

ANNEX

**to Commission Decision adopting a
support programme to raise public awareness on EU enlargement and neighbourhood
policies for 2021-2023**

Multiannual work programme
This document constitutes the work programme within the meaning of Article 110(2) of the
Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046)

1 IDENTIFICATION

	2021	2022	2023
Beneficiary	Public in the EU Member States and the enlargement and neighbourhood regions		
CRIS/ABAC commitment	2021/042-557	2022/042-988	2023/043-244
Total cost	EUR 2 250 000	EUR 2 250 000	EUR 2 250 000
Budget line	Budget line: 14.20.04.03		
Management mode	Direct management by the European Commission		
Final date for contracting	31/12/2022	31/12/2023	31/12/2024
Final date for operational implementation	31/12/2025	31/12/2026	31/12/2027
Programming and implementing unit	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, unit A2 Interinstitutional Relations and Communication		

2. CONTEXT

Over the past years, the Commission has strengthened the credibility of its enlargement policy and improved its transformative power by ensuring a stronger focus on addressing fundamental reforms early in the enlargement process, including rule of law, economic governance and public administration reforms. These strands are interlinked and progress in

these areas will be key to determining when countries are ready to join the EU. In February 2020, the Commission adopted proposals to improve the accession process¹, and at the EU-Western Balkans Summit on 6 May 2020², EU leaders reaffirmed the EU's determination to intensify further its engagement with the region and welcomed the Western Balkan partners' pledge to carry out necessary reforms thoroughly and vigorously.

The EU's enlargement policy contributes to mutual benefits of peace, security and prosperity in Europe. It strengthens the EU's political and economic strength and has a powerful transformative effect on the countries concerned. A well-prepared accession process ensures enlargement is not at the expense of the EU's effectiveness.

The current enlargement agenda covers the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and Turkey. The accession process is rigorous, built on strict but fair conditionality, established criteria and the principle of own merit. This is crucial for the credibility of enlargement policy, for providing incentives to enlargement countries to pursue far-reaching reforms and for ensuring the support of the Europeans.

According to the winter 2020-2021 Eurobarometer survey³, overall a slight majority of Europeans (46%) is in favour of the EU further enlarging to include other countries in the future. However, in 9 out of 28 Member States, a majority of respondents is against new countries joining the EU. The public expects to see real evidence of the effectiveness of the EU accession process and its transformative power for the countries concerned, as well as the benefits for the EU as a whole. At the same time, disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference leads to the spread of EU hostile narratives, which are obstructing EU efforts in the enlargement region. The EU institutions, together with Member States, are addressing these issues by promoting an informed and facts-based debate to reduce the space for disinformation and information manipulation in the public arena and by raising awareness of disinformation activities in the region.

In 2021 and in the following years, the Commission's main communication emphasis in the Western Balkans will be on the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan⁴, aimed to spur the long-term recovery, accelerate a green and digital transition, and foster regional cooperation and convergence with the EU.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) governs the EU's relations with 16 of the EU's closest eastern and southern neighbours. To the South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine**, Syria and Tunisia; and to the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Russia takes part in cross-border cooperation activities under the ENP but is not a part of the ENP as such.

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

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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

¹ European Commission Communication from February 2020, COM(2020) 57 final, on "Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans".

² EU-Western Balkans Zagreb Summit Declaration of 6 May 2020:
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/05/06/zagreb-declaration-6-may-2020/>

³ Standard Eurobarometer 94 Winter 2020 2021,:

<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2355><https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2355>

⁴ Economic and Investment Plan, Brussels, 6.10.2020 COM(2020) 641 final

The European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy ('the High Representative') published a Joint Communication titled 'Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy'⁵ in November 2015. The revised ENP strongly emphasises two assumptions:

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

In the Eastern Neighbourhood region, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) complements the ENP and provides the policy framework for the relations between the EU and its Eastern partners. In recent years, the EU has substantially reshaped its approach in the region by developing a clearly defined policy framework based on the real impact of the EU's actions on individuals across the EaP region. In this context, the '20 Deliverables for 2020', based on four priority areas (stronger economy, stronger governance, stronger connectivity, stronger society), were endorsed by the EU Member States and the six Eastern partners⁶. This framed not only the EU's policy and cooperation but also the EU's communication in the region. In 2019, the initiative celebrated its 10th anniversary, which was marked by a broad consultation with stakeholders across the EU and EaP. Based on these contributions, a Joint Communication was adopted⁷ in March 2020, providing for the long-term policy objectives of the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020 and setting out the measures that aim to strengthen resilience, foster sustainable development and deliver tangible results for society, which will be reflected in future communication activities. The May 2020 Council Conclusions endorsed⁸ the Joint Communication. A joint staff working document on the EaP was published on 2 July 2021 setting out the priorities for the coming period. This will be the basis for discussions with all partners ahead of the Eastern Partnership summit in December 2021.

This strengthened and coordinated approach has already led to a better understanding of and increased credibility for the EU among people across the EaP. According to the 2020 survey, 49% of Eastern partner countries' citizens have a positive perception of the EU - a rise of 4% from the baseline of 2016; 70% of EaP citizens consider that the relations between the EU and their country are 'good'; 57% of EaP citizens are aware of the EU's financial support, and 53% of them believe that the support is effective - a rise of 10% since 2016. More than half (53%) of EaP citizens who are aware of the EU's financial support are able to identify at least one specific programme financed by the EU in their country - a significant increase +18% compared to 2017. The EU is the most trusted international institution, and the only one trusted by the majority (60%) of EaP citizens. Trust is higher in Georgia (69%), Ukraine (66%), Moldova (63%) and Armenia (60%) and lower in Belarus (45%) and Azerbaijan (41%).

⁵ Joint Communication on Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/joint-communication_review-of-the-enp.pdf

⁶ Joint Staff Working document Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020 Focusing on key priorities and tangible results of 9 June 2017, SWD(2017) 300 final, endorsed during the 2017 Eastern Partnership Summit that took place in Brussels on 24 November 2017: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14821-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

⁷ Joint Communication on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all of 18 March 2020: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/1_en_act_part1_v6.pdf

⁸ Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 of 11 May 2020: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/43905/st07510-re01-en20.pdf>

In the Southern Neighbourhood, the policy of the EU towards the North African and Middle Eastern countries seeks to encourage political and economic reform as well as to support regional cooperation among the countries of the region themselves and with the EU through the Union for the Mediterranean initiative. In 2020, the Barcelona Process marked 25 years of cooperation in areas such as economic and social development, environmental protection and climate change, energy, migration, terrorism and extremism, as well as promoting dialogue between cultures. 2020 was also a pivotal year for the Africa-EU relations to achieve the ambition of forging an even stronger partnership.

In February 2021, the European Commission, together with the High Representative, also adopted a new Joint Communication on the renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood⁹, establishing a new Agenda for the Mediterranean to relaunch and reinforce the EU's partnership with the region. The April 2019 Council Conclusions endorsed the Joint Communication.¹⁰ It will guide EU policy and programming towards our partner countries for the coming years. In the framework of the new agenda for the Mediterranean, the Joint Communication is accompanied by an Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours¹¹ to ensure amongst others that the quality of life for people in the region improves and that the economic recovery, including following the COVID-19 pandemic, leaves no one behind. The Plan includes 12 preliminary flagship initiatives to strengthen resilience, build prosperity and increase trade and investment to support competitiveness and inclusive growth in the region.

In the Southern Neighbourhood, according to the latest opinion polls, overall, at least half of the people in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine have a positive view of the EU. 59% of people in the Maghreb region say that relations between their country and the EU are good, compared to 67% in the Mashrek countries, while both regions see EU financial support as being effective. Citizens feel EU support has contributed most to tourism (31% in both regions) as well as trade (34% Maghreb) and education (27% Mashrek). In both regions, respondents want the EU to play an even greater role in promoting trade, health and economic development. The EU remains, along with its Member States, one of the biggest aid and investment contributors in its neighbourhood and on the world stage. Nonetheless, the combined efforts of the EU and its Member States are at times not recognised due to the lack of visibility and understanding of the objectives by the final beneficiaries, namely the people from partner countries, as well as within the EU. There are also other challenges that on occasion overshadow the visibility of the EU's cooperation on the ground, e.g. (frozen) conflicts, migration challenges, etc.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME

This programme sets out a range of measures to support the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations in raising public awareness about its policies, in line with the European Commission's institutional prerogatives and in line with its policy and communication priorities.

⁹ Joint Communication Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean of 09/02/2021: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood_en.pdf

¹⁰ Council Conclusions on a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – a New Agenda for the Mediterranean of 19 April 2021: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7931-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

¹¹ Joint Staff Working Document Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours of 09/02/2021: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_staff_working_document_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf

In particular, it will provide the public with information about the enlargement process and the neighbourhood policy, as well as the countries involved, in order to stimulate an informed and facts-based debate on the political, economic and social impact of the two EU policies.

It will also contribute to addressing the issue of disinformation and foreign information manipulation by raising awareness of relevant issues in the region and informing about the wide range of EU support for communication activities including press trips to and from the regions, training courses and support for media literacy programmes. These activities will build on the actions foreseen in the Action Plan against Disinformation¹² and European Democracy Plan¹³ and will be implemented in cooperation with European External Action Service.

The programme will also support the promotion of the European Commission's corporate priorities ("a European Green Deal", "an economy that works for people", "a Europe fit for the digital age", "promoting our European way of life", "a stronger Europe in the world", and "a new push for European democracy")¹⁴. It will therefore complement and strengthen the European Commission's corporate communication actions.

To that end, when executing the programme, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations will ensure coordination with other Commission departments, including the Directorate-General for Communication and European Commission Representations, as well as the European External Actions Service and the EU Delegations and Offices in the region.

Where feasible and appropriate, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations will follow the Team Europe approach in its strategic communication and public diplomacy initiatives.

The programme will support tools and channels that have proven particularly successful, including visibility events, stakeholder and media outreach, digital content production and online and social media activities. In the light of the specific communication context linked to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term recovery, priority will be given to digital and hybrid means of communication, including online and hybrid events.

In terms of target audiences, in addition to addressing the general public in the EU Member States and in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions, the awareness raising measures will address, where relevant, specific stakeholders and opinion multipliers, such as journalists, business organisations, civil society representatives, academia and think tanks, as well as youth representatives.

4. OBJECTIVES

The programme's overall objective is to raise public awareness and to promote an informed public debate about the EU enlargement and neighbourhood policies among target audiences both within and outside the EU.

The specific objectives are:

- to increase public knowledge and understanding of the enlargement process and the neighbourhood policy priorities, including the countries involved, as well as the objectives and the impact of the EU pre-accession funds and neighbourhood policy funds;

¹² (JOIN (2018) 36 final)

¹³ (COM/2020/790 final)

¹⁴ Commission Work Programme 2020 "A Union that strives for more" of 29 January 2020: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/cwp-2020_en.pdf

- to stimulate a public debate among the target audiences about the policy related developments;
- to contribute to addressing relevant issues related to disinformation by raising awareness of disinformation and foreign information manipulation activities in the regions concerned and by highlighting the scope and benefits of EU actions in this area.

5. ACTIVITIES

The programme will support a wide range of communication activities implemented by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations under its communication strategy. These may include:

- outreach and networking (e.g. organisation of online and physical visibility events, seminars, conferences, fairs, study visits, and workshops, including events for specific target groups, e.g. media, business, youth, think tanks and digital influencers);
- cultural diplomacy (e.g. logistical support to online and physical film festivals, book fairs, youth and sports events, video and writing competitions);
- concept, design and implementation of targeted communication campaigns, including production of content and social media material;
- media relations and media rebuttal (e.g. media monitoring, production of media materials, press events, training for journalists, press and media trips);
- online and social media activities (e.g. webmasters, content managers, graphic and web designers, social media managers);
- production of different information tools and products, such as publications, audio-visual materials, EU branded promotional materials;

The programme will also provide funding for support services to successfully implement and measure the above-mentioned communication activities, such as:

- opinion polling, focus groups and studies on awareness of and support for EU enlargement and the European neighbourhood policy, as well as EU values, policies and programmes;
- communication training for staff and implementing partners (e.g. developing programmes and training materials, providing trainers and logistics);
- assessment and evaluation of information and communication actions (e.g. survey-based evaluations).

6. EXPECTED RESULTS

The main expected results are:

- factual information about the European Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies is made available and disseminated to target groups through relevant channels;
- debate among target groups is stimulated and facilitated;
- better awareness of the threats posed by disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference in the regions.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The effectiveness of activities and the achievement of objectives will be monitored and evaluated through quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks taking into account the European Commission’s Communication Network Indicators matrix ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations will monitor the performance of its communication activities through web analytics, social media metrics and tailor-made surveys for individual outreach activities.

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	RESULTS	IMPACT
EVENTS	Number of attendees: physical and online [counting]	Overall usefulness of the event for attendees [survey]	Percentage of people perceiving that they are well informed about the European Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies [survey]
PUBLICATIONS	Number of readers of publications [web analytics]	Overall usefulness of publication for readers [survey]	
MEDIA RELATIONS	Number of online views of media releases [web analytics]	Percentage of media items published in tier(s) 1-6 in a sample of EU related media coverage [media monitoring]	
SOCIAL MEDIA	Number of impressions [social media metrics]	Number of engagement: shares, likes, clickthroughs, comments [social media metrics]	
WEBSITES	Number of visits [web analytics]	Conversion rate: downloads, registrations, form completed, etc. [web analytics]	

8. ASSUMPTIONS

The expected results are based on the assumption that the public and media remain interested in the EU enlargement and neighbourhood policies and are willing to engage in the debate on the related developments.

9. IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

Procurement (direct management)

The procurement procedures will contribute to all four objectives of the Financing Decision as stated in Section 4 above.

The whole programme will be implemented through procurement. The global budget reserved for this procurement is EUR 6 750 000 (EUR 2 250 000 for 2021, .EUR 2 250 000 for 2022, and EUR 2 250 000 for 2023).

⁽¹⁵⁾ <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/corp/comm/Evaluation/Pages/Do-You-Need-Methodological-Guidance.aspx>