



ANNEX

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the Annual Action Programme in favour of ENI East and South countries for a Regional Communication Programme Phase III to be financed from the 2019 general budget of the European Union

Action Document for ‘EU Neighbourhood Communication Programme’ (2014 – 2020)
(Regional Communication Programme phase III)

ANNUAL PROGRAMME

This document constitutes the Annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation and action programme/measure in the sense of Articles 2 and 3 of Regulation N° 236/2014.

1. Title/basic act/ CRIS number	Action Document for EU Neighbourhood Communication Programme (Regional Communication Programme phase III) CRIS number: 2019/042-253 financed under the European Neighbourhood Instrument
2. Zone benefiting from the action/location	Eastern Neighbourhood: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine. Southern Neighbourhood: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine ¹ , Syria, Tunisia.
3. Programming document	Programming of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) 2014-2020; ENI East Regional Strategy Paper (2014-2020) and the Multiannual Indicative Programme (2017-2020); Regional South Strategy Paper (2014-2020) and Multiannual Indicative Programme (2017-2020)
4. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG 17: Partnerships to achieve the goal

¹ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

5. Sector of intervention/thematic area	Communication	DEV. Assistance: NO		
6. Amounts concerned	Total estimated cost: EUR 17 million Total amount of European Union (EU) contribution EUR 17 million			
7. Aid modality(ies) and implementation modality(ies)	Project Modality Direct management through Procurement			
8 a) DAC code(s)	99820 – Promotion of development awareness			
b) Main Delivery Channel	61000 - Private sector in provider country			
9. Markers (from CRIS DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade Development	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) thematic flagships	N/A			

SUMMARY

The EU Neighbourhood Communication Programme ('the Programme') aims at increasing the understanding and awareness of the EU and its policies as well as improving the public perception of the EU in its Neighbourhood partner countries, in the framework of the revised European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)².

² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/overview_en.

The Programme seeks to build on the lessons learned, success stories, and the innovative approach in communication already initiated and set out under the previous phases of the Regional Communication Programme. It also seeks to support the general trend of modernisation of the EU communication sector by fostering strategic communication approaches.

The Programme is intended to support and strengthen existing communication networks and platforms of the EU. It directly supports the EU Delegations' public diplomacy and outreach activities in partner countries by providing targeted support in communicating EU values, policies and results of EU programmes and projects.

Through tailored strategic communication activities, it helps to raise the profile of the EU and its work in the target region by generating attractive and compelling stories and by engaging with strategic multiplier groups. It seeks to highlight the benefits of the partnership between the EU and its Neighbourhood countries by channelling facts and stories into thematic communication actions.

The present Action Document and corresponding budget allocation include a top-up for the ongoing Regional Communication Programme amounting to EUR 1,150,000. This top-up will ensure the continuation of activities of the two projects for an additional year following the initially foreseen end date of the ongoing contract (31 October 2019).

1 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

1.1 Context Description

The EU's Neighbourhood is a region of strategic importance for the EU. The EU's policies for the Eastern and Southern regions geared to support reform and democracy aim to foster prosperity and stability around European borders.

The EU has a vital interest to engage with citizens in its partner countries to increase knowledge of its values and policies as well as to build support around these. Communicating about EU's actions has gained high political attention over recent years, in particular in the wake of growing disinformation and propaganda against the EU's values.

Over the last decade, a number of regional communication programmes focusing on the Neighbourhood has been supported by the EU and implemented by the European Commission. These programmes have progressively reinforced understanding and awareness of the EU in the target region, providing annual data on the evolution of public perception. They have helped shape more strategic communications and strengthen the communication capabilities of EU Delegations in the Neighbourhood. Much progress has been achieved at country level in terms of strengthened and modernised communication and outreach work by EU Delegations.

In 2015, the East StratCom Task Force of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was created to contribute to the fight against disinformation and to reinforce the strategic approach in EU communications in the Eastern Neighbourhood³, followed by the EEAS Task Force South focusing on the Southern Neighbourhood. More recently, the EU has launched the Joint Action Plan on Disinformation,⁴ aiming to develop a coordinated response and build societal resilience to disinformation in the EU and its Neighbourhood.

A renewed approach to communication was developed jointly by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and the EEAS in 2018 around the following key elements: 1. moving away from a project-based communication to a more thematic-based communication to avoid fragmentation of messages and to support stronger narratives per theme; 2. generating communication narratives which present the benefits and impact of EU's action to people in the countries concerned, through human-interest stories and facts; 3. unifying EU branding by reducing the number of logos and slogans for individual initiatives; 4. promoting the use of large communication contracts for campaign-led actions implemented by professional communication contractors; in parallel, increasing funds available to Delegations for outsourcing communication support services and hiring experts; 5. strengthening capacities of the Delegations and improving the communication frameworks and tools for the management of communication activities in Delegations. These elements are in line the new Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions,⁵ released in 2018.

The above approach has substantially reshaped communications in the region and has generated some positive results in the Neighbourhood countries with regards to citizens' perception of the EU (*cf. paragraph 1.3*).

1.2 Policy Framework (Global, EU)

The revised European Neighbourhood Policy governs the EU's relations with 16 of its closest Eastern and Southern Neighbours. To the South, these are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia; and to the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Russia takes part in Cross-Border Cooperation activities under the ENP but is not a part of the ENP as such.

The ENP translates the EU's wish to build on common interests with partner countries and a commitment to work jointly in priority areas, including in the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as well as the enhancement of economic development, the investment climate and social cohesion.

The Joint Communication titled the 'Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy' was adopted by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in November 2015. The text highlighted the need to develop more tailored responses to each particular situation of the Neighbourhood countries, and avoid a 'one size fits all' approach: *'Differentiation and greater mutual ownership will be the hallmark of the new ENP, recognising that not all partners aspire to EU rules and standards, and reflecting the wishes of each country concerning the nature and focus of its partnership with the EU'*.

³ <http://archive.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Action%20PLan.pdf>.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/eu-communication-disinformation-euco-05122018_en.pdf.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/communication-and-visibility-manual-eu-external-actions_en

The revised ENP strongly emphasises two principles: 1. the implementation of a differentiated approach to neighbours, to respect the different aspirations of partners and to better answer to EU interests and the interests of partners; and 2. an increased ownership by partner countries and Member States. Strengthening the state and societal resilience of the EU's partners is a priority in the face of threats and pressures they are experiencing, including the challenges associated with mobility and migration.

In the Eastern Neighbourhood region, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) complements the ENP and provides the policy framework for the relations between the EU and its Eastern partners, with 2019 marking the 10th anniversary of the EaP. In recent years, the EU has substantially reshaped its approach to communication in the region through the development of a clearly defined policy framework based on the tangible impact of the EU's actions on citizens across the EaP region. In this context, the '20 Deliverables for 2020'⁶, based on the four priority areas (stronger economy, stronger governance, stronger connectivity, stronger society), have been endorsed by the EU Member States and the six Eastern Partners. This frames not only the EU's policy and cooperation but also the EU's communication in the region.

The policy of the EU towards the North African and Middle Eastern countries in the Southern Neighbourhood seeks to encourage political and economic reform as well as to support regional cooperation among the countries of the region themselves and with the EU through the Union for the Mediterranean initiative. In 2018, the Union for the Mediterranean marked 10 years of cooperation in areas such as economic and social development; environmental protection and climate change; energy; migration; terrorism and extremism; as well as promoting dialogue between cultures.

1.3 Stakeholder analysis

According to 2018 opinion polls⁷, almost half of all citizens (46%) in the Eastern Neighbourhood have a positive image of the EU, compared to just 13% who have a negative perception. A significant proportion of the population (37%) is neutral towards the EU, which suggests a substantial scope for enhancing the EU's position. 63% of the people interviewed believe that the EU's relations with their country are good, with the perception of the EU generally consistent compared to the previous year. Trust towards the EU has grown in recent years, now expressed by 61% of the population, making it the most trusted institution among the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Eurasian Economic Union. More than half of the respondents (57%) say they are aware of the EU's financial support, while 26% respond negatively.

The Southern Neighbourhood's opinion polls⁸ indicate that 74% of people in the Maghreb⁹ believe that relations between their country and the EU are good, compared to 65% in the Mashrek¹⁰ countries. 60% of those asked in the Maghreb and 57% in the Mashrek feel that the

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/eastern-partnership_en.

⁷ Opinion polls conducted by Kantar Public in 2018, as part of the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme <https://euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-perceptions-southern-neighbourhood-countries-new-poll-results>.

⁸ Same as above.

⁹ Region of North Africa consisting primarily of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania. Mauritania is not included as a target country as it is not part of the European Neighbourhood Policy..

¹⁰ Region including Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Palestine and Iraq. The Programme only concerns the Mashrek countries which are part of the European Neighbourhood Policy: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Palestine..

EU has a positive influence on the development of their country, while both regions see the EU financial support as being effective (59% Maghreb and 69% Mashrek). In more general terms, 55% of the population in the Maghreb has a positive image of the EU, compared to 45% in the Mashrek. Only 22% of people in the Mashrek and just 9% in the Maghreb have a negative image.

Demographic analysis based on public opinion surveys in the Neighbourhood region shows that young people are generally more inclined¹¹ to have a positive image of the EU, and consequently are more receptive to the EU's messages. Representing the future leadership of the target countries, younger generations are a key audience for the EU's strategic communication work.

Therefore, they are the main target audience for the communication work envisaged in the Programme, broadly defined as 15-35 year-olds, living in the Neighbourhood partner countries and in the EU. Young people are intended both as a target for the messages of the Programme and as a multiplier of messages. Academic institutions, schools, youth networks, student associations and other youth groups are by extension also stakeholders.

The Programme also addresses opinion makers (media) to foster a positive press climate and extend the messages to broader audiences. These include local and regional media across the targeted regions. In addition, other groups of multipliers could be the target of the Programme's efforts, whereby these groups would help amplify the EU's messages.

Further audiences in the Neighbourhood area are of importance to the Programme to multiply messages and help increase public support. These include EU projects' beneficiaries, civil society, political leaders, local institutions, central and regional authorities, social networks groups and the public in general.

While the focus of the Programme is on people from the EU's Neighbourhood regions, the messaging, contents and activities developed within the framework of this action could also be used for communication inside the European Union.

As concerns internal audiences, the Programme shall seek the collaboration of EU Delegations in partner countries and of relevant units within the European Commission and the EEAS. The Programme also targets the implementing partners of EU-funded actions in the region in order to reduce fragmentation in messaging, visibility and other communication activities.

1.4 Problem analysis/priority areas for support

The recent modernisation and reinvigorated strategy in EU communications, as reflected in the renewed approach adopted in 2018 (*cf. paragraph 1.1*), have paved the way for more impactful and better coordinated communication actions in the EU's Neighbourhood.

This Programme intends to capitalise on the advancements in the EU communication sector and to continue building support for the EU's action in the region, while addressing challenges which hinder the achievement of the EU's communication objectives.

¹¹<https://www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/Open%20South%20Wave%203%20report.pdf> and [https://euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2018-07/EU%20NEIGHBOURS%20east AnnualSurvey2018report EaPOverview.pdf](https://euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2018-07/EU%20NEIGHBOURS%20east%20AnnualSurvey2018report_EaPOverview.pdf)

Through specialised services, this Programme complements and expands the in-house know-how and capacity to deliver high quality outputs. It brings additional manpower to generate and disseminate information and awareness products by targeting key audiences with the most relevant tools and making use of the experience of the pilot actions carried out in the previous programme. Specialised profiles, such as video producers, graphic designers and social media managers, are to be made available to support the EU's work through this Programme.

Generating narratives and coordination of thematic messaging are among the key deliverables of this Programme. Thematic-based campaigning can break the wheel of small uncoordinated communication actions, which often lead to message fragmentation.

The Programme also foresees dedicated activities to extend outreach, by targeting and mobilising strategic audiences, going beyond the usual multipliers networks.

2 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
<p>Political instability, security concerns and evolving political relations between partner countries in certain parts of the region, as well as restrictions by national authorities/regimes, could make it difficult, even impossible, for some activities to be undertaken/completed, thus affecting the impact of the Programme. Depending on political developments, changes in a sometimes volatile political climate could discourage the media from visible co-operation with the EU.</p>	M	<p>Regularly monitor the political situations in the countries and adjust strategies as required.</p>
<p>Because of the fluid political and economic situation in partner countries, outreach activities might need swift refocusing or strategy change at a given point in time.</p>	M	<p>Regularly monitor the political situations in the countries and adjust strategies as required.</p>
<p>Disinformation spread by third countries or other actors directly or indirectly affects the receptivity to EU messages in the target populations.</p>	M	<p>Adopt measures to tackle deliberate disinformation campaigns in the Neighbourhood affecting/ concerning EU cooperation in the region.</p>
<p>Assumptions</p>		

- Target audiences in partner countries are not adverse or hesitant (due to varied level of restrictions by the national authorities/regimes) to engage with the EU and its outreach activities;
- The EU remains of high interest for the local media and citizens in Neighbourhood partner countries;
- Representatives and beneficiaries of EU-funded programmes and projects are eager to engage with the Programme and share information about their respective initiatives;
- Young people and other strategic multipliers groups are interested in actively engaging within the networks developed by the Programme’s segments to support dissemination of EU’s messages.

3 LESSONS LEARNT AND COMPLEMENTARITY

3.1 Lessons learnt

The earlier phases of the communication programmes focused on the Neighbourhood region laid the foundations for an increase in visibility and knowledge about the European Neighbourhood Policy and EU programmes in partner countries. The subsequent Regional Communication Programme¹² (2011-2014) brought further progress in disseminating quality information about the EU’s action in the regions. Their formal evaluations have shed light on some of the shortcomings of these past efforts.

The final evaluation of the Regional Information and Communication Programme (2007-2010)¹³ recognised the ‘Factual information about EU projects is not per se interesting, unless it is put into countries’ context (...) and related to people’s lives’. The Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) of the Programme (2011-2014) showed that there was a need to establish a more coherent approach in communication, as the three projects within the Programme did not manage to combine efforts to increase the impact of their activities and ensure the sustainability of the Programme as a whole. According to the preliminary findings of the mid-term evaluation of the same Programme, the EU should put more efforts into highlighting the tangible results of projects in promoting and supporting the values of the EU and less into explaining complex policy issues to a wider local audiences who ‘struggle’ with EU terminology.

The ongoing Regional Communication Programme ‘OPEN’¹⁴ (2015-2020) has built on the lessons from previous phases and it has brought about some innovation compared to past experiences. It has benefitted from thorough monitoring and regular evaluation of activities and strategies through the work of a joint core communication coordination group, made up of experts from European Commission’s services and the EEAS. Based on the feedback gathered in these systematic evaluations, a few lessons learnt can be drawn from present work:

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/enpi-regional-communication-programme-2011-13-decision_en

¹³ Impact evaluation of the ENPI-Regional Information and Communication programme, final evaluation report, 17 May 2010.

¹⁴ <https://euneighbours.eu/en>.

- The Programme's communication tool and online platforms are at times perceived as competing with Delegation's accounts. Considerable resources are used to manage the Programme's communication tools and online platforms, while they could be focused on content sourcing and production;
- Engaging young people as multipliers has shown a large potential in the Eastern region via the Young European Ambassadors initiative. In the Southern Neighbourhood, the events organised on university campuses proved to serve as powerful triggers of interest of the younger generations;
- Communication actions are at times hampered by the difficulty to gather data and information on the results of the EU-funded projects in the region. The DigiTool, developed as part of a pilot action with the EU Delegation to Georgia, can help overcome this challenge by centralising and improving accessibility of information. The roll-out of the tool to other Delegations should be considered;
- As EU Delegations are often understaffed in the field of communication, there is a need to shape communication work according to the 'less is more' approach, thus prioritising themes and actions. The experience of the pilot project with the EU Delegation to Lebanon has provided valuable recommendations which can be applied to other countries in the regions;
- The use of local languages has been an essential part of the successful engagement strategy of the present Programme (2015-2020).

At national level, in Ukraine, the communication campaign 'Moving Forward Together' has since 2018 communicated the concrete benefits and results of the EU-Ukraine cooperation to the citizens of the country. The establishment of a unique and professionally designed EU brand (visual identity, core message, brand manual) has proven to be the most efficient way to ensure the visual and key messaging consistency (brand identity and awareness) of the EU communication. Awareness of the campaign topics has, according to research, roughly doubled in the first seven months of the campaign – this awareness still needs to be transferred into an increased knowledge about the EU.

The ongoing evaluation of the Info Centres in the Enlargement region commissioned by DG NEAR could provide valuable assessment elements for a possible establishment of centres in the Neighbourhood region.

The Programme under this Action Document seeks to adopt approaches in line with the above considerations.

3.2 Complementarity, synergy and donor co-ordination

Harmonisation and synergies are to be sought, to the extent possible, in the field of donor coordination and sharing of information with EU Delegations (on bilateral programmes), with EU Member States, other international organisations and bilateral donors to avoid duplication of activities. Complementarity and coherence are particularly important in the EU Neighbourhood countries where there are already substantial ongoing EU communication programmes. This ensures effective and efficient action and raises the profile of the activities.

When relevant, synergies are to be sought with activities developed by other major international donors involved in similar outreach activities.

The synergies with the key EU strategic communication activities (including strategy, content and visual aspects) in the partner countries should be ensured, so that the EU communications would be perceived as a clear and consistent ‘single voice’.

The Programme complements and supports the communication activities of other regional ENI-funded programmes. Whereas other regional programmes would normally manage communications towards their stakeholders, this Programme intends to present and channel information on the key results of those programmes to a wider public (*c.f. target audiences, paragraph 1.3*), and also by crafting thematic narratives.

4 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

The Programme’s objective and activities, as detailed in this section, are based on the experience gathered in previous regional communication programmes. The measures foreseen in the Programme serve as support to the implementation of the communication strategy and plans of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, the European External Action Service as well as of the EU Delegations in the Neighbourhood region.

4.1 Overall objective, specific objectives, expected outputs and indicative activities

The **general objective** of this Programme is to contribute to the improvement of public perception and attitudes towards the EU and to the development of a more receptive environment for European values and principles in Neighbourhood partner countries, by delivering and fostering a more strategic approach in communicating about the impacts of the European Neighbourhood Policy across the two partner regions. The Programme complements and supports the communication work of the Delegations in the countries and benefits from the close collaboration with the communication teams in the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations and the EEAS StratCom Task Forces. It is designed to reach 'soft centre' audiences – seeking to shift neutral attitudes to positive ones – across the whole of countries concerned, including territories and breakaway regions.

The specific objectives of the Programme are:

- To **improve understanding and raise awareness** of the benefits and results for citizens of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the Southern and Eastern partner countries through facts and human-interest stories about the EU and its actions, made available in local languages and through appropriate dissemination channels;
- To **stimulate a positive public debate** among the target audiences about the EU, in particular by building a strong network of multipliers of young age and by working with the local media with a view to maximising outreach to the general public;
- To contribute to **addressing issues related to disinformation**, including by raising awareness across the two partner regions.

4.1.1 Expected results and main activities

This Programme should deliver the following results:

- Increased awareness and improved understanding of the EU, its policies and programmes among the target audiences, thus generating a more positive perception of the EU overall;

- Strengthened communication capabilities of EU staff and implementing partners, in relation to digital communication infrastructure and global strategic communication approach;
- Enhanced dialogue among young people in the EU and in partner countries via a strong network of young communicators;
- Qualitatively and quantitatively improved media reporting on the EU and EU-related issues in the ENP region, by supporting the creation of positive EU narratives in the partner country and by promoting them;
- Enhanced understanding of the public opinion regarding the EU in the partner countries of the ENP region.

Building on the strategy underpinning the current Regional Communication Programme (2015-2020), the new Programme consists of two similar but separate projects, respectively for the Eastern and the Southern Neighbourhood regions.

EU Regional Communication Programme for the Eastern Neighbourhood <i>Target countries:</i> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine	EUR 11 million
EU Regional Communication Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood <i>Target countries:</i> Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria ¹⁵ , Tunisia	EUR 6 million

The two projects have common activities' denominators, identified in the following four macro-areas, but are shaped according to the needs and specificities of each region:

- Strengthening capabilities: Reinforcing the EU's strategic communication framework, also at country-level, and improving project communications;
- Content production: Regional thematic campaigning, website(s), campaign materials;
- Multipliers: Engagement with multipliers (youth, media, any other relevant stakeholders/multiplier group);
- Surveys: Opinion polling in the Neighbourhood region.

The Programme shall ensure a generally balanced geographical coverage of the target countries in the organisation of activities and production of content materials, while

¹⁵ At the time of writing this action document, EU co-operation with Syrian governmental authorities is still suspended. In case this decision is reversed, the Commission will assess the opportunity to involve Syria in the implementation. The political instability and/or security situation in Syria will be assessed prior to that in order to confirm the feasibility/opportunity to: a) engage the stakeholders and b) implement the activities.

responding to the different audiences' needs and adapting according to cultural traits and languages.

Strengthening capabilities for more strategic communications

The Programme plays a role in fostering a change in EU communications. In line with the advancements achieved both at central- and country-level, the Programme is designed to support the strengthening of communication capabilities of staff and of EU-funded projects, as relevant.

In particular, the Programme builds on the pilot actions developed in the previous regional communication programme (2015-2020) and provides the platform and resources for their roll-out across the regions. Namely:

- Centrally managed digital platform for communication management purposes, collecting information on all EU-funded actions per country and region (EU DigiTool);
- Strategic communication framework to support Delegations in the definition of communication priorities and implementation of impactful thematic campaigns.

Strategic communication notions and their practical implementation are to be the basis of dedicated and specialised communication trainings to be delivered to EU staff and EU projects' implementers. roll-out of the EU DigiTool to the Delegation offices; roll-out of the strategic communication framework to Delegations in both regions.

The project should also assist EU Delegations and EU projects in partner countries to align communication activities of various sectors (e.g. EU4Business). This would help improving efficiency and effectiveness of communicating EU cooperation topics as well as further support the shift away from project-based communication.

Content production and coordination

The Programme supports outreach activities and communication activities of the European Commission, EU Delegations and EU programmes and projects run at bilateral, regional and interregional levels, by adopting a strategic communication approach, aiming to showcase the impact of EU actions' on the lives of people in the Neighbourhood. While the Programme assists in improving communication on EU thematic support (rather than single projects), production and coordination of communication contents about regional cooperation actions are prioritised over bilateral projects in the Programme's work. The Programme complements and builds synergies with existing efforts at Delegation level (large-scale campaigns, communication contracts) in order to ensure coherent and effective EU messaging.

The Programme helps identify and feature human-interest stories behind successful EU initiatives, and present concrete results and facts about the benefits of the EU's work. Content strategies are based on a high-impact communication approach, favouring thematic campaigning as opposed to single-project communication outputs.

The Programme supports the formulation of fact-based regional and thematic narratives about the cooperation of the EU with its partner countries. It sources and crafts relevant, accessible and high-quality written and audio-visual productions to be made available to the European Commission and EU offices across the region for their dissemination on their platforms (*the key audiences are identified in paragraph 1.3*). The Programme ensures that products are available in the languages spoken by the target audiences.

Content development, as described above, aims to both increase awareness of the EU's work and address disinformation challenges. On the latter, the Programme may make use of disinformation materials and data analyses which are produced by EU institutions.

Production of content is coordinated with EU Delegations colleagues both in terms of factual verification and dissemination schedule.

Content production is generally intended for dissemination on existing official EU channels (European Commission and EU Delegations). Ad hoc online channels could be used by the Programme to amplify the dissemination of tailored content, however the risk of generating competition vis-à-vis EU official channels needs to be taken into consideration (*cf. paragraph 3.1*). Whereas creative production and technical development work is the prerogative of the project implementers, strategies and messaging are to be guided by EU staff.

Possible activities could include: sourcing, design and distribution of targeted communication campaign materials aimed at various communication channels (conventional and new media, public relations events, goodwill ambassadors, cultural cooperation activities and exchanges, etc.) in specific EU-related thematic areas; production of multi-media packages focusing on human-interest issues and facts about the EU's impact; running of 'EU info centres'; formulation of thematic regional narrative-based priority themes; development, maintenance and update of an effective centrally managed web-based system providing high-quality and up-to-date information about EU cooperation programmes and projects in the Neighbourhood region.

Multipliers

To expand and maximise the impact of EU communications, engagement with relevant multipliers is key and can be also cost-efficient.

Previous experience has proven that young people can be a powerful vehicle to communicate EU messages. Therefore, involving first-hand and engaging with young people from the Neighbourhood region is one of the tasks of this Programme. As there are major cultural and identity-related differences between the South and East regions, the Programme shall carefully adapt engagement strategies to maximise, and not compromise, the impact of the communication work.

The second major stakeholder group targeted by the Programme is the media – crucial opinion makers who can greatly influence the public opinion. The Programme is intended to act as an intermediary between EU-funded actions on the ground and interested media parties, in particular local and regional media. This role entails sourcing and dissemination of interesting and time-relevant stories to media channels to generate more qualitative and quantitative coverage of the EU and the organisation of press trips, as defined in collaboration with EU staff. Synergies with media support programmes funded by the EU are to be sought.

The Programme should engage also with social media influencers, bloggers and vloggers, as well as look into other alternative multipliers that would help reach the strategic goals of this action and systematically seek synergies with the already existing networks of multipliers, where relevant.

Possible activities could include: organisation of engaging events in universities and schools aimed at informing young people about EU funding programmes and values and to facilitate the establishment of a network of EU supporters; continuation of the Young European Ambassadors network in the Eastern Neighbourhood and possible replication in the South; direct involvement of young people in campaign-related actions and events on the ground;

direct outreach to media in the region to generate interest in human-interest stories about EU cooperation projects and increase media coverage; organisation of trips for journalists to visit and promote EU-funded activities on the ground in target countries.

Surveys

Understanding the public plays a major role and is a prerequisite for engaging citizens from partner countries in an open dialogue about the opportunities and challenges of the partnership with the EU. By gauging public opinion, the Programme provides and analyses the state of opinion and perception of EU values, programmes and policies among opinion leaders, the media sector, other specific target groups or the general public, and provide a useful feedback regarding the EU initiatives in the two partner regions.

The Programme fills the knowledge gap on awareness as regards the EU, its policies and cooperation activities – by providing detailed information on perceptions and attitudes within each partner country on a range of issues relating to the impact of both policy initiatives and communication strategy.

Through in-depth face-to-face interviews, online consultations and surveys, the Programme tracks, amongst others, the evolution over time of perception of populations in partner countries of a range of issues, such as their understanding and knowledge of EU values, policies and activities as well as the image and the role of the EU as a global actor in the Neighbourhood area. It is important that surveys are localised to the extent possible to provide applicable results, but that, at the same time, a core content structure should be maintained to ensure comparability of data over time.

The Programme builds on the previous opinion polling waves and promotes a greater use of the results in support of the communication and outreach activities. It shall also draw data from findings of other audience research, not funded by the Programme.

Possible activities could include: regular, representative and ad hoc polls in partner countries on a number of EU-related topics; focus groups.

In addition to the activities described above, the budget allocated for this Action Document includes a top-up for the ongoing ‘EU Neighbours South’ and ‘EU Neighbours East’ projects as part of the Regional Communication Programme ‘OPEN’, amounting to EUR 1 million for the South region and EUR 150,000 for the East region. The top-ups will ensure the continuation of activities of the projects for an additional year following the initially foreseen end date of the ongoing contract (31 October 2019).

4.2 Intervention logic

The intervention logic is based on a thorough analysis of past achievements, lessons learnt and current challenges in the EU communication sector. It seeks to respond to evolving needs and resource availability at EU Delegations, with a view to ensuring high efficiency and quality results for the delivery on the Programme’s objectives.

In line with the renewed communication approach (*cf. 1.1*) adopted by the EU in its Neighbourhood region, the Programme is designed to sustain and foster a strategic communication action by both the European Commission’s Headquarters and EU Delegations in partner countries, with the goal of improving the public perception of the EU.

The Programme is structured around four main deliverable areas, as presented in paragraph 4.1, which collectively contribute to the achievement of the overall objective. These clusters reflect the priority areas for the Programme’s work and provide examples of concrete outputs.

One such example is thematic campaigning, which is one of the approaches that the Programme is meant to foster (as opposed to fragmented single-project communications). In this area, the Programme serves as a major tool for the implementation of strategic communication campaigns, also by playing an active role in the coordination of content sourcing and presentation of EU-funded projects (e.g. EU4Business for EU support in private sector development). Campaigns are run in the local languages and are tailored per country/region. The Programme actively involves multipliers in order to achieve strategic communication goals. The communication activities have qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators (KPIs), which are measured in order to assess the results and impact of each bigger campaign. It is expected that the Programme will use latest available digital and social media tools and approaches for the campaigns to be effective.

In all its elements, the scope of the Programme is intended as complementary to other public diplomacy and outreach activities of EU Delegations and other EU actors, with whom it should seek synergies and coordinate activities.

4.3 Mainstreaming

The Programme directly contributes to improving awareness about cross-cutting issues, by integrating content and messages regarding gender, resilience, etc. into the communication-driven actions.

4.4 Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals

As a communication-focused action, this Programme supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, by raising awareness of the development objectives at large.

5 IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement.

5.2 Indicative implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 4 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 48 months from the date when a financing agreement is concluded.

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

5.3 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 measures¹⁶.

5.3.1 Procurement (*direct management*)

All objectives, expected outputs and activities are subject to procurement.

¹⁶ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

5.4 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.

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

5.5 Indicative budget

	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
All Objectives and Outputs: Procurement (direct management)	17,000,000	N/A
Total	17,000,000	N/A

5.6 Organisational set-up and responsibilities

Building on the organisational set-up established under the ongoing Regional Communication Programme 'OPEN', the new Programme benefits from a close collaboration with all relevant actors within the European Commission's services and the EEAS. A Steering Committee is set up to provide the general strategic direction to the Programme and it shall include communication teams from DG NEAR and EEAS. Regular meetings (a few times per year) chaired by DG NEAR's Communication Unit will be organised to review progress and adjust the strategic approach of the Programme's activities.

In addition to the Steering Committee meetings, more frequent exchanges (weekly/monthly as needed) are to take place at operational level, including relevant communication and policy colleagues. These meetings focus on more thorough and technical reviews of the Programme's outputs and day-to-day planning of activities.

5.7 Performance and results monitoring and reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and direct outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the Logframe matrix (for project modality).

SDGs indicators and, if applicable, any jointly agreed indicators as for instance per Joint Programming document should be taken into account.

The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

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

5.8 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a mid-term and final evaluations may be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

In case a mid-term evaluation is decided, it will be carried out for learning purposes, in particular with respect to adjusting the approach and strategy adopted in the Programme.

In case a final evaluation is decided, it will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels.

Evaluations will be designed based on the Communication Network Indicators framework developed by the European Commission, which includes specific communication performance indicators for public diplomacy actions.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 30 days in advance of the dates foreseen for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and *inter alia* provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders. 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.

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

5.9 Audit

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 audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

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

5.10 Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU. As this Programme is a communication action in itself, communication and visibility plans are an integral part of its deliverables.

APPENDIX - INDICATIVE LOGFRAME MATRIX

	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact (Overall Objective)	To improve the public perception and attitudes towards the EU and to the development of a more receptive environment for European values and principles in Neighbourhood partner countries, by delivering and fostering a more strategic approach in communicating about the impacts of the European Neighbourhood Policy across the two partner regions;	Annual public surveys about the perception of the EU and other surveys; social media and web analytics; media coverage;	Opinion polls, social media analytics, media analysis reports;	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome(s) (Specific Objective(s))	O1: To raise awareness of the European Neighbourhood Policy, EU development cooperation programmes and projects in the Southern and Eastern partner countries by increasing access to information in local languages and through appropriate channels of dissemination;	Percentage of people who say they are aware of the EU in annual surveys; engagement on social media; website visits; number of articles on media; number of participants to events; pre- and post-campaign surveys to assess the impact of the Programme actions;	Opinion polls, social media analytics, web analytics, media monitoring reports, event reports;	- Target audiences in partner countries are not adverse – or hesitant due to varied level of restrictions by the national authorities/regimes—to engage with the EU and its outreach activities. - The EU remains of high interest for the local media and citizens in Neighbourhood partner countries;
	O2: To improve understanding of the EU and its cooperation actions, with special emphasis on facts about the impact of the EU's work and human interest stories	Percentage of people who say they are aware of EU support and the areas of support in annual surveys; engagement on social media; website visits; number of articles on media; number of participants to events; pre- and post-campaign surveys to assess the impact of the Programme actions;	Opinion polls, social media analytics, web analytics, media monitoring reports, event reports;	-Representatives and beneficiaries of EU-funded programmes and projects are eager to engage with the Programme and share information about their

	O3: To stimulate a positive public debate among the target audiences about the EU, in particular by building a strong network of young multipliers and by working with the local media with a view to maximise outreach to the general public;	Number of people engaged in the Programme's and other existing relevant networks; number of media reached, number of articles in media;	Progress and monitoring reports, event reports, media monitoring reports;	respective initiatives; - Young people and other strategic multipliers groups are interested in actively engaging within the networks developed by the Programme's segments to support dissemination of EU's messages.
	O4: To contribute to addressing issues related to disinformation , including by raising awareness across the region;	Media coverage;	Media monitoring reports, disinformation trend analyses;	
Outputs	<p>Content production: Regional thematic campaigning, website(s), campaign materials;</p> <p>Strengthening capabilities: European Commission and country-level (Delegations) strategic communication framework and project communications enhancement;</p> <p>Multipliers: Engagement with multipliers (young people, media, any other relevant);</p> <p>Surveys: Opinion polling in the Neighbourhood region;</p>	<p>Number of times content is shared by EU Delegations and projects;</p> <p>Number of visits on website; number of visit of created content (for other platforms – top media);</p> <p>Engagement rate on social media channels;</p> <p>Number of people engaged in networks;</p>	<p>Web analytics, social media analytics, event reports, progress and monitoring reports;</p>	The implementers of the contracts will run the foreseen activities diligently and to the highest level of professionalism.