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ANNEX I

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the Annual action plan in favour of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2022

Action Document for EU for Improved Border and Migration Management

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and annual and multiannual action plans and measures in the sense of Article 9 of IPA III Regulation and Article 23 of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU for Improved Border and Migration Management Annual action plan in favour of North Macedonia for 2022			
OPSYS	ACT-60917			
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)			
Team Europe Initiative	No			
Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in North Macedonia			
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
Window and thematic priority	Window 1: Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy Thematic Priority 4: Migration and border management			
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries Other significant SDGs 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development			
DAC code(s)	15210-Security system management and reform (100%)			
Main Delivery Channel	12000 Recipient Government			
Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input 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, newborn 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"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Digitalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
Amounts concerned	Budget line: 15.020101.01 Total estimated cost: EUR 10 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 10 000 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
Implementation modalities (type of financing and management mode)	Project Modality Direct management through: Procurement			
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	Priorities: "Good Governance, Rule of Law, PAR" Flagship: "VIII Digital Infrastructure"			
Final Date for conclusion of Financing Agreement	At the latest by 31 December 2023			
Final date for concluding contribution /	3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation			

delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement
Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

1.2. Summary of the Action

The Action aims at strengthening the border and migration management capabilities of North Macedonia and will support the implementation of the new Integrated Border Management Strategy.

The Action will upgrade the technological and institutional capacities to identify, register, screen and treat the information on migrants and refugees in line with EU and international standards. It will facilitate the exchange of data at regional level and support the country in preparing technically for connecting to the EU data systems and cooperating more effectively with EUAA, Frontex and UNHCR.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

North Macedonia strives to join the EU and embarked on a large spectrum of reforms to harmonise its regulative and institutional framework with the EU, foster the economic development and achieve cohesion with the EU economic and social standards. The EU Member States decided to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia in March 2020¹. The first Intergovernmental Conference opening the accession negotiations with North Macedonia took place on 19 July 2022, following the approval by the Council of the Negotiating Framework. The Commission started immediately the screening exercise, which is the first step in the negotiating process. The EU path for North Macedonia passes through challenging fundamental reforms, reinforcing the rule of law and the fight against organised crime and corruption. While progress has been achieved in the last few years, the European Commission reports and strategic documents clearly outline the challenges that need to be addressed². The citizens of North Macedonia enjoy visa-free travel to the EU under the Visa Suspension Mechanism. The visa regime is largely aligned with that of the EU, but the national legislation still needs to be fully aligned with the EU list of countries whose nationals are subject to a visa for short stays in the EU.

This Action targets the priorities related to the effective and efficient border management. It will support the implementation of the agreement between North Macedonia and EU on

¹ Council of the European Union on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Associations Process. The Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania. Brussels, 25 March 2020 (7002/20).

² 2022 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy SWD (2022) 528 final ;. 2022 Report on North Macedonia (SWD (2022) 337 final); Communication "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans (COM(2018)65 final) 6.2.2018; Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and North Macedonia 26 March 2001.

operational activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) in North Macedonia, signed on 26 October 2022, with the objective to assist North Macedonia in its efforts to manage migratory flows, counter irregular migration, and tackle cross border crime. The agreement will allow joint operations to be organised and Frontex border management teams to be deployed in North Macedonia, subject to the country's agreement. Reinforcing controls along the borders of North Macedonia will contribute to further enhancing security at the EU's external borders.

North Macedonia is a transit country for migration flows from North Africa and the Middle East. The geographical location of North Macedonia on the Balkan route creates constant pressures over the border. During the 2015 refugee crisis, North Macedonia saw approximately 800 000 migrants transiting the national territory in 2015 and 2016. The migration flow has significantly lowered in the last three years. It continues to be largely transitory, with most migrants arriving from Greece. In 2020, irregular movement through the territory continued at an increased pace compared with previous years. While specialised international organisations observed 41 257 arrivals in 2020, the national authorities, from March 2019 to April 2020, detected over 25 000 irregular border crossing, primarily involving Pakistani, Afghan, Bangladeshi, Indian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian and Iranian persons³, while in 2021 a significant number of nationals of Somalia and Eritrea were also noted. People in irregular movement remain the target of organised criminal groups engaged in people smuggling often subjecting them to extortion and various forms of abuse.

The country has still not set up a proper protection-sensitive migration management system. Registration of migrants was suspended at the southern border from April 2020 to January 2021. There is a need to have a systematic registration of all individuals apprehended in the irregular movement for humanitarian and migration management purposes. Following registration, anyone needing international protection have to be identified by systematic protection-sensitive profiling and referred to national protection mechanisms. As part of the regional IPA II programme "*Regional Support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Phase II*", the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) finalised a Master Plan that can be used by the authorities of North Macedonia to implement a biometric IT system for the identification and registration of mixed migration flows that is compatible with EURODAC. In the absence of a proper system for managing irregular movements, the practice of returning migrants outside of a legal and/or procedural framework remains the norm. There is no available data on how many individuals are apprehended on the country's territory, which is estimated to be almost the totality of what the authorities define as prevented attempted illegal crossings.

The *Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection* requires migrants to submit an asylum claim or leave the country within 72 hours and also enabled authorities to control the migrant flow. In 2020, 211 applications for asylum were submitted (490 in 2019), out of which 47 (22%) were from Afghanistan, 33 (16%) from Pakistan, 26 (12%) from Turkey and 23 (11%) from Syria. In 2020, the Sector for Asylum issued two decisions granting subsidiary protection, 39 negative decisions for 46 persons and 201 decisions for the discontinuation of asylum procedures for 215 persons. There have been no positive decisions granting refugee status since 2018 (often people who apply for refugee status leave the country before any decision is taken). UNHCR reported that the mechanism for adjudicating refugee status failed to provide basic procedural guarantees and proper determinations as prescribed in the law regulating asylum and temporary protection.

³ IOM database within the IPA project - Special Measure on supporting North Macedonia to improve its border and migration management capabilities.

2.2. Problem Analysis

The authorities have insufficient capacity to register and identify the migrants, additionally many migrants are smuggled by criminal organisation active in the trafficking of human beings and therefore the number of migrants transiting the country is considered to be higher than official figures. Despite the decrease in the dynamics compared with the previous years, the refugee and migration crisis should, in no case, be considered as ended. Refugees and migrants who travel via unregulated routes are invisible to the country's protection system and as highly vulnerable groups are at great risk of becoming victims of human trafficking and organised crime. The registration of migrants is inconsistent, and the dynamic border crossing patterns prevent regular and adequate protection-sensitive profiling and the referral to national protection mechanisms. The transit centres for migrants are not suitable for long-term stays. The infrastructure of the transit centres remained relatively unchanged throughout the years. Regarding the asylum procedure, there is a need to assure adequate, rapid and quality asylum applications processing, in full respect of human rights and in line with international standards. Support is needed to consolidate accomplishments in integrated border management and migration. Additionally, support is needed to further improve border security systems, to achieve full compliance with EU and Schengen *acquis*, as well as to implement the best practices of the sector and set up a proper protection-sensitive migration management system.

There is also a need to strengthen the coordination of actions on migration at the national, regional and European level. Considering the EU accession perspective of North Macedonia, the country needs to align with EUROSUR border surveillance standards, including the National Coordination Centre for Border Management. Likewise, the development of biometric and EURODAC-compliant migrant registration systems is key for preparing the country's eventual connection to EURODAC. By establishing the relevant IT infrastructure and registration mechanisms, North Macedonia will substantially enhance the quality of its migrant registration and identification system, facilitate the exchange of data at regional level and be technically prepared for the future connection to EU data systems.

Within the framework of the regional IPA project, *"Regional Support for Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey, phase II"*, one of the activities was to benchmark the existing ICT infrastructure supporting the migration management registration process. This activity developed a National Master Plan that describe the state of the IT system and infrastructure, the needs and the best implementation strategy to achieve technical readiness for future interconnectivity with relevant EU information management systems—using the EURODAC system as a reference model. The Master Plan mapped the existing IT infrastructure and systems and defined the necessary steps for a harmonised design to develop the relevant national systems with EURODAC at the time of EU accession. The current stage is to implement the system. Therefore, this Action will consider the Master Plan and its recommendations, paying particular attention to the technical characteristics of the equipment required to be tendered. Complementary to this Action, capacity-building and follow-up support will be ongoing in parallel as part of phase III of the regional IPA project.

The Action will involve different stakeholders:

- The **Ministry of Interior (MoI)** is the main policy maker in the home affairs sector, also responsible for the coordination and supervision of implementation and reporting of the sector reforms.
- The **Department for Border Affairs and Migration**, within the Ministry of Interior, is the main responsible department of the national border control officers.
- The **National Coordination Centre for Border Management (NCCBM)**, a body of the Government of North Macedonia in charge of coordination and cooperation with the border institutions and authorities.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Intervention Logic

The **Overall Objective (Impact)** of this Action is *to improve security in the country and at its borders while supporting human rights and the free movement of people.*

The Action aims to achieve the following **Specific Objective (Outcome):** *1. Strengthened border and migration management capabilities.*

This Outcome will be achieved through the following **outputs:**

1.1. Strengthened technology capacities to identify, screen and properly treat information on migrants and refugees, in line with EU standards

The Action will improve the management of the mixed migration flows, including registration and identification of new arrivals, in line with EU and international standards. The feasibility studies will be conducted to assess the most relevant technological investments. The use of such technology, including special equipment, related IT support and software solutions, biometric IT systems for identification and registration of migrants will allow the border police to collect, process, store and analyse information on migrants' and refugees' arrival and departure. This Action will also improve border security by providing connectivity with relevant regional and international security and police institutions. Over the long term, data collected by this system can inform sound migration management policy, improving government capacities to plan and prepare.

1.2. Strengthened institutional capacities to ensure full operation of the migrants' identification and registration IT system

With this output, the Action will provide the necessary technical capacities to border officials to adequately manage the whole system indicated in output 1.1 ensuring full operation of the identification and registration system. In addition, capacity building measures will consider the skills required to manage European border surveillance standards, including EURODAC.

3.2. Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1.1. Strengthened technology capacities to identify, screen and properly treat information on migrants and refugees, in line with EU standards

- Feasibility studies on most relevant technological investments, supply, delivery, unloading, integration with the existing system, commissioning and putting adequate technical equipment into operation for migrants' identification and registration in line with EU standards, including software solutions and related IT support and biometric IT systems for identification and registration of migrants.

Activities related to Output 1.2. Strengthened institutional capacities to ensure full operation of the migrants' identification and registration IT system

- Training Need Analysis, training programme and training delivered for all intended users of the equipment.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

As part of a broader obligation to sustainable development, the EU has a longstanding commitment to addressing environmental concerns in its assistance programmes. This Action does not pursue specific objectives as regards the environment and climate change. Still, this

Action is environment-sensitive and will contribute to addressing environment concerns. By digitalising the data collection, storage and electronic exchange of information will decrease the paper circuits and save natural resources. Furthermore, all activities related to this Action will be implemented minimising negative impacts on the environment.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

The country has put in place the legal framework to ensure gender equality through the adoption of the Law on equal opportunities for women and men and the Law on the prevention and protection against discrimination. The current legal framework actually prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation and prescribes that equal representation of men and women exists when one sex is represented with at least 40% in bodies at all levels (state, municipal levels other institutions).

This Action is gender-sensitive. Under the migration and border management, the Action will ensure that the relevant UN recommendations are applied. This includes systematic collection of sex and age disaggregated data in asylum registration systems, timely identification of the needs of women and vulnerable groups. In addition, the government is committed to taking into account, as crosscutting element in all its policies, the European Union Gender Strategy 2020-2025.

Human Rights

North Macedonia is a reliable partner in the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. The Action will reinforce the rights-based approach in managing migration. The activities are dedicated or affect migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, human trafficking, unaccompanied migrant children, and women and girls migrants. The project activities will support the implementation of the relevant international standards in the respective international documents such as the UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention against Torture, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment and or Punishment, UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, EU Directive 2009/115/EC on common standards and procedures in the Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals and in line with recommendations made by relevant international human rights monitoring bodies.

Disability

The Action will ensure the implementation of EU and international standards in registration of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. However, people with disabilities, being more vulnerable in migration will benefit significantly from the Action.

Civil Society

The civil society organisations have been engaged in the identification of the national sector priorities, primarily during the preparation of the relevant strategic documents and the discussion of the sector Performance Assessment Framework. Since the programming of IPA is embedded in the national policy dialogue platform (Sector Working Group), the EU assistance is also defined in inclusive consultations with all stakeholders. This approach will be extended at the implementation phase for this Action.

3.4. Risks and Lessons Learned

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures

People and the organisation	Lack of political will to continue the investments in the border management system	L	H	Engage in continuous policy dialogue with national authorities through, mainly, the Sector Working Group on Home Affairs
People and the organisation	Dramatic change in migration trends with unpredictable duration and number of arrivals.	M	H	Regular coordination with EU and the neighbouring countries and exchange of information on migration flows trends and regular donor coordination meetings that ensure alignment, coordination and coherence of international assistance.
Planning, process and system	Weak administrative capacity, lack of adequate number and quality staffing and insufficient coordination among institutions	M	M	Establishing good communication channels and regular coordination and consultation between institutions

Lessons Learned:

The total IPA II envelope for home affairs for North Macedonia under the bilateral pillar reached almost EUR 30 million and covers the fight against organised crime, terrorism and money laundering, management of the migration flows and border management, including quality of customs controls. The implementation of this financial assistance, essential for the country, provides for the formulation of the following lessons:

- Improving border management systems and their impact on irregular migration and the fight against organised crime require strong coordination among the EU regional and national instruments, as well as the concerted efforts of the EU institutions and the EU Member states. The exchange of data and information is the first and fundamental layer on which all future cooperative efforts will be developed, and complementarity between the regional and bilateral strand of support achieved.
- Proper and timely involvement of the civil society is key for the success of any initiative in this sector.
- The effective and efficient management of migratory flows and their impact on society requires a high level of political commitment, inclusive multilateral dialogue on sector policies and effective administration. Therefore, strategies that work well involve a combination of tools. Intense upgrade of the current capacities – achieved through complementarity of the regional and bilateral instruments – will contribute to law enforcement, stronger ownership and political commitment to effective management of migration flows. While digitisation cannot be a panacea in migration management, the technological leap can dramatically improve the way

institutions operate and communicate and therefore improve their performance and reduce costs and delays.

- Regarding migration management, the main lesson learned is that strict migration controls often give rise to increased irregular migration and feed human trafficking market actors. The problem is international and requires concerted efforts of the EU and partner countries.

3.5. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain	Indicators	Baselines	Target	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To improve security in the country and at its borders while supporting human rights and the free movement of people	Level of country's preparation to implement the EU <i>acquis</i> on irregular migration, border management, international protection and legal migration	Moderately prepared (2021)	A higher level of preparedness (2027)	European Commission annual report ⁴	
Outcome 1	Strengthened border and migration management capabilities	Irregular border crossing rate ⁵	22% (2017)	<5% (2027)	Border police database extract	Migration pressure remains in the current limits without high pick-up periods
		Rate of asylum seekers who have asylum right granted	0% (2020)	≥ 3% (2027)	MoI Database	
Output 1 related to Outcome 1	Strengthened technology capacities to identify, screen and properly treat information on migrants and refugees, in line with EU standards	Number of feasibility studies to assess the most relevant technological investments needed	0 (2021)	1 (2023)	Final report of the technical assistance approved	Political and institutional support to sector reforms and implementation of the sector strategies translated into sufficient staff level, and financial resources for the bodies and institutions involved
		Number of technical equipment for identification and registration of migrants procured	0 (2021)	1 (2024)	Annual report of the Border Police	
		Number of modern biometric IT systems for identification and registration of migrants put in use	0 (2021)	1 (2025)	Acceptance certificates	
Output 2 related to Outcome 1	Strengthened institutional capacities to ensure full operation of the migrants identification and registration IT system	Number of trainings for staff dealing with the migrant identification and registration IT system	0 (2021)	TBD	Project report	

⁴2022 Report on North Macedonia (SWD 2022) 337 (final). https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports_en (chapter 24)

⁵ Measured as the Ratio of people irregularly crossing the border and detected by the patrol border police in the green border over the people crossing the border and either found inside the country or in the area patrolled by the border police

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with North Macedonia.

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 72 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

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. Methods of implementation

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 measures⁶.

4.3.1. Direct Management (Procurement)

Procurement will be used for achieving the only Outcome of the Action Document, i.e. Outcome 1: Strengthened border and migration management capabilities.

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

In case the technical documentation prepared by Frontex requires specific expertise, capacity and restrictions, the activities will be implemented through a pillar-assessed international organisation, selected on the grounds of its administrative, financial and technical capacity.

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 provisions.

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

⁶ 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.

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, (EUR)
Methods of implementation, cf section 4.3		
Outcome 1: Strengthened border and migration management capabilities , composed of	10 000 000	0
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	N/A	N/A
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.3.1	10 000 000	0
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2	Will be covered by another decision	N/A
Audit – cf. section 5.3	Will be covered by another decision	N/A
Communication and visibility – cf. section 6	Will be covered by another decision	N/A
Contingencies	0	N/A
Totals	10 000 000	0

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The Delegation of the European Union to North Macedonia is in charge of the implementation of the Action, and will collaborate with the Secretariat for European Affairs (NIPAC office), the line ministry involved and all stakeholders and implementing partners.

At policy level the implementing partners will be accountable to the relevant Sector Working Groups (Home Affairs) as well as the IPA Monitoring Committee.

At contract level, the implementation arrangements will be discussed through the project Steering Committees having advisory functions and composed of the EU Delegation, the relevant national authorities and all relevant implementing partners.

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 partners 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) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support). 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:

The progress in the implementation of the Action will be monitored at the sector level through the established 2021 Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) which includes outcome and impact indicators, targets and baseline data. The PAF has been selected as a web-based application (backed up by a government decision on responsibilities and deadlines), allowing regular electronic input of data, data processing and data analytics.

The PAF data will be used and discussed in the Sector Working Group on Home Affairs, which is also the inclusive platform of all stakeholders to monitor the implementation of the sector priorities. This set-up implies that the Ministry of Internal Affairs shall assume a vital role in the supervision of the implementation of the Action and in the organisation of policy dialogue to discuss challenges and results.

At the output level, data about the implementation of each project and contract will be collected in OPSYS. They will be based on official documents such as reports, acceptance certificates or equivalent documents.

The project itself is a tool to improve the capacities of the national institutions to monitor the sector developments. The competent actors (Ministry, SEA) are expected to produce timely and meaningful data to monitor the results and impact of the Action.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the Action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this Action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission. It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including policy revision).

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 1 month in advance of the dates foreseen for the evaluation missions. 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 the partner country and other key stakeholders. 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.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract.

5.3. Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment,

contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Visibility of EU funding and communication about objectives and impact of Actions are a legal obligation for all Actions funded by the EU, as set out in the EU communication and visibility requirements in force.

In particular, the recipients of EU funding shall acknowledge the origin of the EU funding and ensure its proper visibility by:

- providing a statement highlighting the support received from the EU in a visible manner on all documents and communication material relating to the implementation of the funds, including on an official website and social media accounts, where these exist; and
- promoting the actions and their results by providing coherent, effective and proportionate targeted information to multiple audiences, including the media.

Visibility and communication measures shall be implemented, as relevant, by the national administrations (for instance, concerning the reforms linked to EU budget support), entrusted entities, contractors and grant beneficiaries. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included, respectively, in financing agreements, delegation agreements, and procurement and grant contracts.

The measures shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan, established and implemented in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. The plan shall include, inter alia, a communication narrative and master messages for the Action, customised for the various target audiences (stakeholders, civil society, general public, etc.)

Visibility and communication measures specific to this Action shall be complementary to the broader communication activities implemented directly by the European Commission services and/or the EU Delegations and Offices. The European Commission and the EU Delegations and Offices should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities, notably with respect to the communication narrative and master messages.

At the level of the Action, the communication policy will be based on few activities with high media potential, and able to create media events allowing the Commission and the EU Delegation to promote the relevant EU values, policy and investments. Cooperation with the NIPAC office and the other beneficiaries will be very important to ensure one-voice communication to citizens.

At contract level, all contractors and grantees shall develop communication and visibility activities in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. The communication and visibility plans of contractors and grantees will be approved by the EU Delegation. Contractors are expected to show a good communication reflex and the ability to exploit unexpected opportunities to promote the activities and the EU support. Focus should be put on "out-of-the-box" communication solution having the potential to attract the attention of media and citizens and allow passing important messages. The opportunities provided by the digital communication and social media shall be used at large. It is the responsibility of the contractors and beneficiaries to keep the EU Delegation and the Commission fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities. The beneficiary shall also report on the visibility and communication actions in the relevant reports. The implementation of the communication activities shall be funded from the budgets of the individual contracts.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability potential of the Action is high both at institutional, regulatory and even financial level. Coupling capacity building with modernisation of the equipment will improve the efficiency of the border management system as a whole, will spare time and resources and will allow the country to deliver on the international commitments. The Action will create new capacity to respond to migration, and to cooperate more effectively with the EU.

Another vector of sustainability is provided by the inclusive policy dialogue, which is expected (1) to support the implementation of the coherent sector policies, underlying this Action, by keeping a strong focus on the sector priorities, and (2) to translate the political commitment into sufficient funding and modern human resource management to ensure that the policy gains are sustained.

The investments in the border crossing points will increase security, save time and efforts of both authority and business operators. The maintenance of the equipment will be ensured through the state budget.