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**COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION**

**of 28.11.2023**

**on the financing of the 2023 annual action plan part III in favour of the Regional South  
Neighbourhood**

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## on the financing of the 2023 annual action plan part III in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

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

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046<sup>1</sup> of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, and in particular Article 110 thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/947<sup>2</sup> of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009, and in particular Article 23(2) and Article 43 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In order to ensure the implementation of the 2023 annual action plan in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood, it is necessary to adopt an annual financing Decision, which constitutes the annual work programme, for 2023.
- (2) The envisaged assistance should comply with the conditions and procedures set out by the restrictive measures adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU<sup>3</sup>.
- (3) The eligibility criteria formulated in Commission Notice Nr. 2013/C-205/05 (OJEU C-205 of 19.07.2013) 'Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards' should apply to the implementing modalities linked to this annual action plan.
- (4) The action plan provided for in this Decision should contribute to climate and biodiversity mainstreaming in line with Commission Communication 'The European Green Deal'<sup>4</sup> and in the Interinstitutional Agreement of 16 December 2020 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu) Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

<sup>4</sup> COM(2019)640 final of 11 December 2019.

sound financial management, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap towards the introduction of new own resources<sup>5</sup>.

- (5) The Commission has adopted the Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood<sup>6</sup> for the period 2021-2027, which sets out the following priorities Priority Area 1: Human development, good governance, and rule of law; Priority Area 2: Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition; Priority Area 3: Peace and Security; Priority Area 4: Green Transition; Priority Area 5: Support to the main drivers of regional integration.
- (6) The objective pursued by the annual action plan to be financed under the Neighbourhood geographic programme of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 aims to reinforce EU-Israel bilateral and regional relations on the basis of the three strands identified under (7).
- (7) The action “Regional EU-Israel cooperation in support of the Abraham Accords, and fight against antisemitism and fostering Jewish life” aims to reinforce EU-Israel bilateral and regional relations and is structured along three objectives contributing to different strands of EU-Israel and regional cooperation. Firstly, it aims at supporting the normalisation process between Israel and some Arab countries, also with a view to enhancing the prospects to reach a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East Peace Process. Secondly, it supports the global fight against antisemitism. Finally, it aims at strengthening the existing EU-Israel cooperation by exploring opportunities to strengthen the sustainability of policy approximations.
- (8) In accordance with Article 43 of Regulation (EU) 2021/947, the action set out in the Annex is of a regional nature, fostering regional cooperation. Due to the action’s nature and the importance to ensure complete regional coverage, the eligibility of the action extends exceptionally to the countries identified in the Annex, as their participation constitutes a substantial element to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of Union financing or to foster regional cooperation.
- (9) The objective and design of the action fulfil the criteria for Official Development Assistance established by the OECD/DAC, as per the requirements of Article 3(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947, contributing to the sustainable development of partner countries and the implementation of the 2030 agenda by contributing to gender equality, peace, justice and strong institutions, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, climate action and peaceful and inclusive societies.
- (10) It is appropriate to authorise the award of grants without a call for proposals and to provide for the conditions for awarding those grants.
- (11) Pursuant to Article 62(1), point (c) of the Financial Regulation, indirect management is to be used for the implementation of the action plan.
- (12) The Commission is to ensure a level of protection of the financial interests of the Union with regards to entities and persons entrusted with the implementation of Union funds by indirect management as provided for in Article 154(3) of the Financial Regulation.

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<sup>5</sup> OJ L 433I, 22.12.2020, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)9399 of 16.12.2021 on a Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood.

- (13) To that end, such entities and persons are to be subject to an assessment of their systems and procedures in accordance with Article 154(4) of the Financial Regulation and, if necessary, to appropriate supervisory measures in accordance with Article 154(5) of the Financial Regulation before a contribution agreement can be signed.
- (14) It is necessary to allow for the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 116(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (15) In order to allow for flexibility in the implementation of the action plan, it is appropriate to determine the changes which should not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (16) This Decision shall be implemented in conformity with the European Union's position that the territories which came under Israeli administration in June 1967 are not considered as being part of the State of Israel.
- (17) The NDICI-GE Neighbourhood Committee, established under Article 45 of Regulation (EU) 2021/947, did not deliver an opinion within the time limit established by its chair, and the Commission decided to adopt the action plan provided for in this Decision.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

*Article 1*  
*The action plan*

The annual financing Decision, constituting the annual work programme for the implementation of the 2023 annual action plan part III in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood, as set out in the annex, is adopted.

The action plan shall consist of the action set out in the annex.

*Article 2*  
*Union contribution*

The maximum Union contribution for the implementation of the action plan part III for 2023 is set at EUR 18 000 000, and shall be financed from the appropriations entered in budget line 14.020110 of the general budget of the Union.

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

*Article 3*  
*Methods of implementation and entrusted entities or persons*

The implementation of the actions carried out by way of indirect management, as set out in the annex, may be entrusted to the entities or persons referred to or selected in accordance with the criteria laid down in point 4.3.3. of the annex.

*Article 4*  
*Flexibility clause*

Increases<sup>7</sup> or decreases of up to EUR 10 million and not exceeding 20% of the contribution set in Article 2, first paragraph, or cumulated changes to the allocations of specific actions not exceeding 20% of that contribution, as well as extensions of the implementation period shall not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, provided that these changes do not significantly affect the nature and objectives of the action.

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

*Article 5*  
*Grants*

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals in accordance with the conditions set out in the Annex. Grants may be awarded to the bodies referred to in the Annex.

Done at Brussels, 28.11.2023

*For the Commission*  
*Olivér VÁRHELYI*  
*Member of the Commission*

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<sup>7</sup>These changes can come from external assigned revenue made available after the adoption of the financing Decision.