



EN

THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX II

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multiannual action plan part I in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood for 2024-2026

Action Document for Support to women's employment in the Southern Neighbourhood through gender-responsive private sector development

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

1. Title OPSYS Basic Act	Support to women's employment in the Southern Neighbourhood through gender-responsive private sector development. Multiannual action plan part I in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood for 2024-2026 OPSYS business reference: ACT-62465 ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD.1398831 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)	Yes Priority v. Economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support)
EIP Flagship	Yes Flagship 6 – Inclusive economies
3. Team Europe Initiative	Yes Regional Team Europe Initiative on Jobs through Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood
4. Beneficiary(y)/(ies) of the action	The action shall be carried out in the Southern Neighbourhood countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel ⁽¹⁾ , Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine*, Syria ⁽²⁾ and Tunisia.

¹ See Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards on [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013XC0719\(03\)&from=en](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013XC0719(03)&from=en).

	<p>As per Article 43(1) of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation, for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness, and upon explicit justified request, specific activities such as regional events may be extended to countries neighbouring the Southern Neighbourhood (Saudi Arabia and Iraq) and Gulf countries.</p> <p>This is justified because the action is part of a wider initiative led by UN Women encompassing the above-mentioned countries, and may, for limited activities and if needed, support cross-regional exchanges of best practices. It is in line with the multi-annual indicative programme for the Southern Neighbourhood for 2021-2027, which makes reference, under priority 5 (specific objective 2) to the importance of cross regional cooperation.</p>
5. Programming document	Multi-annual indicative programme for the Southern Neighbourhood (2021-2027) ³
6. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results	<p>Priority Area 2: Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition.</p> <p>Specific Objective 4: Enhance inclusive economy and promote financial inclusion.</p>
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
7. Priority Area(s), sectors	<p>160 - Other Social Infrastructure & Services</p> <p>250 – Business and other services</p> <p>151 – Government and civil society – general</p>
8. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<p>Main SDG (1 only): SDG 5 “Gender equality”</p> <p>Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets:</p> <p>SDG 8: “Decent Work and Economic Growth”</p> <p>SDG 10: “Reduced inequalities”</p>
9. DAC code(s)	<p>Main DAC Code</p> <p>16020 – Employment creation 40%</p> <p>Other relevant DAC Codes</p> <p>25030 – Business development services (30%)</p> <p>25010 – Business Policy and Administration (15%)</p> <p>15170 – Women’s right organisations and movements, and government institutions (15%)</p>
10. Main Delivery Channel @	41000 – UN entities

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue. Implementation of the present action will integrate the recommendations of the Communication to the Commission on the review of ongoing financial assistance for Palestine C (2023) 8300, 21.11.2023.

² Co-operation with the Government of Syria suspended since 2011.

³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)9399 of 16.12.2021 on a Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood.

11. Targets	<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"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
12. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Internal markers and Tags	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	EIP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	EIP Flagship	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		NO <input type="checkbox"/>
	Tags transport energy environment, climate resilience digital economic development (incl. private sector, trade and	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

macroeconomic support)			
human development (incl. human capital and youth)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
health resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
migration and mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
agriculture, food security and rural development	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
rule of law, governance and public administration reform	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
other	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Digitalisation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES		NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital entrepreneurship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
digital skills/literacy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connectivity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES		NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
health	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Migration @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET INFORMATION

14. Amounts concerned	<p>Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020110 Southern Neighbourhood</p> <p>Total estimated cost: EUR 10 000 000</p> <p>Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 10 000 000</p> <p>The EU contribution to this action may be complemented by other contributions from Team Europe partners as parallel financing to the broader initiative of UN Women in the region (tentatively Germany and Spain). It is subject to the formal confirmation of each respective partners' meaningful contribution as early as possible. In the event that the Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) and/or these contributions do not materialise, the action may continue outside a TEI framework.</p>
------------------------------	---

MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

15. Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)	Indirect management with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).
---	--

1.2. Summary of the Action

The present action contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 “Gender Equality”, as well as SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth” and SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities”. It reflects the EU priorities outlined in the Joint Communication on a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood⁴ and its Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) under its Flagship 6 “Inclusive economies”⁵. It contributes to promoting an “economy that works for people” and to implementing the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood (2021-2027)⁶ under its Priority Area 2 “Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition”. It aligns with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Declarations on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (2022) and on Employment and Labour and (2022).

In the Southern Neighbourhood, women’s access to the formal labour market remains one of the lowest in the world, compromising growth perspectives for a number of countries. At the same time, the private sector represents the region's main engine for growth and decent job creation, a potential which is largely untapped for women.

The action aims to support women’s employment through a targeted angle of promoting a gender-responsive private sector development, with a specific focus on innovation and incubation in high-potential sectors, namely the care, the green and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) economies. It will take a three-fold approach: 1) establishing an enabling policy and legal environment for a gender-responsive private sector; 2) supporting gender-responsive private sector to boost women’s employment and their economic empowerment in the workplace and in the economy at large, using the Women Empowerment Principles as main vehicle and implementing gender-responsive corporate policies and supply chains; and 3) increasing women’s access to decent work, including for women living in vulnerable situations, by leveraging the potential of the care, green and STEM economies.

The action consolidates and complements the programme adopted under the 2022 Regional Action Plan which aimed at supporting women’s economic empowerment in the Southern Neighbourhood⁷ with a focus on the nexus between access to finance, financial inclusion and digitalisation, notably for women entrepreneurs. The action will explore links with relevant facilities under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+). It will be implemented by UN Women, as part of a comprehensive multi-stakeholder regional initiative aiming at “Surging Women Employment in Arab States by 5% by 2030”, involving both the public and private sectors and International Financing Institutions (IFIs). The initiative offers a direct synergy with the Regional Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on “Jobs through Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood” and will open broader scope for donor coordination in the region under the leadership of UN Women. The action will contribute and feed into the regional policy dialogue on women economic empowerment led by the Union for the Mediterranean.

⁴ JOIN (2021) 2 final of 09.02.2021

⁵ SWD(2021) 23 final

⁶ C(2021) 9399 final

⁷ C(2022) 8009 final

1.3. Beneficiar(y)/(ies) of the action

The action shall be carried out in in the Southern Neighbourhood countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia, out of which only Israel is not included in the list of ODA (Official Development Assistance) recipients.

The action is of a trans-regional nature, fostering regional cooperation. Due to the project's nature and the importance to ensure extended regional coverage, the eligibility of the action extends exceptionally, for specific activities such as regional events, to the following countries or territories, as their participation constitutes a substantial element to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of Union financing or to foster regional or trans-regional cooperation: countries from the Union for the Mediterranean (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mauritania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Türkiye) as well as countries neighbouring the Neighbourhood South countries (Saudi Arabia and Iraq) and Gulf countries.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

Supporting inclusive societies and economies is a key objective of the *Joint Communication on a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – a New Agenda for the Mediterranean*⁸, which gives special attention to promoting the role of women in society and the economy, recognizing that enormous positive returns could be brought by increasing women's labour market participation and their economic empowerment. Promoting an inclusive and sustainable economy that leaves no one behind is central to achieve **“an economy that works for people”**. The private sector plays a fundamental role in achieving these objectives, therefore **promoting a gender-responsive private sector is a key to unlock and boost women's employment** in the region and thus contribute to inclusive and green growth.

Women's economic empowerment is essential to sustainable economic development and growth, including the green economy, and to enhance gender equality and human rights. It is a priority of the European Union's external action under the EU **Gender Action Plan (GAP) III**⁹, aiming to promote women's economic and social rights and empower them, while harnessing the opportunities offered by the green and digital transitions. This includes promoting decent and green work, equal pay, labour rights and leadership, and supporting an enabling environment for women's economic participation. The action is in adherence with the respect of fundamental values of democracy, human rights and rule of law. Women's enhanced economic independence can increase their participation in decision-making, access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, to education and training. It can enable them to challenge gender-based violence, and to engage in and benefit from the green transition and digital transformation.

The action contributes to achieving **Sustainable Development Goal 5 “Gender Equality”**, as well as **SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”** and **SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities”**.

It implements the **Multi-annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood (2021-2027)** under its priority area **“Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition”**. Decent and green job creation and addressing inequalities are a key priority, taking into account labour market realities in the region and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment and employability, especially for women and youth. The MIP notably foresees concrete action to promote women's economic empowerment including equal access to employment, and equal pay for equal work.

⁸ JOIN (2021) 2 final of 09.02.2021

⁹ JOINT (2020) 17 final of 25.11.2020. The Gender Action Plan III is a Joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy which was welcomed through EU Presidency Conclusions of 16 December 2020. Drafting was led by European Commission in close consultation with EU Member States, EEAS, civil society organisations, partner governments, and international organisations (UN entities, International Finance Institutions among others). The different parties contributed to the drafting of the document through meetings and through responses to a survey conducted during the process.

The present action **consolidates and complements the programme adopted under the 2022 Regional Action Plan**, which aimed at supporting women's economic empowerment in the Southern Neighbourhood¹⁰ focusing on the nexus between **access to finance, financial inclusion and digitalisation**, notably for women entrepreneurs. The action will establish synergies with other regional and bilateral initiatives and will explore links with relevant facilities under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+).

It is embedded in the **regional Team Europe Initiative on Jobs through Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood**. The European Commission joins forces with France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden, as well as the European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), to boost employment in the region through a transformative approach focusing on sustainable trade and investment, vocational training and skills, and inclusive entrepreneurship. The regional TEI approach fosters complementarities, synergies and donor coordination, for a transformative impact.

The action advances Flagship 6 of the **Economic and Investment Plan** for the Southern Neighbours **"Inclusive economies"**¹¹. It aligns with the **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** regional policy framework notably the *UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society* (2022)¹², and the *UfM Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour* (2022)¹³.

The **added-value of a regional approach** on this topic are: 1) to allow for pilot initiatives in order to assess engagement at country level; 2) to foster exchanges and dialogue across the region; 3) to set the groundwork for regulatory convergence on sectors of interest to the EU; and 4) to generate positive momentum on women's economic empowerment at the regional level for a transformational shift.

The action will be incorporated in the comprehensive multi-stakeholder regional initiative led by **UN Women, "Surging Women Employment in Arab States", aiming at boosting women employment by 5% by 2030 in the region**, involving both the public and private sectors and International Financing Institutions (IFIs) and implemented through nine complementary programmes. The initiative offers a direct synergy with the Regional Team Europe Initiative, notably on its pillars 2 (Vocational training/technical skills) and 3 (Inclusive entrepreneurship), through potential engagement of TEI partners, and will open broader scope for donor coordination in the region under the leadership of UN Women. The action will contribute to the regional policy dialogue on women economic empowerment under the UfM umbrella, from the targeted angle of supporting a gender-responsive private sector in the region.

2.2. Problem Analysis

The Southern Neighbourhood region is facing important socio-economic challenges which hinder sustainable and inclusive growth. Economic growth has been slow since over a decade. The private sector, although vibrant, remains far below its potential, including in terms of jobs creation. However, **the private sector represents the region's main potential engine for growth and decent job creation**. A diverse private sector where women, in all their diversity, are equal players (as employees, managers, or business owners) is more productive and competitive, and brings higher returns to society and economy. According to a recent survey **increased female employment could increase GDP across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region by 57%**¹⁴.

Women's labour force participation in the region remains the lowest in the world, hovering around 20% for over two decades, compared to 50% globally in 2019¹⁵. In this context, women's employment still

¹⁰ C(2022) 8009 final

¹¹ SWD(2021) 23 final

¹² [5th UfM Declaration StrengtheningRoleWomenSociety Final- EN.pdf \(ufmsecretariat.org\)](#)

¹³ [Final-UfM-Ministerial-Declaration-EN.pdf \(ufmsecretariat.org\)](#)

¹⁴ PWC (2022), MENA Women in Work Survey 2022: Young Women, Powerful Ambitions.

¹⁵ World Bank (n.d.), World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org/>.

represents an untapped economic opportunity: boosting female employment could increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) across the MENA region by 57%, as much as \$2 trillion¹⁶.

The MENA region remains the furthest away from economic gender equality, despite nearly closing the educational gender gap¹⁷. **Paradoxically, there is no clear correlation between women's level of education and their labour force participation**, which indicates structural challenges (including entrenched gender stereotypes and gender biases) beyond skills and qualifications. Besides, within the labour force, women face **higher levels of unemployment** than men (19%, compared to 7%), despite being more educated than men.¹⁸ Unemployment is exceptionally high for young women (42%)¹⁹. This suggests that actual women's employment is even below 20% on average in the region. The important proportion of women and youth not participating in economic activities and not even looking to be economically active reflects the challenges they face to fully participate in the economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges to women's labour market participation, women being disproportionately represented in the most affected and frontline sectors as well as in precarious and informal employment, which largely excludes them from formal social protection systems. Women have been severely hit by lockdowns and business closures, while continuing to carry out unpaid care work. Many women have been pushed into inactivity by lack of job opportunities or dropped out completely from the labour market. **Post COVID-19, there is an even more pressing need for inclusive job creation and decent work for all**, including fair wages, decent working times, comprehensive work-family policies, occupational safety and health at work and social protection, as essential conditions for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Due to discriminatory laws, gender stereotypes, cultural and social barriers and insufficient institutional protection, **women are disproportionately represented in informal and vulnerable employment sectors**. They face significant gender pay gaps, as well as workplace sexual violence and harassment and have limited access to productive assets and credit. These obstacles severely limit their ability to engage in and benefit from economic opportunities in high-potential sectors, including the green and digital economies. In general, women tend to work in a limited number of sectors, mostly in services (education, healthcare, public administration), but also in agriculture and manufacturing. Employment opportunities in the public sector, traditionally favoured by women, have diminished, and the private sector has been unable to provide the same quality of jobs.²⁰ The private sector continues to be male dominated, with low female participation and even lower levels of women in leadership roles.

A more gender-responsive private sector can boost women's employment in the Southern Neighbourhood. Gender-responsive business-conduct is a key aspect of private sector engagement, under the **Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs)**²¹, informed by international labour and human rights standards and grounded in recognising that businesses have a stake in, and responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment. The WEPs provide a comprehensive framework of seven principles to advance workplace, marketplace and community equality and set a global benchmark for the private sector. **Implementing WEPs positions businesses to play a significant role in advancing women's employment and leadership.**

In particular, **three sectors offer promising opportunities** in terms of decent job creation and women's employment in the region, namely the **care sector, the green economy and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sector**. These sectors are employment-intensive and have

¹⁶ PWC (2022). MENA Women in Work Survey 2022: Young Women, Powerful Ambitions.

¹⁷ World Economic Forum (2023), "Global Gender Gap Report 2023".

¹⁸ International Labour Organisation (2023), "Trade, investment and employment in the Southern Mediterranean Countries. Thematic report of the Mainstreaming Employment into Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood project".

¹⁹ World Bank (2019), *World Development Indicators*, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>

²⁰ Assaad, Ragui and Ghada Barsoum (2019), « Public Employment in the Middle East and North Africa ». IZA World of Labor 463.

²¹ [Home | WEPs](#)

significant **multiplier effects** as they help to tackle additional systemic barriers that limit women's participation in the labour market.

- **Investing in the care economy is key to closing gender gaps** in the labour market and at home²². Inadequate care services (notably child-care) have a disproportionate impact on women, as care responsibilities, due to persistent patriarchal norms, still fall predominantly on them, affecting their work-life balance and options to take on paid work. On the contrary, affordable and quality child-care, and care services overall, brought to scale through a viable business model, could be a major amplifier for women's employment. Additionally, the care sector is predominantly female, informal and under-valued. **Promoting formalisation, adequate working conditions and wages in the care sector could generate good-quality jobs, notably for women, while at the same time providing quality care solutions for more women to engage in employment**²³.
- **The high proportion of female STEM graduates in the region is a major opportunity**. It places women in a strong position for new and future jobs in the STEM economy, including in **information and communication technologies and digitalisation** (anticipated to account for 70% of all jobs in the future). There is therefore a potential to harness the digital transition to boost women employment in these sectors.
- In a region deeply affected by climate and environmental challenges, with disproportionate social and economic impacts on women, green transition is a key priority. The **green economy sector offers an untapped potential to surge women's employment**, be it in the green farming sector, transition to renewable energies, circular economy, etc. Therefore, fostering a more gender-responsive private sector also includes a focus on promoting green skills, transitioning to greener job models and creating green jobs for women by addressing systemic barriers and ensure equal opportunities in green employment and entrepreneurship, and by supporting existing companies and start-ups in the green and circular economy. This can involve facilitating access to finance, including climate finance, for women entrepreneurs in sectors like renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and waste management.

Women's economic empowerment is a driver of sustainable and inclusive economic development and growth. There is a strong economic incentive to build a diverse workforce in which everyone can contribute and play their part to their full potential. There is growing evidence that businesses and consumers benefit from providing decent work for women in all their diversity, promoting women leaders and eradicating gender-based discrimination. This can increase productivity, profitability and financial returns. This involves encouraging companies to implement gender-responsive and environmentally sustainable corporate policies.

Gender-responsive private sector development is one of the accelerating factors towards women's employment, and has to be combined with addressing other structural barriers to women's employment, such as discriminatory **social norms**, as well as **legal and policy barriers**. The holistic initiative implemented by UN Women to "**Surge women's employment by 5% in the MENA region**" encompasses the multiple facets of women's employment. It is operationalised through nine complementary programmes, building on high-level political ownership and sustainable financing, and will simultaneously activate legal and policy changes, shifting social norms, changing the role of mass media in advancing women's employment, as well as private sector engagement. While the action and EU funding will focus on private sector engagement, the encompassing approach of the broad UN Women initiative will allow to address all these mutually-reinforcing aspects, allowing for a transformative shift.

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

²² International Labour Organisation (2022), "Care at work Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work"

²³ [A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-care-strategy.europa.eu/en)

At micro level, the action will 1) support, as rights holders, women, including women living in most vulnerable positions (including rural women and/or in informal economy etc), in accessing employment services and decent job opportunities; 2) build the capacities of private sector entities and employers, notably women-led/owned businesses, key in increasing women's access to employment and decent work, with focus on the care, green and STEM sectors.

At meso level, organisations such as (women's) business organisations, (women's) chambers of commerce, women leaders' networks and women's rights organisations, are a vector to raise awareness, advocate and build capacity on women's economic empowerment.

At macro level, the action will engage with governments and public actors as duty bearers, including Ministries responsible for gender equality, Ministries of labour, finance, business and trade (including their gender units or focal points), National Councils for Women, etc. which have a key role in embedding women's economic empowerment into national policies and promoting women representation in policy-making. The action will partner with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and National Banks to advance the uptake and implementation of credit lines and other financing modalities.

2.3. Lessons Learned

The action will build on the lessons learned from regional and bilateral initiatives in the Southern Neighbourhood promoting inclusive economies, women empowerment and private sector development.

It will incorporate the reflections stemming from the recently launched EU-funded regional projects supporting women's economic empowerment in the Southern Neighbourhood with focus on access to finance, financial inclusion and digitalisation for women entrepreneurs, at policy and regulatory level ("**Enhancing Women Entrepreneurs' Financial Inclusion and Access to Finance in the Digital Age**"), and in promoting concrete gender-sensitive financial and digital tools and skills development ("**Inclusive NISSA**"). The action will build on and deepen the networks of stakeholders established under these projects and committed to women's economic empowerment, notably public authorities, the financial sector as well as women entrepreneurs and their organisations.

The action will seek complementarities with **bilateral initiatives** such as: "**Innovation for Enterprise Growth and Jobs**" which supports private sector innovation and women's economic empowerment in Jordan notably in the digital sector; the "**Women Empowerment Hub**" (WeHub) project in Lebanon, which promotes an enabling environment for better engagement of women in the workforce; the "**Tamkeen**" programme in support to women's empowerment in Egypt. It will also synergise with the upcoming initiative aiming to increase **women's participation in the labour market** in Morocco through an integrated approach.

It will establish linkages **with on-going regional projects** supporting inclusive and sustainable economies in the Southern Neighbourhood, and mainstreaming gender approaches. It will notably use the best practices and networks of the recently launched regional "**Green and circular economy programme**" and its predecessor **SwitchMED II**. The action will build on the networks and best practices from these initiatives, notably regarding partnerships with business support organisations and SMEs. By focusing on the green economy as one of the target sectors, the action will contribute to embed a gender-lens to the transition toward green and circular economy models, and to harness the green transition in order to boost women's employment in the region.

The social economy offers strong potential for women's economic empowerment and women's employment. The action will capitalise on the achievements of "**Impact Together**" which enhances the understanding of social economy, social entrepreneurship and impact business in the region, and builds the capacities of the ecosystem. Social economy models may inform the identification of pilots in the target sectors of the care, the green and the STEM economies.

Additionally, the action will harness the efforts under the regional project in **“Support to Youth NEETs”**, which will strengthen employment and training policies and services responsive to the needs of young “Not in Employment, Education, or Training” (NEETs), particularly for women and girls.

The action will incorporate the experience from previous or on-going regional socio-economic cooperation programmes: **“Mainstreaming Employment into Trade and Investment” (METI)** enables policy makers in the Southern Neighbourhood to incorporate employment issues into trade and investment policies; **MED MSMEs** helped establish an enabling business environment for MSME development and financial inclusion the region; **Promotion of Social Dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood (SOLID II)** and **Social Dialogue for Formalization and Employability (SOLIFEM)** foster social dialogue to promote inclusive socio-economic development as well as formal employment, notably for youth and women.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective / Impact** of this action is: Women's employment in the Southern Neighbourhood is enhanced through gender-responsive private sector development.

The **Specific Objectives (Outcomes)** and indicative **Outputs** to be delivered by this action are the following:

Specific Objective 1: An enabling policy and legal environment for a gender-responsive private sector is established.

The action will provide better evidence-based analysis and diagnostics for gender-responsive policymaking to drive private sector growth and women's employment, and aims to support policies and legal reforms that lead to better employment outcomes for all women, in dialogue with the private sector (including the extension of maternity and paternity coverage, expansion of public sector provisions for care services, realisation of positive human resource practices including equal pay for equal work in law and practice and the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and harassment at work; advancing a human rights-based monitoring of employment conditions, labour inspection etc.). The programme will deliver policy solutions to ensure markets work for all women, including women living in vulnerable situations, women in rural and informal economy. It will support sector-level rules and regulations and ensure key supporting functions are available to allow markets to function optimally. Evidence-based policy dialogue at regional level will be closely interlinked with the Union for the Mediterranean platforms and fora. It will be complemented by targeted support and collaboration with IFIs, with focus on the three target sectors of the care, green and STEM economies.

Output 1.1. Analysis and diagnostics are made available for gender-responsive policy-making on labour market dynamics and their impact on women's employment.

Output 1.2. Policy and legal reforms to support gender-responsive private sector growth are designed, promoted and implemented, including in the three target sectors.

Specific Objective 2. A gender-responsive private sector promotes women's employment and their economic empowerment in the workplace and in the economy at large.

The action's primary delivery vehicle will be the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). In collaboration with chambers of commerce and business associations, the action will expand the recruitment of WEP signatories and support the development of firm-level implementation plans to improve gender equality in the workplace. Companies will be supported to apply gender-responsive corporate policies and practices, particularly to increase women's employment, and fair recruitment programmes. The action will support the development of a supplier development programme to ensure that more women-owned and women-led enterprises (including young women) are included in the supply chains of corporates to expand women's employment. Opportunities across relevant supply chains will be identified, and women, in all their diversity, will be supported to link to large firms to act as suppliers and join key networks. Gender-responsive marketing practices will be promoted and strengthened. This work will be delivered in collaboration with international financial institutions by making available lines of credit and access to finance components to benefit firms that achieve key gender equality milestones to access concessional finance. The action will support analytical work, entrepreneurial support as well as technical and advisory services to structure the financial instruments.

Output 2.1. Private sector engagement on the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) is expanded and sustained.

Output 2.2. Companies implement gender-responsive corporate policies and practices in alignment with the WEPs.

Output 2.3. Inclusion of women-owned and women-led enterprises in the corporate supply chains is enhanced, as a means to expand employment.

Specific Objective 3. Women's equal access to decent work is increased, including for women living in vulnerable situations, by leveraging the potential of the care, green and STEM economies.

The action will support a sectoral approach to boost inclusive employment in the green, care and STEM economies, focusing on creating and growing sustainable and gender-responsive enterprises and jobs through private sector engagement and synergy across target sectors. The programme will foster inclusive and rights-based approach business models, integrating women, in all their diversity, as entrepreneurs, employees, suppliers, or distributors within these sectors, notably in the green and circular economy. The strategy emphasises developing a robust and gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem, increasing equal access to markets and supporting growing and emerging women-led entrepreneurs and innovations.

The extensive WEPs network in the region will be leveraged to develop business partnerships to connect women graduates and women job seekers to decent job opportunities, notably in the green, care and STEM sectors. Governments, as duty bearers, and the private sector will be supported to identify priorities and investment opportunities to advance women's employment in key sectors. Emphasis will be on identifying opportunities for women's employment and design and pilot innovative projects scaling job creation (including incubators, franchise).

The action will facilitate linkages to IFI financial services, support access to EU and other markets and develop gender-responsive business management systems to enhance women-led enterprise establishment and inclusive growth.

The action will provide entrepreneurship support, skills training (including reskilling/upskilling, particularly on green skills), as well as business development services to enhance women's employability and productivity, promoting entrepreneurship as a viable employment route. Interventions will seek to achieve impact in a short period and thus will focus primarily on scaling existing women-led businesses (leading to new employment opportunities), while also supporting start-ups, recognising the extended incubation periods often associated with new businesses.

Output 3.1. Priorities and investment opportunities to advance women's employment in the three target sectors are identified and discussed with stakeholders,

Output 3.2. Innovative actions / investments to advance women's employment in the three target sectors are designed and piloted in selected countries.

Output 3.3. Women graduates and employment-seeking women are trained and supported to access job opportunities in the care, green and STEM sectors.

3.2. Indicative Activities

- **Specific Objective 1: An enabling policy and legal environment for a gender-responsive private sector is established.**

Indicative activities include:

- In-depth analysis and diagnostic of the factors (including the structural causes of gender inequality in this sector) behind women's stagnant labour force participation rate. This includes policy analytics and gap analysis of national and sectoral laws / regulations, notably on the care, green and STEM sectors (inception activity).
- Policy dialogue, exchanges of best practices and knowledge sharing on women's employment and private sector engagement for women's economic participation.
- Public-Private Dialogues (including women's organisations) targeting private sector engagement for women's employment, women's labour rights and fight against gender-based violence and sexual harassment at work.
- Design, promote and implement viable policy and legal reforms for gender-responsive private sector growth, with focus on the care, green and STEM sectors (including policy frameworks for promoting green skills and green jobs).

Specific Objective 2. A gender-responsive private sector promotes women's employment and their economic empowerment in the workplace and in the economy at large.

Indicative activities include:

- Awareness-raising, capacity-building of private sector actors on the Women's Empowerment Principles, informed by international labour and human rights standards.
- Support to development of WEP implementation plans.
- Design and promotion of gender-responsive corporate policies and practices for gender-sensitive and safe workplaces.
- Technical assistance to support women-led enterprises and start-ups for gender-responsive supply chains, including on green and circular economy.
- Advisory services and technical assistance to structure gender-responsive financing instruments, in collaboration with International Financial Institutions (IFIs).
- Advance gender-responsive marketing practices.
- **Specific Objective 3. Women's access to decent work is increased, including for women living in vulnerable situations, by leveraging the potential of the care, green and STEM economies.**

Indicative activities include:

- Diagnostic work to further define priorities and investment opportunities to advance women's employment in the care, green and STEM sectors (inception activity).
- Identifying and developing innovative, inclusive and sustainable actions and pilot investments to advance women employment in the three target sectors (inception activity).
- Entrepreneurship support, skills training and business development services that enhance the employability and productivity of women, in all their diversity.
- Design and piloting of innovative models aiming to scale decent job creation with speed (franchise and incubators) in the target sectors, with emphasis on the potential of green jobs.
- Reskilling / upskilling programmes for women, to match the skills requirements on the labour market, in the three target sectors with a focus on green skills.

- School to work transition programme notably for female graduates in the care, green and STEM sectors; work placement programme, work readiness help desk.

The commitment of the EU's contribution to the Team Europe Initiative to which this action refers, may be complemented by other contributions from Team Europe members. It is subject to the formal confirmation of each respective member's meaningful contribution as early as possible. In the event that the Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) and/or these contributions do not materialise, the EU action may continue outside a TEI framework.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

This action will integrate green skills development for women within its framework, aligning with climate change policies and gender equality. It will contribute to equip women with the skills needed for the green and circular economy. This approach supports the creation of decent work for women while also contributing to broader climate action efforts, ensuring a sustainable future for all.

Outcomes of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project).

The EIA screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment). The specific environmental aspects linked to the proposed support to private sector development notably in the field of the green and the STEM economies as well as the care sector, will be taken into consideration during the implementation of the programme.

Outcome of the Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project).

The CRA screening concluded that this action is at no or low risk (no need for further assessment). The action provides an opportunity to support partner countries in climate change adaptation and mitigation by supporting the green transition through the promotion of green skills and green jobs for women. The action will encourage investment and employment in non-carbon intensive sectors, thus avoiding potential greenhouse gas emissions; it will facilitate access to finance, notably climate finance, for women entrepreneurs.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G2. This implies that gender equality and women and girls' empowerment is considered the principal objective of this action.

Equal opportunity and gender mainstreaming: inequalities in the participation of women in business and the labour market are registered in the whole region, together with other significant differences such as substantial wage gaps between men and women and the lack of entrepreneurial opportunities. Unemployment generally affects women more than men in all age groups, particularly as regards long-term unemployment. The growing educational level of women in the region has often not translated into improved market access.

The action aims to take a human-rights based and gender-transformative approach by identifying and addressing the structural causes of gender inequalities and combating discriminatory social and cultural norms and laws pertaining to the private sector and in the economy. It also applies an intersectionality perspective by promoting that those women living in most vulnerable situations will have equal access to employment opportunities (including in the three target sectors). It will incorporate a gender-based approach

at all levels and stages of its design and implementation. In line with the EU GAP III (in particular thematic areas “Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women” and “Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation”), the action will promote decent work, equal pay and labour rights for women, as well as women’s transition to the formal economy, notably in sectors linked to the green and digital transition, as well as the care economy.

Human Rights

This action will apply the working principles of the rights-based approach²⁴ throughout the design and implementation of the intervention, e.g. avoid any unintentional human rights harm, imbalance or negative impact. Economic empowerment is important for women and girls to realise their human rights. Therefore, as a G2 action, promotion of women’s and girls’ fundamental rights is the principal objective. As private sector engagement is a key component of the action, particular attention will be given to the UN Guiding principles on Business and Human Rights (due diligence).

Disability

Following the worldwide trend, women and persons with disabilities, in the region, continue to face discrimination in employment, whether it relates to access to employment or equal pay for equal work. But because of intersectionality discrimination, this issue affects women with disabilities disproportionately. They earn less and face worse employment rates than men (with and without disabilities) and women without disabilities. The causes behind employment and pay gaps are multi-faceted. Lower education and training levels create a huge gap before persons with disabilities, including women, access habilitation/rehabilitation for employment. Stigma and discrimination, sectoral segregation, with higher earning sectors being disproportionately male-dominated, and work-life balance, with women spending more time conducting informal unpaid work and caretaking responsibilities, are among the many barriers faced by women with disabilities²⁵.

Therefore, as per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that, in alignment with the 2021-2030 EU Disability Strategy, the overall action will take into consideration the specific needs of women with disabilities by aiming to improve, through its activities, their labour rights and economic opportunities, with a particular focus on the three targeted sectors. Moreover, from a logistic point of view, efforts will be made to ensure that the specific needs and constraints of people with disabilities will be factored in where possible during the different activities.

Democracy

Greater economic independence can increase women’s participation in decision-making, leadership and governance. In this respect, the action contributes to democracy and inclusive participation.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

Due attention will be paid to conflict sensitivity and resilience, as relevant, with a focus on socio-economic resilience for women, including women living in vulnerable situations, through access to decent work.

²⁴ Applying all human rights for all; meaningful and inclusive participation and access to decision-making; non-discrimination and equality; accountability and rule of law for all; and transparency and access to information supported by disaggregated data.

²⁵ <https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2022/09/EDF-recommendations-on-employment-of-women-with-disabilities-September-2022-final.pdf>

Disaster Risk Reduction

Not a significant objective.

3.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
External Environment	Political instability within some of the partner countries	High	Medium	The political situation in target countries will be monitored. If required, in-country activities would be temporarily suspended. The regional nature of the action in itself mitigates this risk.
Planning, processes and systems	Lack of sufficient political prioritisation of women's economic empowerment in the participating countries and resistance to address the structural causes of gender inequalities in the private sector and in the economy.	Medium	High	Continuous awareness-raising, at all political and decision-making levels, including through the planned activities and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.
Planning, processes and systems	Speed of policy implementation	Medium	High	The speed of policy implementation could be maintained through close coordination between implementing partners and relevant political counterparts including through the EU Delegations. The choice of an established implementing partner with effective networks in the region will also mitigate this risk.
Planning, processes and systems	Overlapping with other on-going initiatives at the national level.	Medium	Medium	The implementing partner will be in close contact with Commission services, the EU Delegations in the region and other development partners in order to avoid duplication and ensure synergies. In some cases, this may result in adapting the proposed approach.
People and the organisation	Operating across a broad	Medium	Low	The intervention will be incorporated into a broader regional initiative.

	geographical region means that resources are spread thinly and that, as a result, overall impact is muted.			Donor coordination and joined resources, including with IFIs, will thus minimise this risk. The focus will be on supporting beneficiaries who respond well to the opportunities offered rather than ensuring even geographical coverage.
People and the organisation	Lack of trust and limited cooperation among countries.	High	Medium	The cooperation between participating countries could be promoted in a gradual manner and around consensual matters. The regional dimension of the action builds on country-based activities, which mitigates this risk.
People and the organisation	Engagement of private sector stakeholders towards women's economic empowerment.	Medium	High	Engagement of the private sector will be supported through dialogue and through concrete measures, building notably on the existing WEPs networks, in the perspective of due diligence and human rights based approaches.

External Assumptions

The intervention logic relies on the following external assumptions:

- Political commitment to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the countries and in the region is sustained.
- National governments support the processes related to the review of the legal and policy frameworks supporting women's employment and are committed to implement measures promoting inclusive private sector growth.
- Private sector entities in the region are committed to implement the Women Empowerment Principles and to support women employment and women-led enterprises.
- There is a shift in societal and cultural norms pertaining to all women's participation in the labour force.

3.5. Intervention Logic

The intervention logic for this action is that:

IF data and analytical evidence for gender-responsive policy-making on labour market dynamics and their impact on women's employment is available (Output 1.1), **IF** policy and legal reforms to support gender-sensitive private sector growth are designed, promoted and implemented, including in the three target sectors (Output 1.2), **AND** national governments support the review of legal and policy framework supporting women's employment – **THEN** an enabling policy and legal environment for a gender-responsive private sector will be established (Outcome 1)

IF private sector engagement on the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) is expanded and sustained (Output 2.1), **IF** companies implement gender-responsive corporate policies and practices in alignment with the WEPs, **IF** inclusion of women-owned and women-led enterprises in the corporate supply chains is enhanced, as a means to expand employment, **AND** the private sector commits to implement gender equality

principles as a growth strategy, **THEN** a gender-responsive private sector will promote women's employment and their economic empowerment in the workplace and in the economy at large (Outcome 2).

IF priorities and investment opportunities to advance women's employment in the three target sectors are identified and discussed with stakeholders (Output 3.1), **IF** innovative actions and investments to advance women's employment in the three target sectors are designed and piloted (Output 3.2), **IF** women graduates and employment-seeking women are trained and supported to access decent job opportunities in the care, green and STEM sectors (Output 3.3), **AND** there is a prevailing will from national governments, private sector and IFIs to support concrete and inclusive innovations / investments on the three target sectors, **THEN** women's equal access to decent work will be increased, including for women living in vulnerable situations, by leveraging the potential of the care, green and STEM economies (Outcome 3).

Finally, IF an enabling policy and legal environment for a gender-responsive private sector is established (Outcome 1), **IF** a gender-responsive private sector promotes women's employment and their economic empowerment in the workplace and in the economy at large (Outcome 2), **IF** women's equal access to decent work is increased, including for women living in vulnerable situations, by leveraging the potential of the care, green and STEM economies (Outcome 3), **AND** public and private stake-holders are committed to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment - **THEN** women's employment in the Southern Neighbourhood will be enhanced (Impact), thus advancing national targets on gender equality and contributing to more inclusive economies and societies.

3.6. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix²⁶

Results	Results chain: Main expected results [maximum 10 @]	Indicative Indicators [it least one indicator per expected result @]	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact / Overall objective	Women's employment in the Southern Neighbourhood is enhanced through gender-responsive private sector development.	<p>Increased access for women, in all their diversity, to decent work in non- traditional (in particular STEM) and female-dominated sectors, including women's transition to the formal economy. (GAPIII)</p> <p>Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities. (GERF 1.11 SDG 8.5.2)</p> <p>Total number of jobs created for women through EU contribution (aggregates indicator by WEPs, gender-responsive supply chain, Women-led MSMEs)</p>	<p>Tbd</p> <p>Arab States: 20.2% (2021) Egypt: 15.9% (2021) Jordan: 25.6% (2021) Morocco: 12.4% (2021) Tunisia: 23.6% (2021)</p> <p>Tbd</p>	<p>5% surge in women's employment (2030)</p> <p>Arab States: 15% (2030) Egypt: 10.9% (2030) Jordan: 15.6% (2030) Morocco: 7.4% (2030) Tunisia: 18.6% (2030)</p> <p>Tbd</p>	<p>Programme impact evaluations.</p> <p>GenTrack (ILO Labour Force Participation Survey)</p> <p>UN Women Monitoring Systems (Track-it)</p>	<i>Not applicable</i>

²⁶ Baseline and target values will be defined during the inception phase of implementation.

<u>Outcome 1</u>	An enabling policy and legal environment for a gender-responsive private sector is established.	<p>Number of measures in place in partner countries to promote the rights of women workers and their access to decent work and social security. (GAP III)</p> <p>Number of policy, regulatory or legal reforms adopted to support women's employment and entrepreneurship (GAP III)</p> <p>Number of partner private sector companies reporting positive results for gender equality following legal and policy reforms.</p>	Tbd	Tbd	National laws and policy review reports; programme progress reports; Gender Justice Dashboard.	Political commitment to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Political and socio-economic situation is sufficiently stable.
<i>Output 1.1 related to Outcome 1</i>	Analyses and diagnostics are made available for gender-responsive policy-making on labour market dynamics and their impact on women's employment.	Number of analytical products shared and discussed with key partners relating to women's employment, including on the green, care and STEM economies.	NA	5	National laws and policy review reports; programme progress reports; UN Women-commissioned studies.	National government support and ownership on the review of legal and policy framework supporting women's employment.
<i>Output 1.2 related to Outcome 1</i>	Policy and legal reforms to support gender-sensitive private sector growth are designed and implemented, including in the three target sectors.	<p>Number of regional and national public-private dialogues held.</p> <p>Number of policy and legal reforms drafted and adopted in support to gender-responsive private sector growth.</p> <p>Number of policy and legal actions implemented by public and private actors.</p>	Tbd	Tbd	Programme progress reports; national laws and policy review reports.	

<u>Outcome 2</u>	A gender-responsive private sector promotes women's employment and their economic empowerment in the workplace and in the economy at large.	<p>% increase in the share of women in private sector employment.</p> <p>% of women in managerial positions (GAP III / SDG5)</p> <p>% of women reporting having access to increased economic opportunities in the private sector.</p>	Tbd	Tbd	UN Women monitoring system Track-it; WEPS progress reports; programme progress reports; Survey.	Private sector commits to gender equality and gender-responsive business practices.
<i>Output 2.1 related to Outcome 2</i>	Private sector engagement on the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPS) is expanded and sustained.	<p>Number of WEPS signatories.</p> <p>Number of WEPS action plans</p> <p>Number of jobs created for women by WEPS signatories (disaggregated by level: executive, management and employed).</p>	<p>Arab States 618 (2023)</p> <p>Tbd</p> <p>Tbd</p>	<p>Arab States 1200 (2026)</p> <p>Tbd</p> <p>Tbd</p>	UN Women Monitoring System Track-it; WEPS progress reports; programme progress reports.	Private sector commits to implement gender equality principles as a growth strategy.
<i>Output 2.2 related to Outcome 2</i>	Companies implement gender-responsive corporate policies and practices in alignment with the WEPS.	<p>Number of WEPS companies trained on gender-responsive corporate policies and practices.</p> <p>Number of WEPS companies implementing gender responsive practices (ie. WEPS marketing, harassment in the workplace, gender responsive supply chains, care and parental leave).</p> <p>Number of companies reporting a positive change in their workplace for women following implementation of WEPS tools.</p>	Tbd	Tbd	UN Women Monitoring System Track-it; WEPS progress reports; programme progress reports.	

<p>Output 2.3 <i>related to Outcome 2</i></p>	<p>Inclusion of women-owned and women-led enterprises in the corporate supply chains is enhanced, as a means to expand employment.</p>	<p>Number of targeted services for women-led-/owned enterprises made available by business development providers (including supplier development programme)</p> <p>Number of women-led/owned enterprises receiving technical support to be included in the corporate supply chains of WEPs signatories.</p> <p>Number of opportunities created for women-led/owned enterprises through effective supply chain inclusion (disaggregated by the age of the women-led/owner)</p>	<p>Tbd</p> <p>0 (2024))</p> <p>0 (2024-</p>	<p>Tbd</p> <p>200 (2026)</p> <p>200 (2026)</p>	<p>WEPs progress reports; Progress reports from the National WEPs Networks (state-level); Programme progress reports.</p>	<p>Commitment from public and private sector to support the growth of women-led enterprises.</p>
<p><u>Outcome 3</u></p>	<p>Women's equal access to decent work is increased, including for women living in vulnerable situations, by leveraging the potential of the care, green and STEM economies.</p>	<p>Number of women's jobs supported/sustained by the EU through innovative investments in the care, green and STEM sectors, disaggregated by age, and by sector. (GERF 2.13)</p> <p>Number of women benefiting from incentives / support actions used to encourage women's entry into the green economy and the circular economy (GAP III)</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>Arab States</p> <p>(2026)</p> <p>30,000</p>	<p>National employment reports; programme progress reports.</p>	<p>Prevailing will from national governments, private sector and IFIs to support concrete innovations / investments on the three target sectors. Shift in societal and cultural norms pertaining to women labour force participation and care responsibilities.</p>

Output 3.1 <i>related to Outcome 3</i>	<p>Priorities and investment opportunities to advance women's employment in the three target sectors are identified and discussed with stakeholders.</p>	<p>Number of gender-transformative and sector-based identification studies and diagnostics.</p> <p>Number of stakeholders meetings by sector.</p> <p>Number of investment opportunities identified by sector.</p>	Tbd	Tbd	Programme progress reports.	
Output 3.2 <i>related to Outcome 3</i>	<p>Innovative actions / investments to advance women's employment in the three target sectors are designed and piloted in selected countries.</p>	<p>Number of innovative projects designed and implemented in each target sector, that advance women's employment (including franchise, incubators etc).</p> <p>Number of sustainable investments / financing schemes established in partnership with IFIs that include technical support provided by the action.</p> <p>Number of jobs created through innovative actions and investments, disaggregated by sex and by sector.</p> <p>Number of women entrepreneurs and women-led MSMEs receiving business support services and technical support to start and grow their business. (disaggregated at least by age and disability status, and by target sector)</p>	<p>NA</p> <p>NA</p> <p>NA</p> <p>NA</p>	<p>Tbd</p> <p>Tbd</p> <p>15.000</p> <p>10.000</p>	<p>Programme progress reports.</p>	<p>Prevailing will from national governments, private sector and IFIs to support concrete innovations / investments on the three target sectors.</p>

Output 3.3 related to Outcome 3	Women graduates and employment seeking women are trained and supported to access job opportunities in the care, green and STEM sectors.	Number of partnerships developed with private sector, employment services, vocational training institutes, to connect women to job opportunities in the target sectors.	Tbd	Tbd	Programme progress reports.	
		Number of women graduates and employment seekers linked to businesses and benefitting from opportunities in the target sectors as suppliers and employees (disaggregated at least by age and disability status)	NA	10.000		
		Number of beneficiaries of innovative skills and job matching mechanisms piloted (including reskilling / upskilling schemes, work placement, work readiness helpdesk etc).	NA	Tbd		
		Number of green skills and green jobs support schemes put in place.				

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 72 months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this financing Decision.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3. 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 measures²⁷.

4.3.1. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity

This action may be implemented in indirect management with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

This implementation entails carrying out the activities identified in section 3, related to the overall objective of the action.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: UN Women leads a broad regional coalition of like-minded organisations towards increasing women's employment in the MENA region. UN Women is in a unique position to deliver structured collaboration between government bodies, development partners, international financial institutions (IFIs), the private sector, academia, and civil society organisations towards women's employment. UN Women offers a specialised expertise in the field of women's economic empowerment in the region, operational capacities and presence in the region, as well as a convening power and networks across the region. EU's engagement under the UN Women led initiative through the present action aligns with the EU's strategic cooperation with the UN towards promoting gender equality and women's empowerment across the globe.

4.3.2. Change from indirect to direct management due to exceptional circumstances

If the implementation modality under indirect management as defined in section 4.3.1 cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission, the modality of implementation by grants under direct management would be used according to the following:

- (a) Subject matter of the grant(s): the grant(s) would entail carrying out the activities identified in section 3.
- (b) Type of applicants targeted: international organisations or NGOs with specialised technical expertise, experience and added-value in the field of women economic empowerment and women's employment in the Southern Neighbourhood, particularly at a regional level.

²⁷ [EU Sanctions Map](#). 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.

4.4. 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).

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Third-party contribution (amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3		
Indirect management with a pillar-assessed entity – cf. section 4.3.1	10 000 000	
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	may be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Strategic communication and Public diplomacy – cf. section 6	will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Contingencies	N.A	N.A.
Totals	10 000 000	

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

A project steering committee will be established for the contract under this action, including representatives of the EU (relevant Commission Services where necessary) and the implementing partner. The steering committee shall meet at least once a year to assess progress and issue recommendations on the direction of the project.

At the level of the broader initiative led by UN Women in the region, donor coordination and strategic steering will be supported by a High-Level Advisory Board which will be convened at least once a year, with representatives from the stakeholders involved (including regional organisations, national governments, IFIs, bilateral partners, the private sector, right holders notably women's organisations, the UN System, and the EU). The Advisory Board will provide overall strategic guidance and guide the dialogues on financing and funding to advance the agenda.

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 Outputs and contribution to the achievement of its Outcomes, and if possible at the time of reporting, contribution to the achievement of its Impacts, as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Arrangements for monitoring and reporting, including roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

- The monitoring level will be the contract, covering the entirety of the action.
- The logical framework will be completed during the inception period and updated during implementation.
- SDGs indicators and EU Result Framework Indicators / Global Europe Results Framework should be taken into account.

All monitoring and reporting shall assess how the action is considering the principle of gender equality, human rights-based approach and rights of persons with disabilities including inclusion and diversity. Indicators shall be disaggregated at least by sex and age, and disability if possible.

To ensure a closer follow-up, the implementing partner will provide regular Flash Reports indicating the past activities, activities in the pipeline, difficulties encountered, and measures taken to mitigate.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a mid-term or a final evaluation will be carried out for this action via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the innovative nature of the action and the fact that it is embedded in a broader multi-stakeholders regional initiative in the Southern Neighbourhood.

Evaluation shall also assess to what extent the action is taking into account the human rights-based approach as well as how it contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment and disability inclusion. Expertise on human rights, disability and gender equality will be ensured in the evaluation teams.

The Commission shall form a Reference Group (RG) composed by representatives from the main stakeholders at both EU and national (representatives from the government, from civil society organisations (private sector, NGOs, etc.), etc.) levels. If deemed necessary, other donors will be invited to join.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 2 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation exercise and 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 countries and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination²⁸. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner countries, 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.

²⁸ See best [practice of evaluation dissemination](#)

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. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

All entities implementing EU-funded external actions have the contractual obligation to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. To that end they must comply with the instructions given in the 2022 guidance document [*Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions*](#) (or any successor document).

This obligation will apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, the partner country, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU Member States. In each case, a reference to the relevant contractual obligations must be included in the respective financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and contribution agreements.

For the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU and its contribution to this action, the Commission may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, as part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union. Visibility and communication measures should also promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds. Effectiveness of communication activities on awareness about the action and its objectives as well as on EU funding of the action should be measured.

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