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**THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**ANNEX VII**

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multiannual action plan part 1 in favour of the NDICI Neighbourhood East Region for 2021- 2022

**Action Document for Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies**

**MULTIANNUAL ACTION PLAN**

This document constitutes the multiannual 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**

<b>1. Title CRIS/OPSYS Basic Act</b>	<b>Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies for 2021-2022</b>  CRIS number: NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2021/043-010 and NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2022/043-011  Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
<b>2. Team Europe Initiative</b>	No
<b>3. Zone benefiting from the action</b>	The action shall be carried out in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova <sup>1</sup> , Ukraine), the Russian Federation
<b>4. Programming document</b>	Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Eastern Neighbourhood, 2021-2027 <sup>2</sup>
<b>5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results</b>	<i>Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies</i> <i>Specific objective 1: Civil society capacity, youth participation, cultural cooperation and free media environment strengthened</i>
<b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b>	

<sup>1</sup> hereinafter referred to as Moldova

<sup>2</sup> C(2021)9370 adopted on 15/12/2021

<b>6. Priority Area(s), sectors</b>	Civil society			
<b>7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	<p>Main SDG (1 only): SDG 16. Promote peaceful &amp; inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <p>Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets:  SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.  SDG 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status</p>			
<b>8 a) DAC code(s)</b>	15150 – Democratic participation and civil society (100%)			
<b>8 b) Main Delivery Channel</b>	21000 – International NGO 23000 – Developing country-based NGO			
<b>9. Targets</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
<b>10. Markers (from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>11. Internal markers</b>	<b>Policy objectives</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>

	Digitalisation Tags: digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship job creation digital skills/literacy digital services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Connectivity</u> Tags: transport people2people energy digital connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET INFORMATION</b>				
<b>12. Amounts concerned</b>	Budget line: 14 02 01 11 Total estimated cost: EUR 59 740 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 54 870 000 The contribution is for an amount of EUR 21 070 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2021 and for an amount of EUR 33 800 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2022, subject to the availability of appropriations for the respective financial years following the adoption of the relevant annual budget, or as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths. This action is co-financed in joint co-financing by potential grant beneficiaries for an amount of EUR 4 870 000.			
<b>MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
<b>13. Implementation modalities (type of financing and management mode)</b>	Project Modality <b>Direct management</b> through: - Grants - Procurement <b>Indirect management</b> with the entity to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.3			

## 1.2 Summary of the Action

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) Civil Society Facility is the EU's landmark programme combining regional and country-based actions to support civil society in the Eastern Partnership and Russia. Empowered civil society is a crucial component of an inclusive and resilient democratic system and a key contributor to the democratic and economic transformation of the partner countries. The Joint Communication<sup>3</sup> on the future of the EaP of March 2020 and the Joint Staff Working Document<sup>4</sup> on Recovery, resilience and reforms: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities of July 2021 confirm the EU's commitment to enhance engagement and sustainability of civil society in all partner countries, particularly local, grassroots organisations, to meaningfully participate in policy dialogue, promote reforms and public accountability. As for the Russian civil society, the EU follows the five principles guiding the EU-Russia relations since 2016 and seeks to further foster people-to-people contacts, support human rights defenders and civil society organisations (CSOs).

Against the backdrop of socio-economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and increased political instability across the countries, this action aims to reinforce civic resilience and grassroots democracy by strengthening the capacity of local CSOs as well as think tanks to meaningfully engage in policy making and dialogue, promote open civic space, and serve the needs of local communities. This is in line with the objectives of the regional Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) to strengthen resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies in the EaP countries. To achieve its objective, the action proposes the following intervention areas:

- Capacity development and financial sustainability of the local CSOs that empowers them to effectively promote reforms, democratic development, play an active role in socio-economic recovery and respond to sudden changes in the political and social context;
- Continuous monitoring of civic space that triggers early warning of potential shrinking space and contributes to an enabling environment for civil society to operate;
- Systematic engagement with the EU and EaP think tank community in a public debate that enriches the EaP framework with a pool of expertise.

The design of the intervention will further build on the EU's strategic approach to supporting civil society and established framework partnership agreements with key civil society organisations to channel support more effectively and increase overall impact.

The action contributes directly to achieving the SDG 16 Promote peaceful, just & inclusive societies, and empowering civil society to take active role in advocacy and monitoring.

## 2. RATIONALE

### 2.1. Context

Empowered civil society is a key component of a just, equitable and democratic system. By articulating citizens' concerns, civil society organisations (CSOs) – including grassroots, local, transnational, gender and women focused, research oriented organisations – play a critical role in policy dialogue as governance actors and engage in initiatives to further a participatory democracy. Civil society is also recognised as one of the main partners to push for change under five broad political priorities<sup>5</sup> set by the European Commission for 2019-2024, thus capacity and enabling environment that allow CSOs to perform this role need to be further enhanced. The EU's commitment to support civil society applies to all countries in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood. As defined in the 2012 Communication “*Roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations*”<sup>6</sup>, support to the development of capacity of CSOs, engagement in policy dialogue and promoting enabling and conducive civic space are the three areas in which the EU is committed to work. Since 2012, the EU has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to support civil society in the Eastern Partnership through a series of policy documents, taking stock of the achievements to date and drawing new forward-looking objectives.

The Joint Communication “*Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, reinforcing resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all*”, adopted in March 2020, and the Joint Staff Working Document on the future of the Eastern

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<sup>3</sup> Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: *Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all*, Joint Communication JOIN(2020) 7,

<sup>4</sup> Joint Staff Working Document, Recovery, resilience and reforms: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities,

[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd\\_2021\\_186\\_fl\\_joint\\_staff\\_working\\_paper\\_en\\_v2\\_p1\\_1356457\\_0.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd_2021_186_fl_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v2_p1_1356457_0.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> See political priorities for the [International Partnerships](#)

<sup>6</sup> Roots of democracy and sustainable development: *Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations*, Communication COM(2012) 492, <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2012-communication-roots-of-democracy-and-sustainable-development.pdf>

Partnership, published in July 2021, acknowledge the contribution of civil society to increasing public accountability, advancing human rights, sustainable growth and local development, as well as ensuring service delivery to the whole population in the region. Building on innovative actions and engagement to date, the EU commits to continue supporting financial sustainability and capacity of CSOs as well as promoting cooperation with a range of social partners and enhancing leadership skills of civic actors. In order to achieve sustainable results, working with the partner countries to promote an enabling environment for civil society, both in terms of law and practice, will be key. In Russia, despite the increasingly difficult environment, the EU continues to support to civil society and further advance the fifth principle (foster people-to-people contacts, support human rights defenders and civil society organisations) guiding the EU-Russia relations since 2016 Foreign Affairs Council.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only had a significant impact on societies, but also strongly amplified social, economic and political vulnerabilities of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. In turn, the EaP governments adopted a series of measures to mitigate the socio-economic impact, such as tax relief, unemployment benefits and income support, these responses often lacked an all-inclusive approach to socio-economic recovery and their effects will be fully felt only in the medium and long term.<sup>7</sup> Notably, the immediate impact on the healthcare sector and the vulnerable groups of the population has been unprecedented. It is estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic could set progress towards gender equality back 15 years in the Eastern Partnership region and Central Asia as gaps in pay, poverty, access to finance and digital opportunities widen<sup>8</sup>.

Since the outset of the pandemic, CSOs have played a critical role, both in delivering social, health and educational services, and in watchdog, monitoring and reporting activities on the implementation of these emergency measures as well as advocating on behalf of vulnerable groups and disproportionately effected sectors. CSOs, independent journalists and professional media have been key for providing fact-based and accurate information about the pandemic and its health risks, government measures and restrictions and countering growing disinformation. These proactive steps taken by civil society in all EaP countries helped to shape stronger links with their constituencies. Yet, the COVID-19 crisis severely affected many CSOs and civil society activists. Financial and organisational survival is a risk some CSOs have had to face as donations dropped and the future funding may be reduced, while running costs continue. At the same time, the EaP countries and the Russian Federation witnessed a number of turbulent moments, which in some cases halted the forward-looking reform processes and tested countries' democratic resilience.

The hostilities in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone in 2020 had a strong effect on Armenia and Azerbaijan. In **Armenia**, the effects of the hostilities posed an additional and new layer of challenges for Armenian CSOs and society as a whole. The combination of COVID-19 and the conflict, which also pushed many to flee to safety, exacerbated existing socio-economic vulnerabilities leaving beneficiaries of many CSOs in dire need for urgent humanitarian support as well as made CSOs to rethink usual practices of engaging with beneficiaries and target groups. Many CSOs largely re-focused their work to emergency interventions such as provision of humanitarian relief, access to education and psychosocial support to the displaced families and/or wounded soldiers and families affected. There are more than 5,000 registered CSOs in Armenia, including public organisations and foundations. However, only up to 20% of them are considered to be active. The CSO Meter identified some progress in indicators related to operational environment but maintains that many CSOs still face challenges in terms of financial sustainability, organisational capacity, transparency, engagement with constituencies and external communication. The general operational environment is favourable although the polarised political context, which has only been exacerbated with the outbreak of hostilities in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone in September 2020 and the early parliamentary elections in June 2021. Most CSOs stay committed to navigate the challenging context to deliver against their priorities although stronger nationalist sentiments are prevailing. The EU is a long-standing partner of civil society in Armenia and, as a leading donor, the EU has supported the work of CSOs through thematic and bilateral programmes, including capacity building and policy dialogue initiatives. The EU has promptly responded to the emergency triggered by the Nagorno-Karabakh by providing humanitarian funding to international organisations present in the field. The programme will complement these initiatives on civil society and independent media capacity building as well as support the disability and women's rights movements and explore possibilities of the regional programme to support exchanges and joint work of these movements across the EaP region. There is a potential for synergies with recently launched initiative on empowering youth and students as civic activists and

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<sup>7</sup> COVID-19 Briefing Paper: lessening the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, EaP Civil Society Forum, 2020 <https://eap-csf.eu/project/covid-19-briefing-paper-lessening-economic-impact/>

<sup>8</sup> OECD reporting, <https://www.oecd.org/eurasia/Gender%20gaps%20in%20Eurasia%20The%20Daunting%20effects%20of%20COVID%2019.pdf>

promote participatory democracy as well as in terms of new projects on building capacity of civil society and journalists to monitor and fight poverty in a more comprehensive and vocal manner.

In **Azerbaijan**, the civil society environment remains restrictive, despite of some positive trends observed in 2019 and 2020, such as minor legal amendments to the CSO legislation and local civil society showing some modest signs of revival. The COVID-19 pandemic and impact of hostilities in the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict zone led to further restrictions of civil society environment and participation of CSOs in policy dialogue. These restrictions largely prevented Azerbaijani independent CSOs to play an active role in the COVID-19 response and in the support to vulnerable groups in conflict affected areas. In February 2020, Azerbaijan adopted new five national priorities for socio-economic development until 2030, mostly convergent with those of the 2020 Joint Communication of the EU on the future of the Eastern Partnership, *inter alia* a steadily growing competitive economy; a dynamic, inclusive and socially just society; competitive human capital and space for modern innovations; or clean environment and ‘green growth’. Since 2014 and despite some minor amendments, the legislation for CSOs in Azerbaijan remains restrictive and burdensome regarding both registration and access to funding. Access to foreign funding is very limited, which is mainly due to a lengthy and uncertain grant registration process. The state public funding to registered CSOs, the State Council on NGOs and the Youth Fund were the most important sources of state funding. In 2019, they funded around 2 million EUR in small grants to NGOs. In terms of present donors, contribution agreements with regional and international organisations have proved to be an effective way to continue supporting independent CSOs in a challenging context. In the last years, the EU has signed contribution agreements that include a large financial support to third parties and capacity building components with international organisations, such as UNDP, UNICEF, Council of Europe and OHCHR. In total, these projects have funded more than 50 actions implemented by CSOs. The EU has also responded quickly to the emergency triggered by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by funding humanitarian aid, through international humanitarian organisations in the field. The EU continues to be one of the two largest foreign donors to CSOs in Azerbaijan together with USAID. The procedure for registration of grants from foreign sources still discourages many potential donors from working in Azerbaijan. The issue of CSO support is discussed in the donor coordination sub-group on democracy and rule of law.

**Belarus** faces the most challenging chapter of its modern history. Following the falsified presidential elections in August 2020, an unprecedented and sustained civic and political unrest and mobilisation took place across the country. Enabling environment for civil society has practically disappeared. Since the falsified Presidential elections in August 2020, Belarus has witnessed disproportionate violence employed by the Belarusian authorities against peaceful protesters, which has resulted (at the time of writing) in over 35,000 people arrested and more than 650 political prisoners, many of whom risk several years of detention.<sup>9</sup> . This comes on top of deteriorating economy, which is already vulnerable due to combined impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of structural reforms. In view of the political situation in the country, the enabling environment for civil society has shrunk. Already before, the legal environment for CSOs to operate was restrictive, with a complex registration procedure and other controls. Over the past year, the situation has drastically deteriorated and even registered and legally operating organisations and individuals face possible criminal charges and detention. Belarus has a "National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development" which is re-elaborated once in five years for the 15-year period, with the strategy until 2030 currently in place. The strategy sets forth instruments for efficient use of demographic, social, natural, manufacturing and innovative potential of the country. The need for mature CSOs is mentioned as one of the key elements for a successful society, however no means or funds are provided to support further this dimension. Several laws have been adopted or amended over the last year to restrict free flow of information further restricting media space. At the same time, the annual International Implementers Meeting (BIIM) gathers key international implementers as well as donors working mainly with Belarusian civil society in exile and/or with CSOs implementing non-registered projects. EU Delegation strives to maintain the Team Europe approach to bring together the EU and all EU Member States’ support for the people of Belarus under one visible common banner, this way demonstrating the EU solidarity with the local people.

**Georgia’s** political landscape is polarised and a political crisis has triggered many actions and demonstrations by civil society. The challenging political environment related to elections, the hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone and the overall political situation in the region, prompted civil society to more actively address the needs of ethnic minorities, advocate for independent media and their sustainability. The need to enhance the potential of think tanks, including through regional and European networks has also been noted. Digitalisation of civil society and ensuring a free digital space become a priority to ensure CSO effectiveness, sustainability and independence.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/103756/belarus-statement-spokesperson-sentencing-maryia-kaliesnikava-and-maksim-znak\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/103756/belarus-statement-spokesperson-sentencing-maryia-kaliesnikava-and-maksim-znak_en)

Despite a growing number of civil society platforms and coalitions, Georgia does not yet have a country strategy for engagement with civil society. Since 2018, relations between public authorities and civil society have considerably deteriorated. Even though state funding as a source of income for CSOs continues to grow, yet, it remains insufficient. Enhanced supportive government policies reinforcing CSOs sustainability, media independence and integration of ethnic minorities are crucial for effectiveness of donor support in the sector. In Abkhazia, active participation and formation of activities targeting community needs also in response to the pandemic show the need to consolidate already achieved results and to continue building a vibrant and responsive civil society as well as the need to further ensure the space for civil society support activities and to support active communities in South Ossetia. In the period of 2014-2020, the EU provided financial support of above EUR 40 million to more than 90 CSOs. In addition to numerous sectoral initiatives, the programme Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative provides comprehensive support to civil society to build capacity and ensure its sustainability as well as to increase CSOs role and impact in the political, economic, social and cultural development of a modern Georgia. The EU efforts to ensure overall sustainability of the civil society in Georgia are also closely coordinated with and complemented by the USAID programme 'ACCESS' with a focus on the grassroots level. In Abkhazia, synergies will be sought with the Confidence-building and Early Response Mechanism (COBERM), including the EU Rapid Response Fund, funded through the Instrument contributing to Peace and Stability (IcSP) and aiming at facilitating cross-ABL (Administrative Boundary Line) meetings and people-to-people contacts, dialogues and the results thereof. Further cooperation will be ensured with ongoing initiatives under ENPARD, in particular with the Local Action Groups (LAGs) and new initiatives under the EU4Dialogue programme.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, the political landscape is fragile, following three governments in 2019 and Maia Sandu inauguration as President in December 2020. Snap Parliamentary elections will take place in July 2021. Moldovan CSOs expanded their capacity to engage in policy dialogue with the government, however further capacity building will be necessary, and the lack of financial sustainability and the uneven distribution of capacity between the capital city and the regions remain outstanding challenges. In terms of enabling environment for CSOs, in June 2020, the Moldovan Parliament adopted the Law on Non-Commercial Organisations. Among other things, the law simplifies their registration procedure and eliminates the registration fee. The intermediary assessment of the Civil Society Development Strategy for 2018-2020 and its Action Plan, showed that overall, the implementation process was rather slow and many actions were implemented not by governmental bodies, but by the CSOs. The overall implementation of the Action Plan is low, by the end of 2020, 30% of envisaged actions not being initiated. The 2% law, adopted by the Parliament in 2016, allowing women and men to direct 2% of their income tax to CSOs, continued to be implemented. The amount allocated to CSOs through the 2% income tax designation mechanism decreased by 17% in 2020, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2018 tax reform. The EU remains focused on delivering tangible benefits to the Moldovan institutions and citizens, as outlined in the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027. The EU Delegation is managing large financial support to third parties schemes under the Civil Society Facility 2019, jointly with some initiatives funded under the EIDHR and CSO instruments. Synergies will be ensured with the projects implemented by other donors in view of strengthening the internal capacities of CSOs, specifically at local level. Civil society continues to be mainstreamed into the overall EU support to the country.

In **Ukraine**, reforms progress slowly, while commitment and interest in the implementation of the Association Agreement remain high. Social tensions have increased throughout 2020 during the COVID-19 crisis. Further escalation of the conflict in Ukraine and mobilisation of Russian troops in Crimea in the spring of 2021 has generated intense international attention. At the same time, civic space remains generally favourable towards civil society engagement and growth. At the same time, attacks against civil society and journalists have intensified during the COVID-19 crisis while prosecution of high profile cases is slow and partly inadequate. Space for civic engagement in the non-government control areas and Crimea continues to shrink. A number of issues prevent further financial sustainability of civil society in Ukraine, such as ambiguous legal frameworks for donations and revenue generation. In addition, the EU remains the largest donor to civil society. The EU co-chairs a regular donor coordination group in the country, as well as multiple working groups intended to align policies and achieve synergies of interventions at political and financial assistance levels – in line with the EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society. The EU's Ukrainian strategic partners, as well as partners of major donors are associated to these processes.

In the **Russian Federation**, the law labelling Russian NGOs receiving foreign funding and carrying out political activities as "foreign agents" and the law on "undesirable organisations" have been revised and expanded in scope. These legislative changes effectively empower the authorities to hinder the work of independent civil society through new and vague reporting requirements, unscheduled audits, direct oversight over programs and events, disproportionate fines and the threat of initiating criminal procedures and dissolving non-compliant organisations. Due to this and other factors, the operating environment for civil society is becoming increasingly difficult. In parallel, the clamp down on independent media is intensifying. Over the past years, a number of foreign organisations

that finance Russian NGOs were deemed “undesirable” and any interaction and association with these organisations could cause criminal prosecution, further limiting the opportunities for foreign and international NGOs to operate in the country and local ones to receive funding. While it is too early to assess the full impact of the new legislation, some negative consequences are already visible, including a certain degree of hesitation among local CSOs and individuals to accept EU funding. The EU has become de facto the largest donor to civil society and co-chairs a number of thematic working groups with the EU Member States and likeminded donors (trade, environment and climate change, health).

Important to note, that the EU Civil Society Roadmaps developed with EU Member States have become a key strategic framework to inform, guide and frame our engagement with civil society at the country level. With the new 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, a new cycle of the EU’s external cooperation has begun. Depending on the specific country-context, the Roadmaps for 2018-2020 will be either updated or revised to respond to the new priorities or political developments, or extended to validate the continuation of the existing priorities. Overall, the Roadmaps express a number of concrete steps that the EU plans to make in order to meet civil society's needs and advance its role and enabling environment in partner countries, and ensure systematic and strategic involvement and consultation of civil society in all sectors of support interventions and policy dialogue. Thus, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies is designed to implement the long-term policy objectives of the EaP, in particular building resilient, gender-equal, fair and inclusive societies across the region. It will also help to pursue objectives set out in revised country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society.

Overall, the engagement and support to civil society in the EU's wider Eastern Neighbourhood<sup>10</sup> need to take account of these recent developments in the civic space and foster enabling environment for civil society in each country.

## 2.2. Problem Analysis

### *Short problem analysis:*

Many CSOs in the region continue to face challenges of representativeness, transparency, internal governance and dependency on support by international donors. The COVID-19 pandemic particularly amplified these vulnerabilities by putting additional pressure on financial sustainability and CSO operations, forcing to work and communicate remotely with their constituencies. Moving forward, the importance of establishing adequate technical capacity, skills and soft/hardware to work online will remain a key aftereffect of the pandemic. In the view of ever increasing disinformation, especially linked to the health and political crises (an info-demic), but also the EU’s image, CSOs also require additional support to be able to counter disinformation and serve as sources of accurate, diverse and fact-based information.

Moreover, during the pandemic governments in the region have responded to the situation by invoking emergency laws, restricting gatherings, democratic activities and expanding state surveillance. In countries, where restrictive laws have already been squeezing civil society even before the pandemic started, the state authorities took advantage of the extraordinary situation to undercut civil liberties even further and silence critical voices. In countries, where the environment remains conducive to CSOs, the governments still employed superfluous measures to curb the spread of the COVID-19, yet severely affecting the CSO work altogether. In times of crises, CSOs have a crucial role to play, both in delivering essential services, as well as in watchdog and advocacy activities, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the emergency measures. Changes in the policy and political environment including restrictions of civil society space are often happening so sudden that CSOs would not be able to respond unless more rapid and flexible financing tools are made available to them in addition to traditional instruments and modalities of EU support to strengthen their capacity. Their role will be critical in post-pandemic socio-economic recovery.

The civil society environment across the countries has been affected by the increased political instability, in particular, the unprecedented crackdown on society in Belarus, the hostilities in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone, and the increased societal polarisation ahead of and following elections in Georgia, Moldova and Armenia.

While there is overall a high number of registered CSOs in the region (these figures vary from country to country), only a limited percentage of them are active organisations. Additionally, a new civic dynamism has been emerging and presenting a shift from professionalised CSOs towards localised, informal grassroots-oriented networks. These



new informal, ad hoc, self-organised civic groups and movements advocate various changes through innovative and community-based ways. Yet, in all partner countries, there is a significant discrepancy in terms of technical, managerial and advocacy capacity between the CSOs operating in and out of the capital cities and those based in the regions. This prevents civil society as a whole from achieving sustainable country-wide impact, reaching out to and engaging constituents, building stronger coalitions and becoming more effective advocates for democratic change. A limited tradition of dialogue between CSOs and government representatives still prevails in several countries of the region. CSOs' capacity and know-how remain limited in terms of promoting their work through effective communication campaigns, especially online, to enhance links with constituencies and increase trust in CSO sector.

The local think tank community remains weak and fragmented. A more structured policy dialogue with the EU and EaP think tank community is needed to facilitate an informed debate and contribute with expertise and research-based inputs to the development of the EaP framework and country-specific strategies.

The programme proposes to address these needs to increase the financial sustainability of CSOs, strengthen their operational capacity to promote reforms and democratic development at all levels, foster an enabling environment for civil society, and enhancing policy dialogue among civil society, think tanks, the EU and state authorities in the EaP.

EU priorities have been adapting to the new global challenges in recent years and there is now more focus on the digital transformation of societies, better external investment planning and greening of economies and societies. Civil society has established a critical role in advocating for transformative change and strengthening civic resilience in key public policy fields, including gender equality, good governance, human rights, environmental governance, social development, conflict affectedness. At the same time, CSOs capacity to engage as active contributors and perform an active role needs to be further increased.

*Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action:*

The populations and local communities of the EaP countries and Russia will be the final beneficiaries of the intervention. As rights-holders, they are considered as active stakeholders, whose active participation in policy formulation and decision-making is supported and promoted through dedicated activities of this action.

In 2019, the European Commission signed financial framework partnership agreements (FPAs) with well-established, civil society organisations<sup>11</sup> that possess a recognised knowledge, local political awareness and experience in supporting civil society in the Eastern Neighbourhood region and Russia. Some of these framework partners have very specific experience and expertise in operating in and channelling support to local independent CSOs in difficult environments, where space for independent civil society actors is shrinking. In addition to their role of channelling effectively the support to local CSOs, these strategic partners are also engaged in policy dialogue and provide first-hand analysis of the developments in civic space across the region. The current FPAs with the selected CSOs are valid until 2023 and, as this format of engagement has become an important element of the EU's strategic approach to supporting civil society in the EaP and Russia, a selection procedure to identify new strategic partners for the period 2024-27 will be organised in the future.

At regional level, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is the entity that provides CSOs a vehicle to push their agenda onto the regional debates in the framework of the EaP. At the country level, the EU works closely with the Forum's National Platforms to promote democratic reforms and dialogue with state authorities.

All major civil society donors are present in the region, including implementing agencies of EU Member States. The past years have seen some fluctuations in the level and type of their involvement that have had an impact also on the demand for civil society support from the European Union. Civil society organisations have stressed the need for EU support to be better adjusted to the needs of new emerging civil society actors, such as social movements and informal groups and that funding should be mobilised faster and be more aligned to local policy agendas rather than the EU priorities. CSOs have also been reiterating the need for long-term core funding rather than short-term project-based funds.

In terms of engagement with the think tank community, the action will build on the initial steps taken by the EU and German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) to launch a pilot network of think tanks<sup>12</sup> with expertise and profound interest in the EaP policy. The network and related activities thus far focused on understanding the expectations of stakeholders, followed by dedicated public events, close-door debates, input papers and national consultations to understand better the national and multilateral EaP contexts.

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<sup>11</sup> More information on the strategic civil society framework partners: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/fpa\\_infographics.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/fpa_infographics.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> More information on the Network of Think Tanks on the EaP: <https://dgap.org/en/research/programs/robert-bosch-center-central-and-eastern-europe-russia-and-central-asia-network>

Necessary synergies will be also ensured in regards to other EU-funded regional and bilateral actions already ongoing under the previous phases of this programme and beyond. Due attention will be given to ensure the complementarity with the activities implemented under the EU COVID-19 Solidarity Programme for the Eastern Partnership, which contains a component on support to civil society and vulnerable groups. Complementarity will also be ensured with the actions of thematic programmes for civil society and democracy and human rights under the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI). Activities will be aligned with the EU Civil Society Roadmaps developed together with the EU Member States, as well as the work done by other international donors and EU Member States in supporting civil society.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

#### 3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective (Impact)** of this action is to build civic resilience and grassroots democracy in the Eastern Partnership.

With the aim of fostering regional and trans-regional co-operation, in particular in the area of people-to-people contacts, the Commission decides to extend the eligibility of this action to the Russian Federation.

The **Specific Objective (Outcome)** of this action is to strengthen the capacity of local CSOs as well as think tanks to meaningfully engage in policy making and dialogue, promote open civic space, and serve the needs of local communities.

The **Outputs** to be delivered by this action contributing to the Specific Objective (Outcome) are:

1. Local CSOs have increased financial resources and strengthened operational capacity to promote reforms, democratic development and contribute to socio-economic recovery at all levels.
2. Continuous monitoring of civic space and contribution to an enabling environment for civil society is ensured.
3. Think tank community and other relevant actors are engaged in structured dialogue and public debate.

#### 3.2 Indicative Activities

*Activities related to Output 1*

##### **Activity 1. Mobilise EU strategic civil society framework partners to step up capacity development at regional level**

Through 'Strategic partnerships for capacity development of civil society organisations in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood', EuropeAid/164964/DH/FPA/Multi launched in 2019, framework partnership agreements were signed with seven selected CSOs<sup>13</sup>, which have significant experience in providing technical and financial support to grassroots organisations in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood.

The current FPAs with the selected CSOs are valid until end-2023, and Framework Partners will be mobilised to implement regional capacity development activities through a call foreseen to be launched in 2022. As this format of engagement has become an important element of the EU's strategic approach to supporting civil society in the EaP and Russia, a selection procedure to identify new strategic partners for the period 2024-27 will be organised throughout 2023, to continue with the implementation of further regional capacity development activities. This may also include building capacity of local civil society in key thematic EU policy areas, such as environment, digitalisation and gender equality.

These strategic partners will be mobilised for:

- 1.1 Providing financial support to third parties (local active CSOs), design and test new methods (financing tools) to fund CSOs and work towards improving their financial sustainability;
- 1.2 Pursuing capacity development programmes focused on the needs of local CSOs' and communities;
- 1.3 Supporting CSOs in activities related to outreach and inclusive citizen and community engagement, thematic policy dialogue including women's and youth organisations.

##### **Activity 2. Develop country-specific capacity development programmes in the Eastern Partnership countries**

In line with the respective country's Roadmap for EU Engagement with Civil Society, country-specific capacity building activities in this area may include:

- 2.1 **Armenia:** Activities may include capacity building of civil society actors including youth, women's rights activists, disability movements, and those engaged in key topics such as poverty reduction, democratisation, accountability and transparency as well as the Green Deal. Activities may also support the reduction of

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<sup>13</sup> More information on the strategic civil society framework partners: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/fpa\\_infographics.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/fpa_infographics.pdf)

societal polarisation, disinformation and hate speech, and support reconciliation and wider conflict mitigating activities.

- 2.2 **Azerbaijan:** Activities may include the evaluation of previous EU-funded capacity building of CSOs; training needs assessment of CSOs and capacity building strategy; implementation of capacity building activities in areas such as project cycle management and EU-Azerbaijan priority cooperation sectors.
- 2.3 **Georgia:** Activities may include capacity building support for advancing CSOs' role in the Association and DCFTA Agenda related policy dialogue, civic engagement in the regions, including ethnic minority regions, local advocacy, including in breakaway regions, service delivery and think-tanks services, as well as digitalisation of the civil society sector, support to independent media and more favourable ecosystem for social entrepreneurship, including advocacy for establishment of a favourable legislative framework, economic incentives, awareness raising and capacity building for social entrepreneurship, especially in the regions.
- 2.4 **Republic of Moldova:** Activities may include strengthening CSOs' capacity in the process of implementation of the Association Agreement, including at local level.
- 2.5 **Ukraine:** Activities may include capacity building activities through Framework Partners active in Ukraine.

Where appropriate, EU Delegations may use the framework partnership agreements with the international CSOs described above for their bilateral programmes related to capacity-development and financial support to third parties.

### **Activity 3. Support to the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) to continue promoting civic engagement and pro-democracy activism in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood**

Given numerous adverse effects on civil society and people as well as worrying pushbacks on democracy and civic space caused by the COVID-19 crisis, this activity is particularly designed to respond to the needs of local communities. In addition, the regional action may include additional activities and financial support to third parties dedicated to Azerbaijan.

Through this activity, the following results will be pursued:

- 3.1 Providing flexible support to CSOs, local actors and grassroots activism, civic initiatives and other forms of citizens' self-organisation to enable them to drive the pro-democracy and reform agenda;
- 3.2 Ensuring critical and emergency support to civil society provided, that enables them to financially and operationally sustain despite the long-lasting impact of COVID-19 and other political events;
- 3.3 Identifying and enabling new critical actors, emerging civic movements and leaders, especially women, identified to play a meaningful role in democratic transformation;
- 3.4 Pursuing capacity development activities to help local civil society to better adapt to changing country-contexts, realise transformational ideas and become better communicators of their work.
- 3.5 Providing teacher training in the field of civic education and human right education, to empower educators and students to play a meaningful role as citizens in democratic transformation

### **Activity 4. The Rapid Response Mechanism**

This activity earmarks funds for the continuation of the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), which allows CSOs to respond swiftly and flexibly to unexpected changes in the political or policy environment in the Eastern Partnership and Russia. Such changes may relate to all policy areas under the EaP priorities or to sudden restrictions on civil society space. Support can be provided in order to pursue an important policy issue in all EaP priority areas, to increase public awareness, contribute effectively to public debates on critical governance issues, and scale up targeted emergency capacity efforts.

The support is offered in the form of low value grants (up to 60,000 EUR) to selected CSOs, through direct award and on an ad hoc basis. The tool can be also used in cases where programming of other support through the bilateral envelope of the NDICI or the publication of a call for proposals would be inadequate to ensure quick reaction.

*Activities related to Output 2:*

### **Activity 5. Monitoring implementation and impact of EU support to civil society in the Eastern Partnership**

This activity proposes a continuation of ongoing work on a monitoring system that supports the EU Delegations in the Eastern Partnership in the monitoring of the EU support to CSOs.

Through this activity, the following results will be pursued:

- 5.1 Improving the quality and impact of EU support to civil society through a continuous monitoring system of the EU-funded civil society projects that will complement the EU project monitoring;
- 5.2 Generating evidence on the management and impact of EU support to civil society on the ground and its benefits for citizens;
- 5.3 Recommending concrete corrective measures, where gaps and shortcomings are identified.

#### **Activity 6. Monitoring of civic space and enabling environment for civil society based on the CSO Meter tool**

This activity constitutes the continuation of support provided for the development a monitoring tool on civic space (the CSO Meter) followed by regular monitoring. The CSO Meter assesses the progress in creating an enabling environment for civil society development by providing consensus-building standards, which are required to be in place for CSOs to operate freely. Furthermore, it is designed to respond to the needs of the countries monitored, taking into account the complexities and dynamics of the sector.

Through this activity, the following results will be pursued:

- 6.1 Monitoring the environment for civil society, issuing early warning reports on possible closures of civic space and providing meaningful input for policy dialogue at regional and national levels;
- 6.2 preparing and presenting yearly public reports on the state of indicators in the CSO Meter in each of the EaP countries and at regional level, allowing to compare performance and progress across the region;
- 6.3 empowering a critical mass of CSOs that can use the monitoring tool, exchanging strategies and expertise and advocating for improving the environment in each country and across the region;
- 6.4 pursuing local media and advocacy campaigns on civic space related issues.

*Activities related to Output 3:*

#### **Activity 7. Structured engagement with the think tank community on the EaP**

This activity will build on the initial steps taken to launch a pilot network of the EU and EaP think tanks with expertise and profound interest in the EaP policy aiming to strengthen and promote participatory and inclusive policy dialogue on the Eastern Partnership. The pilot phase focused on understanding the expectations of stakeholders, followed by dedicated public events, close-door debates, input papers and national consultations.

Through this activity, the following results will be pursued:

- 7.1 Further developing and sustaining the network of think tanks and promoting a long-term systematic engagement and dialogue on the EaP and its priorities between the EU and a wider-think tank community in the EU Member States and the EaP countries;
- 7.2 Exploring possibilities for capacity building of established and new think tanks in the EaP countries in a wide range of areas, including promoting an exchange of lessons learnt, development of cooperation, research, monitoring, and this way contributing to an increased quality of their knowledge base and overall independence;
- 7.3 Promoting EU's cooperation with think tanks, raising the overall level of public awareness and knowledge of the EaP policy and its priorities in the essence of enhanced strategic communication and building a researched-based positive EaP agenda, which will contribute to the knowledge-based EaP policy and decision-making processes at national and European levels.

### **3.3 Mainstreaming**

The EU has a strategic interest in advancing its global leadership on human rights and democracy in external action, including in within the EaP framework. Consequently, *human rights and democracy* principles will be central in the implementation of the action. A particular attention will be paid to ensuring full respect for human rights and equal

treatment of all. The European Democracy Action Plan<sup>14</sup> pins down that a healthy democracy relies on citizen engagement and an active civil society, not only at election time, but all the time, and engaged, informed and empowered citizens are the best guarantee for democratic resilience.

In addition, the action equally supports the transformative approach to contributing to **empowering women, girls and young people** to fully use their rights and increase their participation in political, economic, social, and cultural life as entrenched in the EU Gender Action Plan III<sup>15</sup>. To the extent possible, the activities described in this action will seek to contribute to raising awareness and safeguarding gains made on gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities and **youth empowerment** to date. The EU also recognises and promotes the role civil society plays in multilateral and regional human rights fora, advocacy and awareness raising campaigns as well as implementing and monitoring the EU policies, such as the EU Disability Strategy and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. Through the EU4Youth programme in the East, civil society fellowships and activities dedicated to capacity building of youth organisations help youth to develop skills and become active citizens and entrepreneurs. Moreover, CSOs and young leaders need to be further equipped with skills and resources to push for partner countries’ stronger commitment to the green agenda and sustainable development.

Unresolved conflicts continue to hamper development in the region and, in particular, the recent hostilities in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone caused numerous casualties, damages and displacement of the local population. In this regard, the action takes into account, in line with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, the **conflict sensitivity** and **reconciliation** efforts in the Eastern Partnership region and acknowledges the profound role civil society can play in building trust, sustainable peace and supporting people affected by conflicts. Women, men and children in conflict-affected territories, both unresolved and ongoing, IDPs, asylum seekers and refugees are disproportionately impacted due to restrictions in movements, limited humanitarian aid as well as limited socio-economic opportunities and a lack of proper health care services in the midst of the pandemic. To the extent possible, this action will support civil society in their effort to take active role in dialogue and promote peace initiatives, in synergy with other EU-funded initiatives and humanitarian aid projects, to help prepare the ground for longer-term conflict resolution.

In the Eastern Partnership region, civil society has been among the pioneers in pushing for sustainable **green agenda**. Environmental activism has become pivotal to the implementation, compliance and regulation of environmental policies and an active civil society participation make critical contributions to governments’ policies on fighting **climate change** and promoting **environmental protection**. At the same time, in some countries climate activism and fighting environmental injustice have become increasingly dangerous to freely pursue. In addition, local CSOs, particularly in rural areas, often lack sufficient knowledge of green policies, but also inclusive digital transformation and public health, and means to advocate these issues, therefore their capacity to play an active role needs to be reinforced.

### 3.4 Risks and Lessons Learned

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
External environment	Environment enabling civil society to operate, including pursuit of public participation and dialogue deteriorates in the wider Eastern neighbourhood	M	M	Engage with state actors, local authorities and CSOs to re-build trust and promote dialogue
People and organisation	Insufficient amount of qualitative proposals for financial support to third parties	L	L	Guidelines for financial support to third parties must be formulated in an accommodating manner; Local languages (as far as possible and economically justifiable) to be used in the application process.

<sup>14</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/european-democracy-action-plan\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/european-democracy-action-plan_en)

<sup>15</sup> [www.ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join-2020-17-final\\_en.pdf](http://www.ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf)

External environment	Cash flow problems and cuts in foreign donor funding of CSOs (due to pandemic, restricted civic environment, conflicts)	L/M	L/M	Re-granting through established CSOs, and – where possible - provision of core funding (i.e. operating support) to local CSOs
External environment	Political situation in the region deteriorating and escalation of conflicts	M	M	EU engages with the partner countries and supports stability and democratic development; civil society supported and enabled to take an active role in preventing political instability

## Lessons Learned

This new Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies is designed to reflect the achievements and lessons learnt of the previous phase of the facility, which covered the period of 2019-2020. For the purpose of collecting an inventory of the key lessons learnt to date and lay the ground for the new action, a forward-looking reflection meeting took place in January 2021, involving the regional team and EUD civil society focal points.

This internal reflection concluded that combining regional and bilateral activities into a multiannual single action under the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility has brought a higher degree of coherence and predictability to the EU support to civil society in the region. At the same time, it is important that the future activities, notably on capacity building, take strongly into account different and constantly changing country contexts, engage more actively women’s organisations and local communities in a wide range policies including the post-pandemic impact, poverty reduction and preventing destabilising factors in the regions. The need to strengthen capacity and engagement of local think tanks and the need to recalibrate the visibility and communication dimension of the EU support have been noted. Additionally, the areas in which CSOs work remain largely donor-driven and financial sustainability in-between and post- projects continues to be an issue.

In addition, this action draws on the findings of the structured consultations on the future of the Eastern Partnership, organised in the second half of 2019, which gathered contributions by the EU institutions, partner countries, nearly all Member States and a variety of stakeholders, such as civil society organisations (including the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum) and think tanks. The consultations<sup>16</sup> reconfirmed that civil society needs to be empowered to play a stronger role in the design, implementation and monitoring of the public policies. Responses underlined the role of civil society and independent media in promoting strategic communication and ensuring better EU’s visibility. In addition, more structured dialogue with the think tank community on the EaP policy and monitoring of developments was suggested, as the engagement in this area so far has not been systematically pursued at the regional level.

The action will also contribute to the new, more strategic approach to finance civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries. The EU established strategic partnerships with civil society organisations with sound local knowledge and capacity to channel funds in increasingly difficult and volatile environments has helped to increase outreach and support to smaller, local grassroots organisations, that operate in local languages, to independent media, as well as to human rights defenders and do it with a higher degree of awareness of the country context. Financial support to third parties has proved to allow quicker and more flexible outreach to CSOs that are not able to directly apply for the EU funding and that third party support made available by CSOs for CSOs tends to be more tailored to their needs. It is important to note the Framework Partnerships with CSOs have been particularly relevant to ensure a rapid and effective COVID-19 response, particularly in support to the most vulnerable groups.

The Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) proved to be extremely efficient for responding to swiftly and flexibly to unexpected changes provoked by the COVID pandemic and other unfolding crises. The low value short-term grants provided through the instrument were crucial in providing CSO support to vulnerable groups, empower women, promote a shift to distance learning, disseminate accurate information, and fight disinformation about the crisis. The review of the RRM carried out in December 2019 as part of the EU-funded project “Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility – Regional Actions” also confirmed that the RRM is effective and efficient, and its value added in responding to unexpected needs in the short term. The RRM in 2019-2020 offered the option of RRM support though both low value grants and service contracts. While demand for RRM support in the form of low value grants was high, there

<sup>16</sup> The results of the structured consultation on the future of the EaP are summarised in the Joint Staff Working Document “Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020”, SWD(2020) 56, [https://ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jswd\\_structured\\_consultation\\_on\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_the\\_eastern\\_partnership.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jswd_structured_consultation_on_the_future_of_the_eastern_partnership.pdf)

were no identified needs for service low value contracts and it is proposed that the new RRM mechanism will operate through low value grants only.

In 2020, Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) has been carried out on the regional Impact Monitoring Technical Assistance project, which is an important tool to monitor civil society grants and, especially sub-grants, in the region. The new project on impact monitoring will build on the lessons learnt provided by the ROM exercise, notably in exploring possibilities of dissemination of the intervention's results in a wider civil society community and identifying success stories among the monitored projects.

The 2020 external evaluation of EED aims to account the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the democracy support provided by EED. Against the backdrop of democratic backsliding, the evaluation found that EED has filled gaps in democracy support left by more traditional donors, strengthened the readiness of pro-democracy actors to contribute to locally led and locally shaped political and civic process in line with ambitions and reasonable expectations, and contributed to the sustainability of pro-democracy actors. At the same time, a number of lessons learnt have been drawn and will have to be taken into account by EED in order to strengthen its grant-making mechanism.



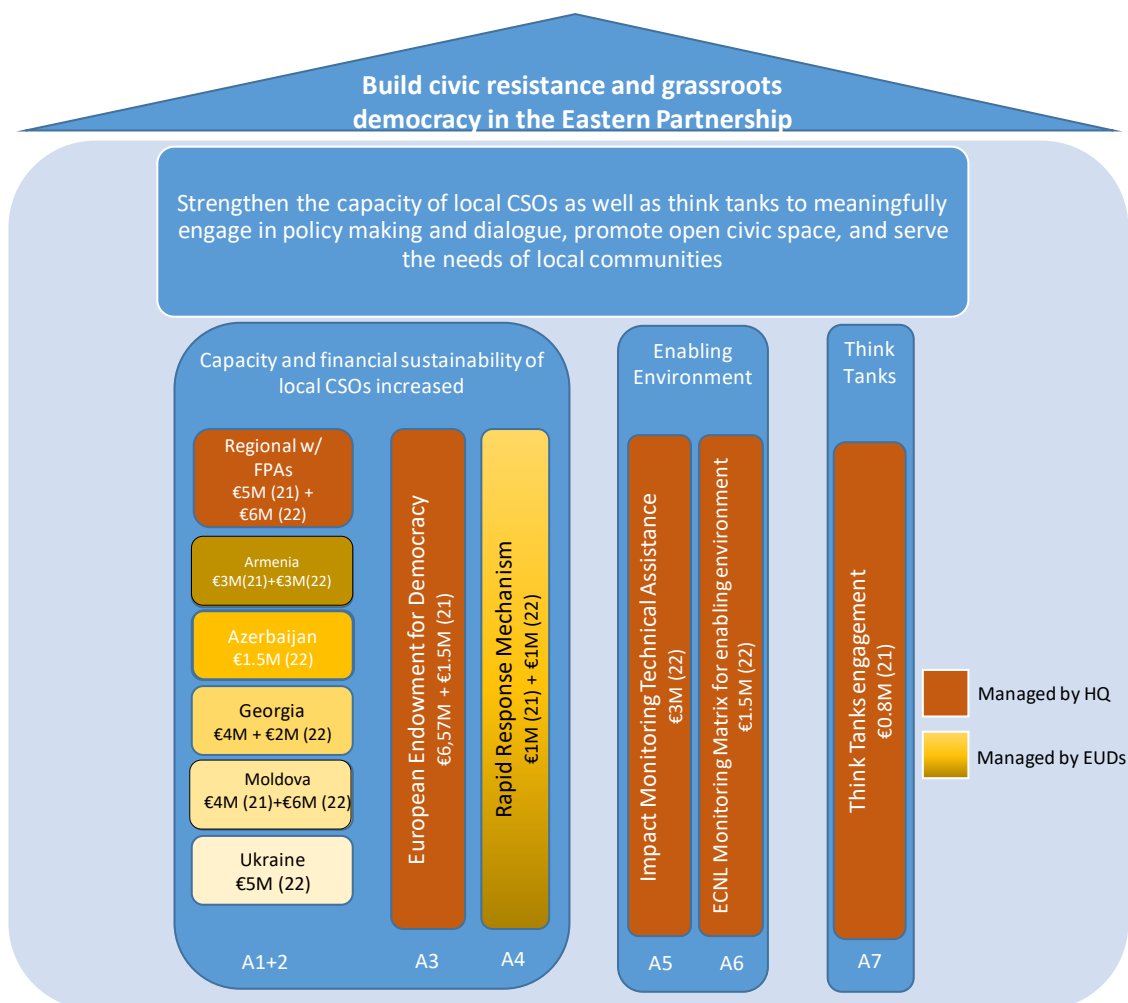
### 3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is designed to bring a higher degree of coherence and predictability of support to civil society by combining regional and bilateral activities into a multiannual single action under the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies. This reflects and contributes to the results-oriented agenda of the Eastern Partnership with the aim of strengthening resilience in all areas as an overriding policy framework.

Strong civic resilience and functioning grassroots democracy, as the main objective of this programme, require a comprehensive approach and investment to supporting civil society and advancing active citizenship as well as a strong interlinkage with good governance and all-inclusive socio-economic reforms. Therefore, this intervention logic is designed to capitalise and sustain the EU’s efforts to date in advancing the role of civil society across three main priority lines: capacity development, enabling environment and policy dialogue. At the same time, it seeks to apply innovative tools in financing of local CSOs, especially in close partnerships with well-established strategic partners, as well as to capture and foster current trends in civic space, emerging new civic actors, movements and informal civic self-organisation.

The action builds on the assumption that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be long lasting and will continue straining CSOs’ capacity and financial sustainability, this way affecting a pursuit of their missions in the short and medium term. Moreover, the observed impact by the pandemic on the civil society environment in the Eastern Partnership and Russia suggests that the dependency on international donors for financial support is likely to be increasing and will continue to challenge the sustainability of CSO work on the ground. In addition, as a result of the pandemic, a number of funding opportunities offered by various donors have been re-oriented towards post-pandemic recovery and health-related priorities.

Overall, the action offers a comprehensive response to regional and country-specific needs and general expectations to support civil society in the Eastern Neighbourhood. The visualisation of the intervention logic below indicates how the proposed implementation modalities interrelate to different activities.



### 3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators:	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumpti ons
<b>Impact</b>	Build civic resilience and grassroots democracy in the Eastern Partnership.	'Voice and Accountability' Worldwide Governance Indicator, percentile ranks of countries in the EaP	2019 country percentile ranks: Armenia 48 Azerbaijan 7 Belarus 11 Georgia 53 Moldova 43 Ukraine 48	Country percentile ranks of all 6 EaP countries improved	'Voice and Accountability' Worldwide Governance Indicator <sup>17</sup>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Outcome</b>	Strengthened capacity of local CSOs as well as think tanks to meaningfully engage in policy making and dialogue, promote open civic space, and serve the needs of local communities.	CSO Sustainability Index Overall score for the countries in the EaP	2019 scores: Armenia 3.6 Azerbaijan 5.9 Belarus 5.5 Georgia 4.0 Moldova 3.8 Ukraine 3.2	Overall scores of all 6 EaP countries improved	CSO Sustainability Index <sup>18</sup>	
<b>Output 1</b>	Local CSOs have increased financial resources and strengthened operational capacity to promote reforms, democratic development and contribute to socio-economic recovery at all levels.	Number of CSOs in the EaP receiving EU support through grants or Financial Support to Third Parties to strengthen their technical and advocacy capacities	2020: 1,200	2025: 3,000	Dedicated tool for monitoring CSO assistance in the EaP <sup>19</sup>	
<b>Output 2</b>	Continuous monitoring of civic space and contribution to an enabling environment for civil society is ensured.	Number of EaP countries that report improvement in at least 2 CSO Meter areas and no significant deterioration in other areas.	2020: 3	2025: 6	CSO Meter for assessing the CSO environment in the EaP	
<b>Output 3</b>	Think tank community and other relevant actors engaged in structured dialogue and public debate.	Number of think tanks active in the EaP Think Tanks Network for structured dialogue and public debate	2020: 0	2025: 3 per country	Upcoming think-tanks project	

<sup>17</sup> 'Voice and Accountability' indicator of the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) reflects perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media. The percentile rank indicates the country's rank among all countries covered by the aggregate indicator, with 0 corresponding to lowest rank, and 100 to highest rank, [WGI 2020 Interactive > Interactive Data Access \(worldbank.org\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> CSO Sustainability Index developed by USAID uses a seven-point scale, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of sustainability. [CSO Sustainability Index Explorer \(csosi.org\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> The CSO Meter consists of a set of standards and indicators in 10 different areas to measure both law and practice when monitoring the environment in which CSOs operate in the Eastern Partnership countries <https://ecnl.org/cso-meter>

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1 Financing Agreement

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

### 4.2 Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 60 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.

### 4.3 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>20</sup>.

#### 4.3.1 Direct Management (Grants)

##### *4.3.1.1 Grants: (direct management): Build capacities of CSOs to engage in advocacy, policy development and promote accountability*

##### (a) Purpose of the grants

To achieve Output 1 and implement Activities 1 and 2, grants will be concluded in order to develop regional and country specific capacity development programmes in selected Eastern Partnership countries and in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood region. The country-specific actions will be designed in line with the respective country's Roadmap for EU Engagement with Civil Society, and will focus on one or more of the following priorities:

- design and test new ways (financing tools) to fund CSOs and work towards improving CSOs' financial sustainability;
- adjust capacity development programmes to the needs of local CSOs' and communities;
- support CSOs in their agenda for outreach and engagement with citizens and communities in an inclusive manner;
- support the development of professional not-for-profit management and strengthen internal control and governance;
- promote self-governance standards, possibly through the establishment of a self-voluntary transparency framework for CSOs;
- advance regional and thematic policy dialogue between civil society and relevant stakeholders, ensuring the involvement of a wide variety of CSOs, including women's organisations;
- support to the elaboration of country-specific studies and events (mobilisation of country-specific expertise mandatory), on-going support, monitoring and evaluation.

Grants will be awarded in order to:

- conduct activities to strengthen capacity of CSOs to participate in the democratisation process in the Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation and become better communicators of their work;
- provide financial support to third parties and contribute to the financial sustainability of local CSOs;

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<sup>20</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.

- conduct coaching and mentoring support in the implementation of project funding received, coupled with organisational development support to the organisations' own strategies and ambitions;
- coordinate appropriately with EU Delegations and relevant donors on the implementation and monitoring of supported initiatives.

**(b) Type of applicants targeted**

For the regional capacity development programme (Activity 1), potential applicants for the grants will be organisations that have signed a financial framework partnership agreement with the EU, either for:

- following the call for proposals “Strategic Partnerships for Capacity Development of Civil Society Organisations in the Eastern Partnership”, EuropeAid/164964/DH/FPA/Multi, launched in 2019, or
- following a new selection procedure for FPAs planned to be launched in 2022.

For the **country-specific capacity development programmes** (Activity 2), potential applicants for the grants will be:

- organisations that have signed a financial framework partnership agreement with the EU (either following the call for proposals “Strategic Partnerships for Capacity Development of Civil Society Organisations in the Eastern Partnership”, EuropeAid/164964/DH/FPA/Multi, launched in 2019, or following a new selection procedure for FPAs planned to be launched in 2022, or
- civil society organisations that have a solid experience in implementing CSO capacity building activities and in awarding and managing financial support to local CSOs in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood.

**4.3.1.2 Grant (direct management): Support to the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) to continue promoting civic engagement and pro-democracy activism in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood**

**(a) Purpose of the grant**

To achieve Output 1 and implement Activity 3, a grant will be awarded to EED, aiming to promote civic engagement and support pro-democracy actors in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood.

**(b) Type of applicants targeted**

The target organisation to implement this activity is EED, which operates primarily as a grant-awarding organisation located in Belgium and established in 2013 through a decision of the Council of the European Union to foster and encourage deep and sustainable democracy. EED is steered by the Board of Governors, that consists of representatives of the 27 EU member states, UK, Norway, the European External Action Service, a representative designated by the European Commission, nine Members of the European Parliament, and three members elected to represent European civil society. The Board of Governors has an oversight over EED’s activities and ensure consistency with EU policies.

**(c) Justification of a direct grant**

Under the responsibility of the Commission’s authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because of EED’s competence, high degree of specialisation, strong proven operational experience in countries, where the space for civil society is shrinking due to administrative, legal, social, and political barriers. Such restricted environments require a body with appropriate competence, mandate and strong local awareness, which allows ensuring security of beneficiaries.

Due to its particular institutional set-up, EED is able to roll-out support in a flexible manner, adapting to local needs and rapidly a changing context, and support a vast array of established and emerging pro-democracy civic actors, movements and civil society organisations that may often not be able to obtain funding otherwise. On this basis, EED will receive a direct award of an action grant due to its technical competence or administrative power, in accordance with Art 195(1)(f) of the 2018 Financial Regulation. EED operates in the Eastern Neighbourhood since its establishment in 2013 and has acquired necessary capacity to manage a demand-driven support.

#### **4.3.1.3 Grants (direct management): direct awards under the 'Rapid Response Mechanism'**

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant(s)**

To achieve Output 1 and implement Activity 4, low-value grants will be awarded to CSOs to allow them to respond swiftly and flexibly to unexpected changes in the policy and political environment in the Eastern Partnership and Russia, including sudden restrictions of civil society space. By providing quick financial support it increases the EU capacity to adapt to those changes which affect civil society and ensures that civil society has the resources and space to adequately contribute to such changes and promote public debates.

This activity earmarks funds for a continuation of the RRM support under the Civil Society Facilities 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 to CSOs through the direct award small grants of up to EUR 60.000 each. It is expected that 25-35 grants will be awarded. The grant contracts will be managed by the respective Delegations (or exceptionally by HQ where this would be justified by the politically sensitive context).

**(b) Type of applicants targeted** Potential applicants are CSOs with a proven track record of action on a particular governance issue, ad-hoc coalitions of CSOs (or particular extensions of advocacy work conducted by established coalitions, networks and platforms), CSOs having proven citizen support for a particular advocacy idea and public policy think tanks based either in the European Union or in one of the Eastern Partnership countries, with a track record on policy work aimed at EU policy in the Eastern Partnership.

Grants will be awarded without a call for proposals to CSOs which will be selected on grounds of their specific degree of technical competencies in the field of civil society support or their high degree of specialisation in the specific area of civil society activities at stake. The policy and implementation context for civil society measures in the Eastern Partnership shows an ever decreasing space for active involvement and participation of CSOs which limits support measures to a limited, highly specialised and significantly competent beneficiaries in the country or region specific context in order to respond to immediate and ad-hoc needs arising from sudden changes in their environment. The recourse to such a direct award will be subject to fulfilling the conditions defined in Article 195 of the 2018 Financial Regulation and will be considered on a case-by-case basis in the light of these requirements.

#### **4.3.1.4 Grant (direct management): Monitoring of civic space and enabling environment for civil society based on the CSO Meter tool**

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant**

To achieve Output 2 and implement Activity 6, a grant will be awarded with the objective of contributing to an improvement of the environment in which civil society organisations operate in the Eastern Partnership countries, with the following planned results:

- The environment in which CSOs operate is regularly monitored, recommendations produced and changes introduced in order to ensure a more enabling environment for CSOs;
- Local stakeholders have a better understanding of issues on enabling environment for CSOs and solid basis for advocacy for improved legal framework for CSOs.

##### **(b) Type of applicants targeted**

The grant will be awarded without a call for proposals to the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL).

##### **(c) Justification of a direct grant**

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because of ECNL's competence, high degree of specialisation, strong proven experience in the field, and its unique methodology used to assess the environment in which civil society organisations operate. On this basis, this programme proposes to grant ECNL with a direct award of an action grant due to its technical competence or administrative power, as stipulated in the Art 195(f) of the 2018 Financial Regulation.

In particular, ECNL gained a certain degree of specialisation as well as unique expertise and experience in preparing similar monitoring tools for the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership regions. Based on its previous experience in monitoring developments in the Western Balkans and Turkey, over the period of 2018-2019 ECNL has designed and

implemented a Monitoring Matrix to monitor civic space for civil society organisations in the EaP countries. This tool is called the CSO Meter.

ECNL, with its affiliate the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), currently has ongoing programmes in support of enabling CSO law reform in each country of the EaP region and has been engaged in the region directly since 2007.

#### **4.3.1.5 Engagement with think tanks**

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant**

To achieve Output 3 and implement Activity 7, a grant will be awarded to strengthen and promote participatory and inclusive policy dialogue on the Eastern Partnership. This will be achieved by further developing the network of think tanks and promoting a long-term systematic engagement of the network and beyond. Possibilities to strengthen the capacity of and cooperation among think tanks, raising the overall level of public awareness and knowledge of the Eastern Partnership policy and its priorities in the essence of enhanced strategic communication, will be particularly considered under this action. The applicants will be invited to come forward with innovative ideas to promote their expertise, policy recommendation and strategic dialogue at national and European levels.

##### **(b) Type of applicants targeted**

Potential applicants for the grants will be non-governmental organisations performing and having a certain track record of think tank work, including policy-oriented research, analysis and advocacy related to the Eastern Partnership policy. Launching call for proposals for this activity is tentatively planned for 2022.

#### **4.3.2 Direct Management (Procurement)**

The proposed procurement of services links to the achievement of Output 2 and implementation of Activity 5. This will build on the technical assistance project launched under the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility 2018, which has been monitoring the impact of the EU support to civil society interventions, including a conduction of monitoring missions, data collection and reporting on results and recommendations. Building on the tools developed so far, a technical assistance project will be set up to monitor results and impact of the ongoing EU regional and bilateral support to civil society. It will contribute to improving quality and impact of the EU support, collecting good practices and recommending corrective measures for the EU-funded civil society projects in the EaP region.

Subject	Indicative type (works, supplies, services)	Indicative trimester of launch of the procedure
Monitoring implementation and impact of EU support to civil society in the Eastern Partnership	Services	1st trimester of 2022

#### **4.3.3 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity**

A part of this action with the objective to achieve Output 1 and implement Activities 2.4 in Georgia may be implemented in indirect management with an entrusted entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services on the basis of meeting the following cumulative criteria:

- proven experience, significant technical competence and a high degree of specialisation in implementing support to civil society;
- proven positive track record in providing capacity development to civil society and financial support to third parties in Abkhazia;
- reputed and credible in the above-mentioned geographic area of operations and among beneficiaries
- positively pillar assessed for grants and procurement.

The implementation by this entity/these entities entails CSO capacity development and management of a scheme of financial support to third parties in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

It is possible that several international organisations complying with the above-established criteria and having similar experience will partner as a consortium under one agreement and implement the above activities jointly if this is more cost effective, efficient and suitable.

#### **4.3.4 Changes from indirect to direct management (and vice versa) mode due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)**

If negotiations with an entrusted entity fail, or if the above-mentioned preferred modality cannot be implemented due to circumstances outside of the Commission's control, to reach Output 1 and implement Activities 2.4, that part of this action may be implemented in direct management in accordance with the implementation modalities identified in sections 4.3.1.

#### **4.4 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants**

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

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of products and services in the markets of the countries concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

## 4.5 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2021	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2022	Indicative third-party contribution (in EUR)
<b>Output 1</b> composed of:			
Activity 1. Mobilise EU strategic civil society framework partners to develop regional capacity development programme in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.1	5 M (REG)	6 M (REG)	1.22 M
Activity 2. Develop a country-specific capacity development programme in the Eastern Partnership countries			
2.1 Armenia: Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.1	3 M (AM)	3 M (AM)	0.67 M
2.2 Azerbaijan: Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.1		1.5 M (AZ)	0.17 M
2.3.a Georgia: Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.1		4 M (GE)	0.44 M
2.3.b Georgia (breakaway regions) Grants (indirect management) – cf section 4.3.3		2 M (GE)	0.22 M
2.4 Moldova: Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.1	4 M (MD)	6 M (MD)	1.11 M
2.5 Ukraine: Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.1		5 M (UA)	0.56 M
Activity 3. Support to EED to continue promoting civic engagement and pro-democracy activism in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood	6.57 M (REG)		
3.1 Azerbaijan Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.2	1.5 M (AZ)		
Activity 4. The Rapid Response Mechanism Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.3	1 M (REG)	1 M (REG)	0.22 M
<b>Output 2</b> composed of:			
Activity 5. Monitoring results and impact of civil society work in the Eastern Partnership Procurement (direct management) – cf section 4.3.2		3 M (REG)	
Activity 6. Monitoring of civic space and enabling environment for civil society based on the CSO Meter tool Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.4		1.5 M (REG)	0.17 M
<b>Output 3</b> composed of:			
Activity 7. Structured engagement with the think tank community on the EaP		0.8 M (REG)	0.09 M



Grants (direct management) – cf section 4.3.1.5			
<b>Grants – total envelope</b>	21.07 M	30.8 M	4.87 M
<b>Procurement – total envelope</b>		3 M	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.07 M</b>	<b>33.8 M</b>	<b>4.87 M</b>
	<b>59.74 M</b>		

#### 4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

Each of the components of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility 2021-2022 will have their own internal governance structure. All standalone projects, except those set up under the Rapid Response Mechanism, will have a regular steering committee, where the projects' implementation and achieved results will be discussed. Such steering committees will involve representatives of the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the EU Delegations, implementing partners and other stakeholders as appropriate. For the Activity 2, steering committees will be organised at the national level, whereas for other activities, that have a multi-country scope, project steering will be arranged at the regional level.

As regards the Rapid Response Mechanism, working arrangements within the EU have been developed in the previous phase and will be followed in order to guide the decision making process.

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.

### 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 for project modality.

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).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

As part of this action, the Commission plans to contract services for the regional technical assistance project on impact and results monitoring, which will serve both the team working on regional projects and the EU Delegations for bilateral projects. This will build on the technical assistance project launched under the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility 2018, which monitor impact of the EU support to civil society interventions, including a conduction of monitoring missions, data collection and reporting on results and recommendations.

#### 5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, evaluation(s) will not be carried out for this action or its components.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. In such cases, the implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with other key stakeholders as appropriate and following the best practice of evaluation dissemination<sup>21</sup>. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project. The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a Financing Decision.

### **5.3. 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.

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

## **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](#) (or any successor document), 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.

During the implementation of the planned activities of this programme, communication and visibility will be given a high importance, unless it is considered that this, in some cases, could endanger security of the beneficiaries. In all other cases, when the programme is mentioned, through campaigns or in external communications and meetings where there is no risk involved for the beneficiaries, it should be made clear that the EU has provided funding for the implementation of a specific action. The implementation of communication activities shall be the responsibility of the implementing partners, with the concrete arrangements to be specified in the respective grant agreements or terms of reference and contracts for procurement, and shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the action. The actions shall ensure effective means to demonstrate results at country and broader regional level as well as to increase the awareness of the target audience on the goals and benefits for citizens of the EU assistance provided in the framework of this intervention.

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<sup>21</sup> See best [practice of evaluation dissemination](#)