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

**ANNEX I**

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the NDICI Neighbourhood East Region for 2024

**Action Document for Governance and EU related reforms**

**ANNUAL ACTION PLAN**

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and action plan/measure in the sense of Article 23(2) of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

**1. SYNOPSIS**

**1.1. Action Summary Table**

<b>1. Title OPSYS Basic Act</b>	Action Document for Governance and EU related reforms OPSYS business reference: ACT-62534 ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD-1407831 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe).
<b>2. Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)</b>	Yes x. Rule of law, governance and public administration reform.
<b>EIP Flagship</b>	No
<b>3. Team Europe Initiative</b>	No
<b>4. Beneficiar(y)/(ies) of the action</b>	The action shall be carried out in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus <sup>1</sup> , Georgia, the Republic of Moldova <sup>2</sup> , Ukraine) and for the benefit of the Russian Federation's pro-democratic civil society <sup>3</sup> .
<b>5. Programming document</b>	Multiannual Indicative Programming Document (MIP) 2021-2027 <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In line with the European Council Conclusions of October 2020 and updated Council Conclusions of February 2024, and in light of Belarus's involvement in the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, recognised in the Council Conclusions of February 2022, the EU has stopped engaging with representatives of Belarus public bodies and state-owned enterprises. The EU assistance was also fully recalibrated away from public authorities and towards non-state actors. As part of this action, activities may be organised with the representatives of Belarusian civil society as appropriate.

<sup>2</sup>Hereinafter referred to as "Moldova"

<sup>3</sup> In line with Council Conclusions of June 2021, the EU continues support to Russian civil society human rights organisations and independent media ([www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf)), (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0020>), reiterated further by the HRVAP after the FAC of 15 November 2022

([www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-defence-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-meeting\\_en](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-defence-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-meeting_en)).

<sup>4</sup> C(2021)9370 adopted on 15/12/2021

<p><b>6. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results</b></p>	<p>Priority area 2: Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security</p> <p>Specific objective 2.1: Support judicial reforms, the rule of law, prevention and fight against corruption, and economic, organised and serious crime, including trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, firearms trafficking and cyber crime</p> <p>Specific objective 2.2: Support partner’s effort for a modern, accountable and effective public administration, including reliable and comparable statistics</p> <p>Specific objective 2.3: Fostering security and civil protection</p> <p>Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies</p> <p>Specific objective 5.1: Strengthen civil society capacity and enabling environment, youth participation, cultural cooperation and free media environment</p> <p>Specific objective 5.2: Strengthen democracy, gender equality, human rights and anti-discrimination</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b></p>	
<p><b>7. Priority Area(s), sectors</b></p>	<p>Priority area 2: Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security</p> <p>Priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies</p> <p>DAC codes:</p> <p>151-Governance and Civil Society</p> <p>152 - Conflict, Peace &amp; Security</p> <p>160-Other social infrastructure and services</p> <p>110-Education</p> <p>740- Disaster Prevention &amp; Preparedness</p> <p>998- Unallocated / Unspecified</p>
<p><b>8. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b></p>	<p>Main SDG (1 only):</p> <p>SDG 16 Peace, Justice and strong institutions</p> <p>Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets:</p> <p>SDG 4 Quality Education</p> <p>SGD 5 Gender Equality</p> <p>SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals</p>
<p><b>9. DAC code(s)</b></p>	<p>Main DAC codes:</p> <p>151-Governance and Civil Society</p> <p>152 - Conflict, Peace &amp; Security</p> <p>160-Other social infrastructure and services</p> <p>110-Education</p> <p>740- Disaster Prevention &amp; Preparedness</p> <p>998- Unallocated / Unspecified</p> <p>Sub-codes:</p> <p>15110 - Public Sector Policy and Administrative Management</p> <p>15160 - Human Rights</p> <p>15150 - Democratic participation and civil society</p> <p>16062 - Statistical Capacity Building</p>

	11230 - Basic life skills for adults 15200 - Civilian Peace Building, conflict prevention and resolution 74010 - Disaster Prevention and Preparedness 99820- Promotion of development awareness				
<b>10. Main Delivery Channel @</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Contributions to special funds for Technical Co-operation Activities)-47080 University, college or other teaching institution, research institute or think tank-51000 Multilateral organisations - 40000				
<b>11. Targets</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance <sup>5</sup>				
<b>12. Markers (from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>	
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>	
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>13. Internal markers and Tags</b>	<b>Policy objectives</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
		EIP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>5</sup> Thematic target for geographic programmes (at least 15%) in delegated act.

EIP Flagship	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Tags <sup>6</sup>	YES	NO	
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
environment, climate resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
digital	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
human development (incl. human capital and youth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Digitalisation <sup>7</sup>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
digital services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 <sup>8</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>6</sup> When a marker is Significant or Principal Objective, please indicate the relevant tags by selecting “YES” or “NO”.

<sup>7</sup> Please address the digitalisation marker in line with the note Ares(2019)7611708.

<sup>8</sup> Please address the migration marker in line with the note Ares(2021)6077013.

COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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### BUDGET INFORMATION

<b>14. Amounts concerned</b>	Budget line: BGUE-B2023 14.020111 C1 NEAR Eastern Neighbourhood Total estimated cost: EUR 36 614 612 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 36 500 000 This action is co-financed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for an amount of EUR 114 612.
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### MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

<b>15. Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)</b>	<b>Direct management</b> through grants and procurement <b>Indirect Management</b> with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) <b>Indirect management</b> with the pillar assessed entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.3. <b>Other actions and expenditure</b> as set in section 4.3.5
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## 1.2. Summary of the Action

This action contributes to achieving results under priority area 2: Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security, and priority area 5: Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies of the Multiannual Indicative Programming Document (MIP) 2021-2027, namely by strengthening accountable institutions, democracy, the rule of law and security, and by increasing the resilience of democratic actors in the Eastern Partnership countries (EaP). This action is in line with the policy objectives and priorities outlined in the joint communication on the Eastern Partnership<sup>9</sup> and the joint staff working document of recovery, resilience and reform agenda<sup>10</sup>. In addition, this action will support the implementation and improvement of structural reforms, which are a precondition for boosting economic and social development in the EaP countries and investments under the Economic and Investment Plan. The action also aligns with SDG 16 Peace, Justice and strong institutions, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, and contributes to SDG 5 Gender equality.

The action places particular emphasis on providing the tools to effectively monitor the state of play and progress in the areas of good governance and the rule of law in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region and partner countries. It also focuses on strengthening resilience, democracy, confidence building, conflict prevention, and fostering security and civil protection. In addition, the action will support advancement towards European standards in a number of areas, including rule of law, public administration and statistics. In line with the EU Gender Equality Action Plan (GAP) III for 2021-2025<sup>11</sup>, adopted by the Commission, gender equality will be mainstreamed in all priority areas and contexts.

To this aim, interventions will be developed in the following sectors:

<sup>9</sup> JOIN (2020)7 final.

<sup>10</sup> SWD (2021)186 final.

<sup>11</sup>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.

Sector of support 1-Public Administration Reform and Rule of Law, which aims at supporting the EaP countries in their efforts to strengthen the resilience of their governance and public administration systems, to produce reliable, comparable and sex disaggregated statistics, and to enhance their knowledge of EU policies. This will be achieved by improving the knowledge and application of the Principles of Public Administration and enhance gender sensitive administrative capacities required for the EU integration process. Capacities of the National Statistics Institutes (NSI) to produce reliable, comparable and sex disaggregated statistics will be enhanced, mobilising DG ESTAT expertise. Knowledge on EU foreign affairs and external policies will be boosted by the establishment of the EU diplomatic programme for the enlargement region under the auspices of the College of Europe. In addition, the action aims at enhancing the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial systems in the EaP countries. This will be achieved by improving the evidence of the performance of the judiciary and raising awareness and disseminating the knowledge amidst stakeholders across the beneficiary countries in order to feed in the policy dialogue and justice reforms. A Regional Justice Survey with country-specific and comparable regional analytical reports with policy recommendations may be rolled out in EaP countries.

Sector of support 2 – Strengthening Resilience through Conflict Prevention, Civil Protection and Support to Democracy, which aims at promoting the peaceful settlement of conflicts in the region while enforcing the role of women, children and young people in peacebuilding as well as at enhancing cooperation with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism by building capacity of the EaP countries to better prevent, prepare, and respond to natural and human-made disasters. In order to support democratic processes and more resilient democracies support will be made available to provide flexible assistance to pro-democracy and human rights activists and civil society organisations, complementing other EU and Member State democracy support programmes. The focus of the action will be in particular on cases where the space for civil society is shrinking due to administrative, legal, social and political barriers, with entailed risks of providing the necessary political and operational support.

Sector of support 3 – Support to Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy, which aims at further developing and strengthening existing communication networks and platforms of the EU in the region. These efforts will contribute to a more visible and robust presence of the EU in the Eastern Partnership region, laying the groundwork for a more knowledgeable and supportive environment for EU policies and assistance. It will also directly support the EU Delegations’ public diplomacy and outreach activities in partner countries by providing targeted support in communicating EU values, policies and results of EU programmes and projects as well as the EU enlargement process.

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

The action shall be carried out in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus<sup>12</sup>, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova<sup>13</sup>, Ukraine) and for the benefit of the Russian Federation’s pro-democratic civil society<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup>In line with the Council Conclusions of 12 October 2020 and in light of Belarus’s involvement in the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, recognised in the European Council Conclusions of February 2022, the EU has stopped engaging with representatives of Belarus public bodies and state-owned enterprises. Should there be a change of the context this may be reconsidered. In the meantime, the EU continues to engage with and, where possible, has stepped up support to non-state, local and regional actors, including within the framework of this regional programme.

<sup>13</sup>Hereinafter referred to as “Moldova”

<sup>14</sup> In line with Council Conclusions of June 2021, the EU continues support to Russian civil society human rights organisations and independent media ([www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf)), reiterated further by the HRVAP after the FAC of 15 November 2022 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0020>), ([www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-defence-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-meeting\\_en](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-defence-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-meeting_en)).

## 2. RATIONALE

### 2.1. Context

The current context in the EaP region is marked by several fundamental shifts on the geopolitical as well as on the enlargement strands.

On the geopolitical side, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is having wide-ranging consequences throughout the region. In parallel, among others, the military operation by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 yet again demonstrates the crucial need for peace and stability in the region while, in turn, concluding a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan would have a positive impact on security, stability and connectivity, inter alia. Continued confidence building activities across the region would yield important benefits in terms of security, stability and connectivity. Furthermore, considering Belarus's involvement in the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, as underlined by the European Council Conclusions of February 2022, and, in line with the Council Conclusions of 12 October 2020, the EU has stopped engaging with representatives of Belarus public bodies and state-owned enterprises. Nevertheless, the EU will continue to engage with non-state, local and regional actors, including within the framework of this regional programme. Against this backdrop, the regional dimension of the EaP post-2020 Recovery, resilience and reform agenda together with its Economic and Investment Plan remains fully relevant as confirmed at the EaP Foreign Affairs Ministerial meeting in December 2022 and recalled during the Annual EaP Foreign Affairs Ministerial meeting in December 2023. Furthermore, the EaP constitutes a useful vehicle to support the membership aspirations through regional cooperation when relevant while adjusting to the different ambitions of our partners. The EU's enlargement policy has already gained new momentum in the region. Following the European Council's decision to grant Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova European perspective, and the European Commission's proposal to open negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, and grant candidate status to Georgia endorsed by the European Council in December 2023, the three partner countries will come under increased scrutiny and pressure to deliver on key reforms in order to meet the conditions set out in the Commission's opinions and advance on their respective accession paths.

In this context, the rule of law, in particular the independence and functioning of the judiciary, the fight against corruption, respect of fundamental rights, the economy, the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reform continue to be the cornerstones of the enlargement policy<sup>15</sup> and represent the fundamentals of the EU accession process. It is essential that aspiring members step up their reform efforts, in line with the merit-based nature of the accession process and with the assistance of the EU<sup>16</sup>. A functioning public administration also plays a fundamental role in the EU integration process by enabling the implementation of crucial reforms and organising efficient accession dialogue with the EU. Hence, the EU enlargement criteria recognise the need for a country to build a national public administration with the capacity to pursue principles of good administration and effectively transpose and implement the EU acquis. Child protection and sex disaggregated statistics will have a key role to play in the monitoring of state of play and progress made by the EaP countries and ensure evidence-based policy making across the enlargement portfolio and beyond.

Strengthening resilience which includes strengthening security across the entire region is an overarching priority of the EaP policy endorsed at the EaP Summit in December 2021 by the EU, its Member States and the Eastern partner countries. Conflicts, crises and fragility hamper progress towards sustainable peace and security and to achieving the SDGs. The number of women involved in peace processes remains low, despite global, regional and national commitments and many peace agreements do not even include gender equality provisions that adequately address women's needs. Women, peace and security (WPS) is a priority for the EU and has specific target in the Gender Action Plan III. It focuses on the links between gender

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<sup>15</sup>2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy p.2

<sup>16</sup>2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy p.16

inequality and conflict, how they are mutually reinforcing, and emphasises the need to understand gender inequality as a root cause and driver of conflict and fragility. Armenia, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova have endorsed Action Plans to implement the WPS agenda and Azerbaijan has developed a plan for the approval of the government. The children protection in conflict areas is a priority and tailor-made projects should be developed in close cooperation with donors and other International Organisations ensuring their reintegration in the societies.

Democracy support has always been a pivotal element of EU's external policies, with support for democratisation processes in non-EU states traditionally channelled through instruments like the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR), the Instrument for Stability, NDICI instrument and previous instruments. A number of EaP countries have a restrictive environment for civic engagement and in many cases, this hampers the support of the EU to civil society organisations and independent media. Significant weaknesses remain in such contexts, with corruption being often endemic, weak institutions and governance, and a lack of democratic accountability as well as many barriers to civic engagement and political participation. Tools such as Technical Support Instrument, and in particular the pilot initiative for enlargement countries, can facilitate the learning process from EU Member States in the implementation of reforms to improve democratic processes by increasing civic participation through emerging technologies. Civil society and independent media play an important role in encouraging citizens' participation in democratic reform processes, in fighting corruption and often even provide essential services for local communities. Pro-democracy and human rights activists, including women human rights defenders and queer activists are often a target of defamation, smear campaigns, online and offline hate speech, often also criminal charges. Women human rights defenders are much more likely than men to be targeted with sexual and gender-based violence and to be subjected to verbal abuse, surveillance, and online violence.

The EU has a vested interest in fostering stability, democracy, and economic prosperity in its neighbouring regions. Continuing with a regional communication program in the EaP region is vital for many strategic reasons. Firstly, such a program serves as a platform for promoting the EU's values and policies, enhancing mutual understanding and trust between the EU and EaP countries. This communication program is also pivotal in countering misinformation and enhancing resilience against external propaganda that might seek to undermine the EU's influence and objectives. Moreover, by facilitating dialogue, the program will support the reform processes in EaP countries, linked to EU enlargement in the case of three of the EaP countries, ensuring that citizens are well-informed about the benefits of closer integration with the EU, such as access to the single market, increased investment, and support for democratic institutions. Strengthening regional communication not only aligns with the EU's foreign policy goals but also helps to create a more secure and cooperative neighbourhood, ultimately contributing to the stability and prosperity of the EU itself.

In this rapidly evolving context, the current policy framework remains valid and fit for purpose. On the one hand, priorities two and five, i.e. “Accountable institutions, the rule of law, and security” and “Resilient, gender equal, fair and inclusive societies” of the joint communication of the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 Reinforcing Resilience - an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all and its related joint staff working document, “Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities”<sup>17</sup>, refer to good governance and democratic institutions, rule of law, successful anti-corruption policies, fight against organised crime, respect of human rights and security, including support to populations affected by conflict, as the backbone of strong and resilient states and societies. They are also significant preconditions for a functioning market economy, a healthy business environment and investment climate. and for sustainable growth. The staff working document also highlights the importance of promoting gender equality in public administration reform, through systematic gender mainstreaming, equal access to resources, gender-

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<sup>17</sup>[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern-partnership/joint-staff-working-document-recovery-resilience-and-reform-post-2020-eastern-partnership-priorities\\_en?s=273](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern-partnership/joint-staff-working-document-recovery-resilience-and-reform-post-2020-eastern-partnership-priorities_en?s=273)



responsive budgeting and provision of gender-disaggregated official statistics. On the other hand, the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) has proved itself fit for purpose and sufficiently flexible to respond to challenges at unprecedented speed. The five priorities included in the MIP are set out to support resilience in the broadest sense and match the investment priorities identified as part Global Gateway Strategy, with the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership (EIP) as the main tool in the Eastern Neighbourhood. Last but not least, according to the EU GAP III, EU actions should contribute towards promoting gender equality, including by increasing the level of women participation, representation and leadership in politics, governance and electoral processes at all levels, via support for democracy and governance programmes and public administration reforms.

For all components of this action synergies will be built with local and international organisations, EU funded programs and donors and partners working on similar and related programs to avoid duplication, ensure complementarities and a bigger impact. In the case of the first sector of support complementarity will take place with the EU Diplomatic Academy managed by FPI in close coordination with the EEAS, rule of law programmes such as the Justice Dashboard for the EaP implemented by Council of Europe. In the case of Public Administration reform complementarity will be sought with other institution-building tools available in the EU neighbourhood, notably Twinning, TAIEX, other technical assistance tools and budget support operations when the country benefits from assistance in the domains of PAR and public financial management (PFM). Tools such as Technical Support Instrument, where Moldova and Georgia participate as observers in the pilot initiative for enlargement countries, can facilitate the learning process from EU Member States in the implementation of public administration reforms. In the case of DG ESTAT, its annual donor coordination survey will be widely disseminated among the donors and beneficiaries, in order to avoid duplication and use the resources efficiently. Moreover, the actions will build on the gender equality mappings, country level implementation plans, and other resource developed by the EU4 Gender Equality Reform Help Desk. Attention should be particularly paid to seeking coordination with projects financed by bilateral envelopes and managed by EU Delegations s.

## **2.2. Problem Analysis**

### **Sector of support 1- Public Administration Reform (PAR) and the Rule of Law**

#### **Short problem analysis**

For the past years, EaP countries have been working on elaboration and implementation of public administration reforms, but not always in a comprehensive and coherent way. There has been mixed success during implementation of the PAR; some partner countries have managed to implement certain reforms and achieve small, but consistent progress in some areas, especially service delivery. There is a difficult context for a professional, meritocratic, de-politicised, reliable public administration to emerge. A professional class of permanent civil servants, upon which holders of public office rely and which can exercise a check on power, has not emerged yet and constantly high turnover further exuberates the problem. The overall administrative and institutional architecture is fragmented, leading to a proliferation of agencies with various accountability lines and other dysfunctions. The system of managerial responsibility and delegation of authority, a core principle of sound financial management, has not been properly developed. Partner countries are investing efforts in addressing these challenges, however, with limited success that negatively impacts overall administrative capacity of these states. The EaP countries have made some progress in mainstreaming gender equality in public administration reforms and gender-Responsive Public Financial Management (GRPFM) assessment has been conducted in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, which creates a roadmap for mainstreaming gender-responsive budgeting and gender-sensitive reporting. However significant gender gaps remain in terms of the number men and women in senior positions, wages and other conditions in the public administration and the parliament. More needs to be done to systematically assess the implementation of policies and reforms, including revenue and expenditure management from a gender perspective.

Reliable and comparable statistics are crucial to underpin an effective public administration. Good quality statistical data, produced in a professionally independent manner is essential to support the implementation of policies and democratic processes, but it is also needed for trade negotiations, economic analyses, as well as for the monitoring of the efficiency of policies implemented and the assistance provided. EaP countries are at a moderate level of development in statistics as they make a wealth of data available but still a significant number of data are lacking or are not produced in line with European standards and data available are disseminated not using the advantages of latest IT developments. The statistical data produced by the EaP countries need to be improved and better harmonised with European standards, so they can be used as a better tool for the design, implementation and monitoring of national policies as well as European policies towards these countries. At national level, more and better-quality and sex disaggregated statistics are an important source for evidence-based decision making by policymakers. At the EU level, harmonized data is needed to monitor the implementation of the agreements signed and/or currently negotiated with the EaP countries, including to monitor progress towards EU accession under Chapter 18 of the fundamentals of the accession process. Especially around statistics, commonalties are a critical factor, because, in addition to the scope and quality of data, their harmonisation and standardisation as well as their regional and international comparability represent a key value for the users. Gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies remains suboptimal across the EaP region. Most national and regional policies are not gender responsive. Specifically, these policies are rarely based on sex-disaggregated statistical data, gender impact assessments are seldom conducted to inform policy development, women, men, are usually not consulted, national and local budgets are not gender responsive, and women's perspectives are not adequately reflected in the governments' policies and programmes. National reforms often exclude a gender perspective and links to international and national commitments on women's rights. Data also needs to be disaggregated by gender, age and other factors to be able to understand and address inequalities and marginalisation.

Sound and up to date knowledge of EU policies is another key pillar for a public administration in the path of EU accession. In the case of EU foreign affairs policy currently there is no structured mechanism for cooperation or exchange of best practices between entry-level diplomats from Member States and the enlargement region, limiting the possibility of interactions amongst peers both within the EaP region, as well as cross regional with the Western Balkans countries and with the EU. Moreover, entry-level diplomats of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine do not benefit at the moment from a regional diplomatic academy focusing on EU external actions, in particular the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In line with the objectives of the CFSP established in 1993 by the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the action will lay the foundations for a wide network of young diplomats capable of understanding and promoting the EU's fundamental values and foreign policy objectives on the grounds of mutual trust and cooperation. Establishing a common diplomatic culture at the European level can play a crucial role in future relations across the EU's Neighbourhood and with the EU. The location of the programme in Belgium, close to the heart of the EU institutions with guest lecturers and study visits planned will allow access to a network not easily reached for entry-level diplomats in the region creating opportunities for learning and increasing knowledge of EU Foreign Policy.

Despite some past improvements, Moldova ranked 82 in 2020 and 68 in 2023 and Georgia ranked 49 in 2021 and 48 in 2023 in the Rule of Law Index<sup>18</sup>; Azerbaijan improved on Government Effectiveness in the World Wide Governance indicator World Bank<sup>19</sup> as well as Moldova, which also improved on the Rule of Law Worldwide Governance by the World Bank<sup>20</sup>, the evidence base of judicial and wider rule of law reforms in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine needs to be strengthened. As mentioned in 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy<sup>21</sup>, the entrenchment of the rule of law requires an

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<sup>18</sup><https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/>

<sup>19</sup>[Home | Worldwide Governance Indicators \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators)

<sup>20</sup><https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators>

<sup>21</sup>[https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/2023-communication-eu-enlargement-policy\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/2023-communication-eu-enlargement-policy_en)

independent, impartial, accountable and professional judicial system, which operates efficiently, and with adequate resources, free from undue external interference and where decisions are executed effectively and in a timely manner<sup>22</sup>. This includes a stronger emphasis on developing baselines and robust tools to monitor and evaluate the performance of justice. These baselines and tools will, to the extent possible, be gender sensitive so that gender gaps in the justice system can be addressed. Measuring justice performance is a challenge which requires the setting up of reliable mechanisms allowing for comparisons over time. In this context, there is a need to continue implementing a second phase of the Justice Surveys in EaP countries, analysing data, measuring the perception and experience of justice by a wide range of justice users and stakeholders and to connect, complement and compare this data with other justice measurement tools. This will allow for a regular, comprehensive and comparable evidence-based assessment across the EaP countries, including those with an EU perspective, and assess the improvements across time. The engagement of the EU in this effort is key due to the fundamental importance of rule of law both in the Eastern Partnership policy and in the enlargement context, namely in view of the opening of the rule of law Reports to those accession countries who get up to speed even faster.<sup>23</sup>

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

The main stakeholders are the state institutions responsible for public governance reforms, including development of strategic framework for public administration reform (PAR), policy development and co-ordination, public service and human resource management, public financial management (including public procurement, internal control and external audit); structures in charge of co-ordination among institutions; independent bodies and parliaments within the scope of their scrutiny and oversight powers, and other relevant stakeholders. The actual organisation varies according to the assignment of responsibilities at the level of each beneficiary country.

On statistics, the main stakeholders are the National Statistics Institutes (NSI) as well as other producers of official statistics being part of the national statistical system (for instance; National Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministries of Education, Health and Agriculture, among others), together being responsible for the production of official statistics in the countries. Statistical data also provide factual evidence for a wide range of other users such as policy makers, economists, media, academia and the public at large, as well as EU institutions.

In relation to the diplomatic programme, Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia are the main stakeholders. Potential inclusion of other countries is to be explored. European External Action Service (EEAS), the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament and its committees, as well as the European Defence Agency and the EU Military Committee will be also involved in the activities of the Diplomatic Academy. In addition to this, NATO, Permanent Representations of EU Member States, Embassies and Missions of partners, as well as non-governmental stakeholders such as think tanks, NGOs and media organisations are other possible stakeholders involved in project activities.

In the rule of law area, the main stakeholders of the action include members of the judiciary (judges, court staff; prosecutors), professional organisations representing the judges and prosecutors (such as High Council of Justice), relevant Ministries (such as Ministry of Justice), civil society organisations and international partners active on judicial reform, justice users and the public more largely. The action will interact with other justice measurement tools/ processes such as those carried out by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).

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<sup>22</sup>2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy p.8

<sup>23</sup>2023 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen

## **Sector of Support 2 - Strengthening Resilience through Conflict Transformation, Civil Protection, and Support to Democracy**

### Short problem analysis

In recent decades, the EaP region has experienced multiple conflicts. Unresolved conflicts and divides in the region continue to hamper the development of each country individually, as well as the EaP countries collectively. Whilst there are a number of commonalities, all the conflicts and peace negotiations differ substantially due to different histories and roles of various actors. It is thus necessary to have tailor-made approaches that are flexible, targeted, sensitive to the context and building on opportunities and advances already created by other EU efforts. It is also important for Track 1 negotiations to have a diverse toolbox of support measures available in case any opportunities rise. At the same time the work supporting Track II efforts needs to continue and be enhanced to ensure that bottom-up initiatives and other technical tracks get the support they need and that the ideas and initiatives can contribute to the diplomatic negotiations. As women are seldom involved in the Track I negotiations, or broader peace and security agenda discussions, inclusion of women, marginalised communities and people with disabilities should be promoted where possible on both track 1 processes and track 2 and 3 initiatives, including through advocacy and ensuring access to resources. The enhanced level of gender-based violence in conflict situations are subsequently not sufficiently prevented and/or addressed. It is important to highlight that effective and sustainable peace-making processes must also include the empowerment of communities torn apart by war to build peace from below. One-dimensional interventions are unlikely to produce comprehensive and/or lasting resolution.

The EaP region is also characterised by a highly complex disaster profile, with a high exposure to natural and human-induced disaster risks, ranging from earthquakes, floods, landslides, forest and ground fires, heat and cold waves. Environmental, industrial, and chemical biological, radiological and nuclear risks are serious. Moreover, adaptation to climate change, although closely related, is still not implemented in synergy and full coordination with disaster risk management policies. The EaP countries recognise the need to meet the necessary capacity level of the EU Member States in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). The instructional, legislative and financial arrangements for comprehensive disaster risk management should be strengthened, taking into account climate change impacts. It is also necessary to strengthen prevention, preparedness and response at both national and local levels, as well as enhance inter-agency coordination when asking or receiving international assistance in case of disasters. However, lack of financial, human or technical resources as well as inadequate capacities and expertise have often been cited as obstacles to concrete implementation of a sound disaster risk management. In addition, an efficient and needs-based prevention, preparedness and response to risks relies on enhanced cooperation in the region, with the UCPM, the EU Member States and other international actors. Ukraine and Moldova became participating states of the UCPM in 2023 and Georgia is expected to join the UCPM in 2024. Moreover, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are particularly exposed to high transboundary risk in case of a disaster. These different layers of cooperation need to be further enhanced and implemented in practice.

The environment for civic engagement and political engagement across the region is still predominantly restrictive, in many cases hampering the support of the EU to civil society organisations, pro-democracy, gender equality and human rights activists and independent media. The civil society environment across the EaP countries has been affected by increased political instability. In some countries, there are growing restrictions on foreign funding for NGOs. Hybrid threats, including Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) and disinformation are continuously used as tools to undermine democratic values and discredit those who stand up for them. The unprecedented crackdown on society in Belarus, and similar measures limiting and even criminalising foreign support to pro-democracy activists in the rest of the region put a strain on civic actors. In addition, instability, and military clashes along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border as well as the Line of Contact, the military operation of Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 and subsequent exodus of over 100,000 Karabakh Armenians to Armenia, Russia's full-

scale military aggression against Ukraine and protracted conflicts in Georgia and Moldova have contributed to a changing geopolitical landscape in the region. Against this background, there is a continuous need for flexible and targeted support to established civil society organisations, civic and media actors in the EaP region, to sustain their short and long-term pro-democracy and reform agendas.

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

Main stakeholders are the conflict affected populations, local authorities/municipalities, and civil society as well as domestic civil protection and other relevant authorities in disaster risk management (environment agencies, hydrometeorological services, etc).

Participants of targeted non-civil protection actors involved in prevention, preparedness and response to disasters include civil society organisations, scientific community, and academia. Finally, the local population, and especially those most discriminated and marginalised, is the ultimate beneficiary of the programme and the importance of community awareness and community involvement in preparation and mitigation activities is inestimable.

The direct beneficiary of the part of the action focusing on strengthening democratic resilience is the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). The EED's main purpose is direct grant-making to pro-democracy activist and organisations struggling for democratic transition in the European Neighbourhood and beyond, through specific flexible procedures.

The long-term and ultimate beneficiary of the interventions under this action document are EU and EaP citizens as well as economic actors who will benefit from the results of reform implementation. An intersectional perspective will ensure that these actions "leave no one behind".

### **Sector of support 3 – Support to Communication and Public Diplomacy**

#### Short problem analysis

The EaP region is a hotspot for disinformation campaigns that may undermines EU communication efforts. Public diplomacy initiatives must contend with and counteract misinformation from various sources, including local and external actors. In addition, potential issues that might arise in the work are linked to diverse political landscapes with each EaP country having a unique political and information environment, and different capacities for government strategic communication, with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, in the enlargement policy, with varying degrees of openness to EU influence and different levels of democratic development. Tailoring communication strategies and efforts that work uniformly across such diverse landscapes can be challenging. Another element that needs to be taken into account is a limited local media capacity. In some EaP countries, independent media might be underdeveloped, under-resourced, or face political pressures. This can limit the reach and effectiveness of EU messages and initiatives, and the EU may need to support capacity-building in local media. Building on the previous phase of the communication programme, this issue will continue to be tackled in an effective way, including through media partnerships.

To address these various challenges, the EU will need to adopt a flexible, context-specific approach that includes in-depth local knowledge, enhancement of the media literacy and independent journalism, countering disinformation effectively, and fostering genuine partnerships with local actors and stakeholders. Moreover, commitment to consistent, long-term engagement and sufficient resource allocation is essential for the success of communication and public diplomacy initiatives in the Eastern Partnership region.

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

The anticipated communication efforts predominantly aim at young adults, specifically those aged between 15 and 35, residing in both the EaP region and within the EU itself. The intent is for these young people to not only receive the messages but also to act as facilitators and influencers for further dissemination. Educational entities, youth organizations, student groups, and other youth-related bodies are inherently involved as key stakeholders by this approach.

The communication programme will also engage with influential media outlets to cultivate a supportive press environment, thus broadening the reach of its messages. This encompasses various media platforms, both local and regional, throughout the targeted areas. The communication programme will similarly target other influential, non-traditional entities that could bolster the distribution of the EU's communications.

The communication programme will prioritise other groups within the EaP countries to help channel its messages and enhance public backing. These groups include recipients of EU project funding, the civil society sector, local entities, government authorities at different levels, and the social media communities. Additionally, the communication programme will engage the general audience that has an interest in the EU enlargement process, recognizing their role in shaping perceptions and facilitating broader dialogue.

### **2.3. Lessons Learned**

#### **Sector of support 1- Public Administration Reform (PAR) and the Rule of Law**

Lessons learnt of previous programmes on PAR point towards several recommendations to be considered in the next phase. Concentrating efforts on a limited number of key horizontal systems such as completion and modernisation of the general administrative and accountability frameworks within the framework of the Principles of Public Administration; policy development and co-ordination capacities, amongst others; more adapted, problem driven approach through including national and regional expertise into the design and implementation of specific modernisation efforts, accepting sensitivities concerning terminologies, approaches and solutions; raising political awareness and commitment to governance reform; put more emphasis on implementation and provide support on how reforms and sectorial strategies are designed, prioritised, sequenced and implemented; deepen the evidence basis of policies in various PAR areas and strengthen instruments for monitoring progress.

On statistics, key lessons learnt from the Statistics Through Eastern Partnership programme (STEP) evaluation include appreciating the success of regional programmes for countries with similar backgrounds. STEP I has proven that a regional approach is extremely helpful for the EaP countries to build professional networks and to address common problems, strengthen institutional capacity and deliver an increasing number of comparable and harmonised data. Stakeholders endorsed continuing this approach for its facilitation of interaction among peers and learning opportunities within a broader group of EU Member States' National Statistics Institutes (NSIs). Conclusions of the evaluation of STEP point towards the relevance of leveraging the EU accession and approximation process to advocate for improved professional independence of NSIs, improved resources, and improved quality of statistical products. Moreover, conclusions stress the need to be less ambitious regarding the quantity of statistical domains and to put more emphasis on crosscutting issues such as development of National Statistics Systems (NSS) and NSI management as well as more limited sectoral focuses and a clearer focus on horizontal topics such as enhancing the support to IT, communication and dissemination capacities, NSS cooperation, enhanced use of sex disaggregated statistics for evidence-based policymaking for NSS amongst others.

Concerning the diplomatic academy, participants' feedback on the pilot programme funded by the European Parliament was very positive. The programme reinforced the diplomats' knowledge of EU internal processes in areas related to the EU external action and allowed to create personal and professional bonds, fostering deeper understanding of the distinctive cultures present at the training. The residential format of the programme was a strong added value, allowing the participants to study, work and live together. The combination of formal and informal settings was found to be very useful in developing a common understanding of EU policies as well as creating opportunities for networking. The format will be replicated in the new diplomatic programme as it will be set up and run parallel to the EU Diplomatic Academy funded by FPI in close coordination with the EEAS. Challenges to be considered from the previous phase relate to difficulties in administrative arrangements such as visa application, diplomatic accreditation or scholarship transfer.

The action will continue and expand on a prior European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) funded action setting up justice surveys across the EaP countries and implemented in the period June 2019 -June 2021. Main lesson learnt as well as challenges from the previous phase relate to the COVID-19 outbreak, where the project demonstrated sufficient flexibility in adapting new data gathering modality and consultation through online platforms. In addition, the elections during the implementation period also affected the previous action and influenced some stages of the implementation. Another important lesson learned is that maintaining a comparable timeframe across the beneficiaries is crucial to ensure the cross-country comparability of the data. In addition, experience has shown to the need to act on the complementarity between perception- and experience-based justice measurement tools and other existing tools measuring justice system performance, such as the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice's (CEPEJ)<sup>24</sup> Justice Dashboard for the EaP. Stronger emphasis on awareness raising and dissemination amidst main stakeholders to make use of the result to inform policy dialogue for instance should be reflected in the second phase.

## **Sector of support 2 – Strengthening Resilience through Conflict Prevention, Civil Protection and Support to Democracy**

The EU has supported conflict transformation and confidence-building through various programmes. In 2020, the EU launched a pilot regional programme called EU4Dialogue to support the overall diplomatic efforts towards conflict transformation in the South Caucasus (alongside with Moldova/Transnistria). Where conditions allowed, the programme aimed to build confidence across dividing lines, through identifying common interests and building on those. These activities across the divides, which were piloted during the first phase have contributed towards creating trust in smaller environments and can now be scaled up and replicated to ensure wider impact. Furthermore, in confidence-building, long-term engagement is key to build trust, as is flexibility in the tools in order to use the momentum where it occurs. Initiatives which support mutual benefits across the divides have common denominators, but need to be tailored to the context they are implemented in. Setting up a quick and flexible facility which allows to fund project ideas stemming from the dialogue processes has proved to be a valuable tool and it will be continued with further flexibility and continued involvement of relevant stakeholders. This empowers local civil society and increases EU visibility. Further efforts are also needed to mainstream conflict transformation in the EaP countries, including through strengthening multilateral cooperation.

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<sup>24</sup>[Council of Europe European Commission for the efficiency of justice \(CEPEJ\) - European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice \(CEPEJ\) \(coe.int\)](https://coe.int/)

Civil protection dimension of this action is built upon past and ongoing actions on prevention, preparedness and response to natural and human-made disasters (PPRD East), lessons learned and identified good practices of PPRD East programmes and other international organisations' initiatives. The previous PPRD East actions have achieved enhanced legal and institutional frameworks to improve disaster risk management and supported institutional coordination among all actors, though, to a varying extent. Nonetheless, not all partner countries are facing the same level of difficulties or have the same needs and not all countries aspire to reach the same level of co-operation with the UCPM as well as amongst each other. National ownership has been strong though also varied in different partner countries. The regional approach has been highlighted to be of great importance for the assessment of cross-border risks, regional risk prioritisation and development of similar national methodologies to enable the comparison of risks and exchange of experts. Regional actions (such as trainings and full-scale exercises conducted in the previous PPRD East programme cycles) provided a unique platform for a dialogue on a technical level. In addition, closer cooperation with the UCPM has been identified vital to accomplish EU acquis standards in the area of civil protection. To ensure continuity and sustainability of the action is to continue aligning the programme more firmly to a permanent framework, i.e. the UCPM, moving to a more policy-driven approach and institutional relationship which is more conducive to sustainability.

The Commission has seen a decline in conditions of the work of civil society and in many countries the usual funding instruments of the EU are not able to efficiently support the grassroots organisations and new civic movements emerging in volatile environments. In this context, the EED has been a crucial partner for support to the independent civic activists and media. EED established itself as a functioning democracy support organisation and it has provided grants in all countries of its mandate. By the end of 2023, EED has approved more than 873 initiatives from EaP (from over 4,530 requests received), for a total amount of more than EUR 80 million. Each year of the EED's operations has seen a significant growth in number of awarded grants and a steady growth in funding received from the EED's donors. At the same time, the political contexts in the EED's countries of operations are evolving unpredictably, which requires quick adjustments, new procedures that would respond to new challenges. In an evaluation of the EED by independent experts it was noted that against a backdrop of democratic backsliding, the EED has filled gaps in democracy support left by more traditional donors, strengthened the readiness of pro-democracy actors to contribute to locally led and locally shaped political and civic process in line with ambitions and reasonable expectations, and contributed to the sustainability of pro-democracy actors. Following a review of the EED's gender mainstreaming the EED has undergone a six-month coaching process to further strengthen its gender responsive approach. The Commission has been the exclusive provider of its operating grant. While there is a need for donor diversification it is important to maintaining the same high level of ambition in terms of activities.

### **Sector of support 3 – Support to Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy**

The EU Neighbours East communication programme which will finish at the end of 2024, offers valuable insights and lessons on the effectiveness of strategic communication strategies.

One significant lesson is the importance of tailored communication strategies that address the diverse cultural, political, and social contexts of partner countries. The EU has recognised that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective when dealing with varied audiences across the EaP. We have taken into consideration the annual surveys and focus groups results and tailored the communication efforts in line with the results. Another lesson lies in the power of fostering people-to-people connections to build a foundation of trust and cooperation. The EU Neighbours East programme has emphasized the role of education, culture, and youth exchanges in creating lasting relationships between the EU and individuals in the neighbouring countries. The programme has also highlighted the critical need for transparency and clear communication to counter misinformation and build credibility. In an era where fake news and propaganda can quickly undermine international relations, we have learnt that providing clear, factual, and accessible



information is key to maintaining a positive image and influencing public opinion in neighbouring countries. Finally, the EU Neighbours East communication programme teaches us the value of monitoring and evaluation in refining communication strategies. The EU has implemented measures to continually assess the impact of its communications, allowing for data-driven adjustments and improvements. This iterative approach ensures that resources are effectively utilised, campaign messages are resonating with target audiences, and the overall goals of the programme are being met. Through this process, the EU has become more agile and responsive to the dynamic geopolitical landscape of the region, which in turn bolsters the efficacy of its foreign policy initiatives.

Another lesson learned is that the diversity and gender equality dimension of each of the three sectors could be further mainstreamed and monitored in the implementation phase.

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION**

#### **3.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs**

The Overall Objective of this action is to enhance democracy, the rule of law, and security by strengthening accountable, inclusive and gender sensitive institutions and by supporting societal resilience in the EaP countries.

The Specific Objective(s) (Outcomes) of this action are to

1. Strengthen public administration systems in the EaP region, including national statistical systems and knowledge of EU policies, and enhance the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the judicial systems.
2. Increase societal resilience of the EaP countries through conflict prevention and resolution, civil protection and democratisation.
3. Improve the public perception and attitudes towards the EU and create awareness for a more receptive environment in EaP countries towards European values and principles supporting a closer association with the EU.

The Outputs to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:

1.1 contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1)

Improved capacities of public administration systems to deliver better policy and public services to citizens and businesses in line with the principles of Public Administration.

1.2 contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1)

Increased National Statistics Institutes (NSIs) capacity for producing reliable, comparable and sex disaggregated statistics and furthered integration of the three candidate countries among the EaP countries into the European Statistical System (ESS).

1.3 contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1)

Enhanced knowledge of EU foreign policy of entry-level diplomats, men and women, from the EaP region.

1.4. contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1)

Improved evidence and increased gender sensitive knowledge and awareness amidst stakeholders on the performance of the justice systems across the beneficiary countries in the EaP region.

2.1 contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2)

Strengthened capacity and inclusion of civil society and conflict affected groups in enhanced dialogue across the dividing lines, better socio-economic conditions and increased gender sensitive human security, contributing to building a durable foundation for conflict transformation.

2.2. contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2)

Enhanced capacity and collaboration for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

2.3 contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2)

Improved capacity to prevent, prepare, and respond in a gender sensitive way to natural and human-induced disasters, and to enhance cooperation between EaP countries, as well as with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

2.4 contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2)

Strengthened and efficient EED mechanism of financial support to beneficiaries.

3.1 contributing to Outcome 3 (or Specific Objective 3)

Enhanced comprehension and awareness of how the neighbourhood and enlargement policies benefits citizens in the EaP region as well as increased engagement in mitigating the spread and impact of false information in the region.

### **3.2. Indicative Activities**

All activities will apply a gender perspective to the extent possible.

Activities related to Output 1.1:

Regional seminars and conferences, regional studies and papers, assessments of state of play and progress of reforms against the principles of public administration, review of PAR/PFM strategies and/or action plans and analytical work, policy advice and capacity building activities; seminars, conferences, workshops; concept papers, studies, guidance documents.

Activities related to Output 1.2:

Provision of technical assistance and assessments by EU experts on statistical domains and institutional elements, support in preparation and implementation of surveys, organisation of meetings, seminars, workshops and trainings, study trips and production of statistical publications.

Activities related to Output 1.3:

Develop learning modules on European Foreign Affairs and External Actions policies, including enlargement and common foreign and security policies, organise workshop and events on European Foreign Affairs and External Actions policies, organise study visits with diplomats in Brussels as well as simulation exercises.

Activities related to Output 1.4:

Perception survey of justice performance; research and analysis to draft analytical reports; comparative analysis; awareness-raising, consultation and dissemination activities.

Activities related to Output 2.1:

Strengthening of capacities of for dialogue participation, cultural and educational exchanges, facilitation of people-to-people contacts, organisation of meetings, conferences and events contributing to conflict

transformation and dialogue processes, management of a flexible facility including support to grass-root level organisation, and infrastructure interventions.

#### Activities related to Output 2.2

Strengthening of existing women networks, increase of women's leadership and participation in all policy-making decisions/processes in areas related to peace and security.

#### Activities related to Output 2.3

Technical assistance missions, national table-top exercises, training, exchange of experts, institutional and operational cooperation, regional full-scale exercise(s) and workshops/conferences. These actions will focus on inter alia inter-institutional coordination, early warning systems, multi-risk assessments and emergency planning and supporting approximation of the legislation to the EU acquis and stimulating regional cooperation.

#### Activities related to Output 2.4:

Supporting beneficiaries, organising seminars, studies, conferences, publications, networking events, workshops, training and visibility activities, capacity building for beneficiaries etc.

#### Activities related to Output 3.1

Design of information campaigns, maintenance of the website, production of easy-to-understand, engaging content, engaging with the Young European Ambassadors network, collaborating with local journalists and media outlets collecting information on all EU-funded actions per country and region (EU DigiTool), organisation of workshops and training sessions collaboration with influencers development of partnerships with regional media outlets, launch campaigns that tackle dis and misinformation and provide factual information, support local initiatives that aim to bring the EU closer to citizens.

### **3.3. Mainstreaming**

#### **Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity**

Climate change adaptation will be factored into the programme through implementation of concrete adaptation and capacity building measures, as it has repercussions on the frequency and scale of natural and human-induced disasters.

#### **Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls**

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1<sup>25</sup>.

The Gender Action Plan is the EU's ambitious strategy for contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG5, accelerating progress on gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority of all EU external policies and actions, including as a focus of the Global Gateway strategy. It seeks to empower women and girls in all their diversity to participate and lead equally in social, economic, political life, and to have a say in all decision making, in all public and private spheres. The plan aims to address structural causes of gender inequality and gender-based discrimination, including by actively engaging men and boys in challenging gender norms and stereotypes. Finally, to leave no one behind, the action plan seeks to tackle all intersecting dimensions of discrimination, paying specific attention for example to women with disabilities, migrant women, and discrimination based on age or sexual orientation.

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<sup>25</sup> Principal objective / significant objective/ not targeted.

Gender analysis and data collection are vital for targeted policies and result monitoring. The EU will therefore continue to step up efforts to ensure that EU-funded humanitarian aid adequately addresses the needs of women, girls, men, and boys.

Gender equality will be mainstreamed into the various components of this program: through outcomes, activities and indicators addressing specific gender gaps in each sector. Dialogues with partner organisations will be initiated to strengthen the gender and diversity perspective, in the initiation of the programs as well as through the implementation phase.

In relation to Public Administration reform, activities focusing on gender inequalities will be proposed, with the aim of tackling both structural and cultural barriers to gender equality as well as for applying a gender perspective. The NSIs will support the governments by providing an increased number of sex disaggregated statistics.

Likewise, on the rule of law component, the justice survey outcomes will be encouraged to provide a gender equality breakdown that will help to inform the design of policy actions which can address possible gender gaps.

Women, peace and security will be promoted through the women's platform of the EU4Dialogue project, and a gender lens will be mainstreamed in the conflict prevention and civil protection programme. EED's application of the gender markers will be followed up to ensure alignment with GAP III.

### **Human Rights**

The actions will be guided by a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights, which will be particularly relevant for people in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. The five working principles below may be applied as and if relevant at all stages of implementation: legality, universality, and indivisibility of human rights; participation and access to decision-making processes; non-discrimination and equal access; accountability and access to the rule of law; transparency and access to information. The implementing partners will be tasked to ensure that this approach is taken across all programme.

During the program implementation, rights holders (including women and youth groups) will be empowered to claim their rights. Duty bearers may be addressed through advocacy campaign. Multiple forms of discrimination will also be addressed from an intersectional approach to ensure that no one is left behind and to avoid unintended negative impacts in terms of human rights.

### **Disability**

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D0. This implies that this action does not focus on disability as a significant objective and the disability perspective will not be systematically mainstreamed in all aspects of the program.

Women and men with disabilities are often excluded regarding access to services, justice and decision making and are seldom consulted and involved conflict prevention and security processes. Women with disabilities are often affected by multiple forms of discrimination, because of their sex and disability. When possible, activities will be adjusted to include persons with disabilities in the various components of the programs. The action will have positive effect in terms of quality of legislation and strategies and their proper implementation in all sectors, including disability. To the extent that this action addresses disability-related issues (e.g., civil service issues, service delivery) it will ensure that its advice is consistent with non-discrimination principles.

## **Democracy**

This action will support accountable public administration which is key to democratic governance and inclusive economic development. An accountable, transparent, and well-functioning public administration is not only a democratic right of citizens but also guarantor of delivery of quality services and the key driver of economic growth and competitiveness.

The action will also directly support the functioning of EED as an important actor in the region, channelling direct financial support to pro-democracy activists.

## **Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience**

Unresolved protracted conflicts continue to hamper development in the region and have already caused numerous casualties, damages and displacement of the local population. In this regard, the action takes into account the conflict sensitivity, and follows the 'do no harm' principle.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine grossly violates international law and the principles of the UN Charter, and undermines European and global security and stability. The ongoing active military aggression seriously affects the situation in Ukraine and the possible implementation of this action in Ukraine. A flexible approach will be adopted to the action's implementation, taking into account security developments on the ground.

Resilience and conflict sensitivity are also key areas of engagement in the framework of this action. Sector of support 3 – Resilience through Conflict Prevention and Civil Protection, will aim to support conflict transformation and contribute towards building sustainable peace in the region.

## **Disaster Risk Reduction**

Disaster Risk Reduction will increase resilience to natural and human-induced disasters, in full coherence with the Sendai Framework: to prevent, prepare and better respond to disaster as well as to better adapt to climate change. The Sendai Framework also stresses the importance of mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction into all policies and sectors as well as the preservation of ecosystem functions that help to reduce risks and integrated environmental and natural resource management approaches that incorporate disaster risk reduction. The action includes focus on the development of early warning systems and community-based planning to prepare for potential hazards and disasters, national and community-level training and the strengthening of legislative frameworks that foster Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction also emphasises the role of vulnerable groups (including women, children, youth older persons or persons with disabilities) and advocates for resilient communities and an inclusive and all-of-society disaster risk management. To this effect, awareness and understanding of cultural specificities and differences will be considered throughout this action.

### 3.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category <sup>26</sup>	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium / Low)	Mitigating measures
External Environment	Political instability in the region, including changes in government, military and other conflicts (in particular, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine) or the strengthening of anti-democratic forces	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	Risks resulting from political and economic instability will be addressed through multi-lateral, political dialogue. Such risks will also be mitigated by the adoption of a flexible approach to action activities, allowing for adequate adjustments in cases of disruptive external factors. A detailed assessment needs to be made of the situation on the ground to mitigate security risks and ensure the sustainability of activities and investments
External environment	Lack of commitment and cooperation from stakeholders and partner Governments	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Risk will be mitigated with enhanced, closer and continuous policy dialogue and strategic cooperation with relevant stakeholders and national authorities
People and the organisation	High staff turnover	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Institutionalisation of policy dialogue and inclusion of the capacity building activities in the national training structures and Training of Trainers (ToT), where relevant. Implementation of a retention policy for concerned staff and for knowledge transferred

#### External Assumptions

No deterioration of the situation in and due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The EaP governments are committed to cooperate both at a national and regional level.

The EU continues to be of significant interest for the local media and citizens in the EaP partner countries, demonstrating a sustained level of attention and receptiveness.

### 3.5. Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that good governance and democratic institutions, rule of law, respect of human rights and security, including support to populations affected by conflict, are the backbone of strong and resilient states and societies. They are also significant preconditions for a functioning market economy and for sustainable growth.

<sup>26</sup>The risk (category) can be related 1-to the external environment; 2-to planning, processes and systems; 3-to people and the organisation; 4-to legality and regularity aspects; 5-to communication and information. See pp44-48 of [Implementation Guide of the Risk management in the Commission](#). *[EC internal link]*

The area of support 1 (Outcome 1) aims to strengthen public administration systems in the EaP region, including national statistical systems and knowledge of EU policies, and enhance the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the judicial systems. To achieve this, the action will seek to improve capacities of public administration systems to deliver better policy and public services to citizens and business in line with principles of public administration; to increase NSIs capacity for producing reliable, comparable and sex disaggregated statistics and furthered integration of the three candidate countries among the EaP countries into the European Statistical System (ESS); to enhance knowledge of EU foreign policy of entry-level diplomats, men and women, from EaP countries. The action will also improve evidence of the performance of the judiciary and increase gender sensitive knowledge amidst stakeholders on the entrenchment and performance of the justice systems across the beneficiary countries.

The area of support 2 (Outcome 2) aims to increase societal resilience of the EaP countries through conflict prevention and resolution, civil protection and democratisation. In order to achieve this the action will seek to enhance the dialogue across the dividing lines, better socio-economic conditions and increased gender sensitive human security, contributing to building a durable foundation for conflict transformation; to enhance capacity and collaboration for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and finally to improve the capacity to prevent, prepare, and respond in a gender sensitive way to natural and human-made disasters, promote cooperation amongst the EaP countries, as well as with and within the UCPM. The action will also strengthen the EED mechanism of financial support.

The area of support 3 (outcome 3) aims to improve the public perception and attitudes towards the EU and create awareness for a more receptive environment in EaP countries towards European values and principles supporting a closer association with the EU. To achieve this the action will seek to enhance the comprehension and awareness of how the neighbourhood and enlargement policies benefits citizens in the EaP region as well as to increase the engagement in mitigating the spread and impact of false information in the region.

The above-mentioned results will be underpinned by a wide range of activities encompassing capacity building, provision of technical assistance, organisation of seminars, conferences, coordination activities, advocacy, direct support to beneficiaries, amongst others.

If the above-mentioned outcomes are achieved, then this action on Governance and EU related reforms will contribute to enhancing democracy, the rule of law, and security by strengthening accountable, inclusive and gender sensitive institutions and by supporting societal resilience in the EaP countries.

### 3.6. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results [maximum 10]	Indicators [it least one indicator per expected result]	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
<b>Impact 1</b>	To enhance democracy, the rule of law, and security by strengthening accountable, inclusive and gender sensitive institutions and by supporting societal resilience in the EaP countries.	1 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2 Global Peace Index 3 Women, Peace and Security Index	To be assessed per country at the inception period of the programme	To be determined during the inception phase of the programme	Score of the different indexes	<i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Outcome 1</b>	1. Strengthened public administration systems in the EaP region, including national statistical systems and knowledge of EU policies, and enhanced quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the judicial systems.	1.1 Number of PAR and PFM related decisions assisted by SIGMA where SIGMA advice/recommendation has been considered 1.2 Number of datasets/indicators disseminated by Eurostat 1.3 % of this data being gender, gender sensitive and/or disaggregated 1.4 Increase in knowledge about EU Foreign and External policy 1.5 Policy dialogue between the Commission and EaP partner countries has been informed by action findings	1.1 0 (2025) 1.2 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme (2025) 1.3 0 (2025) 1.4 0 (2024) 1.5 To be assessed per country at the inception period of the programme	1.1 tbd (2026) and tbd (2028) 1.2 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme 1.3 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme 1.4 tbd (2027) 1.5 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme	Implementing partner reporting  Policy briefs  Commission reports  Eurostat and NSI websites and databases  Government publications, official gazettes, government websites	The EaP governments are committed to cooperate both at a national and regional level  Cooperation of official statistics providers  Continued ownership and political commitment to public administration reform



<p><b>Outcome 2</b></p>	<p>2. Increase societal resilience of the EaP countries through conflict prevention and resolution, civil protection and democratisation.</p>	<p>2.1 Number of people directly benefiting from EU supported interventions that specifically aim to support civilian post-conflict peace-building and /or conflict prevention  2.2 Extent to which the Sendai Framework<sup>i</sup> targets are met.  2.3 Strengthened and efficient European Endowment for Democracy (EED) mechanism of financial support to civil society actors  2.4 Civil society is supported in a flexible manner including new civic actors and individual activists.</p>	<p>2.1 EaP average 2.209/5 (2023)  2.2 As outlined in the reports to the Sendai Framework presented by the different countries.  2.3 Low level of Structures and procedures in place.  2.4 CSO Sustainability Index</p>	<p>2.1 Improved score  2.2 Additional targets have been met and existing ones have improved in each of the countries.  2.3 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme  2.4. To be determined during the inception phase of the programme</p>	<p>Global Peace Index  UNISDR reports  Self-assessment by EaP beneficiaries and European Commission  Reports and Peer-reviews  Relevant Subcommittees Implementing partner reporting  CSO Sustainability Index</p>	<p>Dialogue processes not derailed by the political climate; attempts by authorities to interfere in the actual implementation due to political reasons are kept to a minimum; active and broad engagement of stakeholders.  Partner countries are willing to reach a higher degree of co-operation within the region, intra region and with EU  Political will to cooperate in the field of disaster prevention, preparedness and response and to make it a priority in the countries' development strategies  Willingness at all levels to share information.  EED, backed up by European Parliament and European Commission.</p>
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<p><b>Outcome 3</b></p>	<p>3. Improved public perception and attitudes towards the EU and awareness created for a more receptive environment in EaP countries towards European values and principles supporting a closer association with the EU.</p>	<p>3.1 Annual public surveys about the perception of the EU and other surveys; social media and web analytics; media coverage.</p>	<p>3.1 To be assessed per country at the inception period of the programme</p>	<p>3.1 Annual public surveys about the perception of the EU and other surveys; social media and web analytics, media coverage.</p>	<p>Annual public surveys about the perception of the EU</p>	<p>The EU continues to be of significant interest for the local media and citizens in neighbourhood partner countries, demonstrating a sustained level of attention and receptiveness.</p> <p>The public perception of the EU and its initiatives in neighbourhood partner countries is generally positive, creating a conducive environment for successful engagement and effective communication of EU messages and programmes.</p>
<p><b>Output 1 related to Outcome 1</b></p>	<p>1.1 Improved capacities of public administration systems to deliver better policy public services to citizens and business in line with the principles of Public Administration</p>	<p>1.1.1 Number of PAR regional seminars / conferences organised 1.1.2 Number of PAR regional studies / papers elaborated</p>	<p>1.1.1 0 (2025) 1.1.2 0 (2025)</p>	<p>1.1.1 tbd (2026) and tbd (2028) 1.1.2 tbd (2026) and tbd (2028)</p>	<p>SIGMA Activity reports</p>	<p>Stable and functioning governments and public administrations in European Neighbourhood East region</p>

<b>Output 2 related to Outcome 1</b>	1.2 Increased NSIs capacity for producing reliable, comparable and sex disaggregated statistics and furthered integration of the three candidate countries into to the European Statistical System (ESS)	1.2.1 Number of data points from the countries in Eurostat's database 1.2.2 Number of sex disaggregated data 1.2.3 Number of datasets/indicators published alongside EU-27 data	1.2.1 Estimation of baseline data availability by the contractor (tbc)(2025) 1.2.2 tbd (2025) 1.2.3 tbd (2025)	1.2.1 tbd 1.2.2 tbd 1.2.3 tbd	DG ESTAT database extractions Project reports	Sufficient support to NSI provided by the Government,  Availability of experts and good cooperation between all stakeholders.  The necessary human and technical resources are provided by the national authorities.
<b>Output 3 related to Outcome 1</b>	1.3 Enhanced knowledge of EU foreign policy of entry-level diplomats, men and women, from the EaP region.	1.3.1 Number of diplomatic training programmes offered to entry-level diplomats 1.3.2 Number of entry-level diplomats from Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine participating in the training (disaggregated by sex, and age)	1.3.1 0 (2024) 1.3.2 0 (2024)	1.3.1 6 (2027) 1.3.2 tbd (2027)	College of Europe Report Project reports	Commitment from administrations sending entry-level diplomats in the European Diplomatic Academy
<b>Output 4 related to Outcome 1</b>	1.4 Improved evidence and increased gender sensitive knowledge and awareness amidst stakeholders on the performance of the justice systems across the beneficiary countries in the EaP region.	1.4.1 Number of justice surveys completed and published 1.4.2 Number of participants to dissemination activities (disaggregated by sex)	1.4.1 0 (2025) 1.4.3 0 (2025)	1.4.1 1 survey completed and published per each beneficiary country and 1 regional survey(2027) 1.4.2 To be determined during preparatory phase (2026)	Project Report Justice Surveys	The stakeholders fully participate in the surveys and in the dissemination activities.

<b>Output 1 related to Outcome 2</b>	2.1 Strengthened capacity and inclusion of civil society and conflict affected groups in enhanced dialogue across the dividing lines, better socio-economic conditions and increased gender sensitive human security, contributing to building a durable foundation for conflict transformation.	2.1.1 Number of initiatives successfully implemented to improve socio-economic development and human security of conflict affected populations. 2.1.2 % of those being gender sensitive	2.1.1 0 2.1.2 To be determined in inception phase	2.1.1 To be determined in inception phase 2.1.2 To be determined in inception phase	Project reports	
<b>Output 2 related to Outcome 2</b>	2.2 Enhanced capacity and collaboration for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.	2.2.1 Number of people who was been trained on the women peace and security agenda (disaggregated by gender and age)	2.2.1 EaP average score 0.728 (2023)	2.2.1 Improved score	Women, Peace and Security Index	
<b>Output 3 related to Outcome 2</b>	2.3 Improved capacity to prevent, prepare, and respond in a gender sensitive way to natural and human-induced disasters, and to enhance cooperation between EaP countries, as well as with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).	2.3.1 Number of people who have been trained to prevent, prepare and respond to natural and human-made disasters (number of gender trainings)	2.3.1 To be determined in inception phase	2.3.1 To be determined in inception phase	Project reports	Political will to cooperate in the field of disaster prevention, preparedness and response and to make it a priority in the countries' development strategies
<b>Output 4 related to Outcome 2</b>	2.4 Strengthened and efficient EED mechanism of financial support to beneficiaries	2.4.1 Number of grassroots civil society organisations and independent media actors benefitting from (or reached by) EU support	2.4.1 0 (2025)	2.4.1 To be determined in inception phase	Project reports	EED, backed up by European Parliament and European Commission,

<p><b>Output 1 related to Outcome 3</b></p>	<p>3.1 Enhanced comprehension and awareness of how the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policies benefits citizens in the EaP region as well as increased engagement in mitigating the spread and impact of false information in the region.</p>	<p>3.1.1 Percentage of people with the positive perception of the EU 3.1.2 Number of fake news items in the media analysis</p>	<p>3.1.1 To be assessed per country at the inception period of the programme 3.1.2 To be assessed per country at the inception period of the programme</p>	<p>3.1.1 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme 3.1.2 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme</p>	<p>Opinion polls, social media analytics, media analysis reports  Media analysis, disinformation trend analysis, EEAS information analysis reports</p>	<p>Target audiences in partner countries are open and willing to engage with the EU and its outreach activities, despite varying levels of restrictions imposed by national authorities/regimes  Young people and other strategic multiplier groups are keen to actively participate within the networks developed by the Programme's segments, demonstrating a strong interest in supporting the dissemination of EU's messages and initiatives.</p>
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## **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 country.

### **4.2. Indicative Implementation Period**

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3.2 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 measures<sup>27</sup>.

#### **4.3.1. Direct Management (Grants)**

##### **4.3.1.1 Sector of support 1-Public Administration Reform and Rule of Law**

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

The grant will contribute to achieve Outcome 1 specified in Section 3.

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

The beneficiary of the directly awarded grant will be the College of Europe.

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

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grants may be awarded without a call for proposals to the College of Europe.

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified based on Article 195 (f) of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, i.e. "for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers, on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals". More concretely, the recourse to an award of grants to the College of Europe is justified due to its high degree of specialisation, technical competence, and extended experience, including the previous implementation of the Diplomatic Academy and current implementation of the EU Diplomatic Academy funded by the FPI.

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<sup>27</sup> [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.

#### **d) Exception to the non-retroactivity of costs**

**The Commission authorises that the costs incurred may be recognised as eligible as of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024.** This is necessary to start the inception period of the programme and may include preparation activities for the academic year expected to start in September 2024 such as: communication with participants States MFAs, selection of the participants, and preparation of curricula, among others.

#### **4.3.1.2 Sector of support 2 – Strengthening resilience through Conflict Prevention, Civil Protection and Support to Democracy**

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

The grant will contribute to achieve Outcome 2 specified in section 3.

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

The target organisation to implement this activity is the European Endowment for Democracy (EED).

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

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified due to the EED's technical competence or administrative power, in accordance with Art 195(f) of the 2018 Financial Regulation, as the EED has a high degree of specialisation, strong proven operational experience in countries where the space for civil society is shrinking due to administrative, legal, social, and political barriers. Such restricted environments require a body with appropriate competence, mandate and strong local awareness, which allows ensuring security of beneficiaries. EED operates in the Eastern Neighbourhood since its establishment in 2013 and has the necessary capacity to manage a demand-driven support. EED was established in 2013 through a decision of the Council of the European Union to foster and encourage deep and sustainable democracy.

#### **4.3.1.3 Sector of support 2 – Strengthening resilience through Conflict Prevention, Civil Protection and support to Democracy**

The programme will be implemented by DG ECHO under co-delegation.

As regards the EaP countries DG ECHO has the responsibility and competence to programme interventions in the field of civil protection, for the beneficiary countries, as well as responsibility for the financial programming aspects (preparation, call for expression of interest to the Member States, award, acceptance of results and payments). Consequently, DG ECHO and DG NEAR agree on the fact that DG ECHO should be in charge of full financial management of this programme.

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

The grant will contribute to achieve Outcome 2 specified in section 3.

It will strengthen Partner Countries' civil protection capacities for disaster prevention, preparedness and response to natural and human-made disasters at national level. It would enhance the involvement of all relevant governmental actors as well as of civil society stakeholders and scientific community. It would enhance regional co-ordination, institutional and operational co-operation between the UCPM and the

Eastern Neighbourhood countries and among Eastern Neighbourhood countries. Finally, it should ensure sustainability of the results of all phases of the PPRD East beyond the end of the programme.

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

The applicants targeted are national or sub-national civil protection authorities (or relevant competent authorities or entities) of Member States.

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

In line with Art 195(f) of the 2018 Financial Regulation, the direct award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because of the high degree of specialisation required in order to reach the capacity level to of the EU Member States in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

The grant will be awarded to a consortium of national or sub-national civil protection authorities coming from at least two different EU Member States.

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

The procurement will contribute to achieve Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 specified in section 3.

#### **4.3.3. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity<sup>28</sup>**

##### **4.3.3.1 Sector of support 1-Public Administration Reform and Rule of Law**

This action may be implemented in indirect management with the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This implementation entails activities related to output 1.1 specified in section 3 of this Action Document. The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria:

- The action has specific characteristics requiring specialist advisory services in the area of public administration reform in EaP countries by a recognised international organisation and the OECD is considered to be placed as the best public institution in this regard.
- The OECD as a public organisation has a long-standing experience and specialisation in this area to partner with the EU and has been working for a number of years with the partner countries, notably in the European Neighbourhood East area. Since 1992, the SIGMA Programme has embodied the commitment of the European Commission to co-operate with the OECD in order to promote better public governance.
- The successive SIGMA programmes have been repeatedly evaluated with a positive track record in terms of efficiency, quality, effectiveness and sustainability of results and EaP countries have always expressed a high level of satisfaction due to its high level of relevance, flexibility and quality of expertise delivered.
- Overall, the action will contribute to building better governance systems in the EaP countries to deliver improved policy outcomes and public services to its citizens. This will support developing more sustainable governance systems and to strengthen the capacities of public administrations in the targeted region to enhance economic well-being and political freedom and facilitate closer economic integration and political co-operation between the EU and its neighbours.

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<sup>28</sup> The signature of a contribution agreement with the chosen entity is subject to the completion of the necessary pillar assessment.



- More specifically, the action will contribute to increased knowledge and application of European principles of good governance in the areas of policy development and coordination, public service and human resource management, accountability, service delivery and public finance management within the overall framework of the Principles of Public Administration.

#### **4.3.3.2 Sector of support 1-Public Administration Reform and Rule of Law**

This action may be implemented in indirect management with a pillar-assessed entity or a consortium of pillar assessed entities or several pillar-assessed entities working individually, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- EU Member State pillar assessed entity or pillar assessed International Organisation.
- Organisation with a long-standing, strong and wide-ranging partnership with the EU and its Member States.
- Proven sound financial management, operational capacity as well as technical competence, capacities and high degree of specialisation.
- Proven long standing expertise and experience in the design and implementation of justice surveys to assess the independence, quality and effectiveness of the judiciary in many regions around the world, including the EaP and the Western Balkans.
- Track record in design and implementation of Justice Surveys in the EaP region.
- Presence in the EaP region and proven capacity to work across the beneficiary countries, established network of relevant stakeholders as well as access to governments.
- Proven track record in providing assistance in the Eastern Neighbourhood region and capacity to develop good working relations with government authorities and civil society and other stakeholders and to deliver results in a conflict and gender sensitive manner across the region identified in this action.

This implementation entails activities related to output 1.4 specified in section 3 of this Action Document-

#### **4.3.3.3 Sector of support 2 – Strengthening Resilience through Conflict Prevention, Civil Protection and support to Democracy**

This action may be implemented in indirect management with a pillar-assessed entity, a consortium of pillar assessed entities or several pillar-assessed entities working individually, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- EU Member State pillar assessed entity or pillar assessed International Organisation.
- Proven track record in providing assistance in the Eastern Neighbourhood region and capacity to develop good working relations with government authorities and civil society and other stakeholders and to deliver results in a conflict- and gender-sensitive manner across the region identified in this action.
- Proven knowledge and expertise in the given areas of intervention related to Outcome 2 of section 3.

- Demonstrated operational and technical capacities required to implement the activities listed under outcome 2. For this purpose, the entity needs to be able to sub-grant and to ensure that envelopes dealing with works and supplies can be flexibly and efficiently handled.
- Proven sound financial management, operational capacity as well as technical competence, capacities and high degree of specialisation.

This implementation entails activities related Outcome 2, Output 2.3, specified in section 3 of this Action Document.

#### **4.3.4. Changes from indirect to direct management (and vice versa) mode due to exceptional circumstances**

If the implementation modality under indirect management as defined in section ‘4.3.3.1’ cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission or in case no compliant pillar assessed entity can be identified, the modality of implementation by grants under direct management would be used according to the following section ‘4.3.1’:

(a) Subject matter of the grant(s)

The Grant will contribute to achieving the objectives and results of outcome 1, output 1.1 (as relevant), as specified in section 3.

(b) Type of applicants targeted:

- Proven specialist advisory services, operational capacity and specific expertise in the area of public administration reform in the EaP countries, namely on support for improvement governance and management of the public administration as well as the Principles of Public Administration.

If the implementation modality under indirect management as defined in section ‘4.3.3.2’ cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission or in case no compliant pillar assessed entity can be identified, the modality of implementation by grants under direct management would be used according to the following section ‘4.3.1’:

(a) Subject matter of the grant(s)

The Grant will contribute to achieving the objectives and results of outcome 1, output 1.4 (as relevant), as specified in section 3.

(b) Type of applicants targeted:

- Proven long standing expertise and experience in the design and implementation of surveys to assess the independence, quality, and effectiveness of the judiciary in many regions around the world, including the EaP and the Western Balkans.

If the implementation modality under indirect management as defined in section ‘4.3.3.3’ cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission or in case no compliant pillar assessed entity can be identified, the modality of implementation by grants under direct management would be used according to the following section ‘4.3.1’:

(a) Subject matter of the grant(s)

The Grant will contribute to achieving the objectives and results of outcome 2, output 2.1 and 2.2 (as relevant), as specified in section 3.

(b) Type of applicants targeted:

- Proven track record in providing assistance in the Eastern Neighbourhood region and capacity to develop good working relations with government authorities and civil society and other stakeholders and to deliver results in a conflict- and gender-sensitive manner across the region identified in this action.
- Proven knowledge and expertise in the given areas of intervention related to Outcome 2 of section 3.
- Demonstrated operational and technical capacities required to implement the activities listed under outcome 2. For this purpose, the entity needs to be able to sub-grant and to ensure that envelopes dealing with works and supplies can be flexibly and efficiently handled.
- Proven sound financial management, operational capacity as well as technical competence, capacities and high degree of specialisation.

If the implementation modality under direct management as defined in section ‘4.3.1.(grants)’ or ‘4.3.2.(procurements)’ cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission, the modality of implementation by indirect management with a pillar-assessed entity would be used according to section ‘4.3.3’.

#### **4.3.5. Other actions or expenditure**

Part of this action may be implemented through a Service Level Agreement or other agreement with the Statistical Office of the European Union (DG ESTAT) to mobilise its expertise in the achievement of Outcome 1.

Part of this action may be implemented through a Service Level Agreement or other agreement with the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) to mobilise its expertise in the achievement of Outcome 2.

#### **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, in currency identified
<b>Implementation modalities</b> – cf. section 4.3		
<b>Outcome 1:</b> EaP countries have more resilient public administration systems in line with the Principles of Public Administration; development of the national statistical systems to produce high quality and gender-disaggregated statistics; boosted knowledge of EU policies, and enhance quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial systems.  Composed of:	<b>12 000 000.00</b>	TBD
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	900 000.00	TBD
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2	4 600 000.00	N.A.
Indirect management with the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – cf. section 4.3.3.1	5 500 000.00	114 612
Indirect management with an entrusted entity (ies)– cf. section 4.3.3.2	1 000 000.00	TBD
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Increased societal resilience of the EaP countries through conflict prevention and resolution, civil protection and democratisation.  Composed of:	<b>18 000 000.00</b>	TBD
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	8 000 000.00	TBD
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2	2 000 000.00	N.A.
Indirect management with an entrusted entity– cf. section 4.3.3	8 000 000.00	TBD
<b>Outcome 3:</b> Improved public perception and attitudes towards the EU and awareness created for a more receptive environment in EaP countries towards European values and principles supporting a closer association with the EU.  Composed of:	<b>6 500 000.00</b>	N.A.
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2	6 500 000.00	N.A.
<b>Grants</b> – total envelope under section 4.3.1	8 900 000.00	N.A.
<b>Procurement</b> – total envelope under section 4.3.2	13 100 000.00	N.A.
<b>Evaluation</b> – cf. section 5.2	N.A.	N.A.
<b>Audit</b> – cf. section 5.3	N.A.	N.A.
<b>Strategic communication and Public diplomacy</b> – cf. section 6	N.A.	N.A.
<b>Contingencies</b>	N.A.	N.A.
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36 500 000.00</b>	<b>114 612</b>

## **4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities**

Each action will have a Steering Committee which will be co-chaired by the Commission and the responsible implementing partner, where relevant. The Steering Committee will include representatives of other concerned Commission services (including relevant EU Delegations) and other involved EU institutions such as the EEAS. For those actions implemented by a Service Level Agreement, the responsible DG will co-chair the Steering Committee. A wider composition of the Steering Committee can be envisaged depending on the nature of the programme. The Steering Committee shall meet at least once per year to provide an update on the annual activities, to monitor the implementation, steer future implementation period and, when applicable, review and discuss monitoring and evaluations. All implementing partners will be involved in the design of the agenda and will provide inputs for their respective component. For sector of support 3 the implementation of the contract will take place under the leadership of DG NEAR but will be closely coordinated with the EEAS Stratcom East team and the Delegations of the Eastern Neighbourhood region, according to the practice in place under the ongoing programme.

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.

## **4.7. Pre-conditions**

For sector of support 3, political instability in the EaP region may hinder communication and awareness-raising efforts about the EU. It is important for representatives and beneficiaries of EU-funded programmes and projects to remain willing to engage with the Programme and share information about their initiatives. Efforts should be made to ensure that young people and other influential groups in the region are actively involved in the Programme's networks to help disseminate EU messages. Additionally, it is crucial to maintain high interest in the EU among local media and citizens in the neighbourhood partner countries. Close policy dialogue with key stakeholders is essential to achieve this goal.

# **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 (for project modality).

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

Arrangements for monitoring and reporting, including roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring. Programme implementation and contract execution will be monitored through regular reports, both narrative and financial, with clearly identified results indicators linked to each logframe of the different actions foreseen in the areas of support as well as updates on the values of indicators through Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) Result Reporting Exercise. Regular meetings/video conferences between DG NEAR (Headquarters and EU Delegations/EU

Offices) and the implementing partners will further ensure that any issues are addressed in a timely manner so that results are achieved in due time. Relevant Steering Committees will monitor and steer the implementation of the actions planned under the different areas of support. These will be chaired by the European Commission and will include implementing partners and relevant stakeholders, including line DGs, EEAS and other pertinent EU institutions/services. Additional tools include ad hoc and on-the-spot visits that will ensure monitoring of progress and a Result Oriented Assessment missions might be undertaken if relevant. Field missions will take place if relevant and possible.

## **5.2. Evaluation**

Having regard to the importance of the action, mid-term, final, ex-post evaluations might be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants.

In case an evaluation is not planned, the Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing Decision.

## **5.3. Audit and Verifications**

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

## **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.

Security issues or local political sensitivities may make it preferable or necessary to limit communication and visibility activities. In such cases, the target audience and the visibility tools, products and channels to be used in promoting a given action will be determined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation and agreement with the Contracting authority.

## Appendix 1: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRIMARY INTERVENTION LEVEL FOR REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

- ✓ Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);
- ✓ Articulating Actions and/or Contracts according to an expected common chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure a more efficient and aggregated monitoring and reporting of performance;
- ✓ Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

The present Action identifies as

<b>Action level</b> (i.e. Budget support, Blending)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
<b>Group of actions level</b> (i.e: i) top-up cases, ii) second, third, etc. phases of a programme)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#):
<b>Contract level</b> (i.e. Grants, Contribution Agreements, any case in which foreseen individual legal commitments identified in the budget will have different log frames, even if part of the same Action Document)		
x	Single Contract 1	PC-36455 Justice Surveys
x	Single Contract 2	PC-36454 EU Diplomatic Programme for the enlargement region
x	Single Contract 3	PC-37870 EU4 Dialogue Component 1
x	Single Contract 4	PC-37873 EU4 Dialogue Component 2
x	Single Contract 5	PC-36457 Support to democracy action in the Eastern Partnership region
<b>Group of contracts level</b> (i.e: i) series of programme estimates, ii) cases in which an Action Document foresees many foreseen individual legal commitments (for instance four contracts and one of them being a Technical Assistance) and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other, iii) follow up contracts that share the same log frame of the original contract)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of contracts	



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<sup>i</sup> The Sendai Framework works hand in hand with the other 2030 Agenda agreements, including The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the New Urban Agenda, and ultimately the Sustainable Development Goals. [www.preventionweb.net/sendai-framework/sendai-framework-at-a-glance](http://www.preventionweb.net/sendai-framework/sendai-framework-at-a-glance)