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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX I

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multiannual action plan in favour of the NDICI Neighbourhood East Region part 2 for 2021

Action Document for EU EMPOWER

REGIONAL 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 CRIS/OPSYS Basic Act	EU EMPOWER Regional Action Plan 2 CRIS number: 2021/042-997 / OPSYS ACT-60640 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Team Europe Initiative	No
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in the Eastern Neighbourhood Region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine)
4. Programming document	Multiannual indicative programme for the Eastern neighbourhood 2021-2027 ¹
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results	Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies; Specific objective 1: Strengthen civil society capacity and enabling environment, youth participation, cultural cooperation and free media environment Specific objective 2: Strengthen democracy, gender equality, human rights and anti-discrimination
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Civil society and democratic participation
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): SDG 16. Promote peaceful & inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

¹ C(2021)9370 final - Multiannual indicative programme for the Eastern neighbourhood for the period 2021-2027

	Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and, where appropriate, targets: SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. SDG 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.			
8 a) DAC code(s)	15150 – Democratic participation and civil society			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	21000 – International NGO 23000 – Developing country-based NGO			
9. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
10. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	11. Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective
Digitalisation Tags: digital connectivity		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

	digital governance		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital entrepreneurship		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	job creation		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital skills/literacy		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital services		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Connectivity</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Tags: transport		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	people2people		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	energy		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET INFORMATION

12. Amounts concerned	Budget line: BGUE-B2021-14.020111-C1-NEAR Total estimated cost: EUR 12 000 000.00 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 12 000 000.00
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MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

13. Implementation modalities (type of financing and management mode)	Project Modality Direct management through: - Procurement Indirect management with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.2
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1.2. Summary of the Action

This programme proposes to take a comprehensive approach to empower citizens and make the democratic process more inclusive and representative, through strengthening citizens' electoral observation, promotion of an inclusive political process and participation, and through the implementation and/or revision of democratic, transparent and efficient elections-relevant legislation.

An active civil society sphere is a crucial component of a democratic and open society, as well as for safeguarding human rights and the rule of law. The programme aims to strengthen civil society and citizen electoral observers to fulfil their crucial oversight roles in the election cycle as one of the important components of a democratic and open society. The programme will also contribute to fostering a democratic culture and strengthening democratic institutions, in particular with the view of their role within a functioning system of checks and balances. It addresses national needs and challenges throughout the entire elections cycle including through a comprehensive follow-up on electoral recommendations.

The programme foresees three main components:

Component 1 shall enhance capacity of civil society organisations to observe electoral processes. In particular, this component aims at increasing public trust in the electoral systems through citizen electoral

observations and capacity building for civil society organisations to do so. This part of the programme will prepare civil society organisations to increase public oversight of the entire electoral cycle. Furthermore, it will include reserve funds to respond to unforeseen needs of civil society to observe election, in particular in case of early elections.

Activities under Component 2 seek to improve transparency and inclusiveness of democratic institutions. This component would foster enhanced engagement of underrepresented groups (e.g. disabled, youth, women, ethnic/religious minorities) in parliamentary and political party activities through social innovation and/or leadership programmes. It will also seek to strengthen civil society organisations with capacity building to monitor state authorities, corporate public affairs and national/regional Parliaments.

Component 3 aims to strengthen the overall electoral framework, based on international standards. It foresees capacity building and a structured follow-up to international and OSCE-ODIHR electoral observations, including through regular multi-stakeholder dialogues with authorities and civil society to discuss progress on the implementation of electoral observations. This component may assist partner countries in implementing or revising relevant election-focused legislation, party finance reforms and strengthening the role of independent oversight bodies. It particularly strives to improve the representativeness and democratic legitimacy of elected officials by strengthening the voice of citizens.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

The Eastern Partnership aims at building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation. Additionally, bonds forged through the Eastern Partnership help strengthening state and societal resilience: it makes both the EU and the partners stronger and better able to deal with internal and external challenges.

The programme is guided by the Joint Communication on the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020² with its five policy objectives and focus on resilience adopted on 18 March 2020. Based on these objectives, a set of concrete post-2020 priorities have been identified in the Joint Staff Working Document issued on 2 July 2021³ focusing on recovery, resilience and reform, with the overall objectives of strengthening resilience and generating concrete benefits to people. One of the two pillars upon which the new agenda is structured is Governance, with fostering democracy as one of the listed priorities. The Joint Staff Working Document clearly stresses that the “partner countries (together with the EU and its Member States) will work to foster pluralistic, inclusive, participatory and representative democracy, including by supporting the efforts in conducting credible, inclusive and transparent elections. To this end, they will work together to implement the recommendations of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) election observation missions and support genuine democratic transformation in improving parliamentary oversight functions and fostering political pluralism”.

The programme also directly contributes to the European Commission’s “New push for European democracy - nurturing, protecting and strengthening our democracy.” Specifically, the European Democracy Action Plan from 03 December 2020⁴ recognises that the EU is not only concerned with protecting democracy within its

² Joint Communication JOIN(2020) 7 final of 18.03.2020 “Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 “Reinforcing Resilience - an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all”

³ Joint Staff Working Document SWD(2021) 186 final of 02.07.2021 “Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities”

⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European democracy action plan COM(2020) 790 final, 03 December 2020

borders, but as pressure is mounting on democracy, the rule of law and human rights globally, the EU is working actively to protect, inspire and support democracies around the world⁵. The challenges relating to the exercise of democracy are global and the world's democracies have a common interest in working together to address them. At EU level, this requires a coherent approach between internal and external actions.

In the last two decades, the Eastern Neighbourhood region has demonstrated some progress towards adopting democratic norms and institutions, including with respect to the conduct of democratic elections. Notwithstanding, in the course of its recent election observation activities to the region, international electoral observation observers, including the OSCE/ODIHR, have noted varied degrees of implementation of international commitments and other standards for democratic elections, as well as cases of limited public confidence in electoral management bodies and key electoral processes. Although the countries have largely strengthened their legal frameworks in a manner that is accessible and aspires to respect international obligations in the letter of the law, several fundamental aspects continue to pose challenges, including those relating to equality, political pluralism, confidence, transparency and accountability. Ensuring citizens' independent oversight of elections is often a challenge, organisational and financial. This is particularly the case in early elections which occur regularly and often in the region. In addition, political developments in some countries are fluid and increasing repression against democracy advocates should be noted.

An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system. By articulating citizens' concerns, civil society organisations (CSOs) – including local, transnational, gender, women, human rights and inclusiveness focused as well as research oriented – are active in the public arena, engaging in initiatives to further a participatory democracy. CSOs contribute to building more accountable and legitimate states, leading to enhanced social cohesion and more open and deeper democracies.

The Eastern Neighbourhood regional picture is mixed when it comes to levels of participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizens in the policy dialogue with government representatives. In Armenia, following recent political developments, civil society organisations report more positive attitudes as regards the empowerment and inclusion of local civil society actors in the policy dialogue. In Ukraine, CSOs are perceived as playing an important role in promoting the post-Maidan reform agenda as well as in the development of a new political and administrative culture, in particular with regards to promoting transparency and accountability in public life.. Despite a number of weaknesses in terms of capacity, Georgian civil society plays an important role in policy formulation and government oversight. Through the EU-backed National Platform of the Civil Society Forum and other strong coalitions, it has a channel to voice its concerns on the international level. A number of dialogue platforms between civil society and government exist in Moldova, including the EaP National Platform, though limited in scope. In Belarus the interaction between CSOs and the state remains limited with heavily increased state repression since the falsified Presidential election in 2020. In Azerbaijan, the extent to which the public councils established through the 2014 Public Participation Law are channelling genuine engagement, is yet to be established, primarily due to a lack of political will. A Dialogue Platform of State and Civil Society for Promotion of Open Government Partnerships set up in 2016 with civil society and government representation meets regularly to discuss issues related to CSO operating space, but so far with little impact.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected women worldwide, jeopardising the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 5. The situation in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries is of no exception. The impact of the pandemic may actually reverse gender equality gains in the coming years. To avoid this, the governments will need to pursue gender-sensitive decision-making. Two fundamental are key in this regard: (i) using gender mainstreaming as a tool for good governance and (ii) promoting gender-balanced leadership in public administration. Gender mainstreaming underpins democratic governance by offering a

⁵ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 (JOIN/2020/5 final, 25 March 2020), which reaffirms the EU's commitment to promote and protect democracy worldwide.

way to reflect citizens' experiences and needs into decision-making processes and subsequently deliver more responsive and equitable policies and services. In parallel, more gender-balanced leadership can improve the representativeness, responsiveness and fairness of decision-making. Gender mainstreaming and gender-balanced leadership, however, are areas where gaps persist in Eastern Neighbourhood countries. Gender mainstreaming is hindered by a lack of understanding and buy-in across the government and insufficient application of gender impact assessments and gender budgeting. In terms of gender-balanced leadership, women represent on average 16% of ministers and less than 25% of parliamentarians in the region⁶.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only had a significant impact on societies, but also strongly amplified social, economic and political vulnerabilities of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. In turn, the EaP governments adopted a series of measures to mitigate the socio-economic impact, such as tax relief, unemployment benefits and income support. These responses often lacked an all-inclusive approach to socio-economic recovery and their effects will be fully felt only in the medium and long term.⁷ Notably, the immediate impact on the healthcare sector and the vulnerable groups of the population has been unprecedented. It is estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic could set progress towards gender equality back 15 years in the Eastern Partnership region and Central Asia as gaps in pay, poverty, access to finance and digital opportunities widen⁸.

Necessary synergies will be also ensured in regard to other EU-funded regional and bilateral actions already ongoing under the previous phases of this programme and beyond. This is particularly relevant for the programme Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies. Due attention will be given to ensure the complementarity with the activities implemented under the EU COVID-19 Solidarity Programme for the Eastern Partnership, which contains a component on support to civil society and vulnerable groups as well as the regional Civil Society Facility. Complementarity will also be ensured with the actions of thematic programmes for civil society and democracy and human rights under the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE). Activities will be aligned with the EU Civil Society Roadmaps developed together with the EU Member States, as well as the work done by other international donors and EU Member States in supporting civil society.

2.2. Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis

The level of implementation of democratic standards is mixed across the region and concerns both the legal framework as well as its implementation. Eastern Neighbourhood countries face similar challenges when it comes to domestic governance systems and freedom of expression. While progress naturally differs from country to country, the consolidation of deep and sustainable democracy, respect for the rule of law and responsive public administrations need continued support across the region. In this context, it is important to note that there is not only one definition of democracy but there is a consensus that 'free and fair' elections and related political freedoms are essential elements of any democratic system. EU Democracy support has traditionally focused on four areas: (i) inclusive, transparent and credible electoral processes; (ii) constitutional reform and democratic institutions; (iii) political and civil society and (iv) promotion of fundamental freedoms.

Citizens' electoral observation

Oversight of the electoral process at central or local level is an important means to protect electoral integrity, accountability, transparency and the overall credibility of the electoral process, in essence: in fostering a pluralistic and representative democracy. While the situation varies among partner countries, the citizens' oversight can be affected by political instability, in particular, the unprecedented crackdown on society in

⁶ Gender Inequality Index, 2020

⁷ COVID-19 Briefing Paper: lessening the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, EaP Civil Society Forum, 2020 <https://eap-csf.eu/project/covid-19-briefing-paper-lessening-economic-impact/>

⁸ OECD reporting, <https://www.oecd.org/eurasia/Gender%20gaps%20in%20Eurasia%20The%20Daunting%20effects%20of%20COVID%2019.pdf>

Belarus, break-out of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, increased societal polarisation ahead of and following elections in Georgia, Moldova and Armenia. In case of early elections in particular, but also local elections, CSOs as the main actor of citizens' oversight face funding and organisational challenges to put together and implement elections' observation and monitoring.

In Georgia, there is an ongoing contract with the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED). The main objective is to contribute to accomplishing equal, free and fair elections in Georgia through nationwide monitoring of electoral processes, supporting electoral reforms, and promoting voter education and awareness. ISFED created and manages the Elections Portal (electionportal.ge) in collaboration with the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) and Transparency International Georgia. The Elections Portal's goal is to provide information on elections in Georgia. It collects data on alleged cases of violations and incidents electronically or via text message throughout the election period (pre-election, Election Day, and post-election periods) from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and ordinary citizens alike and presents this data on the portal's incident map.

Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for the 2021 Local Self-Governance Elections in Georgia: this EU-funded monitoring is implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with three civil society organizations: the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, Internews Georgia and the Caucasus Research Resource Center - Georgia. Its goals are to a) promote a pluralistic media environment and professional coverage of elections by the media that allows the public to make informed decisions during the elections; and b) to promote capacity and expertise of CSOs as election and freedom of the media watchdogs and to help them professionalise their media monitoring work. This is part of an ongoing collaboration between the EU and UNDP on promoting a transparent, credible and balanced media environment during election time. The EU further supported GYLA (Georgian Young Lawyers Association) in their efforts to conduct a short-term observation mission for the 2020 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia. The action aimed to provide real-time and fact-based evaluation of the voting day for citizens, relevant state institutions, electoral candidates, media and the international community.

In the run-up to the Armenian parliamentary elections on 2 April 2017, through new provisions in the Electoral Code and the introduction of new voter registration technologies, the professional training of local observers became a priority for numerous civil society organisations. As the new Electoral Code adopted by the Armenian Parliament on 25 May 2016 took into account the recommendation of the OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission to remove the mandatory test for domestic observers, a decision that was welcomed by the domestic observer organization, the Armenian civil society organisations became the only responsible actors for the training of citizen observers.

With the support of the EU the "Citizen Observer" Initiative (COI), the "Independent Observer" Public Alliance and "Helsinki Committee of Armenia" established a large-scale observation mission during the parliamentary elections, which observed the electoral process on election day and reached an overall coverage of 97% of 2,009 polling stations all over Armenia. COI involved 4,437 observers, of whom 147 were Diaspora Armenians from 22 countries and around 100 were foreigners. The COI mission covered all 13 electoral districts (four in Yerevan and nine in the marzes), including all 38 territorial electoral commissions and 1522 polling stations within the area of administration of 37 territorial electoral commissions (about 76% of all precincts). Observers reported 1618 violations during the observation mission, of which 216 related to the voting preparation phase, 864 to the voting phase, 144 to the summarization of results phase, and 394 were identified as general violations.

Problems identified by the observers included the widespread abuse of administrative resources, lack of equal competition conditions for candidates, ineffective combat against the barriers to expression of voters' free will, restrictions on civil oversight of elections and the lack of any effective mechanisms and opportunities to complain against the election frauds and appeal the election results. The Initiative also launched the platform

Monitor the Election, a database that gives an opportunity to citizens unable to participate in the upcoming elections to register and check whether someone else has voted in their place.

In Moldova, the CSO Promo-Lex has been very active in organising election observation and facilitating direct and impartial information to citizens with regard to the conduct of local and national (general and presidential) elections, with the support of international donors. Other organisations such as the East Europe Foundation have strengthened civil society dialogue with political actors for inclusive political participation of women, citizens belonging to ethnic minorities women as well as persons with disabilities.

Electoral framework:

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) notes shortcomings in the electoral legal framework and election system and in the implementation of electoral observation mission recommendations. This includes issues related to the accuracy of voters' lists, more transparent candidate registration and wider access to voting rights to citizens. The EU has consistently recommended building consensus on effective solutions to address persistent concerns related to the accuracy of voter registration, which undermines public trust in the electoral process. An element of specific concern is the number of registered citizens that permanently reside abroad but remain included in the voter register.

Electoral administrations require a further professionalisation of electoral management bodies including of lower level commissions/polling staff members. Intimidation of voters with particular focus on public sector employees remains an issue in several countries. Cases of intimidation and vote buying are not a special category of problems, but are rather symptoms of an immature political atmosphere and deficient rule of law and human rights protection. Obstacles persist in relation to the rights of domestic observers to monitor elections. The status of observers, their accreditation process and their access to information and to polling stations need further improvement. There remain challenges related to different stages of the election day such as voting, counting, transfer and reconciliation. Complaints and appeal procedures need further improvement in order to make the process more transparent and less formalistic. Enforcement of decisions in electoral matters deserves particular attention. Comprehensive tracking of the status of implementation of electoral observations recommendations is key.

Challenges related to oversight, of and by Parliaments:

The absence of clear rules between the ruling parties and state bodies lead to numerous cases of misuse of administrative resources by incumbent candidates. This leads to low levels of public trust in the oversight functions of Parliaments. Countries across the region face polarisation of political parties and extreme partisanship. Oversight institutions and Parliaments struggle with outreach to citizens and civil society organisations throughout the entire legislative term including public consultations on draft legislation. The overall architecture of the state administration often lacks a clear typology and effective accountability mechanisms. The organisation of central government is fragmented, with various, often conflicting, organisational logics co-existing. A strong centralisation of political and administrative powers in the executive can be assessed throughout the region. This negatively affects Parliamentary oversight. Impartial access to media by political parties, lack of independence of journalists, cases of intimidation of journalists, transparency of media ownership and unbalanced media coverage are issues of concern.

Political party framework:

The situation varies greatly across the region. A lack of transparency in political party and electoral campaign financing including breaching expenditure ceilings, absence of clear reporting rules and monitoring of expenditures can be noted. Challenges remain around the representativeness of underrepresented groups in parliamentary and political party activities. Political parties lack credibility and trust of the public to accurately represent their preferences and to translate their priorities into policies. This is partially due to a lack of

capacity of political parties to engage and communicate with peers and citizens but also due to insufficient political will.

Gender Equality and inclusiveness of the political process

Gender equality is a core value of the EU and a universally recognised human right, as well as an imperative to well-being, economic growth, prosperity, good governance, peace and security. In order to achieve a functioning democracy and economy, and to fulfil human rights for all, women and girls should participate equally in the public and private sphere. Women and men's equal participation and leadership has major benefits for society as a whole, ranging from the enhanced credibility of democratic institutions to a lower incidence of state-perpetrated violence. Nevertheless, women continue to be under-represented as political leaders and elected officials across the region. Change is slow in elected positions and decision-making bodies at all levels. In 2020, less than 25 % of parliamentarians were women, with a great variation across the region⁹. The much needed development is hampered by factors, such as gender stereotypes, political party structures and the lack of political financing. Women in public life, including politicians, journalists and activists are subject to gender-based violence, including different forms of online violence. At the same time, a vocal generation of women and girl activists takes up a wide range of causes including girl and women empowerment.

In addition to gender equality, an improved inclusiveness of the political process would certainly add legitimacy to elected representatives. The problem is twofold, on one hand restrictive access to decision-making institutions for specific groups from minorities to the disabled. On the other hand, a lack of a proactive approach and initiative of these groups to take part at these processes, from running for elections to influencing the decision-making process at the levels of for example political parties or public administration. Awareness-raising on both sides is necessary.

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

The action will work with a range of national and international actors. At the national level, this includes parliaments, electoral management bodies, other state authorities, political parties, political party groups, citizen election observers and other relevant civil society organisations. It is of fundamental importance that national organisations take the lead in electoral reform efforts so as to ensure sustainability and national ownership.

Other key stakeholders are relevant international organisations such as International IDEA and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) who have strong track records in elections monitoring and democratisation capacity building.

Independent civil society organisations that engage in the political process may directly benefit from this action. These may include inter alia Human Rights House Foundation, ERIM Equal Rights & Independent Media, Netherlands Helsinki Committee, People in Need, Prague Civil Society Centre, the Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and The Transatlantic Foundation. Particular attention will be paid to CSOs that specialise in Parliamentary oversight and citizen electoral observation.

In Georgia, the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) is an independent non-for-profit non-governmental organisation with one of the broadest regional networks in Georgia. It was established in 1995 for the purpose of carrying out citizen monitoring on elections and related political processes.

⁹ Gender Inequality Index 2020 (% of women in parliament): Armenia 24.2%, Azerbaijan 16.8%, Belarus 34.6%, Georgia 14.8%, Moldova 25.7% and Ukraine 20.5%.

The mission of Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) is the protection and promotion of human rights, the rule of law, and transparent and accountable democratic governance in Georgia. GYLA provides free legal aid and conducts strategic litigation before national and regional/international courts, documents and reports human rights violations and conducts advocacy and lobbying for legislative and institutional changes. PMMG (Public Movement Multinational), is an umbrella organization which provides resource support and cooperates with the representatives of 18 diaspora and 56 grass-roots NGOs working in the field of protection of rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups residing in Georgia.

These three CSOs are the EU Delegation's main partners in the election arena. They have established cooperation to complement and support each other. All three work with different monitoring methods that is helpful for the verification of their results.

In Moldova, the EU has funded a series of election monitoring missions by the European Network of Election Monitoring Organisations since the 2016 Presidential election in order to assess the electoral process and provide recommendations to electoral stakeholders in the country in an effort to promote transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and generally assist electoral reform in the Republic of Moldova.

Indirect beneficiaries will be the citizens in the Eastern Neighbourhood and societies at large.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to foster functioning pluralistic, participatory and representative democracy in the Eastern Neighbourhood.

The Specific(s) Objective(s) (Outcomes) of this action are to

1. Enhance capacity of CSO to observe electoral processes.
2. Improve transparency and inclusiveness of democratic institutions, including civil society's oversight of the parliament
3. Improve electoral operational efficiency, inclusiveness, integrity and accuracy of electoral processes according to international standards

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

- 1.1 contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1): Strengthened civil society capacities to monitor and engage in electoral observation
- 1.2 contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1): Better informed population on their democratic rights as citizens
- 2.1 contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2): Enhanced opportunities for the engagement of underrepresented groups (women, disabled, youth, ethnic and religious minorities) in parliamentary and political party activities
- 2.2 contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2): Strengthened capacity of political parties to define transparent and inclusive governance rules, and translate citizens' priorities into policies
- 3.1 contributing to Outcome 3 (or Specific Objective 3): Enhanced capacity of national authorities and electoral management bodies for the implementation of the electoral cycle
- 3.2 contributing to Outcome 3 (or Specific Objective 3): Enhanced regional network and fostered peer-to-peer learning
- 3.3 contributing to Outcome 3 (or Specific Objective 3): Legislation on independent work of oversight bodies, including Parliament, and on party financing developed/revised, in line with international standards

3.2. Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1.1 and Output 1.2:

- Provision of financial support to third parties for citizen electoral observations, including on short notice.
- Providing ad-hoc support in response to requests for tailored capacity building on electoral observation from specific civic organisations and actors, including through organisation of events and support for participation of civil society representatives to selected events.
- Workshops for CSOs on advocacy to better inform citizens about their democratic rights, in particular to politically underrepresented groups (women, disabled, youth, ethnic and religious minorities).
- Capacity building through training workshops, exchange visits, shadowing, international mentoring, remote assistance, induction and orientation programmes, seminars, dialogue facilitation, e-learning, briefings.

Activities related to Output 2.1 and Output 2.2:

- Regional and bilateral technical assistance to strengthen the democratic process and make it more inclusive, effective and representative.
- Provision of financial support to third parties for CSOs to contribute to a more inclusive, effective and representative political process. This includes, amongst others, improvements regarding transparency and access to decision-making power.
- Capacity building for civil society organisations monitoring the Parliaments.
- Supporting CSOs in activities related to outreach and inclusive citizen and community engagement, thematic policy dialogue including women's, disabled, youth, ethnic and religious minorities' organisations.
- Technical assistance to political parties / parliamentary bodies / independent institutions on inclusive governance.

Activities related to Output 3.1, Output 3.2 and Output 3.3:

- Regular dialogue meetings with key stakeholders including national authorities and civil society to structurally follow up on the implementation of OSCE-ODIHR electoral recommendations. Particular attention shall be paid how recommendations can address gender gaps and representation.
- Technical capacity building including for example provision of legal expertise in the form of reviews of draft legislation and regulations through topical workshops and capacity building events with provision of in-depth assistance and expert advice on needed legislative revisions.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Outcomes of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening (relevant for budget support and strategic-level interventions)

The SEA screening concluded that no further action was required.

Outcomes of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The EIA screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment).

In the Eastern Partnership region, civil society has been among the pioneers in pushing for a sustainable *green agenda*. Environmental activism has become pivotal to the implementation, compliance and regulation of

environmental policies and an active civil society participation allows for critical contributions to governments' policies on fighting *climate change* and promoting *environmental protection*. At the same time, in some countries climate activism and fighting environmental injustice have become increasingly dangerous to freely pursue. In addition, local CSOs, particularly in rural areas, often lack sufficient knowledge of green policies, but also inclusive digital transformation and public health, and means to advocate these issues, therefore their capacity to play an active role needs to be reinforced.

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 promoting gender equality is a significant objective.

The action equally supports the transformative approach to contributing to *empowering women, girls and young people* to fully use their rights and increase their participation in political, economic, social and cultural life as entrenched in the EU Gender Action Plan III. The EU has a great interest in increasing the level of women participation, representation and leadership in politics, governance and electoral processes at all levels and enhance women's capacity as political leaders in governments and parliaments as well as encouraging young women and adolescent girls' civic engagement. To the extent possible, the activities described in this action will seek to contribute to raising awareness and safeguarding gains made on gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities and *youth empowerment* to date. The EU also recognises and promotes the role civil society plays in multilateral and regional human rights fora, advocacy and awareness raising campaigns as well as implementing and monitoring the EU policies, such as the EU Disability Strategy¹⁰ and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.¹¹

Human Rights and Democracy

The EU has a strategic interest in advancing its global leadership on human rights and democracy in external action, including in within the EaP framework. Consequently, *human rights and democracy* principles will be central in the implementation of the action. A particular attention will be paid to ensuring full respect for human rights and equal treatment of all. The European Democracy Action Plan¹² pins down that a healthy democracy relies on citizen engagement and an active civil society, not only at election time, but all the time, and engaged, informed and empowered citizens are the best guarantee for democratic resilience.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that it is a significant objective of this action.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

This action promotes a democratic, resilient society, which directly lowers the risk of conflict and contributes to peace. Unresolved conflicts continue to hamper development in the region and, in particular, the recent flaring up of the military confrontation in Nagorno-Karabakh caused numerous casualties, damages and displacement of the local population. In this regard, the action takes into account the *conflict sensitivity* and *reconciliation* efforts in the Eastern Neighbourhood region and acknowledges the profound role civil society can play in building trust, sustainable peace and supporting people affected by conflicts. Women, men and children in conflict-affected territories, both unresolved and ongoing, internally displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees are disproportionately impacted due to restrictions in movements, limited humanitarian aid as well as limited socio-economic opportunities and a lack of proper health care services in the midst of the pandemic. To the extent possible, this action will support civil society in their effort to take an active role

¹⁰ "Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030" 3.3.2021 - COM(2021) 101 final

¹¹ "EU strategy on the rights of the child" 24.3.2021 COM(2021) 142 final

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/european-democracy-action-plan_en

in dialogue and promote peace initiatives, in synergy with other EU-funded initiatives and humanitarian aid projects, to help prepare the ground for longer-term conflict resolution.

3.4. Risks and Lessons Learned

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
3 – people and organisation	Targeted countries do not engage in electoral reform or do so in a manner that lacks good faith and genuine commitment.	M	M	Engage with state actors, local authorities and CSOs to re-build trust and promote a sustained and continuous dialogue
1 – external environment	Unforeseen political instability or electoral developments, including parliamentary boycotts or the calling of early elections.	M	H	The majority of the activities are relevant for the entire electoral cycle and would only be marginally impacted by early elections. The proposed intervention includes flexible funding to CSOs to respond to unforeseen political circumstances. All actions will be designed to be inclusive and consulted with a wide array of stakeholders to mitigate any potential issues.
3 – people and organisation	Lack of financial resources on the side of the beneficiaries to implement reforms that require significant infrastructural changes.	L	L	Most electoral recommendations can be addressed without the commitment of extensive financial resources.
4-legality and regulatory aspects	Shrinking space for media and civil society in some of the targeted countries.	H	H	Throughout the implementation of the programme, the situation of media and civil society will be regularly monitored, in order to be able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Lessons Learned:

Countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood region frequently call early elections and face a significant turnover of elected officials. International electoral observations and following recommendations are produced and widely discussed immediately following elections. However, there is limited direct action after recommendations are published. Changes to the electoral framework through regulatory and legislative changes should be discouraged shortly before elections. Early elections shorten the time window for possible

modifications to the electoral system and have been used as a pretext not to implement meaningful reforms. National and international attention to matters of electoral reform is often heightened around election periods but there is a strong need for structural follow up. The electoral cycle approach is a means of viewing elections as continuous processes rather than isolated events. It recognises that elections are composed of a number of interconnected components that interact with and influence one another, beginning several years before an election and finishing long after election day. Viewing electoral reform from this perspective assists the overall framing and timing of follow-up support. The important role of an active civil society should also be emphasised in educating voters about their rights, political advocacy and monitoring elections.

Bringing elections to EU and international standards is a continuous process that has to be internally driven. The responsibility for organising elections lies with the partner countries, and its follow-up activities, therefore, support sustainable electoral management capacities. Political will and continued commitment to reform are paramount. Implementing electoral observation recommendations well in advance of an election allows time for consultation, drafting and adoption of legislation; testing and development of practices; voter education programmes; and training of electoral staff, potential candidates and other stakeholders. When an election is not imminent, there is also less risk of discussions becoming politically heated, meaning that positions can be more thoroughly considered. Structural follow-up to recommendations is most advisable.

The democratisation reform process is stronger when there is meaningful involvement, public consultation and inclusion, not only of the main opposition parties, but also of smaller political groups, national experts, civil society and other stakeholders, including those who are at risk of marginalisation from the process such as women, national minorities and persons with disabilities.

3.5. Intervention Logic

This programme proposes to take a comprehensive approach to empower citizens and make the democratic process more inclusive and representative, through either electoral observation, promotion of an inclusive political process and participation, and through the implementation and/or revision of democratic, transparent and efficient elections-relevant legislation.

An active civil society sphere is a crucial component of a democratic and open society, as well as for safeguarding human rights and the rule of law. The programme aims to strengthen civil society and citizen electoral observers to fulfil their crucial oversight roles in the election cycle as one of the important components of a democratic and open society. By articulating citizens' concerns, civil society organisations are active in the public arena, engaging in initiatives to further a participatory democracy. CSOs contribute to building more accountable and legitimate states, leading to enhanced social cohesion and more open and deeper democracies.

The programme will also contribute to fostering a democratic culture and strengthening democratic institutions, in particular with the view of their role within a functioning system of checks and balances. It addresses national needs and challenges throughout the entire elections cycle including through a comprehensive follow-up on electoral recommendations.

The programme foresees three main components:

Specific Objective 1 enhances capacity of CSO to observe electoral processes. In detail, this component aims at increasing public trust in the electoral systems through citizen electoral observations and capacity building for civil society organisations to do so. This part of the programme would likely include sub-grants to civil society organisations and increase public oversight of the entire electoral cycle. Furthermore, it will include reserve funds to respond to unforeseen needs of civil society to observe election, in particular in case of early elections. Moreover, this objective is intended to contribute to further accountability and democratic culture,

not least through information campaigns on voting rights. This is intended to contribute to further accountability and democratic culture beyond elections.

Activities under **Specific Objective 2** seek to improve transparency and inclusiveness of democratic institutions. This component would foster enhanced engagement of underrepresented groups in parliamentary and political party activities (e.g. disabled, youth, women, ethnic/religious minorities) through social innovation and/or leadership programmes. It may also seek to strengthen civil society organisations with capacity building to monitor state authorities, corporate public affairs and national/regional Parliaments.

Specific Objective 3 has the purpose to strengthen the overall electoral framework, based on international standards. It foresees capacity building and a structured follow-up to international and OSCE-ODIHR electoral observations, including through regular multi-stakeholder dialogues with authorities and civil society to discuss progress on the implementation of electoral observations. This component may assist partner countries in implementing or revising relevant election-focused legislation, party finance reforms and strengthening the role of independent oversight bodies. It particularly strives to improve the representativeness and democratic legitimacy of elected officials by strengthening the voice of citizens.

3.6. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chin: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To foster functioning pluralistic, participatory and representative democracy in the Eastern Neighbourhood.	'Voice and Accountability' Worldwide Governance Indicator, percentile ranks of countries in the EaP	2019 country percentile ranks: Armenia 48 Azerbaijan 7 Belarus 11 Georgia 53 Moldova 43 Ukraine 48	Country percentile ranks of all 6 EaP countries improved by at least 2.	'Voice and Accountability' Worldwide Governance Indicator ¹³	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Enhanced capacity of CSO to observe electoral processes.	CSO Sustainability Index Advocacy score for the countries in the EaP	2019 scores: Armenia 2.7 Azerbaijan 5.5 Belarus 5.1 Georgia 3.6 Moldova 3.1 Ukraine 2.2	Overall scores of all 6 EaP countries improved by at least 0.1	CSO Sustainability Index ¹⁴	
Outcome 2	Improved transparency and inclusiveness of democratic institutions, including oversight by the parliament and civil society	The checks on Government score	AM: 0.61 AZ: 0.18 BY: 0.22 GE: 0.62 MD: 0.61 UA: 0.56	Overall scores of all 6 EaP countries improved by 0.05	The Global State of Democracy initiative (IDEA)	
Outcome 3	Improved electoral operational efficiency, inclusiveness, integrity and accuracy of electoral processes according to international standards	Number of OSCE-ODIHR electoral observation missions' recommendations fully implemented	Tbd during inception phase	Tbd during inception phase	OSCE/ODHIR election observation reports	
Output 1 related to Outcome 1	Strengthened civil society capacities to monitor and engage in electoral observation	Number of CSOs in the EaP receiving EU support through grants or Financial Support to Third Parties to strengthen their technical and advocacy capacities	2020: 1,200 ¹⁵	2025: 3,000	Dedicated tool for monitoring CSO assistance in the EaP ¹⁶	
Output 2 related to Outcome 1	Better informed population on their rights as citizens	Voter turnout in parliamentary elections % of people who assess their knowledge of voters rights satisfactory	2021: per country AM: 49.4% (2021) AZ: 46.8% (2020) BY: 77.3% (2021) GE: 56.1% (2020)	2025: increased 2025: increased	Voter turnout database of International Institute for Democracy and electoral assistance (IDEA)	

¹³ 'Voice and Accountability' indicator of the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) reflects perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media. The percentile rank indicates the country's rank among all countries covered by the aggregate indicator, with 0 corresponding to lowest rank, and 100 to highest rank, [WGI 2020 Interactive > Interactive Data Access \(worldbank.org\)](#)

¹⁴ CSO Sustainability Index developed by USAID uses a seven-point scale, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of sustainability. [CSO Sustainability Index Explorer \(csosi.org\)](#)

¹⁵ Including EaP Civil Society Facility

¹⁶ The CSO Meter consists of a set of standards and indicators in 10 different areas to measure both law and practice when monitoring the environment in which CSOs operate in the Eastern Partnership countries <https://ecn1.org/cso-meter>

			MD: 48.5% (2021) UA: 49.2% (2019) 2020: N/A		Project reports	
Output 1 related to Outcome 2	Enhanced opportunities for the engagement of underrepresented groups (women, disabled, ethnic and religious minorities) in parliamentary and political party activities	% of women in parliament Fundamental rights score in the Global State of Democracy indices	Armenia 24.2%, Azerbaijan 16.8%, Belarus 34.6%, Georgia 14.8%, Moldova 25.7% and Ukraine 20.5%. AM: 0.65 AZ: 0.41 BY: 0.36 GE: 0.64 MD: 0.61 UA: 0.57	Improvement in all 6 countries by 1%-point	Gender Inequality Index 2020 The Global State of Democracy initiative (IDEA)	
Output 2 related to Outcome 2	Strengthened capacity of political parties to define transparent and inclusive governance rules, and translate citizens' priorities into policies	Free Political Parties score in the Global State of Democracy indices	Armenia 0.64 Azerbaijan 0.37 Belarus 0.38 Georgia 0.37 Moldova 0.7 Ukraine 0.51	Improvement in all 6 countries by 1%-point	The Global State of Democracy initiative (IDEA)	
Output 1 related to Outcome 3	Enhanced capacity of national authorities and electoral management bodies for the implementation of the electoral cycle	Number of OSCE-ODIHR electoral recommendations implemented	n/a	Tbd in contracting phase	Tracking tool do be developed under SO3	
Output 2 related to Outcome 3	Enhanced regional network and fostered peer-to-peer learning	Number of countries and civil servants who have participated in activities and are members of an alumni network	0	At least 200 people from all 6 countries	Progress reports	
Output 3 related to Outcome 3	Legislation on independent work of oversight bodies, including Parliament, party financing developed / revised in line with international standards	Number of countries who have developed / revised	0	At least 2	Progress reports	

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with a partner country/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 by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3. Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures¹⁷.

4.3.1. Direct Management (Grants)

4.3.1.1. Grants (direct management): Strengthen effectiveness of CSO electoral observation with enhanced capacity in electoral oversight

a) Purpose of the grant(s)

To achieve Outcome 1, grant(s) will be concluded in order to develop regional and country specific capacity development programmes in selected Eastern Partnership countries and in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood region.

b) Type of applicants targeted

To achieve Outcome 1, potential applicants for the grants will be organisations that have signed a financial framework partnership agreement as per Art. 130 (4) FR with the EU, either:

- organisations that have signed a financial framework partnership agreement with the EU (either following the call for proposals "Strategic Partnerships for Capacity Development of Civil Society Organisations in the Eastern Partnership", EuropeAid/164964/DH/FPA/Multi, launched in 2019, or
- civil society organisations that have a solid experience in implementing CSO capacity building activities and in awarding and managing financial support to local CSOs in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood.

The recipients of the grant will be selected based on the following criteria: recognised sectorial knowledge of civil society, specific local political awareness and experience in supporting civil society in the Eastern Partnership.

4.3.2. Indirect Management with a pillar assessed entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: proven technical knowledge and specific expertise in the given areas of intervention, as well as a proven track record and the capacity to develop good working relations with government partners and demonstrated capacity to deliver work in a conflict- and gender-sensitive manner across the region identified in this action. In addition, demonstrated specific operational and

¹⁷ www.sanctionsmap.eu 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.

technical capacities are required to implement the activities listed under Outcome 2 and Outcome 3. The implementation by this entity entails implementing activities and reaching results as listed under the expected results. The implementation of Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 is envisaged by two separate entities.

4.3.3. Changes from indirect to direct management (and vice versa) mode due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

If the two negotiations with an entity fail, or if the above-mentioned preferred modality cannot be implemented due to circumstances outside of the Commission’s control, to reach Specific Objective 2 and Specific Objective 3, that part of this action may be implemented in direct management

Grants

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

To potentially achieve Outcomes 2 and 3, should negotiations for indirect management not be possible.

(b) Type of applicants targeted Potential applicants are CSOs with a proven track record of action on a particular governance issue, ad-hoc coalitions of CSOs (or particular extensions of advocacy work conducted by established coalitions, networks and platforms), CSOs having proven citizen support for a particular advocacy idea and public policy think tanks based either in the European Union or in one of the Eastern Neighbourhood countries. Grants will be awarded with a call for proposals.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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

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

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components ¹⁸	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Specific Objective 1: Strengthen effectiveness of CSO electoral observation with enhanced capacity in electoral oversight	
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	6 000 000.00
Specific Objective 2: Improve transparency and inclusiveness of democratic institutions, including oversight by the parliament and civil society	
Indirect management with an international organisation – cf. section 4.3.2	4 000 000.00

¹⁸ N.B: The final text on audit/verification depends on the outcome of ongoing discussions on pooling of funding in (one or a limited number of) Decision(s) and the subsequent financial management, i.e. for the conclusion of audit contracts and payments.

Specific Objective 3: Improve electoral operational efficiency, inclusiveness, integrity and accuracy of electoral processes according to international standards	
Indirect management with an international organisation cf. section 4.3.2	2 000 000.00
Budgetary guarantee – amount of annual provisioning cf. section 4.4.8	n/a
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision
Communication and visibility – cf. section 6	0
Contingencies	n/a
Totals	12 000 000.00

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The responsibility of the programme lies with the Commission. The steering of the projects will be led by Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

Each contract will have a Steering Committee meeting which will be chaired by the Commission and will include representatives of other concerned EU institutional stakeholders (e.g. EEAS and the EU Delegations). For the different components of the programme, a back to back steering committee can be envisaged. The steering committee shall meet regularly, at least once per year to provide an update on the annual activities and for the monitoring of the implementation. Each implementing partner will provide the Secretariat of the Steering Committee for their respective components.

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 results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support).

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).

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the Commission.

It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that this is the first regional democracy support programme.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 30 days in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation 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 report shall be shared with the partner countries and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. 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. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility is a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to advertise the European Union's support for their work to the relevant audiences.

To that end they must comply with the instructions given in the [Communication and Visibility Requirements of 2018](#) (as updated by the communication and visibility requirements in force under the 2021-2027 programming period), notably with regard to the use of the EU emblem and the elaboration of a dedicated communication and visibility plan, to be completed for every action at the start of implementation.

These obligations apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, the partner country (for instance, concerning the reforms supported through budget support), contractors, grant beneficiaries or entrusted entities. In each case, a reference to the relevant contractual obligations must be included in the respective financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

Communication and visibility measures may be funded from the amounts allocated to the action. For the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU and its contribution to this action, the Commission may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, as part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union. Visibility and communication measures should also promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

Effectiveness of communication activities on awareness about the action and its objectives as well as on EU funding of the action should be measured.

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