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COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 29.8.2023

**on the financing of the multiannual action plan in favour of the Neighbourhood East
Region for 2023 - 2024**

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046¹ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, and in particular Article 110 thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/947² of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009, and in particular Article 23(2) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In order to ensure the implementation of the action plan in favour of the Neighbourhood East Region for 2023-2024, it is necessary to adopt a multiannual³ financing Decision, which constitutes the multiannual work programme for 2023 and for 2024.
- (2) The envisaged assistance should comply with the conditions and procedures set out by the restrictive measures adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU⁴.
- (3) The action plan provided for in this Decision should contribute to climate and biodiversity mainstreaming in line with Commission Communication ‘The European Green Deal’⁵ and in the Interinstitutional Agreement of 16 December 2020 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap towards the introduction of new own resources⁶.

¹ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p.1.

² OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p.1.

³ A multiannual financing decision shall always constitute a multiannual action plan/measure.

⁴ 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 COM(2019)640 final of 11 December 2019.

⁶ OJ L 433I, 22.12.2020, p. 28.

- (4) The Commission has adopted the Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Neighbourhood East Region⁷ for the period 2021 - 2027, which sets out the following priorities: 1. Resilient, sustainable and integrated economies; 2. Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security; 3. Environmental and climate resilience; 4. Resilient digital transformation; 5. Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies.
- (5) The objectives pursued by the multiannual action plan to be financed under the Neighbourhood geographic programme of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 should contribute to strengthening resilience across the board in the Eastern Partnership, and will build on and continue the progress already achieved under the Economic and Investment Plan, including the dual green and digital transformations. It will also deliver on key reforms including tackling corruption and organized crime, and providing the tools to effectively monitor the state of play and progress in the areas of good governance and the rule of law in the entire region. Strategic use will be made of TAIEX and Twinning, as well as of other instruments to support reforms and modernize processes.
- (6) The action entitled ‘Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies for 2023-2024’ (Annex I) aims at contributing to inclusive, resilient and democratic societies in the wider Eastern Partnership region.
- (7) The action entitled ‘Improving Cyber Resilience in the Eastern Partnership countries’ (Annex II) aims at supporting judicial reforms, the rule of law, prevention and fight against corruption, and economic, organised and serious crime, including trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, firearms trafficking and cybercrime.
- (8) The measure entitled ‘East Global Allocation’ (Annex III) is a flexible support measure adaptable to evolving and/or unforeseen situations. Activities include support to bilateral and regional actions in the framework of the EaP priorities, as well as support to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the context of their European perspective. In addition, information and visibility activities to enhance awareness and understanding of the ENP are also included.
- (9) The action entitled ‘EU4Culture’ (Annex IV) aims at increasing the role of the cultural and creative industries sector as a vector for economic development, human rights and gender equality. It also aims at enhancing intercultural dialogue, international cultural relations and knowledge exchange in the field of culture across the EaP partner countries.
- (10) The action entitled ‘Supporting Education Reforms and Skills in the Eastern Partnership region’ (Annex V) aims at investing in human capital and knowledge societies so to enhance quality, relevance, innovativeness and inclusiveness of education systems, as well as better skills matching the labour market needs.
- (11) The action entitled ‘EU4Gender Equality Phase II’ (Annex VI) aims at increasing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the EaP countries.
- (12) The action entitled ‘Support to Digital innovation in the Eastern Partnership region - EU4Innovation East’ (Annex VII) aims at strengthening the competitiveness and maturity of the EaP start-up ecosystem.

⁷ Commission Implementing Decision COM(2021)9370 final of 15.12.2021 on Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Neighbourhood East Region.

- (13) The action entitled ‘Strengthening the fight against corruption and organised crime in the Eastern Partnership’ (Annex VIII) aims at reducing high-level corruption, and organised and serious crime in the Eastern Partnership countries.
- (14) The action entitled ‘Participation of Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in the Transport Community’ (Annex IX) aims at ensuring the progressive integration of Ukraine’s, Moldova’s and Georgia’s transport markets in the context of the enlargement process.
- (15) The action entitled ‘Recovery through Circular Economy and Pollution Reduction in the Eastern Partnership countries (EU4Green Recovery East)’ (Annex X) aims at preserving human health, biodiversity and natural assets as well as support circular economy, decarbonisation, climate neutrality and green growth.
- (16) The action entitled ‘Supporting Resilience to Health Emergencies in the Eastern Partnership’ (Annex XI) aims at ensuring that health systems in Eastern Partnership countries are more interconnected and resilient to health emergencies and core health challenges.
- (17) The action entitled ‘Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX)’ (Annex XII) aims at supporting Eastern Neighbourhood beneficiaries in implementing their commitments made under EU-related agreements, achieving regulatory convergence and legislative approximation towards high standards, aligning to the EU policies through a better understanding of the EU legislation, know-how and the adoption of best practices.
- (18) The Commission should acknowledge and accept contributions from other donors in accordance with Article 21(2) of the Financial Regulation, subject to the conclusion of the relevant agreement. Where such contributions are not denominated in euro, a reasonable estimate of conversion should be made. This concerns Action Recovery through a Circular Economy and Pollution Reduction in the Eastern Partnership countries.
- (19) The objective and design of all action fulfil the criteria for Official Development Assistance established by the OECD/DAC, as per the requirements of Article 3(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947, contributing to the sustainable development of partner countries and the implementation of the 2030 agenda by supporting resilience, recovery and reforms in the Eastern Partnership countries with a particular focus on advancing the green and digital transitions.
- (20) It is appropriate to authorise the award of grants without a call for proposals and to provide for the conditions for awarding those grants.
- (21) Pursuant to Article 62(1), point (c) of the Financial Regulation, indirect management is to be used for the implementation of the action plan.
- (22) The Commission is to ensure a level of protection of the financial interests of the Union with regards to entities and persons entrusted with the implementation of Union funds by indirect management as provided for in Article 154(3) of the Financial Regulation. To that end, such entities and persons are to be subject to an assessment of their systems and procedures in accordance with Article 154(4) of the Financial Regulation⁸ and, if necessary, to appropriate supervisory measures in accordance with

⁸ Except for the cases of Article 154(6) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, where the Commission may decide not to require an ex-ante assessment.

Article 154(5) of the Financial Regulation before a contribution agreement can be signed.

- (23) It is necessary to allow for the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 116(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (24) In order to allow for flexibility in the implementation of the action plan, it is appropriate to determine the changes which should not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (25) The action plan provided for in this Decision is in accordance with the opinion of the NDICI Committee established under Article 45 of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1
The action plan

The multiannual financing Decision, constituting the multiannual work programme for the implementation of the action plan in favour of the NDICI Neighbourhood East Regional Programme, as set out in the annexes, is adopted.

The action plan shall include the following actions or measures:

- Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies for 2023-2024 set out in Annex I;
- Improving Cyber Resilience in the Eastern Partnership countries set out in Annex II;
- East Global Allocation 2023-2024 set out in Annex III;
- EU4Culture set out in Annex IV;
- Supporting Education Reforms and Skills in the Eastern Partnership region set out in Annex V;
- EU4Gender Equality Phase II set out in Annex VI;
- Support to Digital innovation in the Eastern Partnership region - EU4Innovation East set out in Annex VII;
- Strengthening the fight against corruption and organised crime set out in Annex VIII;
- Participation of Georgia, Republic of Moldova² and Ukraine in the Transport Community set out in Annex IX;
- Recovery through Circular Economy and Pollution Reduction in the Eastern Partnership countries (EU4Green Recovery East) set out in Annex X;
- Supporting Resilience to Health Emergencies in the Eastern Partnership set out in Annex XI;
- Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) set out in Annex XII.

Article 2
Union contribution

The maximum Union contribution for the implementation of the action plan for 2023-2024 is set at 159 000 000, in particular for year 2023 EUR 95 500 000, and shall be financed from the appropriations entered in budget line BGUE-B2023 14.020111 C1 of the general budget of the Union.

The maximum Union contribution for the implementation of the action plan for 2024 is set at EUR 64 000 000, and shall be financed from the appropriations entered in budget line BGUE-B2024 14.020111 C1 of the general budget of the Union.

The appropriations provided for in the first paragraph may also cover interest due for late payment.

The implementation of this Decision is subject to the availability of the appropriations:

- (a) provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2024 following the adoption of that budget by the budget authority.

Article 3

Methods of implementation and entrusted entities or persons

The implementation of the actions carried out by way of indirect management, as set out in the Annexes II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, X, XI may be entrusted to the entities or persons referred to or selected in accordance with the criteria laid down in point 4.3.1 of the Annex II, IV, V, VII, X and XI, point 4.3.3 of Annex III and point 4.3.2 and 4.2.2 of Annexes VI and VIII respectively.

Article 4

Flexibility clause

Increases⁹ or decreases of up to EUR 10 million and not exceeding 20% of the contribution set in Article 2, first paragraph, considering each financial year separately, or cumulated changes to the allocations of specific actions not exceeding 20% of that contribution, as well as extensions of the implementation period shall not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, provided that these changes do not significantly affect the nature and objectives of the actions.

The authorising officer responsible may apply the changes referred to in the first paragraph. Those changes shall be applied in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and proportionality.

Article 5

Grants

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals in accordance with the conditions set out in the Annexes. Grants may be awarded to the bodies selected in accordance with point 3.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.1, 4.3.2 of the Annexes I, II, III, IX, X respectively.

Done at Brussels, 29.8.2023

For the Commission

Olivér VÁRHELYI

Member of the Commission

⁹ These changes can come from external assigned revenue made available after the adoption of the financing Decision.