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ANNEX I

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multiannual action plan in favour of the NDICI Neighbourhood East Region for 2023-2024

Action Document for Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies for 2023-2024

MULTIANNUAL ACTION PLAN

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

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

1. Title OPSYS Basic Act	Action Document for Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies for 2023-2024 OPSYS business reference: ACT-61707 ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD.1157726 (for 2023) and JAD.1158685 (for 2024) Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)	No
3. EIP Flagship	No
4. Team Europe Initiative	No
5. Beneficiary(y)/(ies) of the action	The action shall be carried out for the benefit of the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus ¹ , Georgia, Republic of Moldova ² , Ukraine) and the Russian Federation's pro-democratic civil society ³ .

¹ In line with the Council Conclusions of 12 October 2020 and in light of Belarus's involvement in the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, recognised in the European Council Conclusions of February 2022, the EU has stopped engaging with representatives of Belarus public bodies and state-owned enterprises. Should there be a change of the context this may be reconsidered. In the meantime, the EU continues to engage with and, where possible, has stepped up support to non-state, local and regional actors, including within the framework of this regional programme.

² Hereinafter referred to as Moldova

³ In line with Council Conclusions of June 2021, the EU continues support to Russian civil society human rights organisations and independent media (www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf),

6. Programming document	Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for the Eastern Neighbourhood, 2021-2027 ⁴			
7. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results	<p><i>Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies</i></p> <p><i>Specific objective 1: Civil society capacity, youth participation, cultural cooperation and free media environment strengthened</i></p> <p><i>Expected result: Strengthened capacity of local civil society organisations as well as think tanks to meaningfully engage in policy making and dialogue, promote open civic space, foster social investment, and serve the needs of local communities;</i></p>			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
8. Priority Area(s), sectors	Civil society			
9. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<p>Main SDG (1 only):</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets:</p> <p>SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.</p> <p>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</p>			
10. DAC code(s)	15150 – Democratic participation and civil society (100%)			
11. Main Delivery Channel	21000 – International NGO 23000 – Developing country-based NGO			
12. 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			
13. 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"/>

(<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0020>), reiterated further by the HRVAP after the FAC of 15 November 2022

(www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-defence-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-meeting_en).

⁴ C(2021)9370 adopted on 15/12/2021

14. Internal markers and Tags

Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
EIP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EIP Flagship	YES <input type="checkbox"/>		NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES		NO
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
environment, climate resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
digital	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
human development (incl. human capital and youth)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
health resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
migration and mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
other	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES		NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

digital entrepreneurship	<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"/>
Tags	YES	NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET INFORMATION

14. Amounts concerned	<p>Budget line: BGUE-B2023 14.020111 - C 1 NEAR (Eastern Neighbourhood) BGUE-B2024-14.020111 - C 1 NEAR (Eastern Neighbourhood)</p> <p>Total estimated cost: EUR 52 000 000</p> <p>Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 52 000 000</p> <p>The contribution is for an amount of EUR 19 000 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2023 and for an amount of 33 000 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2024, provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2024 following the adoption of that budget by the budget authority.</p> <p>This action is co-financed in joint co-financing by potential grant beneficiaries of this action for an indicative amount of EUR 4 100 000.</p>
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MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

15. Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)	<p>Project Modality</p> <p>Direct management through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grants - Procurement <p>Indirect management with pillar assessed entities to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.3</p>
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1.2. Summary of the Action

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) Civil Society Facility is the EU's landmark programme on support to civil society in the EaP countries and Russia, combining regional and country-based actions. Empowered civil society, including social partners, is a crucial component of an inclusive and resilient, gender equal and democratic system and a key contributor to the democratic and economic transformation of the partner countries. The Joint Communication on the future of the EaP of March 2020⁵ and the Joint Staff Working Document on Recovery, resilience and reforms: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities⁶ of July 2021 confirm the EU's commitment to enhance engagement and sustainability of civil society in all partner countries, particularly local, grassroots organisations, to meaningfully participate in policy dialogue, promote reforms and public accountability. Furthermore, the 2022 Commission opinions on the application for membership of the European Union, which confirm the European perspective for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, stress an enhancement of the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes at all levels as priority.

Against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and increased political instability across the countries, this action aims to strengthen inclusive resilient democratic societies in the Eastern Partnership region by capacitating Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to participate meaningfully in European and national policy dialogue (including reforms, accountability and socio-economic recovery), as well as by enabling civic actors to engage in pro-democracy and human rights and environment/climate activism. This is in line with the objectives of the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) to strengthen resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies in the EaP countries. To achieve its objectives, the action proposes the following intervention areas:

- Capacity development and financial sustainability of the local CSOs to empower them to effectively promote **reforms, accountability, democratic development** and play an active role in the sustainable socio-economic recovery;
- Enabling civic actors to engage in pro-democracy, pro-gender equality and **human rights** activism;
- Strengthening resilience of local CSOs to sustain democratic progress and react/respond to sudden **shocks** in the political or social context;

The design of the intervention will further build on the EU's strategic approach to supporting civil society and will establish framework partnership agreements with key CSOs to channel support more effectively and increase overall support.

The action contributes directly to achieving the 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".

The programme will also contribute towards SDG 5, "Achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls", through support to women's rights and other organisations promoting gender equality.

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

The beneficiaries of the action are the local citizens and local CSOs of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and for some of its components the Russian pro-democratic civil society.

⁵ Joint Communication JOIN(2020) 7 final of 18.03.2020 "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 "Reinforcing Resilience - an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all":

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jswd_structured_consultation_on_the_future_of_the_eastern_partnership.pdf

⁶ Joint Staff Working Document SWD (2021) 186 final of 2.7.2021 "Recovery, resilience, and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership Priorities":

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd_2021_186_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v2_p1_1356457_0.pdf

1.4. Context

Empowered civil society is a key component of a just, equitable, gender equal and democratic system. By articulating citizens' concerns, civil society organisations (CSOs) – including grassroots, local, transnational, youth, gender equality focused, environment/climate and research-oriented organisations as well as social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) – play a critical role in policy dialogue as governance actors and engage in initiatives to further a participatory democracy. Civil society is also recognised as one of the main partners to push for change under five broad political priorities⁷ set by the European Commission for 2019-2024, thus capacity and an enabling environment that allow CSOs to perform this role need to be further enhanced. The EU's commitment to support civil society applies to all countries in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood.

As defined in the 2012 Communication *“Roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations”*⁸, support to the development of capacity of CSOs, engagement in policy dialogue and promoting enabling and conducive civic space are the three areas in which the EU is committed to work. Since 2012, the EU has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to support civil society in the Eastern Partnership through a series of policy documents, taking stock of the achievements to date and drawing new forward-looking objectives. As reaffirmed in the 2020 *“EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024”*⁹, civil society remains a key partner for delivering sustainable change and to monitor and review progress

The Joint Communication *“Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, reinforcing resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all”*, adopted in March 2020, and the Joint Staff Working Document on the future of the Eastern Partnership, published in July 2021, acknowledge the contribution of civil society to increasing public accountability, advancing human rights, sustainable growth and local development, as well as ensuring service delivery to the whole population in the region. Building on innovative actions (such as the Collaborative for Impact project¹⁰ that promotes social entrepreneurship and investments) and engagement to date, the EU commits to continue supporting financial sustainability and capacity of CSOs as well as promoting cooperation with social partners and enhancing leadership skills of civic actors. An ambitious target was set to double the outreach to smaller local civil society and support 2 500 active CSOs and civic grassroots actors outside capitals - the new generation of civil society - serving the needs of local communities.

Despite the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and its impact on the entire region, the Joint Communication remains highly relevant as a basis for engagement with the Eastern Partnership countries. The Commission opinions¹¹ on the application for membership of the European Union, which confirm the European perspective for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, stress an enhancement of the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes at all levels as priority. In order to achieve sustainable results, working

⁷ See political priorities for the [International Partnerships](#)

⁸ *Roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations*, Communication COM(2012) 492, <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2012-communication-roots-of-democracy-and-sustainable-development.pdf>

⁹ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020 – 2024*

¹⁰ *“Collaborate for Impact – development of social entrepreneurship and social investments in the Eastern Partnership countries”*: <https://euneighbourseast.eu/projects/eu-project-page/?id=1510>

¹¹ Communication COM (2022) 405 final of 17.06.2022 *“Commission Opinion on Georgia's application for membership of the European Union”*; Communication COM (2022) 406 final of 17.06.2022 *“Commission Opinion on the Republic of Moldova's application for membership of the European Union”*; Communication COM (2022) 407 final of 17.06.2022 *“Commission Opinion on Ukraine's application for membership of the European Union”* https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3790

with the partner countries to promote an enabling environment for civil society, both in terms of law and practice, will be key.

The new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III)¹² was adopted in 2020. It puts forward ambitious plans to promote gender equality and women's empowerment

through all external action of the EU through strong partnerships and dialogue with local actors, civil society and local communities and support to women's organisations.

1.5. Problem Analysis

Many CSOs in most countries of the Eastern Partnership and in the Russian Federation continue to face challenges of representativeness, transparency, internal governance, financial sustainability and dependency on support by international donors.

The civil society environment across the countries has been affected by increased political instability, in particular the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the unprecedented crackdown on society in Belarus, the flare up of hostilities in and around Nagorno Karabakh and the increased polarisation in Georgia. Since the pandemic, CSOs have been playing a vital role in serving local communities and vulnerable groups and pushing for reforms when the national authorities became overwhelmed by the magnitude of crises. In Belarus and Ukraine, an unprecedented civic mobilisation has been redefining political and social activism.

In view of these crises, CSOs often shifted to emergency responses supporting their constituents and communities. For safety reasons, many needed to relocate, either internally or out of the country, and are operating from abroad. They are facing administrative hurdles in registration processes and adapting to different working modalities. Some organisations may find it difficult to keep relevant links to their communities at home. These crises, emergency responses and forced changes in operation put a huge burden on CSOs, triggering stress and burnouts among activists that need to be addressed through relevant care and wellbeing opportunities. Financial support to CSOs will be key for organisations to re-focus on their core mandate and switch from crisis to enabling mode. Civil society needs to be enabled to play their crucial role, both in delivering essential services, as well as in implementing watchdog and advocacy activities, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of emergency measures. Innovative actions should build on the momentum of increased civic mobilisation and channel it to meaningful participation in reform, recovery and reconstruction processes and avoid a de-politisation.

The space for civil society to operate and possibilities for activism vary significantly in the different countries of the Eastern Partnership with room for improvement in all countries. There is also a difference in the legal framework and its application.¹³ Movements that challenge democracy have increased over the past decades and they are linked to attacks on human rights and gender equality. Online gender based violence online has increased often targeting women's rights and LGBTIQI activists. Changes in the policy and political environment, including restrictions of civil society space, are often happening so suddenly that CSOs are not able to respond unless rapid and flexible financing tools are made available to them in addition to traditional instruments and modalities of EU support to strengthen their capacity.

According to OECD DAC, women's rights organisations are underfunded. Where resources are reaching women's rights organisations, they are typically small-scale and short-term. Small amounts of money can

¹² "EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III: An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action" https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf

¹³ In this context, the "CSO meter" is a key tool for monitoring and advocating for the improvement of the enabling environment in which CSO operate in the EaP countries. "CSO Meter: A Compass to Conducive Environment and CSO Empowerment": [CSO Meter Regional Report: Standing strong in times of crises | CSOMETER](#)

stimulate learning and innovation, but they do not enable vital expansion, scale-up and strengthening of organisational and operational capacity.¹⁴

In view of ever-increasing disinformation, especially linked to the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and further political crises, but also the EU's image, CSOs require additional support to be able to counter disinformation and serve as sources of accurate, diverse and fact-based information. CSOs and independent media have been playing an important role on digital literacy providing fact-based information to counter the intensified disinformation in the East.

While there is an overall high number of registered CSOs in the region (these figures vary from country to country), only a limited percentage of them are active organisations. A new civic dynamism is observed and presents a shift from professionalised CSOs towards localised, informal grassroots-oriented networks. These informal, ad hoc, self-organised civic groups and movements advocate various changes through innovative and community-based ways. Yet, in all partner countries, there is a significant discrepancy in terms of technical, managerial and advocacy capacity between the CSOs operating in and out of the capital cities and those based in the regions. This prevents civil society as a whole from achieving sustainable country-wide impact, reaching out to and engaging constituents, building stronger coalitions and becoming more effective advocates for democratic change.

The programme proposes to address identified needs aiming to increase the financial sustainability of CSOs, strengthen their operational resilience and capacity to contribute to and promote reforms and democratic development at all levels, foster an enabling environment for civil society, and enhance policy dialogue among civil society, the EU and state authorities in the EaP. EU priorities have been adapting to new global challenges in recent years focusing more on resilience, reform, recovery and reconstruction, digital transformation of societies, better external investment planning and greening of economies and societies. Civil society has established a critical role in advocating for transformative change and strengthening civic resilience in key public policy fields, including gender equality, good governance, human rights, environmental governance, social development, conflict affectedness. Previous support allowed to develop a strong foundation of pool of actors who require further support in their organisational capacity development.

In **Armenia**, the impact of the 2020 war and more recent hostilities are having a strong impact on the society as a whole and pose a new layer of challenges for Armenian CSOs. Although CSOs do not face restrictions in receiving and using funding from various sources, there are growing concerns among CSOs on shrinking space for participation, growing polarisation and hate speech against human rights activists. Lack of meaningful connection with beneficiaries and wider society, general lack of trust, limited organisational capacities, limited cooperation with peers from across the civil society sector, as well as lack of accountability and dependency on donor funding are among the main challenges faced by civil society in Armenia. Also, strong disparity persists regarding CSOs capacity between Yerevan and the rest of the country.

The EU is a long-standing partner of civil society in Armenia and, as a leading donor, the EU has supported the work of CSOs through thematic and bilateral programmes, including capacity building and policy dialogue initiatives. The EU roadmap for engaging with civil society in Armenia for 2021-2027 outlines the main priorities of EUD for working with CSOs (1) promoting an enabling environment for CSOs operations in Armenia, including enhancing the operational space for CSOs representing marginalised and vulnerable groups and/or working on human rights issues; (2) supporting civil society efforts to provide constructive contribution to policy reform and to act as efficient government watchdogs, with a particular focus in the priority areas of EU engagement in Armenia and the follow-up of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA); (3) Providing targeted capacity development for civil society to

¹⁴ Of the USD 836 million that goes directly to civil society in developing countries for gender-related work, around 39% goes to CSOs in sub-Saharan Africa, 22% to South and Central Asia, 10% to East Asia and the Pacific, 9% to the Middle East and North Africa, 7% to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 4% to Eastern Europe. g This reflects the regional distribution of gender focused aid more generally. [Donor support to southern women's rights organisations: OECD findings - OECD](#)

effectively engage with citizens, the authorities, trade unions and businesses, and become more accountable and financially sustainable.

The civil society legal framework in **Azerbaijan** continues to put significant restrictions over CSOs' operations and in the public sphere in general. Despite the minor changes in the civil society legislation introduced in 2019 and 2020, the situation has not significantly improved since 2014. Limited access to financial resources is the main constraint for CSOs to operate as development actors. State funding is insufficient and often not available for independent actors while foreign funding is very restricted, including due to lengthy and burdensome registration requirements for donor-funded actions. As a consequence, the capacity of civil society remains weak. In general terms, Azerbaijani CSOs lack basic project management skills as well as the capacity to engage in policy dialogue or to carry out advocacy campaigns. In this context, social entrepreneurship has the potential to offer some Azerbaijani CSOs a source of revenue while contributing to social development objectives. At this moment, there is not a social entrepreneurship legal framework in Azerbaijan but the EU funded project Developing innovation-driven and sustainable civil society in Azerbaijan (2020/418-592) implemented by UNDP is working with the Government to develop this framework. The Development Strategy "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio Economic Development", approved by the President in February 2021, recognises the need for close cooperation between civil society, private sector and the State to achieve successful long term development objectives.

Three years after the falsified presidential elections of August 2020, **Belarus** faces a protracted political and societal crisis. Just after the elections, Belarus witnessed a wave of mass public protests with demands for new fair elections and peaceful forms of dialogue to resolve the political crisis. The Belarusian political regime rejected negotiations and responded with mass political repression and persecution of its opponents. Since late 2020, an extremely severe repressive regime focused on suppressing any meaningful public activity. Democratic political forces, independent media and independent civil society organisations face unprecedented political persecution, deprivation of official registration, mass criminal and administrative harassment of their leaders and activists. The state has virtually eliminated the right to freedom of association and freedom of speech; a whole series of repressive legislative acts against any civic activity have been developed and adopted. A large number of civil society organisations were liquidated or forced to self-liquidate, especially in 2021. By the end of 2022 the number of civil society organisations liquidated or forced to self-liquidate reached 1,173, and the number of political prisoners 1,449. Despite the repressions, the activities of CSOs and civic initiatives both within the country and abroad continue. Throughout 2020-2022, a significant number of Belarusian citizens facing political persecution left Belarus, and a large number of public organisations and commercial companies were forced to move to other countries. This exodus of businesses, people and professionals still continues in 2023. The Belarusian authorities' support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine adds to the complexity, and the regime is increasingly dependent on its only remaining ally. The solution to the crisis appears to be dependent on the overall geopolitical situation in the wider region. The European Union has significantly increased its support to the people of Belarus since 2020. EU support is provided to civil society, human rights defenders, independent media, youth, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and culture with an aim to reinforce the resilience of the Belarusian society and its capacity to achieve democratic changes in Belarus.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has left a significant imprint on **Georgia**. While the overall number of Ukrainian refugees is already sizeable, the considerably higher influx in immigration flows from Russia and Belarus are tearing at the social fabric of a Georgian society still reeling from the socio-economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. In a politically charged and extremely polarised environment, the government attempts a geopolitical balancing act after the country's European perspective was recognised in June of 2022. With candidate status contingent on the fulfilment of 12 priorities, including one on ensuring "the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes at all levels", pro forma participation in consultative bodies is largely respected. Impact, particularly of critical NGOs and in contentious areas, is

however more limited. Georgian civil society for its part has continued to be at the forefront of pro-EU advocacy and activities, assuming a pivotal and representative role vis-à-vis a Georgian populace that overwhelmingly supports EU accession. While presently not facing any major legal or procedural hurdles to operate freely, Georgian watchdog and rights advocacy organisations are met with increasing hostility and attempts at vilification by segments of the political spectrum. Moreover, a draft Law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence* had been tabled in Parliament by members of the parliamentary majority in February 2022. The draft foresaw that non-profits (and media) are to be called “agents of foreign influence” if support from outside of Georgia constitutes over 20% of their total revenue in the preceding year and imposes burdens such as additional reporting obligations and financial penalties for violation of the Law’s requirements, such as self-registration in a public registry. Following mounting international pressure as well as protests by a vocal popular movement opposing its adoption, the parliamentary majority eventually abstained from voting in favour in the second reading, effectively letting the opposition vote it down. Nonetheless, CSOs continue to face persistent distrust among large swaths of the Georgian population and hence remain largely donor-dependent in the running of their operations. Against this backdrop, and in line with the Georgia Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society, the EU aims to strengthen CSOs’ role in decision-making processes at local and national level and to enhance CSO development to drive effective sustainable economic and democratic development.

The EU and **Moldova** set ambitious medium-term priorities to achieve the objectives of the 2021-2027 EU-Moldova Association Agenda as well as the five policy objectives of the Eastern Partnership.¹⁵ Moreover, in response to Moldova’s application for EU membership, on 23 June the European Council recognised Moldova’s European perspective and granted Moldova the status of EU candidate country¹⁶. Moldova is expected to take a number of steps, as outlined in the Commission’s Opinion of 17 June, to meet the conditions of the process¹⁷. Among the key conditions is an expectation to enhance the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes at all levels. In this sense, the Moldovan authorities took the commitment to approve the new concept regarding civil society development by May 2023, as a result of the ex-post evaluation of the Civil Society Development Strategy 2018-2020. Additionally, permanent consultative platforms will function at the level of central public authorities in order to involve representatives of civil society in the legislative drafting process. Dialogue, transparency and cooperation with civil society, including women’s rights organisations, should be further strengthened. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine has led to the mass displacement of refugees in Moldova. It disrupted transport corridors and supply chains that heavily affected the national economy and resulted in an increased consumer price inflation. Moldovan civil society played a key role in the immediate response to the refugee crisis by ensuring refugees’ access to housing, food, social services etc. The EU Delegation is managing large financial support to third parties schemes under the Civil Society Facility 2019 and 2020, jointly with some initiatives funded under the NDICI and CSO instruments. Synergies will be ensured with the projects implemented by other donors in view of strengthening the internal capacities of CSOs, specifically at local level. Civil society continues to be mainstreamed into the overall EU support to the country. In particular, the action should be coordinated with and capitalise on an DG ECHO-funded action focused on improving coordination and overall capacities of civil society organisations in the country.

Following the full-scale Russian war of aggression against **Ukraine**, the challenges faced by the country and its civil society are unprecedented. With over 20% of its territory occupied, Ukraine is going through a sharp

¹⁵ Joint Communication: "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all" - [JOIN\(2020\) 7 final](#)

¹⁶ European Council meeting (23 and 24 June 2022) – Conclusions (EUCO 24/22) - <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/57442/2022-06-2324-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>

¹⁷ Communication from the Commission: Commission Opinion on the Republic of Moldova’s application for membership of the European Union - https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/opinion-moldovas-application-membership-european-union_en

economic decline, massive internal displacement and external migration including forced displacement as well as numerous war-related human rights violations committed by Russia on Ukraine's territory. Civil society actors were quick to react and demonstrated impressive strength and unity in combatting these challenges along with many initiatives aimed at supporting the Ukrainian population and the armed forces. The initial responses to immediate war-related challenges are gradually complemented by the medium-term and even long-term initiatives, dealing with communities' resilience, employment, mental health and first reconstruction efforts. Civil society – including among the internally displaced and as refugees abroad - continues to play an important role as a reform watchdog and government advisory on the principles and priorities of recovery and reconstruction, on which it is actively involved since the Lugano conference in July 2022. The relevance of the role of civil society has been further strengthened when the EU recognised Ukraine's European perspective and granted it the status of EU candidate country in June 2022.

In **Russia**, an already challenging context for independent voices has been further aggravated by the onset of the war of aggression against Ukraine: human rights situation on the ground continues to deteriorate, ongoing political repression, 20500 Russian citizens detained throughout the country at anti-war protests, 132 arrested for displaying anti-war symbols and 157 arrested for posting anti-war publications on the Internet. The forcible mobilization of citizens has generated widespread protests resulting in a new exodus of Russian citizens fleeing the country. Around a million Russian citizens have fled since the start of the war, including prominent human rights defenders, journalists and activists. New repressive legislation has been enacted which directly impact freedom of association and expression, many local and international NGOs were shut down or forced to liquidate, including the oldest and very reputable human rights organization *Memorial* and the Sakharov Center, turning Russia away from aspiring towards truth and justice.

The systematic crackdown and censorship against independent media has reached an unprecedented level. In particular, the law “on responsibility for fakes about the Russian forces” adopted by the Russian parliament on 4 March 2022 forced many independent media to cease their activities in the country. Among several media outlets, independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* was forced to suspend its publication in Russia. The independent media outlet *Meduza* has been declared undesirable, making it impossible for Russian citizen to access and share any of its content without risking criminal persecution.

Further to the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU has terminated all forms of engagement with Russian public bodies, including the Russian participation in Cross Border Cooperation and Northern Dimension programs; the EU responded to subsequent escalation and war crimes with its 9th package of hard-hitting sanctions, targeting 1386 persons and 171 entities targeted by sectoral measures as well as import and export restrictions on key economic sectors. At the same time, the support for civil society initiatives and people-to-people contacts continues. Through regional and bilateral contracts, the EU continues to support civil society organisations and independent media, including Russian journalists in-country and in exile.

The EU is currently the lead donor for Russian human rights and civil society projects. Most donors have left the country or have very limited allocations and the EU support has been crucial for enabling Russian civil society organisations and human rights defenders to continue their work.

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

The populations and local communities of the EaP countries and Russia will be the final beneficiaries of the intervention. As rights-holders, they are considered as active stakeholders, whose active participation in policy formulation and decision-making is supported and promoted through dedicated activities of this action. Pro-democratic civil society organisations, social partners, local grassroots initiatives and independent media that are serving the various needs of their communities are targeted by the action.

As part of the Commission's new strategic approach to supporting civil society in the Eastern Partnership, in December 2019, the Commission established strategic partnerships with seven selected civil society

organisations with recognised knowledge, local political awareness and experience in supporting civil society in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood region through the signature of Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA)¹⁸. Through their actions especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, the crisis in Belarus or the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, these partnerships have already contributed to increased outreach and financial support to new civic actors and to grass-root communities. In parallel to these regional agreements, the Ukraine Delegation established five strategic partnerships with similar objectives, which have equally proven a suitable vehicle for more strategic engagement with key partner organisations on a national level. In addition to framework partners' role of channelling effectively support to local CSOs also in difficult environments where space for independent civil society actors is shrinking, these strategic partners are also engaged in policy dialogue and provide first-hand analysis of the developments in civic space across the region. A selection procedure to identify new strategic partners for the next 4-year period 2024-27 is being organised in 2023.

The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) was established with the political support from EU Member States in December 2011 by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) and commenced full operations in July 2013. It offers dedicated, rapid, flexible and complementary support to pro-democracy actors in environments which present a significant level of operational or political risk. It also facilitates platforms for pro-democracy actors (especially EED grantees) in Brussels and other key capitals to enable the sharing of experiences and insights, the development of advocacy skills, and the provision of input to the Brussels and European based policy-making process. The demand-driven support continues to be high every year.

At regional level, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is the entity that provides CSOs a vehicle to push their agenda onto the regional debates in the framework of the EaP. At the country level, the EU works closely with the Forum's National Platforms to promote democratic reforms and dialogue with state authorities.

All major civil society donors are present in the region, including implementing agencies of EU Member States. The past years have seen some fluctuations in the level and type of their involvement that have had an impact also on the demand for civil society support from the European Union. Civil society organisations have stressed the need for EU support to be better adjusted to the needs of new emerging civil society actors, such as social movements and informal groups and that funding should be mobilised faster and be more aligned to local policy agendas rather than the EU priorities. CSOs have also been reiterating the need for long-term core funding rather than short-term project-based funds.

Necessary synergies will be ensured with regards to other EU-funded regional and bilateral actions already ongoing under the previous phases of this programme and beyond (such as EU4Youth, EU4Gender and EU4Dialogue). Due attention will be given to ensure the complementarity with the activities implemented under the Special Measures for Belarus and the emergency assistance responding to the needs of civil society and media affected by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Complementarity will also be ensured with the actions of thematic programmes for civil society and democracy and human rights under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE). Activities will be aligned with the EU Civil Society Roadmaps for each partner country 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.

Synergies will also be made with the EU4Gender Equality program, which supports and mobilises women's rights and other civil society actors to shift societal perception and gender norms in the Eastern Partnership Countries. This program also build the capacity of civil society actors (the CSO Academy) to advocate and support the governments in the development and implementation of gender policies and implementation processes.

¹⁸ More information on the strategic civil society framework partners: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/fpa_infographics.pdf

1.6. Lessons Learned

This new Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies is designed to reflect the achievements and lessons learnt of the previous phases of the facility, which covered the period since 2019. For the purpose of collecting an inventory of the key lessons learnt to date and lay the ground for the new action, a forward-looking reflection meeting took place in January 2023, involving the regional team, EUD civil society focal points and framework partners.

This internal reflection concluded that combining regional and bilateral activities into a multiannual single action under the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility has brought a higher degree of coherence and predictability to the EU support to civil society in the region. At the same time, it is important that the future activities, notably on capacity building, are designed sufficiently flexible allowing to take into account different and constantly changing country contexts. Support of a wide range of policies is needed including on various reform processes, reconstruction, oversight, energy security, ongoing conflicts, poverty reduction and preventing destabilising factors in the regions and should engage more actively women's and youth organisations and local communities. The need to recalibrate the visibility and communication dimension of the EU support has been noted.

Financial support to third parties remains a key tool to increase outreach to a variety of civic actors. In order to allow a sustainable development of young and emerging actors and a re-focusing to original mandates of more established organisations, longer core support is desirable. Flexibility in the re-granting process, including through the use of output-based contracts is needed to enable small and new actors to focus on their mandates.

The action will continue to contribute to the more strategic approach to finance and engage with civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries. The EU established strategic partnerships with civil society organisations with sound local knowledge and capacity to channel funds in increasingly difficult and volatile environments. It has helped to increase outreach and support to smaller, local grassroots organisations, that operate in local languages, to independent media, as well as to human rights defenders and do it with a higher degree of awareness of the country context. Financial support to third parties has proved to allow quicker and more flexible outreach to CSOs that are not able to directly apply for the EU funding and that third party support made available by CSOs for CSOs tends to be more tailored to their needs. A mid-term review of the Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) commissioned in the end of 2021 confirmed that they have been particularly relevant to ensure a rapid and effective response to the needs of civil society in the EaP region, particularly in support of the most vulnerable groups during the Covid-19 pandemic; this was confirmed again following the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The instrument allowed Partners to mobilise quickly, accelerate the implementation, and the small grants proved a lifeline for small CSOs which would otherwise have failed. Grants were provided under the FPAs to fill urgent gaps and output-based contracts helped reduce the burden on grantees and added flexibility. The review found that overall, 80% of support went to entirely new CSOs and there was a strong multiplier effect and cascade of benefits facilitated by digitalisation and social media. A distinct advantage over other grant schemes is the ability that Framework Partners (FPs) had to develop close relationships with beneficiaries over an extended period in a project context where they could provide capacity building in the form of mentoring and other support. FPs have been benefiting from a close relation with the EU and were able to build a strong network among each other. The relationships can be further developed with scope for the FPs for further initiative in setting the agenda, identifying future needs on which a pipeline can be based and responsibility for 'self-management' of systematic coordination. FPs have the potential to be transformational rather than only transactional and that role is desired also by themselves.

The Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) proved to be extremely efficient for responding to swiftly and flexibly to unexpected changes provoked by the COVID pandemic and other unfolding crises. The low value short-term grants provided through the instrument were crucial in providing CSO support to vulnerable groups, empower women, promote a shift to distance learning, disseminate accurate information, and fight disinformation about the crisis. The review of the RRM carried out in December 2019 as part of the EU-funded project “Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility – Regional Actions” also confirmed that the RRM is effective and efficient, and that it has added value in responding to unexpected needs in the short term. The demand for RRM support during 2022 was lower than usual due to significant re-purposing exercises of existing and new assistance to civil society after the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine under flexible crisis declaration rules. With further developments in the volatile political and geopolitical situation across the wider EaP countries it will remain important to provide the opportunity for civil society organisation to react to unforeseen situations.

The 2020 external evaluation¹⁹ of EED aimed to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the democracy support provided by EED. Against the backdrop of democratic backsliding, the evaluation found that EED has filled gaps in democracy support left by more traditional donors, strengthened the readiness of pro-democracy actors to contribute to locally led and locally shaped political and civic process in line with ambitions and reasonable expectations, and contributed to the sustainability of pro-democracy actors. At the same time, a number of lessons learnt have been drawn and will have to be taken into account by EED in order to strengthen its grant-making mechanism. Those lessons include, for instance, choosing grantees that mix more political activities with pure grassroots civic activism, as well as supporting a wide variety of media, including media that is not traditional and not news-oriented, and capable of conducting primary analysis and communicating in an informal way.

¹⁹ Commissioned by EED and conducted for EED.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

2.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective (Impact)** of this action is: to contribute to inclusive, resilient and democratic societies in the Eastern Partnership region.

The **Specific Objective (Outcome) 1** of this action is: Civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations, are actively participating and contributing to European and national policy dialogue (reforms, accountability and socio-economic recovery).

The **Specific Objective (Outcome) 2** of this action is: Civic actors are engaged in pro-democracy, pro-gender equality and human rights activism.

The **Output (Result) 1** to be delivered by this action contributing to the Specific Objective (Outcome) 1 is: The operational capacities and financial resources of local CSOs are enhanced in line with their mandate.

The **Output (Result) 2.1** to be delivered by this action contributing to the Specific Objective (Outcome) 2 is: Civic actors' capacities to engage in pro-democracy, pro-gender equality and human rights are enhanced.

The **Output (Result) 2.2** to be delivered by this action contributing to the Specific Objective (Outcome) 2 is: Civic resilience: The capacity of CSOs to sustain democratic progress and withstand shocks, including regarding shrinking civic space, is strengthened.

2.2. Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1:

Activity 1.1: Develop country-specific capacity development programmes in the Eastern Partnership countries

(activity contributing also to Outputs 2.1 and 2.2)

In line with the respective country's Roadmap for EU Engagement with Civil Society, country-specific capacity building activities in this area may include:

1.1.1 - ARMENIA:

Activities may include capacity building of civil society actors including youth, women's rights and gender equality activists, disability movements, and those engaged in key topics such as poverty reduction, democratisation, accountability and transparency, access to basic services and digital rights as well as the fight against climate change and green transition. Activities may also support the reduction of societal polarisation, disinformation, hate speech and support reconciliation and wider conflict mitigating activities. In line with the Civil Society Roadmap 2021-2027 and the recommendations of the CSO Meter reports on Armenia, further support could be provided for the development and strengthening of civil society.

1.1.2 - AZERBAIJAN:

Activities may include capacity building and financial support to civil society organisations in sectors that are relevant for EU Azerbaijan cooperation. It may also include support to the full implementation of the social entrepreneurship legislation through actions such as technical assistance, advocacy campaigns and capacity building. Financial support to social entrepreneurship initiatives, including women and youth entrepreneurs, may be provided.

1.1.3 - GEORGIA:

Activities may include support for increasing CSO capacities for EU integration-related policy dialogue and monitoring; resilience-building, including through greater economic independence through diversification of earnings; increased digitalisation of the civil society sector; civic engagement in the (breakaway) regions, including for rights of ethnic and religious minorities and other vulnerable populations, support to independent media and a more favourable ecosystem for social entrepreneurship as well as advocacy of and monitoring for environmental rights and green transition.

1.1.4 - MOLDOVA:

Strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations in promoting an inclusive and open dialogue linked to the EU candidate country status. Support enhancing the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes at all levels.

1.1.5 - UKRAINE:

Activities may include capacity building for the next generation of emerging leaders, who commenced to take on these roles in times of war (in particular women) and support to CSOs as engines for flexible employment and life-long learning, related to immense changes in the labour-force structure of Ukraine during and after the war, taking into account the role of internally displaced persons and refugees as well as the need for return and rebuilding the country after the war.

Also, support may be provided to recovery planning at national and local level and for reform-oriented progress regarding Ukraine's EU accession process.

Culture, human, sustainable and local development may be included as instruments of national recovery and societal cohesion.

Where appropriate, EU Delegations may use the framework partnership agreements with the international CSOs described above for their bilateral programmes related to capacity-development and financial support to third parties.

Activity 1.2: Regional technical assistance to build capacities of CSOs in the Eastern Partnership is provided

(activity contributing also to Outputs 2.1 and 2.2)

Building on the established support mechanism, this activity seeks to continue the provision of tailored support to EU services and civic actors.

- Developing, running or facilitating specific regional trainings for civil society organisations and/or their representatives; maintaining and updating existing e-learning courses. Providing tailored coaching to civic actors;
- Supporting civic tech initiatives across the region, to serve development of local initiatives, including through organising regional hackathons on new tools for e-participation and engagement.
- Supporting the next generation of civil society leaders; selecting and building capacities of young female and male leaders who have shown leadership potential in civil society through the Civil Society Fellowships; maintaining the alumni network of the Civil Society Fellows;
- Providing ad-hoc support in response to requests for tailored capacity building from specific civic organisations and actors, including through organisation of events and support for participation of civil society representatives to selected events;
- Elaborating studies, civil society mappings (and updates), surveys and other types of exploratory gender disaggregated and sensitive research on civil society issues across the region;
- Running a help-desk to provide ad-hoc support to Delegations in preparation of calls for proposals, communication events or other engagement with civil society.

Activity 1.3: The functioning of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and its National Platforms as an independent actor is supported

This activity envisages the continuation of support for the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, the main objective of which is to engage in structured dialogue with the EU on policies carried out at regional level. With a regional setup and corresponding National Platforms, it is a self-organised body of civil society from the six EaP countries and the EU that needs further support to reflect changes in the EaP into its own structure.

Activities related to Output 2.1:

Activity 2.1.1: EU strategic civil society framework partners to step up capacity development at regional level is mobilised

(activity contributing also to Outputs 1 and 2.2)

The strategic partners will be mobilised for:

- Providing financial support to third parties (local active CSOs), design and test new methods (financing tools) to fund CSOs and work towards improving their financial sustainability;
- Pursuing capacity development programmes focused on the needs of local CSOs' and communities;
- Supporting CSOs in activities related to outreach and inclusive citizen and community engagement, thematic policy dialogue including women's and youth organisations.
- Supporting CSOs in activities related to potential crisis or urgencies appearing in the region

Activity 2.1.2: Support to the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) to continue promoting civic engagement and pro-democracy activism in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood

(activity contributing also to Outputs 1 and 2.2)

Given numerous adverse effects on civil society and people as well as worrying pushbacks on democracy, gender equality and civic space, this activity is particularly designed to respond to the needs of local communities.

Through this activity, the following results will be pursued:

- Providing flexible, demand driven support to CSOs, media, local actors and grassroots activism, civic initiatives and other forms of citizens' self-organisation to enable them to drive the pro-democracy and reform agenda;
- Providing critical and emergency support to civil society and media, that enables them to financially and operationally sustain despite the long-lasting impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, other violent conflicts, political crises and repression;
- Identifying and enabling new critical actors, emerging civic movements and leaders, especially women, identified to play a meaningful role in democratic transformation;
- Pursuing capacity development activities to help local civil society and media to better adapt to changing country-contexts, realise transformational ideas and become better communicators of their work.

Activities related to Output 2.2:

Activity 2.2.1: Initiatives supported by the Rapid Response Mechanism

This activity earmarks funds for the continuation of the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), which allows CSOs to respond swiftly and flexibly to unexpected changes in the political or policy environment in the Eastern Partnership and Russia. Such changes may relate to all policy areas under the EaP priorities or to sudden restrictions on civil society space. Support can be provided in order to pursue an important policy issue in all EaP priority areas, to increase public awareness, contribute effectively to public debates on critical governance issues, and scale up targeted emergency capacity efforts.

The support is offered in the form of low value grants (up to 60,000 EUR) to selected CSOs, through direct award and on an ad hoc basis. The tool can be also used in cases where programming of other support through the bilateral envelope of the NDICI or the publication of a call for proposals would be inadequate to ensure quick reaction.

With the aim to support pro-democratic movements, the Commission decides to extend the eligibility of this action to the Russian Federation's pro-democratic civil society, in particular activities 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.2.1.

2.3. Mainstreaming

Mapping studies and analyses of sectors in which civil society organisations are active indicate that on average about 70% of CSOs in the Eastern Neighbourhood work on issues related to human rights, gender equality and environment. The intervention logic of this action will support civil society organisations develop according to their own vision, mission and mandates, as long as respect for fundamental EU values is ensured. For this reason, country-specific objectives have been identified, however no particular themes have been identified as priorities for this intervention. In general, actions will pursue to support commitments made by the EU in its Gender Action Plan (GAP) III and the European Green Deal. Actions under the programme shall ensure the involvement of CSOs working on gender equality, and be implemented in a way that maximises their contribution to women and girls' human rights, participation and economic empowerment. Actions will further be responsive to factors such as age, vulnerability and conflict-affectedness, and shall contribute to a balanced representation of women and men in all activities, including from minority communities.

The action contributes directly to achieving the 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".

The Action will offer digital alternative to the beneficiaries when this is considered relevant and possible, to reduce its carbon footprint. When face-to-face activities are planned, the implementing partner will be instructed to consider opting for eco-friendly suppliers and supplies, as well as using other means of reducing carbon footprint e.g. use of trains instead of planes, no printing, using tap water etc. More specifically, the implementing partner will be instructed to comply with the Green Public Procurement principles understood as a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured.

The programme will also contribute towards SDG 5, “Achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls”, through support to women’s rights and other organisations promoting gender equality

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).

Outcome of the Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project).

The CRA screening concluded that this action is no or low risk (no need for further assessment).

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 improving gender equality is a significant objective. Gender equality is a core value for the European Union. Through the EU's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III), the EU has made strong commitments to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls and push for more and faster progress toward gender equality in the partner countries, including increasing the level of women participation, representation and leadership in politics and governance, addressing gender based violence, promoting women’s economic participation, via support for democracy and governance programmes and public administration reforms.

This action 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 GAP III. The activities described in this action will seek to contribute to raising awareness and safeguarding gains made on gender equality.

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 Plan²⁰ 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 D0. This implies that the action has no significant objective in inclusion of persons with disabilities. This action will, to the extent

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/european-democracy-action-plan_en

possible, seek to contribute to raising awareness and safeguarding gains made on inclusion of persons with disabilities

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine grossly violates international law and the principles of the UN Charter and undermines European and global security and stability. As a result of the involvement of Belarus recognised in the European Council Conclusions of February 2022, the EU is further suspending planned and ongoing programmes and activities with the participation of Belarusian public authorities and state-owned enterprises. The EU will continue to step up its support to Belarusian civil society. The ongoing Russian war of aggression seriously affects the situation of human rights in Ukraine and the possible implementation of this programme. The EU and its Member States are committed to provide support for the reconstruction of a democratic Ukraine.

Unresolved conflicts continue to hamper development in the region and have already caused numerous casualties, damages and displacement of the local population. In this regard, the action takes into account, in line with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, the conflict sensitivity and reconciliation efforts in the Eastern Partnership 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, IDPs, 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 active role 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.

2.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
External environment	Climate for dialogue, environment for public participation and civic activities further deteriorates in the wider Eastern neighbourhood	M	M	Engage with state actors, local authorities and CSOs to re-build trust and promote dialogue. Flexible support to civic actors is made available.
External environment	Security situation in the region is an obstacle to the implementation of the actions	M	H	Adoption of a flexible approach to programme activities, allowing for adequate adjustments in cases of disruptive external factors.
People and the organisation	Insufficient amount of qualitative proposals for financial support to third parties.	M	M	Guidelines for financial support to third parties must be formulated in an accommodating manner; Local languages (as far as possible and economically justifiable) to be used in the application process.
External environment	Insufficient number of interested entities willing and able to implement the programme in Belarus.	M	M	Possibility to include local organisations as co-applicant.

External Assumptions

- No further deterioration of the security situation due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;
- EaP partner countries remain committed to implement the post-2020 agenda (with its five policy objectives and focus on Resilience, Recovery, and Reforms).²¹

²¹ Regarding Belarus, please see footnote 1

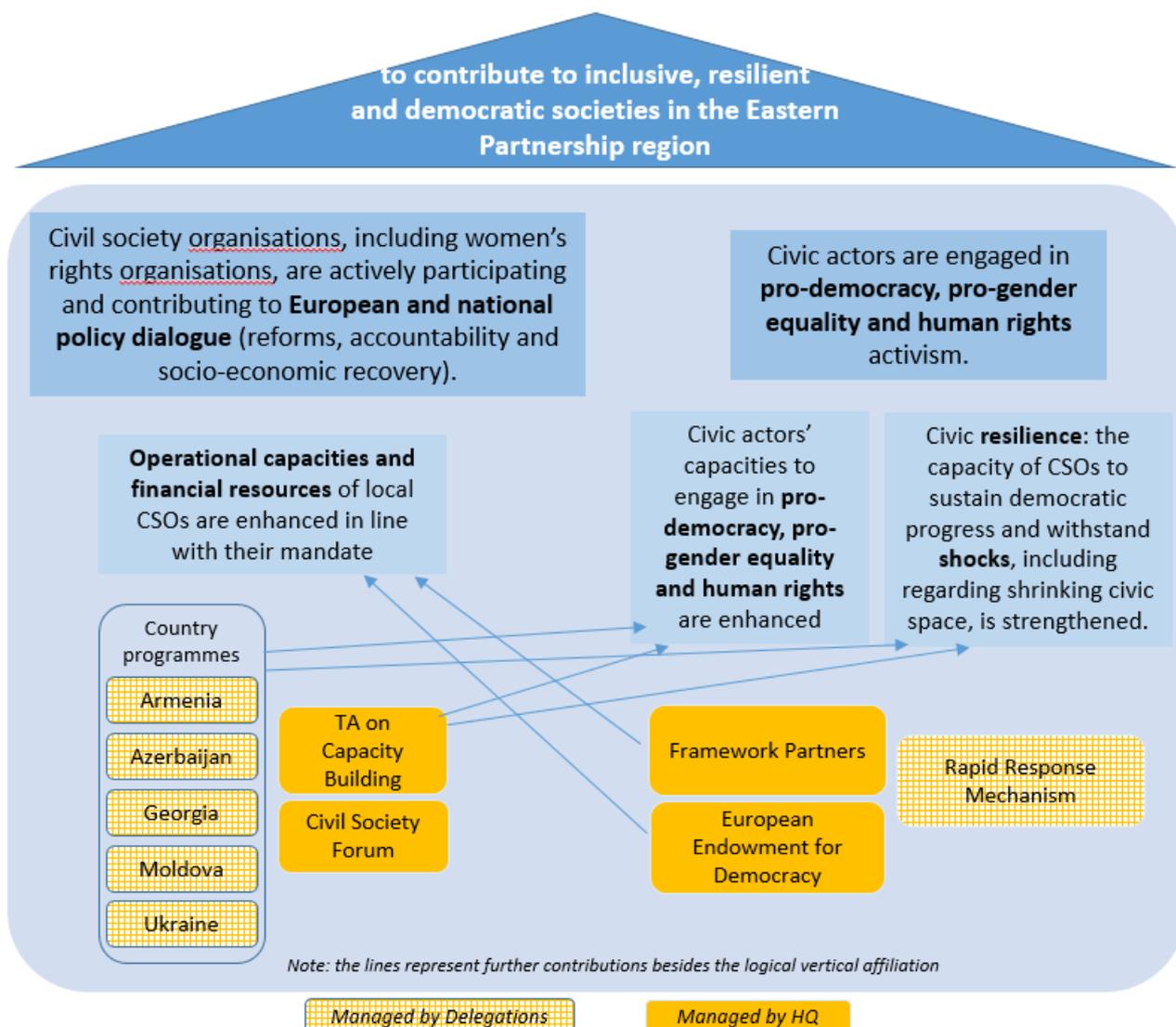
2.5. Intervention Logic

The underlying **intervention logic** for this action is that, against the backdrop of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and increased political instability across the countries, the proposed action aims to bring higher coherence and predictability of support to civil society by pooling regional and bilateral activities under the Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility into a multiannual single action. This reflects the results-oriented agendas of the Eastern Partnership that link civil society support with better governance, with a specific focus on advancing active citizenship, accountability and socio-economic reforms. All in line with the EaP post-2020 agenda

The objectives that the action pursues focus on capitalising and sustaining the efforts and investment that the EU has been making in advancing the role of civil society since the Facility was established (2011). Therefore, on the one hand, it aims to maintain successful interventions that are critical to EU's infrastructure of support to civil society across the region, on three priority lines: policy dialogue, human rights activism and civic resilience.

Overall, the action is giving a comprehensive response to country-specific needs and general expectations to support civil society in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood region, strengthening their resilience and contributing to reform and reconstruction.

The visualisation of the intervention logic below indicates how the proposed implementation modalities relate to the different activities.



Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies for 2023-2024

2.6. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To contribute to inclusive, resilient and democratic societies in the Eastern Partnership region	‘Voice and Accountability’ score, World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicator	2021 country percentile ranks: Armenia 48 Azerbaijan 7 Belarus 6 Georgia 47 Moldova 48 Ukraine 49	2021 country percentile ranks of all 6 EaP countries improved	‘Voice and Accountability’ Worldwide Governance Indicator of the World Bank ²²	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Civil society organisations, including women’s rights organisations, are actively participating and contributing to European and national policy dialogue (reforms, accountability and socio-economic recovery)	1.1: ‘Right to Participation in Decision-Making’ (Legislation & Practice) 1.2: Number of government policies developed or revised with CSO participation through EU support 1.3: Number of CSOs representatives, participating in multi-stakeholder dialogues at global and regional level with the support of the EU-fund <i>disaggregated by types of CSOs (women’s rights/others) when possible</i>	1.1: 2021 country score: AM 4.8 AZ 4.6 BY 2.7 GE 4.8 MD 4.7 UA 5.3 1.2: 0 1.3: 0	1.1: 2024 country score: AM 5.2 AZ 5.0 BY 2.9 GE 5.2 MD 5.1 UA 5.8 1.2: 50 1.3: total 50, of which 10 women’s rights	1.1: CSO Meter score on ‘Right to Participation in Decision-Making’ ²³ 1.2: Projects data 1.3: Projects data	

²² '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 2022 Interactive > Interactive Data Access \(worldbank.org\)](#)

²³ The CSO Meter consists of a set of standards and indicators in 11 different areas (one of them being 'Right to Participation in Decision-Making') to measure both law and practice when monitoring the environment in which CSOs operate in the Eastern Partnership countries: <https://ecnl.org/cso-meter>

Outcome 2	Civic actors are engaged in pro-democracy, pro-gender equality and human rights activism	2.1: Number of CSOs reports presented to local and national public authorities, regional and international human rights bodies per year <i>disaggregated by types of CSOs (women's rights/others) when possible</i>	2023: 0	2027: 200, of which 10 women's rights	Projects data	
Output 1 related to Outcome 1	Operational capacities and financial resources of local CSOs are enhanced in line with their mandate	1.1.1: Number of CSOs in the EaP receiving EU support through grants or Financial Support to Third Parties to strengthen their capacities (during the implementation of this action) <i>disaggregated by types of CSOs (women's rights/others) when possible</i>	2023: 2011	2024: 2250 -of which 10 women's rights (in 2023-2024). 2027: 3000 of which 25 women's rights (in 2023-2027)	Dedicated tool for monitoring CSO assistance in the EaP (TAMIS) ²⁴	
Output 2.1 related to Outcome 2	Civic actors' capacities to engage in pro-democracy, pro-gender equality and human rights are enhanced	2.2.1: Number of capacity development initiatives funded under the Intervention that improve capacities of civic actors <i>disaggregated by type of actor (women's rights/others) when possible</i>	2023: 0	2027: 200, of which 10 women's rights	Project data	
Output 2.2 related to Outcome 2	Civic resilience: the capacity of CSOs to sustain democratic progress and withstand shocks,	2.2.2: Number of grants awarded in EaP EU Delegations under the "Rapid Response Mechanism"	2022: 20 2021: 4	2024: 24	European Commission internal data	

	including regarding shrinking civic space, is strengthened.	<i>disaggregated by types of CSOs (women's rights/others) recipients of the grants, when possible</i>		-of which 4, women's rights		
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²⁴ TAMIS (Technical Assistance Monitoring Information System) is an online database launched in 2020 in the framework of the service contract "Technical Assistance on Impact Monitoring of EU Civil Society Support in Eastern Partnership Countries" (2018/403-246).

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

3.1. Financing Agreement

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

3.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3.1 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 in duly justified cases.

3.3. 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 measures²⁵.

3.3.1. Direct Management (Grants)

3.3.1.1. Grants (Country specific and regional capacity development)

a) Purpose of the grant(s)

To achieve Output 1, 2.1 and 2.2 and implement Activities 1.1. and 2.1.1 grants 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. The country-specific actions will be designed in line with the respective country's Roadmap for EU Engagement with Civil Society, and will focus on one or more of the following priorities:

- support the application of financing tools to fund CSOs and work towards improving CSOs' financial sustainability;
- adjust capacity development programmes to the needs of local CSOs' and communities;
- support CSOs in their agenda for outreach and engagement with citizens and communities in an inclusive manner;
- support the development of professional not-for-profit management and strengthen internal control and governance;
- promote self-governance standards;
- advance regional and thematic policy dialogue between civil society and relevant stakeholders, ensuring the involvement of a wide variety of CSOs, including women's organisations;

²⁵ [EU Sanctions Map](#). Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

- support the elaboration of country-specific studies and events (mobilisation of country-specific expertise mandatory), monitoring and evaluation.

Grants will be awarded in order to:

- conduct activities to strengthen capacity of CSOs to participate in the democratisation process in the Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation, to participate in the reform and recovery processes in the Eastern Partnership countries and to become better communicators of their work;
- provide financial support to third parties and contribute to the financial sustainability of local CSOs;
- conduct coaching and mentoring support in the implementation of project funding received, coupled with organisational development support to the organisations' own strategies and ambitions;
- coordinate appropriately with EU Delegations and relevant donors on the implementation and monitoring of supported initiatives.

b) Type of applicants targeted

For the regional capacity development programme (Activity 2.1.1), potential applicants for the grants will be organisations that have signed a framework partnership agreement with the EU.

For the country-specific capacity development programmes (Activity 1.1.1), potential applicants for the grants will be:

- organisations that are current framework partners with the EU following a new selection procedure for Framework Partners planned to be launched in 2023 by DG NEAR unit C.2, 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

3.3.1.2. Grant (Secretariat of the Civil Society Forum Secretariat)

(a) Purpose of the grant

To achieve Output 1 and implement Activity 1.3 a grant will be awarded to the Secretariat of the Civil Society Forum, aiming at engaging in structured dialogue with the EU on policies carried out at regional level within the Eastern Partnership architecture and increasing impact on policy change of civil society-led advocacy in sectors covered by the Eastern Partnership deliverables.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The target organisation for this grant is the secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, which is a self-organised body of civil society from the six EaP countries and the EU. Its main objective is to engage in structured dialogue with the EU on issues related to policies carried out at regional level. It has been operational since 2009, and received EU funding since 2011 to carry out regional dialogue. Eastern Partnership National Platforms engage in national level policy dialogue in each of the EaP countries.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to the Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

This recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals pursuant to Article 195(f) of the Financial Regulation is justified because the Civil Society Forum's (with its regional setup and National Platforms) of technical competence and its high degree of specialisation as the only umbrella organisation for civil society organisations from all six Eastern Partnership countries. It has a unique role in the region: it represents civil society as a policy dialogue partner in the political framework of the EaP; it is part of the EaP architecture. Its organisation mirrors to a large extent the areas of engagement of the EaP. It presents a self-styled governance model under the leadership of its elected Steering Committee. It needs continuous support to develop its strategic vision, streamline its organisational processes to reflect the changes in the EaP into its own structure also with regard to the EU membership aspirations of three of their members, and to develop its own theory of change strategy. The Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is the organisation set up to ensure technical and administrative support for the functioning of the Forum and will receive and administer this grant.

3.3.1.3. Grant (European Endowment for Democracy)

(a) Purpose of the grant

To achieve Output 2.1 and implement Activity 2.1.2, a grant will be awarded to the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), aiming to promote civic engagement and support pro-democracy actors in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The target organisation to implement this activity is EED, which operates primarily as a grant-awarding organisation located in Belgium and established in 2013 through a decision of the Council of the European Union to foster and encourage deep and sustainable democracy. EED is steered by the Board of Governors, that consists of representatives of the 27 EU member states, UK, Norway, the European External Action Service, a representative designated by the European Commission, nine Members of the European Parliament, and three members elected to represent European civil society. The Board of Governors has an oversight over EED's activities and ensure consistency with EU policies.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified due to the EED's technical competence or administrative power, in accordance with Art 195(f) of the 2018 Financial Regulation, as the EED has a high degree of specialisation, strong proven operational experience in countries where the space for civil society is shrinking due to administrative, legal, social, and political barriers. Such restricted environments require a body with appropriate competence, mandate and strong local awareness, which allows ensuring security of beneficiaries. EED operates in the Eastern Neighbourhood since its establishment in 2013 and has acquired necessary capacity to manage a demand-driven support.

3.3.1.4. Grants: direct awards under the Rapid Response Mechanism

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

To achieve Output 2.2 and implement Activity 2.2.1, grants and low-value grants will be awarded to CSOs to allow them to respond swiftly and flexibly to unexpected changes in the policy and political environment in the Eastern Partnership and the Russian Federation, including sudden restrictions of civil society space.

This activity earmarks funds for a continuation of the rapid response mechanism support provided under previous Civil Society Facilities to CSOs through the direct award of small grants. It is expected that 20-30 grants will be awarded. The grant contracts will be managed by the respective Delegations (or exceptionally by HQ where this would be justified by the politically sensitive context).

(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 Partnership countries, with a track record on policy work aimed at EU policy in the Eastern Partnership.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Grants will be awarded without a call for proposals to CSOs which will be selected on grounds of their specific degree of technical competencies in the field of civil society support or their high degree of specialisation in the specific area of civil society activities at stake. The policy and implementation context for civil society measures in the Eastern Partnership shows an ever decreasing space for active involvement and participation of CSOs which limits support measures to a limited, highly specialised and significantly competent beneficiaries in the country or region specific context in order to respond to immediate and ad-hoc needs arising from sudden changes in their environment. The recourse to such a direct award will be subject to fulfilling the conditions defined in Article 195 of the 2018 Financial Regulation and will be considered on a case-by-case basis in the light of these requirements. It is expected that Article 195(f) applies as grant activities under this Rapid Response Mechanism will include specific characteristics that require a particular technical competence and an organisation with a high degree of specialisation, on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals. The guidelines and working methodology of the Rapid Response Mechanism

3.3.2. Direct Management (Procurement)

The procurement will contribute to achieving Outcome 1: Civil Society Organisations, including women's rights and youth organisations, are actively participating and contributing to European and national policy dialogue (reforms, accountability and socio-economic recovery) and Activity 1.2. Regional technical assistance to build capacities of CSOs in the Eastern Partnership.

3.3.3. Changes from indirect to direct management (and vice versa) mode due to exceptional circumstances

If the implementation modality under direct management as defined in section 4.3.1 (grants) or 4.3.2 (procurements) cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission, the modality of implementation by indirect management with a pillar-assessed entity would be used following these criteria:

- Proven experience, significant technical competence and high degree of specialisation in implementing support to civil society in the wider Eastern Partnership region;
- Proven and positive track record in providing capacity development and financial support to civil society organisations in sensitive environments;
- Positively pillar assessed for grants and procurement.

The objective of the indirect management shall contribute to achieving the objectives as identified in chapter 3 of this document.

3.4. 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).

Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1.2			
Outcome 2 (Civic actors are engaged in pro-democracy, pro-gender equality and human rights activism) composed of:			
Activity 2.1.1: Mobilise EU strategic civil society framework partners to step up capacity development at regional level Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.1	5 000 000 (REG)	5 000 000 (REG)	1 000 000
Activity 2.1.2: Support to the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) to continue promoting civic engagement and pro-democracy activism in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1.3		2 800 000 (REG)	
Activity 2.2.1: The Rapid Response Mechanism supports critical initiatives Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1.4	1 000 000 (REG)	1 000 000(REG)	200 000
Grants – total envelope under section 4.3.1	19 000 000	29 300 000	4 100 000
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.3.2		3 700 000	
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision		
Totals	19 000 000	33 000 000	4 100 000

3.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

Each of the components of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility 2023-2024 will have their own internal governance structure. All standalone projects, except those set up under the Rapid Response Mechanism, will have a regular steering committee, where the projects' implementation and achieved results will be discussed. Such steering committees will involve representatives of the European Commission services, the European External Action Service, the EU Delegations, implementing partners and other stakeholders as appropriate. For the Activity 2, steering committees will be organised at the national level, whereas for other activities, that have a multi-country scope, project steering will be arranged at the regional level.

As regards the Rapid Response Mechanism, working arrangements within the EU have been developed in the previous phase and will be followed in order to guide the decision-making process.

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.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

4.1. Monitoring and Reporting

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

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

4.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a mid-term evaluation will be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

Such evaluation will be combined with a final evaluation of the Civil Society Facility 2019-2020 (2019/041-741; 2020/041-742) and 2021-2022 (2021/043-010; 2022/043-011).

It will be carried out for learning purposes, in particular with respect to further draw lessons that could build into the design of a potential future phase (Civil Society Facility 2025-2026) to be drafted around late 2024 and early 2025.

The Commission shall form a Reference Group (RG) composed by representatives from the main stakeholders at both EU and national (representatives from the government, from civil society organisations (private sector, NGOs, etc.), etc.) levels. If deemed necessary, other donors will be invited to join. The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 30 days in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation exercise

and missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country 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 country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract.

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

4.3. 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.

5. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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

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

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

A Primary intervention²⁶ (project/programme) is a coherent set of results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

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

Primary Interventions are identified during the design of each action by the responsible service (Delegation or Headquarters operational Unit).
 The level of the Primary Intervention chosen can be modified (directly in OPSYS) and the modification does not constitute an amendment of the action document.
 Please tick in the left side column one of the four possible options for the level of the Primary Intervention(s). In the case of ‘Group of actions’ level, add references to the present action and other action(s) concerning the same Primary Intervention.
 In the case of ‘Contract level’ and ‘Group of contracts’, add the reference(s) to the corresponding budgetary items in point 4.5, Indicative Budget.

The present Action identifies as <delete the options that are not applicable to the Action>;

Action level (i.e. Budget support, Blending)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
Group of actions level (i.e: i) top-up cases, ii) second, third, etc. phases of a programme)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSY#): <Present action> <Other actions>
Contract level (i.e. Grants, Contribution Agreements, any case in which foreseen individual legal commitments identified in the budget will have different log frames, even if part of the same Action Document)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract)>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 2	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract)>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 3	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract)>
	(...)	
Group of contracts level (i.e: i) series of programme estimates, ii) cases in which an Action Document foresees many foreseen individual legal commitments (for instance four contracts and one of them being		

²⁶ For the purpose of consistency between terms in OPSYS, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI have harmonised 5 key terms, including ‘Action’ and ‘Intervention’ where an ‘Action’ is the content (or part of the content) of a Commission financing Decision and ‘Intervention’ is a coherent set of activities and results which constitutes an effective level for the operational follow-up by the EC of its operations on the ground. See more on the [concept of intervention](#). *[to access the link an EU Login is needed]*

a Technical Assistance) and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other, iii) follow up contracts that share the same log frame of the original contract)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of contracts	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) 1> <foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) 2> <foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) #>
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