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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX IV

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

Action Document for EU4Youth IV: Youth engagement and empowerment

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

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

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS Basic Act	EU4Youth IV: Youth engagement and empowerment Annual action plan in favour of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine for 2021 CRIS number: 043-008 / OPSYS ACT-60638 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe).
2. Team Europe Initiative	No
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine • EU Member States.
4. Programming document	Multiannual indicative programme for the Eastern neighbourhood 2021-2027 ¹
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results	2.5. Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies <u>Specific objective:</u> Strengthen civil society capacity and enabling environment, youth participation, cultural cooperation and free media environment <u>Expected result:</u> Enhanced participation of young people in society and economy, including through strengthened capacity and networking of Eastern Partnership National Youth Councils and other representative youth organisations to

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

	engage young people in a more structured Eastern Partnership Youth Dialogue for the development, implementation and evaluation of policies affecting their lives at local, regional and national level;			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies Democratic participation and civil society			
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong institutions Other significant SDGs: 4 – Quality education, 5 - Gender equality, 8 – Economic growth and decent work; 10 - Reduced inequalities; 13 - Climate action			
8 a) DAC code(s)	DAC code 1 – 15150 - Democratic participation and civil society DAC code 2 – 11230 - Basic life skills for youth and adults			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	11004 Donor government – Other public entities in donor government			
9. Targets²	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" 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"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
10. Markers³ (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women’s and girl’s empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

² Actual contribution to targets will be confirmed ex-post based on a standardised methodology.

³ For guidance, see <https://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/> (go to “Data collection and resources for reporters”, select Addendum 2, annexes 18 (policy) and 19 (Rio) of the reporting directive).
If an action is marked in the DAC form as contributing to one of the general policy objectives or to RIO principles as a principal objective or a significant objective, then this should be reflected in the logframe matrix (in the results chain and/or indicators).

	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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation Tags: digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship job creation digital skills/literacy digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Connectivity</u> Tags: transport people2people energy digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line: BGUE-B2021-14.020111-C1-NEAR Total estimated cost: EUR 5 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 5 000 000 This action may be co-financed in joint co-financing by: EU Member State Agency(ies) – to be selected in a call for expressions of interest.			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Implementation modalities (type of financing and management mode)	Project Modality Indirect management with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.2.1			

1.2. Summary of the Action

Building on progress achieved under previous phases, the present action constitutes **phase IV** of the **EU4Youth initiative in the Eastern Partnership**. This new phase will contribute to achieving the objectives relating to youth under the March 2020 Joint Communication “Eastern Partnership policy

beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all”⁴ and the July 2021 Joint Staff Working Document “Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities”⁵, which retain, with its **New Deal for Youth**, support to youth employment and entrepreneurship as well as youth participation and leadership in the focus of Eastern Partnership (EaP) cooperation.

The proposed action focuses specifically on promoting greater youth participation in policy making. Besides substantial capacity building support to key stakeholders of the youth sector in the six EaP countries, the action will promote more networking, exchange and mutual learning between key state and non-state actors of the Eastern partner countries and from the European Union.

In short, the proposed action aims to contribute (overall objective) **to increase the influence young people in the EaP region have in determining policy outcomes. The proposed action plans to do so with the following two specific objectives:**

- 1. Increase the capacity of youth organisations and public institutions to jointly implement more participatory and structured policy dialogue in the context of the EaP architecture as well as at local, regional and national levels;**
- 2. Improve the quality and outreach of youth work for mobilising and engaging more young people from remote/less advantaged areas in the EaP region.**

The action addresses **SDG 16** – Peace, Justice and Strong institutions as a main SDG, insofar as it will facilitate the meaningful inclusion of young people in local/regional, national, and international policy making, while fostering intercultural dialogue between youth for peaceful inter-community relations. Other significant SDGs of relevance are **SDG4** – Quality education; **SDG5** - Gender equality; **SDG8** – Economic growth and decent work; **SDG10** - Reduced inequalities; and **SDG13** - Climate action, which will be addressed either as thematic priority areas for projects funded through the small grants scheme, as priority topics for discussion and cooperation within the EaP Youth Dialogue, or as fundamental principles of the EaP Youth Dialogue initiative.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

General and specific context

The six countries of the **Eastern Partnership (EaP) region** are diverse in size, political systems, demography and social and economic terms, but they share some common challenges. In terms of socio-economic development, all six countries have been undergoing transformations towards the market economy, with significant differences and disparities, with capital regions and big cities being the most developed.

As the effects of **climate change** intensify over time, young people of today will face the worst impact. They are also perhaps the last generation that will be able to slow down this global trend. The **European Green Deal**⁶ being a key priority for the European Commission, steps must be taken to ensure youth have the necessary skills to play a full and active role in accelerating the **green transition**.

In addition to the impact on health, the **COVID-19 pandemic** has led to socio-economic consequences and reinforced certain trends. Young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds have faced

⁴ JOIN(2020) 7 final – Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, Reinforcing Resilience - an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all - https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/1_en_act_part1_v6.pdf

⁵ SWD(2021) 186 final – Joint Staff Working Document - Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities - https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd_2021_186_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v2_p1_1356457_0.pdf

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

disrupted learning and inadequate distance learning, reduced employment opportunities, and many suffered socio-psychological effects from confinement. On the other hand, **digitalisation** as second global trend has accelerated throughout all spheres of life, providing also for new opportunities. The EU has committed to supporting the **post-COVID recovery** of the EaP countries helping to ‘build back better’, and - considering also the priorities of the **Digital Agenda**⁷ - youth will have an important role to play in this context.

In terms of pre-existing structural challenges, **youth unemployment** rates are consistently higher than overall unemployment rates, reaching 32.6% in Armenia (2019) and 30.4% in Georgia (2019).⁸ Most EaP countries experience a high number of young people neither in education, employment nor training (**NEETs**). This points to a difficult school to work transition, mainly due to weak (quality) jobs creation but also to skills mismatches and related issues around **quality of education and training**.

With a lack of opportunities (both real and perceived), **migration** of young people to capital cities and out of their countries of origin leads to a brain-drain that reduces the potential of youth contributing to innovation and socio-economic development.

Moreover, in the EaP region regrettably a number of conflicts pose real challenges to the everyday life of citizens. This includes the **unresolved conflicts** in the unrecognised breakaway regions of Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the recently revived conflict escalation in Nagorno Karabakh and the ongoing violence in the Donbas. These conflicts greatly impact physical security, as well as access to goods, services, and opportunities. EU support for youth should therefore seek to involve young people from conflict-affected areas and incorporate elements that promote dialogue, peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts to lay the foundations for more peaceful inter-community relations and, by extension, more secure and prosperous societies. The **political crisis in Belarus** also represents a profound challenge for citizens on the ground, for neighbouring states, and for the EU. Young people have been playing a particularly pivotal role, with many students at state education institutions being targeted for their political views, facing suspension from their studies or referral to law enforcement. In light of this unprecedented civic mobilisation in Belarus – and the accompanying repression – the EU has committed itself to supporting *bona fide* civil society, and to providing assistance to the country’s eventual democratic transition. Four rounds of sanctions have been adopted against individuals and entities linked to the Belarusian regime since October 2020.⁹

Besides country specific challenges and particularities (e.g. the political crisis in Belarus or the impacts of violent conflict), one particularly persistent systemic challenge in the EaP region has been low **political participation and civic engagement** among young people. On the one hand, this is due to a lack of adequate mechanisms for young people’s meaningful participation in political dialogue and decision-making – or indeed the under-use or misuse of existing mechanisms – often leading to a mismatch between youth needs and youth policy. On the other hand, this also stems from insufficient knowledge of ways to influence decision-making processes at the various levels of government, as well as a lack of citizenship and leadership skills.

Vulnerable youth are most impacted by all these challenges. Disadvantages linked with social background, geographical location, sex, ethnic origin, learning difficulties or early leaving from education aggravate the already difficult situation many young people face. Addressing the main challenges for disadvantaged young people through increasing their educational, training and/or employment opportunities and help them become active citizens is essential for social cohesion, inclusion and **reduction of inequalities** in EaP societies and at

⁷ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/64/digital-agenda-for-europe>

⁸ Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment 2019 (KIESE); European Training Foundation - <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/key-indicators-education-skills-and-employment>

⁹ Round one (October 2020): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32020D1388>;

Round two (November 2020): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32020D1650>;

Round three (December 2020): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.LI.2020.426.01.0014.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2020%3A426I%3ATOC>;

Round four (June 2021) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.LI.2021.219.01.0070.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2021%3A219I%3ATOC>.

the heart of EU support to youth. Promoting the inclusion of **young women** in public policy-making with the final objective of achieving a more equal gender balance in public office is a key part of this endeavour.

EU Policy Framework

Building on previous policy commitments, the prioritisation of young people's empowerment was reaffirmed by the March 2020 Joint Communication on the **Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 - Reinforcing Resilience**¹⁰ and the July 2021 Joint Staff Working Document on **Recovery, Resilience and Reform: Eastern Partnership Priorities for 2025**¹¹ outlining the new long-term policy objectives. These documents set out the measures that aim to strengthen resilience, foster sustainable development and deliver tangible results for society. A key element of this policy is a **New Deal for Youth** with a focus on education, employment, and youth participation. In July 2020, the EaP Youth Engagement Summit brought together around 450 active youth leaders and youth workers for a dialogue with EU and EaP policy makers on ongoing EU - EaP cooperation and on the future support under the New Deal for Youth.¹²

Youth is also a general priority for the EU, as outlined in the **EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027**¹³. In particular, the current strategy aims to: bring young people together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, connect youth through learning mobility, online collaboration through Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges, solidarity and intercultural understanding; support to youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work; and foster youth participation in democratic life. With the aim of supporting this latter objective, the structured dialogue with youth has been upgraded as **EU Youth Dialogue** to facilitate exchanges between young people, decision-makers, experts, researchers, and civil society actors. Based on 18-month cycles in which national consultations of young people and youth organisations in each EU member state are conducted on an agreed thematic priority, the EU Youth Dialogue serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection and consultation on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the field of youth. Whilst this policy initiative is not directly applicable to EU Neighbourhood countries, as in other cases (e.g. the **Youth Guarantee**¹⁴ and the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships**¹⁵ related EaP support covered under Regional Action Programme (RAP) 2020) its objectives and approaches as well as best practice examples from implementation can be an inspiration for the Neighbourhood countries.

The European **Council's Conclusions on Youth in External Action**¹⁶, adopted in June 2020, extends the EU's commitment to youth engagement and youth empowerment beyond its borders, recognising the contribution of young people to building stronger, more legitimate, peaceful and democratic societies. It stresses the importance of investing in and working with, by and for youth, and of ensuring the meaningful inclusion and active participation of youth at all levels of society, and in economic and political life. Working in this direction will also promote responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making as called for in the **EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024**¹⁷.

¹⁰ JOIN(2020) 7 final – Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, Reinforcing Resilience - an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all

¹¹ SWD(2021) 186 final – Joint Staff Working Document - Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities

¹² JOIN(2020) 7 final – Joint Communication

¹³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy”, COM(2018) 269 final.

¹⁴ Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee 2020/C 372/01 (OJ C 372).

¹⁵ Launched in July 2013 with a [joint declaration](#) by the European Social Partners (ETUC, Business Europe, UEAPME and CEEP), the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU; see also Council Declaration, 18 Oct. 2013.

¹⁶ 8629/20 (5 June 2020) - Youth in External Action – Council Conclusions - <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8629-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

¹⁷ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, “EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024”, JOIN(2020)5, 25.3.2020.

Relevance and credibility of Partner Country's/Regional Policies and Strategies

Youth socio-economic development is high on the agenda of all EaP partner countries, with youth political participation ensured at varying degrees. All EaP countries have specific youth policies in place, targeted strategies and programmes up to 2020/2025, and state structures responsible for youth affairs.

In **Armenia**, the Youth Policy Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia (MESCS) is currently leading the development of a new Youth Strategy and Action Plan, due to be adopted in 2021. Among others, the new strategy is expected to regulate the participation of youth and civil society in decision-making.

In **Azerbaijan**, the current State Programme on Youth for 2017-2021 governs all youth-related activities, with an ongoing assessment of this strategy set to form the basis of a new post-2021 youth programme. Consultative public councils with participation of civil society (including young people) have been established, and all line ministries are instructed to work with them.

In **Belarus**, policies in the youth field are governed by the Strategy for Development of the National Youth Policy in the Republic of Belarus 2020-2030. Civic participation is listed as one of priorities for the youth sector. In practice, however, young people with independent views have no access to any state support and are experiencing repression by the state authorities.¹⁸ In line with the 12 October 2021 Council conclusions¹⁹ and the review of the EU-Belarus relations which followed, the EU has scaled down bilateral cooperation with authorities at the central level and redirected the financial assistance away from central authorities and towards non-state, local and regional actors.

In **Georgia**, the National Youth Policy Document and subsequent Action Plan for 2015-2020 highlighted raising young people's awareness about civic rights and responsibilities and fostering decision making possibilities and skills as core priorities, while the National Youth Policy Concept for 2020-2030 has envisaged the establishment of sustainable platforms for conducting structural dialogue with young people and youth organisations, at both central and municipal level.

Similarly, in **Moldova**, the country's National Youth Strategy for 2014-2020 sought to promote young people's involvement in participatory democracy, particularly at the local level, setting specific objectives such as a 30% increase in the number of young people involved in local youth councils, and an 80% increase in the number of territorial-administrative units facilitating such structures. In parallel, the Law on Youth also aims to motivate active citizenship and youth participation in decision-making.

In **Ukraine**, the government programme "Youth of Ukraine", adopted in December 2020 and covering the period 2021-2025, lists developing young people's leadership skills, increasing their involvement in decision-making processes, promoting the development of youth advisory bodies, and raising awareness about available tools for civic participation among its principal aims. Such objectives are complemented by the new Law on Youth, adopted in April 2021, which guarantees a minimum level of youth participation in the development and implementation of national youth policy, building on a 2018 government resolution which sets out standard provisions for the establishment of youth advisory bodies at the regional and local levels.

Complementarity with EU and other Donors/Partners

The proposed action is focused on supporting the development of more **structured, meaningful participation** of EaP youth organisations and young people from the EaP countries in policy formulation and decision-making at the local, regional, national, and international levels, as well as on improving the quality of related youth work and fostering young people's active citizenship. As outlined, this central objective is clearly linked

¹⁸ The action will need adaptation to the Belarusian context at components design and implementation stages, with a view to not leaving the BY society and youth behind.

¹⁹ 11661/20 (12 October 2020) – Council Conclusions on Belarus - <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/46076/council-conclusions-on-belarus.pdf>

to EU policy priorities and can also be found in the legal frameworks, strategies and policy programmes of the EaP partners themselves.

The action is part of the broader **regional EU4Youth programme** whose phases I, II and III have already mobilised in total EUR 46.3 million that have been committed under the RAPs 2017-2020). EU4Youth phases I and II will have provided skills development and **employability assistance** to over 18,000 young people from the EaP region, of which more than 60% women and more than 45% disadvantaged youth. Around 120 structures promoting **youth integration and engagement** have been established/supported. **Youth social entrepreneurship** has been another priority area of support over the last years.

The EU4Youth phase II **Youth Engagement Roadmaps project (YER)**, ongoing in 2020 and 2021, supports partner countries in developing and implementing comprehensive, more effective, **evidence-based policy responses**. Content-wise the YER project has focused on strategic key priorities under the New Deal for Youth, including on youth employment partnerships (to promote knowledge sharing from the EU Youth Guarantee) and on youth participation (to promote knowledge sharing from the EU Youth Dialogue), including a.o. through the piloting of youth policy labs, and thereby preparing also the ground for RAP 2020 and this RAP 2021 action.

Building on lessons learned, EU4Youth phase III has started implementation as of Q3/2021, continuing with a focus on **disadvantaged youth** and less privileged regions. The focus of EU4Youth III run until 2025 (i.e. partially in parallel to this action) will be on digital skills development, green youth entrepreneurship, and reinforcing youth-targeted active labour market measures by supporting multi-stakeholder youth employment partnership.

Coordination and support to the EU4Youth programme and all its components will also serve the implementation of this action. An **EU4Youth Alumni Network** was launched to streamline all beneficiaries of EU mobility programmes and youth networks in the EaP countries to increase the outreach and inclusion of disadvantaged youth groups. As all EU4Youth components are partially overlapping in time, synergy and coordination among the components, a coherent **communication approach** and good visibility under the common brand EU4Youth remain essential.

The **Erasmus+ Programme (EUR 215 million for 2014-2020)** is the EU programme supporting education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Under the specific EaP envelope, Eastern Partnership countries participate in **Higher Education** International Credit Mobility, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, Capacity Building in Higher Education and Jean Monet activities. Under the **youth strand** (with no budget earmarked for the EaP region), EaP countries participate in youth mobility projects (both for young people and staff) and non-formal learning activities for youth. Cooperation with Erasmus+ bodies - e.g. European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the SALTO Youth Eastern Europe and Caucasus region²⁰ - will be ensured. The new Erasmus+ phase 2021 – 2027 continues this flagship support with a similar budget and new strands open the EaP countries (VET and Virtual Exchanges).

In terms of **EU-funded bilateral cooperation** at country level supporting youth, the Skills4Jobs programme in Georgia has been supporting the Youth Agency and its reform agenda for the youth sector. In Armenia, the EU Delegation has mobilised technical assistance to support the development of the new youth strategy and action plan. Additional synergies with ongoing and planned **support to civil societies** and with specific actions in the area of human capital development will be sought. In terms of **EU Member States' funding**, future implementers of this action will be encouraged to further explore cooperation and synergies with the **Danish New Democracy Fund**. As an initiative of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported by a consortium of Danish organisations, the Fund aims to strengthen new interregional co-operation and exchange of experience between Denmark and the Eastern Partnership countries, especially relating to culture, employability and youth empowerment.

²⁰ SALTO EECA currently located within the Polish National Agency Foundation for Development of Education System (FDDES) which also deals with the eTwinning National Support Service (NSS), within the eTwinning Plus Programme.

Cooperation with other key initiatives includes the **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum** (EaP CSF), a unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries. The EaP CSF's Working Group 4, focusing on 'Contacts between people', **provides civil society expertise on the thematic priorities of EaP Panel 4**, including the active participation of young people in decision-making, fostering cultural exchanges and facilitating formal and non-formal education and skills development. Members of the WG 4 have the potential to play a particular role in the structured youth dialogue envisaged by the action, by helping to ensure coordination between youth organisations at the national and international levels.

In terms of coordination with other **international organisations**, contacts and exchanges may be sought were relevant with the **Council of Europe** with its youth structures (European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and Joint Council on Youth (CMJ)) as well as the United Nations (UN) Youth Envoy.

EU added value

Considering the above, it is clear that the European Commission's proposal to support more structured youth dialogue in the EaP region reflects also existing policy priorities of EaP governments. The action is intended to build on and strengthen existing structures, rather than to create new ones. In addition, all Eastern partners are already associated to youth actions under the Erasmus+ programme, which provide young people with participation opportunities. However, at the level of policy initiatives, **more exchange, knowledge sharing and cooperation** can help to improve the quality of youth policies, and in particular when it comes to youth participation in policy making.

In fact, the **EU Youth Dialogue** has been well established and is clearly anchored with the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and its Youth Objectives. There is a wealth of good (and less positive) practice available both at EU level and when it comes to the **implementation at the level of Member States** as regards youth dialogue, related mechanisms and institutional set-up and implementation formats.

Along the same lines, under this action it is planned to involve **youth departments and agencies** as well as **youth councils from various EU Member States** in the further development and in the implementation of activities. As a side effect this should help also to further connect, build and strengthen contacts and opportunities for exchange and dialogue between young people and other youth policy stakeholders from the Eastern partner countries and from the European Union.

Although a number of networks, structures, and organisations already exist which may form the basis of the EaP Youth Dialogue, it should be noted that, as much at the civil society level as the governmental one, the development and execution of youth policy is highly fragmented across the EaP region. While presenting a clear challenge for the proposed action, this EU-supported initiative may also **contribute to better inter-institutional coordination** and cooperation, thereby strengthening the overall coherence and impact of policies, at least when it comes to the question of youth participation in decision-making.

In terms of linkages with political dialogue, the **Eastern Partnership architecture** provides an existing policy framework and institutional architecture that the EaP Youth Dialogue can connect with and feed into, not least in terms of **better reflecting the voice of organised youth** and their recommendations. The EaP framework may also potentially provide a platform for Eastern partner countries' government institutions to exchange on good youth policy practice between themselves as well as with EU Member States. The role of the **EaP Panel 4** will be instrumental in enhancing coordination among actions and stakeholders in different areas. The **EaP Youth Forum** taking place under respective EU Presidencies every two years will remain an important opportunity to deepen the dialogue on youth matters, at the presence of young people, youth workers and policy makers.

As part of the 2021-2027 regional programming a first indicative list of regional **Team European Initiatives** (TEIs) have been identified, including youth as one of the priority areas proposed by the European Commission. In case this proposal will be met with interest from EU Member States, the current action, which

actively seeks to build on the EU and Member States' experience working on youth engagement and youth dialogue, can be included in this TEI.

The commitment of the EU's contribution to the Team Europe Initiatives foreseen under this action plan will be complemented by other contributions from Team Europe partners. It is subject to the formal confirmation of each respective partners' meaningful contribution as early as possible. In the event that the TEIs and/or these contributions do not materialise the EU action may continue outside a TEI framework.

2.2. Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis

Investing in, and working with, by and for youth, is of paramount importance to build stronger, more legitimate, peaceful and democratic societies. Young people are **important change makers** and essential partners in the implementation of the common EU-EaP reform and resilience agendas. Yet currently there are insufficient efforts across the board in the EaP countries to engage young people in **policy dialogue and decision-making** at all levels of society, the economy and politics.

Youth is often not sufficiently informed about how policy procedures work, what participation opportunities exist and what is at stake in policy areas that affect their present and future. Besides the **need for more outreach and awareness raising**, there is also a **need to offer more opportunities to develop active citizenship and leadership** skills through non-formal and informal learning opportunities. Such opportunities can often be provided through youth work, but there are **gaps in youth infrastructure** to varying degrees, particularly at the **local level and in rural / periphery areas**.

Statistical data and findings from research are essential elements for evidence-based policy making, including for youth policies and other issues where youth has a stake. In several of the Eastern partner countries there are significant gaps of **statistical data availability**, and there is **little independent research on youth** in general and youth participation in policy making in particular. Some youth surveys have been conducted in recent years, but there is no systematic approach to such research and data collection in place yet.

Where youth dialogue or youth consultations exist, they could be **more systematic and inclusive** in scope. Some of the Eastern partner countries hold regular youth gathering events (such as national youth fora), however, this practice needs to be strengthened and **better linked to the local level**. Moreover, the focus of exchange between public institutions is often focused on youth policy and youth work, whereas young people are also concerned by other policy areas. **Inter-institutional cooperation and coordination** on issues that relate to youth need to be further developed if young people to have meaningful engagement opportunities.

The EU has committed itself to enhancing young people's active participation in democratic life and supporting their political engagement in responding to global challenges. Under the new post-2020 EaP policy framework, the EU will "**increasingly focus on youth participation and leadership**", envisaging the integration of the biennial EaP Youth Forum event into a more structured youth policy dialogue. This dialogue will also strengthen networks among EaP youth councils and other representative youth organisations.

When it comes to **youth organisations**, in particular at local level, they often **lack resources** (including access to funding) and their **institutional and administrative capacity** is often limited and relies heavily on volunteerism. Many **quality resources** of international youth stakeholders exist, but these are **not always accessible to youth in the EaP countries** due to lack of knowledge about them and translations in local languages not being available. The base of **well-trained youth workers** also needs to be broadened in order to facilitate more young people's engagement in youth dialogue.

Cross-cutting issues

The main cross-cutting issues of relevance to the action are: environmental protection & climate change; gender equality & empowerment of women and girls; human rights; disability; democracy; and conflict

sensitivity, peace and resilience. Considerations relating to these important issues, and measures to address and or mitigate the issues and challenges identified, are set out in section 3.3.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues

National Youth Councils and other representative youth organisations from all six EaP countries will play a key role implementing the EaP Youth Dialogue pilot, and accompanying further youth sector capacity building. They will also be assisted in strengthening intra-regional networking, in view of promoting common positions that can feed into the Eastern Partnership's institutional architecture.

In **Armenia**, organisations such as the Armenian Progressive Youth NGO, the EcoHub Foundation for Sustainable Development and Active Citizenship and others could serve as valuable partners. The National Youth Council of Armenia has not been active lately and is not recognised by most of local and international stakeholders.

In **Azerbaijan**, the National Assembly of Youth Organizations (NAYORA), which currently associates 124 organisations, has experience in representing youth organisations at the regional and national level and providing support for dialogue, cooperation and the exchange of good practices between affiliated organisations. It cooperates very closely with the Azerbaijan government.

In **Belarus**, the Belarusian National Youth Council (RADA), registered in Vilnius, would represent a well-established and independent partner in the country, compared to the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) GONGO.

In **Georgia**, the National Council of Youth Organisations gathers over 45 NGOs working for young people and has more than 25 years of experience. It is also a full member of the European Youth Forum, providing scope for further network building.

In **Moldova**, most youth organisations are represented by the National Youth Council of Moldova, established in 1999 and specialising in projects dealing with formal and non-formal education. The Council gathers 58 organisations and is a full member of the EYF and the International Council of youth organisations of the Francophonie (CIJEF). Another potential partner organisation is the National Network of District and Municipal Youth Councils, which unites 23 organisations.

In **Ukraine**, the National Youth Council of Ukraine (NYCU) represents 150 member organisations and was instrumental in establishing the Eurodesk Centre Ukraine in 2018. Since 2019, the National Ukrainian Youth Union (NUMO) has also been active, representing eight all-Ukrainian youth associations and more than 160 student councils.

Youth ministries, youth departments and youth agencies will be the other key actors for the implementation of more structured participatory youth dialogue. The action will provide support to increase the capacity of staff in public institutions to facilitate more engagement with youth and to improve evidence based policy making.

In **Armenia** the main body responsible for the preparation and execution of youth policy is the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS), established in 2019. The Ministry works out and implements national programmes that focus on young people, and watches over the fulfilment of Armenia's international commitments around youth, while also supporting international youth exchanges. The MoESCS also has responsibility for developing statistics, analyses, and projections concerning young citizens and for carrying out dialogue with youth organisations (within a Public Council presided by the minister).

In **Azerbaijan** the main body responsible for implementing the youth policy is the Ministry of Youth and Sports, established in 1994. Its main tasks include ensuring the right conditions for young people's development and supervising youth organisations. The Ministry is also responsible for the implementation of multiannual programmes under the Law on Youth Policy.

In **Belarus**, the Ministry of Education is the main body responsible for implementing youth policy. In line with the 12 October Council conclusions²¹ and the review of the EU-Belarus relations which followed, the EU has scaled down bilateral cooperation with authorities at the central level and redirected the financial assistance away from central authorities and towards non-state, local and regional actors. In this context, no government-level partnership will be established with the country in the framework of the EaP Youth Dialogue.

In **Georgia**, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports has responsibility for coordinating activities under the Georgian Youth Action Plan. The Ministry contains the Youth Affairs Department, which elaborates legislation concerning young people's access to employment, student self-government, and equal opportunities in all spheres. It also supports participation in international programmes and promotes non-formal education. The new Youth Agency of Georgia is now sub-ordinated to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.

In **Moldova**, responsibilities related to shaping the youth policy are assumed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. The Ministry is responsible for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national youth policy. Representatives of the Ministry are members of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) as well as of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC).

In **Ukraine**, youth policy is shaped by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and more particularly the ministry's Youth Policy Department.

Other public institutions in the six EaP countries: besides the public institutions directly in charge of youth policy, there are other ministries, agencies and services involved in youth-related policy making, including at municipal level. Depending on the selected thematic focus areas and related activity planning, a number of these institutions will be invited to participate.

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is the largest umbrella organisation of NGOs from the EaP region and the EU. Within the Forum's regional (EU-EaP) level and national level structures, its Working Group 4 – “Contacts between People” – focuses on a number of areas including Education, Youth, Culture, Research and Innovation. While these areas are of particular importance for youth, young people feel that not enough attention is paid to the youth sector itself.

National youth departments / youth agencies as well as national youth councils from EU Member States will be informed about the action and invited to play an active part in its implementation. In fact, with their experience around the youth dialogue inside the EU they can share valuable experience. NYCs are generally members of the European Youth Forum (EYF), which unites over 100 member organisations representing millions of young people across Europe. As a strategic partner the EYF will be regularly informed and closely associated to the action.

The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership is another strategic partner to be associated to the action. The partnership was created to foster synergies between the priorities and programmes pursued by the two partner institutions in the youth field. The partnership has the function of a “think tank” and a laboratory, gathering and producing knowledge, translating it for effective use in youth policy and practice, and developing and testing new approaches, considering traditional themes and innovative trends.

The Council of Europe (CoE) youth department is part of the Directorate for Democratic Participation within the CoE Directorate General for Democracy. The department elaborates guidelines, programmes and legal instruments for the development of coherent and effective youth policies at local, national and European levels. It provides funding and educational support for international youth activities aiming to promote youth citizenship, youth mobility and the values of human rights, democracy and cultural pluralism. It seeks to bring together and disseminate expertise and knowledge about the life situations, aspirations and ways of expression of young Europeans.

²¹ 11661/20 (12 October 2020) – Council Conclusions on Belarus

Key target groups include *inter alia*:

- Young women and young men in the Eastern partner countries,
- Youth organisations and youth workers,
- Relevant national, regional and local authorities

A specific focus will be on including actors from rural/remote areas, and disadvantaged youth in particular.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to increase the influence young people in the EaP region have in determining policy outcomes.

The Specific Objectives (Outcomes) of this action are to

1. Increase the ability of youth organisations and public institutions to jointly implement more **participatory and structured policy dialogue** in the context of the EaP architecture as well as at national and sub-national levels;
2. Improve the quality and outreach of youth work for **mobilising and engaging more young people** from remote / less advantaged areas in the EaP region.

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

- 1.1 contributing to **Specific Objective 1**: Youth councils, other representative youth organisations and their constituent members from the EaP region have increased capacity to carry out their mandate;
- 1.2 contributing to **Specific Objective 1**: Staff of youth ministries, youth departments and agencies or other selected public institutions at various levels trained on good practices of youth participation in policy making and methods to improve evidence-based policy making in selected policy areas;
- 1.3 contributing to **Specific Objective 1**: A format for more participatory and structured youth dialogue at Eastern Partnership, national and sub-national levels established or strengthened.
- 2.1 contributing to **Specific Objective 2**: Institutional capacity of selected youth organisations and other youth structures at sub-national level in the EaP region enhanced to design and implement youth projects;
- 2.2 contributing to **Specific Objective 2**: Selected youth organisations and other youth structures at sub-national level in the EaP region have piloted innovative practices engaging young people in up to three selected areas relevant to youth - 1) climate change and environment, 2) inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and 3) a possible topic be selected.

3.2. Indicative Activities

All activities that involve meeting and inter-action may be carried out **in-situ, in hybrid format or online**. The carbon footprint of activities shall be continuously assessed, and if travel for physical meetings is considered essential, all means that can reduce emissions shall be preferred.

Depending on the type of activities, especially those related to specific objective 1, they are to be further developed and implemented in close cooperation with national youth councils and other representative youth organisations and/or with national youth agencies or youth departments in the EaP countries.

Activities related to Output 1.1 - *Youth councils, other representative youth organisations and their constituent members from the EaP region have increased capacity to carry out their mandate* – may include:

- Participatory needs assessment and development of a **regional capacity building programme aimed at supporting greater youth engagement** in policy making at various levels, to be developed in close cooperation with national youth councils and other representative youth organisations from the EaP countries, with specific attention also to involvement of disadvantaged youth, including from rural areas and other periphery locations;
- Identification of most relevant existing **resources for youth capacity building** such as training materials, guidelines, online platforms and similar (e.g. from SALTO Resource Centres, EU-CoE Partnership, EU Member States' national youth councils, Council of Europe youth department, European Youth Forum, and other key stakeholders) for adaptation and translation in Eastern partner countries' local languages and their publication and distribution or creating access;
- If needed, in line with the above, development of selected **new capacity building materials**, in particular to support trainings on advocacy, communication and outreach, project and event management as well as in selected thematic policy areas (climate change and environment, inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and a third possible topic be selected);
- Taking into account existing stakeholders, structures and their offers, development of a **regional Training of Trainers initiative** targeted specifically at youth engagement in policy making and integration into existing pool of trainers or support to set-up of new training pools or networks of trainers also at national level;
- Under regional capacity building plan, implementation of **capacity building activities** (trainings, workshops, field studies, study visits, etc.) with youth at EaP intra-regional, national and sub-national levels in close cooperation with youth councils and other existing youth work structures;
- Secretarial and expertise **support to EaP intra-regional thematic working** groups to be established, to operate mainly online, but also meeting at least once physically per year in the region;
- **Monitoring and evaluation** support for above capacity building programme.

Activities related to Output 1.2 - *Staff of youth ministries, youth departments and agencies or other selected public institutions at various levels trained on good practices of youth participation in policy making and methods to improve evidence-based policy making in selected policy areas* – may include:

- Participatory needs assessment and development of a regional **capacity building programme** with activities both at EaP regional level and country level on good practices of **youth participation in policy making**, and methods to improve evidence-based policy making;
- Implementation of training activities, support to knowledge exchange and **networking among youth agencies and youth departments** from EaP region as well as with interested EU Member States;
- **Study visits** (virtual or in-situ) to selected EU Member States to learn and exchange about inter-ministerial cooperation and communication models, partnership practice with youth councils;
- Secretarial and expert **support to standing EaP working group of youth ministries, youth departments or agencies** with at least one physical meeting per year in support of EaP intra-regional exchange;
- **Other capacity building needs** in line with replies from EaP partner countries – based on country-level consultations;
- Development of capacity to collect and analyse statistical data related to youth, incl. related inter-ministerial cooperation, also in view of **development of a regional youth index** with selected indicators (see output 1.3);
- **Cooperation** with German-French Youth Office, German-Polish Youth Office or similar EU Member State entities as well as EU4Dialogue to coordinate and/or jointly implement activities relating to reconciliation, peacebuilding and promotion of inter-cultural dialogue (to be further defined with mentioned stakeholders in upcoming stages).

Activities related to Output 1.3 – *A format for more participatory and structured youth dialogue at Eastern Partnership, national and sub-national levels established or strengthened* – may include:

- Support to **outreach, communication and awareness raising** campaigns to inform and mobilise youth to participate in EaP Youth Dialogue activities;
- Development of an **annual youth survey** to be implemented in all EaP countries, accompanying the EaP Youth Dialogue process;
- Organisation support for the **organisation of local level youth fora**, where possible to existing structures such as local youth councils, local youth centres or youth organisations, and in cooperation with municipalities and other local governance / administration bodies;
- Based on piloting experience under previous EU4Youth, organisation and implementation of **youth policy labs on topics of youth thematic working groups** and topics selected as priority themes for EaP Youth Dialogue;
- **Organisation and expert support for one national youth forum** event per country per year as a culmination of sub-national fora and other youth dialogue activities, to be implemented in close cooperation between national youth agency or youth department and national youth councils and other representative youth organisations;
- Taking into account and **cooperating as appropriate with existing structures** (e.g. EU-CoE youth partnership) support to independent youth research, including the development of a regional youth index, to enhance the evidence base for youth policy making and to accompany the youth dialogue process.

Activities related to Output 2.1 – *Institutional capacity of selected youth organisations and other youth structures at sub-national level in the EaP region enhanced to design and implement youth projects* and Output 2.2 – *Selected youth organisations and other youth structures at sub-national level in the EaP region have piloted innovative practices engaging young people in up to three selected areas relevant to youth - 1) climate change and environment, 2) inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and 3) a possible topic be selected* – may include – may include:

- Development of a multi-stage **EU4Youth small grants scheme**, including information sessions, actors mapping, selection procedure, targeted support and guidance in the development and implementation of small-scale grant projects;
- **Outreach and organisation of local level** and/or online information sessions in all EaP countries to inform about grant programme and to support mapping of potentially interested youth organisations and other youth structures (such as youth centres, local youth councils, etc.), in particular from remote / less advantaged areas;
- Organisation of training sessions on participatory project design and implementation and on various aspects of project **management** (finances, advocacy, event management, monitoring, reporting, etc.);
- Supporting and coaching pre-selected organisations and other youth structures in **project proposal development**, including facilitation of partnerships;
- Call for proposals for **small-scale partnership projects** between youth organisations and other youth structures active at sub-national level (preferably partnerships with other youth organisations and/or youth structures from other EaP countries and/or EU Member States) on up to three selected thematic areas that are relevant to youth;
- **Evaluation and selection of projects** for financing as part of this EU4Youth small grant programme
- **Grant management**, incl. monitoring of small grants as well as continuous support, coaching, and exchanges of experiences for small grant beneficiaries

Besides the institutional capacity building dimension for youth organisations and other youth structures at sub-national level, the thematic areas for the future small grant support shall be further **aligned with the priority areas to be selected in the context of output 1.1** at the implementation stage so as to support the dynamic of the EaP Youth Dialogue process.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

The environmental and climate change risk screenings carried out in the design stage concluded that no further action was required. This is because the action's activities relate primarily to the facilitation of dialogue and capacity building rather than physical infrastructure and initiatives. Nonetheless, environmental considerations will play a particularly central role in the proposed EaP Youth Dialogue, since 'climate change and environment' has been identified as a thematic priority area for policy discussions among young people and with decision-makers, as well as for capacity building projects funded by the action. Throughout the implementation, e.g. when it comes to organisation of meetings (depending on the context digital and hybrid formats may be priorities over in-situ meetings) and selected means of travel which shall consider carbon footprint whenever possible.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2015²² aims at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment throughout all EU external action. Furthermore, in the sustainable development framework, gender equality is a specific goal and cross-cutting vector for achieving the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development (SDG No 5 "Gender equality").

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that, while gender equality is not the principal objective of the action, it is nonetheless a significant objective and central to the project's activities.

Although human capital development among women and girls is steadily improving across the Eastern Partnership countries – thanks in no small part to relative equality in educational attainment and literacy between boys and girls – one area where much more needs to be done is in participation and leadership. For instance, in the parliaments of the six EaP countries, women account for between 18 and 40 per cent of elected representatives²³ with evidence to suggest that these figures are even lower at the local level of governance, and that women are equally under-represented at senior levels of the civil service. This points to a series of structural barriers to women's full and equal participation in political life, which the action will seek to address through fervent non-discrimination practices and actively reaching out to young women and youth organisations with proven experience in women's empowerment. Through the provision of leadership skills development, and a platform for airing views and engaging in meaningful policy dialogue, the EaP Youth Dialogue will play a small part in redressing this inequality. When it comes to the small grants, priority will be given to projects targeting disadvantaged and marginalised groups, including young women and girls (especially in rural areas and non-capital cities and towns).

Human Rights

The action places the empowerment of young people and the fulfilment of their potential at its very heart. Freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly will all be actively promoted by the EaP Youth Dialogue, which seeks to engage young people in democratic life and serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas. Recognising the systemic under-representation of women and girls, and the particular challenges to active participation faced by vulnerable youth (including people with disabilities, and religious

²² GAP III [JOIN\(2020\)17](#)

²³ IPU Parline, Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments (April 2021), <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=4&year=2021>.

and ethnic minority groups, among others), the EaP Youth Dialogue will take extra steps to ensure the meaningful participation of marginalised youth. Indeed, the fact that the Dialogue will rely on existing networks of youth organisations, with decades of collective experience in youth engagement and grassroots implantation in local communities (including in the regions), attests to the commitment of this action to the empowerment of all groups of young people.

This outreach to disadvantaged groups – including in rural areas – is also enshrined in the small grants component of the action. Working with governmental, non-governmental and international stakeholders across all relevant domains (education, employment, social inclusion, etc.), these grants will fund projects that empower young people and foster their skills development, providing them with the support they need to overcome barriers to participation (in public life, education, training, employment) and to enjoy their full rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that the inclusion of disabled persons is a significant objective of the action. The action recognises the systemic under-representation of numerous population groups, and the particular challenges to active participation in democratic life faced by vulnerable youth, including young people with disabilities. As a result, the EaP Youth Dialogue will take extra steps to ensure the meaningful participation of marginalised youth, including by drawing on the expertise and experience of established youth organisation with a proven track record of inclusivity. Moreover, social inclusion will be a priority theme for discussions within the proposed EaP Youth Dialogue, giving young people with disabilities a platform to share their own experiences, and seeking to propose policy responses to those particular challenges.

Democracy

The action's core aim is to foster the participation of young people from the EaP countries in democratic life at the local/sub-national, national, and EaP-regional levels. Notably, it seeks to ensure a structured dialogue between young people and their representative organisations, and decision makers at all levels of government. Such interaction between citizens and political representatives is an essential pillar of democracy, and will ensure that young people's voices are better heard. In addition to establishing platforms for exchanges of views between decision makers and young people, the action also seeks to raise awareness of existing mechanisms for participatory democracy in the EaP countries (thus helping to increase young people's use of such mechanisms), and to build the capacities of young people and youth organisations in the fields of advocacy and public communication. The action also aims to give a particular platform to selected thematic policy areas such as education, employment, social inclusion, health, climate and environment, peace and reconciliation, thus giving young people a stake in democratic discourse around matters of particular priority for them.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The EaP Youth Dialogue proposed by the action will bring together young people from across all six EaP countries – including those with historically tense relationships, and those affected by conflict. In serving as a platform for exchanges of views, peer learning, and the communication of common priorities for young people in the region, the EaP Youth Dialogue will contribute to the fostering of peaceful relations and cooperation between national, ethnic, and other communities which may not otherwise have engaged in meaningful dialogue and collaboration, due to existing conflicts. By ensuring such peaceful communication between young people, the action will counter existing conflictual narratives, and, in the long term, will potentially contribute to the next generation of leaders in the 6 EaP countries having a better mutual

understanding and respect. This is an essential component of peacebuilding. Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding potential shall be mainstreamed further when designing the future activities in more detail

3.4. Risks and Lessons Learned

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
1- external environment	R1 - Unstable political situation in EaP countries	H	M	In Belarus cooperation will have to be limited to non-state actors and to organisations that are not directly associated with the ruling political system; security and safety of youth involved in activities has to be first priority,
2- planning, processes and systems	R2 - Insufficient capacity of youth organisations to apply for and manage grants	M	M	The actions itself has been designed to build capacity of youth organisations; as for the grant scheme, preparatory and supporting measures are planned to enable access for smaller organisations and the minimum and maximum amounts have been adapted to reflect the needs and capacities of youth organisations.
2- planning, processes and systems	R3 - Difficulties to reach and include youth from rural/periphery locations as well as other disadvantaged youth segments	M	M	Outreach, awareness raising and communication have been given a central role under the action which foresees explicitly to work towards inclusiveness.
3- people and the organisation	R4 - Public institutions in EaP countries not ready to cooperate	M	H	Success of EaP Youth Dialogue will be highly dependent on commitment by government institutions; capacity building offer to them may increase willingness to engage; the further planning process should be accompanied by policy dialogue
1- external environment	R5 - Difficulties to implement dialogue activities post-COVID-19 and post-war	L	M	It is expected that by the time of implementation more direct encounters should become possible, and in addition some activities will be also conducted online or in hybrid formats; working across conflict lines should be enabled by the multilateral nature of the initiative.
1- external environment	R6 - Limitations in enabling environment hindering organisations from all countries to participation	M	M	Policy dialogue should support the action, notably to achieve progress on issues such as registration of civil society organisation and funding from foreign sources.

5- communication and information	R7 - Young people not interested or not ready to participate	M	M	The action foresees engagement of youth in particular at local level, with outreach and awareness raising as well as provision of resources in local languages; engagement of qualified youth workers should help reducing participation barriers.
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Lessons Learned:

The proposed action is phase IV of the **EU4Youth programme** launched in 2017 (EUR 46.3 million funding 2017 - 2020) as one of the building blocks of the EaP Youth and Education Package. EU4Youth fosters the active participation of young people (especially disadvantaged young people) in society and their employability, by supporting youth participation, active citizenship, mobility, human capital development, employability and employment. While an evaluation of the EU4Youth programme’s earlier phases will be launched in 2021, a number of experiences from the last four years can already be drawn upon for the present action. These include effectively addressing previously-identified challenges around the implementation, monitoring and visibility of **capacity building via small grants schemes**, learning lessons on **supporting disadvantaged youth** based on prior actions in the field of employability, and expanding best practices in **coordination, planning and partnerships** – namely by replicating the benefits drawn from coordination and support assistance from the EU4Youth service contract team, Youth Engagement Roadmaps with partner countries, and strategic partnerships with key agencies and institutions on the ground.

3.5. Intervention Logic

To improve and innovate public policies in the Eastern Partnership countries, young people have an important role to play. The potential of youth to give meaningful contributions to policy making and active citizenship at various levels is however not fully recognised, enabled and supported. Considering the importance given to youth under the Joint Communication on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 and in line with the principles of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, this Action therefore aims (Overall Objective/Impact) to **increase the influence young people in the EaP region have in determining policy outcomes**. The action consists of two component that are expected to mutually inform and reinforce each other during the implementation stages.

The specific objectives (outcomes) of this action are therefore two-fold:

First, taking inspiration from the Youth Dialogue inside the EU, the action aims to strengthen and develop similar structures that can support greater youth participation in policymaking and better, evidence-based policies on issues concerning youth. Accordingly, the first specific objective (Outcome) is to **increase the ability of youth organisations and public institutions to jointly implement more participatory and structured policy dialogue in the context of the EaP architecture as well as at national and sub-national levels**. The action will support related capacity building, of youth councils and other representative structures on the one side and of youth ministries, youth departments and agencies or other relevant public institutions on the other side. The action also foresees to assist these key actors in jointly piloting the implementation of more participatory and structured policy dialogue at Eastern Partnership as well as at national and sub-national levels. For the international level, the Eastern Partnership policy framework and its institutional architecture are prepared to give more voice to youth, but for meaningful input a bottom-up process is required that strengthens youth participation in the respective local realities in the Eastern Partnership countries in the first place. Being part of a regional EU programme, intra-regional networking and exchange between the key stakeholders from Eastern partner countries as well as with the EU shall contribute to relationship building, exchange and mutual learning.

Second, besides the need for more structured youth engagement in policy making, youth organisations and other youth structures (e.g. local level youth councils, youth centres, etc.) in the six Eastern partner countries often lack resources and capacities to implement quality youth work and to reach out to more young people that could be mobilised to contribute to public affairs. As has been identified, such lack of resources and capacities is particularly recurrent at local level, outside capitals or other big cities, i.e. in remote or otherwise less advantaged areas. The second specific objective (Outcome) of the action therefore is to **improve the quality and outreach of youth work for mobilising and engaging more young people from remote/less advantaged areas in the EaP region.**

For this purpose, empowerment, capacity building and more opportunities are needed, both at organisational and at individual levels. In particular, it is foreseen to invite sub-national level youth organisations and other youth structures to take part in a multi-stage capacity building and small grants programme. Under such EU4Youth small grant programme smaller organisations and entities will be supported and coached to develop and propose youth-led projects for financing. These projects shall pilot innovative practices that engage more young people, in particular from remote / less advantaged areas in up to three selected areas relevant to youth. Climate change and environment has been set as a first priority topic, up to two additional thematic areas will be selected. The grant scheme support structures will also facilitate partnerships and cross-country exchange on selected topics. This in turn is expected to further reinforce the capacities to engage in youth dialogue.

At the level of individuals, more young people are expected to have participation opportunities which should allow them to develop of citizenship competencies for constructive action, enabling youth to examine issues of local and global significance, to help them understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, and to engage in positive interactions with people of different backgrounds. These expected results are captured under the second Specific Objective, which is to develop the quality of youth work and active citizenship of young people in the EaP region, incl. through awareness raising, advocacy, capacity building, as well as networking and exchange across borders.

3.6. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	Young people in the EaP region have more influence in determining policy outcomes	1 Legislation adopted and policy decisions issued after systematic youth participation process 2 Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in youth or student organisations, by country	1 Not available 2 Baseline to be established during inception phase	1 to be established during inception 2 depends on baseline; inception phase	1 Project internal monitoring/research under the project 2 to be clarified (EACEA) what practice inside EU	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Increased ability of youth organisations and public institutions to jointly implement more participatory and structured policy dialogue in the context of the EaP architecture as well as at national and sub-national levels	1.1 Number of policy recommendations published at Youth Fora at EaP intra-regional and country levels 1.2 Number of policy recommendations by youth at EaP events	1.1 0 1.2 0	1.1 12 1.2 12	1.1 Project internal monitoring/research under the project 1.2 Project internal monitoring/research under the project	Political situation in EaP countries will be stable enough
Outcome 2	Quality and outreach of youth work improved for mobilising and engaging more young people from remote/less advantaged areas in the EaP region	2.1 Locations in EaP region where beneficiaries of small grants are based 2.2. Percentage of young people surveyed who consider that they became more active citizens	2.1 non-existing 2.2 to be added before adoption	2.1 Several remote/less advantaged locations per country 2.2 to be added before adoption	2.1 Project internal monitoring: list / map with geo locations 2.2 EU4Youth results framework monitoring; annual end-beneficiary survey	Youth organisations have sufficient institutional and administrative capacity to apply and manage grants
Output 1 related to Outcome 1	1.1 Youth councils, other representative youth organisations and their constituent member organisations from the EaP region have increased capacity to carry out their mandate	1.1.1 Number of participants in capacity building activities 1.1.2 Number of capacity building activities	1.1.1 0 1.1.2 0	1.1.1 600 1.1.2 30	1.1.1 + 1.1.2 Project internal monitoring	Youth from rural/periphery locations as well as other disadvantaged youth can be reached and engaged
Output 2 related to Outcome 1	1.2 Staff of youth ministries, youth departments and agencies or other selected public institutions at various levels trained on good practices of youth participation in policy making and methods to improve evidence-	1.2.1 Number of staff from public institutions trained, per country 1.2.2 Number of exchange activities between public institutions, a) from EaP countries and EU Member States, b) EaP intra-regional	1.2.1 0 1.2.2 0	1.2.1 120 1.2.2 10	1.2.1+1.2.2 Project internal monitoring	Public institutions in EaP countries are ready to cooperate and

	based policy making in selected policy areas					have their staff participate
Output 3 related to Outcome 1	1.3 A format for more participatory and structured youth dialogue at Eastern Partnership, national, sub-national and levels established or strengthened	1.3.1 Number of Youth Fora organised yearly at various levels 1.3.2 Number of young people (annually) who participated in youth dialogue activities at various levels	1.3.1 to be added before adoption 1.3.2 0	1.3.1 to be added before adoption 1.3.2 60,000	1.3.1 Data from youth ministries, youth departments 1.3.2 Data from youth ministries; project internal monitoring	Dialogue activities will be feasible in post-COVID-19 and post-war context
Output 1 related to Outcome 2	2.1 Institutional capacity of selected youth organisations and other youth structures at sub-national level in the EaP region enhanced to design and implement youth projects	2.1.1 Number of youth organisations and other youth structures which participated in outreach/information events about small grants programme 2.1.2 Number of youth organisations and other youth structures supported during capacity building phase	2.1.1 0 2.1.2 0	2.1.1 450 2.1.2 90	2.1.1+2.1.2 Project internal monitoring	Enabling environment and political situation will allow organisations from all countries to apply for grants
Output 2 related to Outcome 2	2.2 Selected youth organisations and other youth structures at sub-national level in the EaP region have piloted innovative practices engaging young people in up to three selected areas relevant to youth - 1) climate change and environment, 2) inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and 3) a possible topic be selected	2.2.1 Number of projects implemented under the grant scheme 2.2.2 Number of participants in project activities under the grant scheme	2.2.1 0 2.2.2 0	2.2.1 30 2.2.2 900	2.2.1 2.2.2	Young people are interested and ready to make use of opportunities offered

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

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

4.2. 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 and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.2.1. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity

This action may be implemented in indirect management with a pillar-assessed entity / a consortium of such entities, to operate in partnership with EU Member State youth agencies or comparable EU Member State public bodies, EU local authorities, other EU public bodies with competences in the youth field, EU and EaP NGOs, International Organisations. The pillar-assessed agency which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- Strong capacity and track record in the area of EU external cooperation,
- Strong capacity and track record in EU funded youth and/or education projects,
- Proven project management experience, incl. capacity building for youth or other civil society organisations.
- Experience in conceiving, managing, and steering sub-granting schemes, in particular for the involvement of smaller organisations.

The implementation by this entity/consortium pertains to the entire action, with the aim to reach the objectives as set out in the intervention logic.

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

Should the exchanges and negotiations with a pillar-assessed entity fail with no possibility to implement the action under indirect management as described under section 4.2.1, the competent authorizing officer is entitled to recur to implementing the activities related to outcome 1 via **procurement under direct management**. Under the same scenario, the activities related to specific objective 2, and in particular the design and implementation of the multi-stage grant scheme, will either have to be redesigned for direct management or another implementing partner under indirect management (e.g. international organisations with pillar assessment for running a small-grant scheme) would need to be found.

4.3. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other

duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

4.4. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Third-party contribution, in currency identified
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.4		
Indirect management with and EU agency or consortium of EU agencies for both objectives		
Objective 1 -Youth policy dialogue	2 500 000	
Objective 2 -Youth activation at local level	2 500 000	
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	0- will be covered by another decision] ²⁴	N.A.
Communication and visibility – cf. section 6	N.A.	N.A.
Contingencies ²⁵	0	N.A.
Totals	5 000 000	

4.5. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

A **project steering committee** will be created and organised by the lead implementing partner. It will meet at least once per year, including representatives of relevant **Commission** services and the implementing partners. **Authorities from EaP partner countries, EaP Civil Society Forum** and the **European Youth Forum** will be invited as and when needed. The action and its sub-components will be implemented in close cooperation with the **EU Delegations** in the Partner Countries. Results achieved will be presented at the EaP panel meetings, as well as in other high-level meetings. Given its role as Contracting Authority and final monitoring body, DG NEAR will chair the steering committee and discuss with implementing partners issues and concerns regarding their activities within this action.

The **steering committee** shall: (a) provide an opinion on the work programmes of the components of the action; (b) discuss objectives, activities and expected results; (c) discuss progress, impact, and challenges to implementation; (e) share information on other relevant actions in the region and on Partner Countries' efforts to reform their policies, in line with policy recommendation provided within the action; (f) ensure donors and stakeholders coordination. The components work programmes will be presented by the implementing partners and approved by the Commission, in line with discussions at the steering committee.

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.

²⁴ Where the action is not covered by a financing agreement (see section 4.1), put 'will be covered by another decision' as it is unlikely that evaluation and audit contracts on this action would be concluded within N+1. These contracts have to be authorised by another Financing Decision.

²⁵ Consider that contracts where no financing agreement is concluded, contingencies have to be covered by individual and legal commitments by 31 December of N+1.

5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

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

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).

In particular, the logframe indicators have been aligned to the extent possible with the EU4Youth results framework which has been developed based on the first three phases of the programme. The implementers should report on the achievement of the indicator presented in the logframe linking to sources of verification and provide data for the overall EU4Youth results framework monitoring. Guidance and assistance to the performance monitoring will be provided by the EU4Youth coordination and support project (financed from EU4Youth III under RAP 2020) which is also in charge of keeping the overall EU4Youth programme's intervention logic and results framework up to date.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the fact that a mid-term evaluation for the entire EU4Youth initiative is planned for 2021/2022, an evaluation specifically for the purposes of this Action Document will not be carried out for this phase.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The financing of an evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a Financing Decision.

5.3. Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

For communicating on Team Europe Initiatives, the EU and its Member States can rely on the specific guidance on the Team Europe visual identity: