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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX I

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the Special Measure in favour of Lebanon for 2023

Action Document for EU support to prevent and alleviate vulnerability and poverty of refugees and host communities in Lebanon

ANNUAL MEASURE

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and a measure in the sense of Article 23(4) of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

1. Title OPSYS Basic Act	EU support to prevent and alleviate vulnerability and poverty of refugees and host communities in Lebanon Special measure in favour of Lebanon for 2023 OPSYS business reference: NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/ACT-61936 ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD.1166220 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe).
2. Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)	No
EIP Flagship	No
3. Team Europe Initiative	Not applicable
4. Beneficiary of the action	The action shall be carried out in Lebanon
5. Programming document	N/A
6. Link with relevant MIP(s)	N/A

objectives/expected results				
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
7. Priority Area(s), sectors	DAC Code: 160 (Other Social Infrastructure & Services)			
8. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<p>Main SDG: SDG 1: No poverty – End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p> <p>Other significant SDGs: SDG 2: Zero Hunger – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture SDG 5: Gender equality – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all SDG 10: Reduced inequalities – Reduce inequality within and among countries SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p>			
9. DAC code(s)	160 – Other Social Infrastructure & Services 16010 Social Protection: 80% 16020 Employment creation: 10% 72010 - Material relief assistance and services: 10%			
10. Main Delivery Channel	Channel 1 - 20000 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society Channel 2 – 40000 multilateral organisations			
11. Targets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
12. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Internal markers and Tags	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	EIP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	EIP Flagship	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Tags	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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES	NO	
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<u>Connectivity</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES	NO	
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Migration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION			
14. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020110 – Southern Neighbourhood Total estimated cost: EUR 80 000 000.00 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 80 000 000.00		
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION			
15. Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)	Direct management through: - Grants Indirect management with the entities to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.2		

1.2. Summary of the Action

The overall objective of this action is to improve the socio-economic living conditions of poor and vulnerable social groups in Lebanon. The action builds on the ongoing interventions in the sector, including those supported through the EU Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, to ensure follow up of the EU's involvement on social protection and self-reliance of refugees and host communities in Lebanon, and to

support the setup of a system for social assistance in the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy. The action is in line with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) Strategic Plan for the Protection of Women and Children for the period of 2020-2027 by ensuring delivery of comprehensive and quality services for target groups, including women, contributing as such to strengthening the national system for the prevention and response to gender-based violence.

The action is particularly relevant in the context of Lebanon, which has been affected by external and internal instability since 2019 and has witnessed a decline in the socio-economic living conditions for refugees and Lebanese alike. An unprecedented institutional vacuum has been delaying agreement on crisis resolution and much needed reforms, pushing the majority of the population in Lebanon into poverty and exacerbating the vulnerabilities of the refugees from Syria, who now live in protracted displacement for over a decade with no durable solutions in sight.

The action, over the course of its duration, aims at the following outcomes: 1) The socio-economic insecurity of refugees from Syria and host communities facing poverty and life-cycle vulnerabilities is reduced, 2) The development of an inclusive national social assistance system with gender sensitive focus linking social assistance with complementary services and programmes is supported under the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy.

The action proposes to support the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), which covers social assistance, social welfare and insurance, and economic inclusion through labour activation. The Strategy has been prepared with support from the EU and the United Nations (UN) and in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, civil society, the World Bank (WB), and donors. The action will prioritise aid effectiveness in Lebanon in the sector of social protection through increased coordination among the members of the international community, and stronger advocacy for sustainability. While the action will continue to provide basic social assistance for poor social groups - amongst them refugees from Syria - and host communities, it will contribute to setting up an integrated social assistance system to promote social cohesion and stability, and work to reduce dependency on the social safety net by supporting an overall sector-wide support for referral through linkages between the different pillars of the National Social Protection Strategy. The action will work towards ensuring higher self-financing of the system through enhanced government contribution. The action will support strong involvement of civil society for monitoring and accountability to improve delivery of assistance to refugees and Lebanese. This action will contribute to achieve SDG1 -No poverty – End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

1.3. Beneficiary of the action

The action shall be carried out in Lebanon, which is included in the list of ODA recipients.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

The Syria crisis is in its second decade, and Lebanon continues to host the largest number of refugees from Syria per capita, equivalent to 25% of Lebanon's population. The social and economic situation of refugees and host communities in Lebanon has been deteriorating following the multiple crises in the country which has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut port blast. Russia's unprovoked and

unjustified military aggression against Ukraine disrupted the global grain supply chain, which further contributed to food insecurity for people living in Lebanon. In 2022, the language of Lebanon's political discourse has grown increasingly hostile, pushing a narrative that holds displaced households responsible for the country's hardship and the ongoing strain on public services. Devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria multiplied the psychological impact of crises in Lebanon, adding further strains on refugees from Syria.

Lebanon's position as a net importer of food has been uncovered as a major vulnerability in light of the global disrupted grain supply chain, due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In addition, the Lebanese currency has collapsed, threatening social stability and pushing people further into poverty. The most vulnerable refugees and Lebanese who benefit from different types of international social assistance, use the allocations primarily to cover food and rent expenses and increasingly use negative coping mechanisms.

The EU continues to support inclusive social assistance, social services, and access to the labour market for the extremely poor refugees from Syria and host communities in Lebanon, through policy dialogue focused on reform and sustainability. The EU's policy dialogue in this sector promotes the importance of nationally owned social protection systems to contribute to poverty reduction, enhance people's resilience in the face of shocks and structural transformation, and contribute to peace, stabilisation and economic growth, in line with the EU policy priorities in development cooperation¹ and with the EU and Lebanon commitments as part of the extended EU Lebanon Partnership Priorities and annexed Compact².

The EU has taken the lead in policy coordination among the main stakeholders, including donors contributing to the social assistance provided to both refugees from Syria and host communities, to ensure more accountability and strategic vision for the sector. Complementarity of funding with the main grant donors is achieved through weekly coordination and joint planning of contributions to the two main operations for social assistance to Lebanese and, respectively, to refugees in need. Complementarity with the World Bank is ensured through dedicated regular meetings and discussions, including with the Ministry of Social Affairs. The National Social Protection Partners Forum, set up by the EU, UNICEF/ILO and the World Bank in 2021, continues to be an important avenue for coordination and information sharing on complementarity of funding with actions at local level and conducted by civil society.

The action is in line with the EU-Lebanon Compact, annexed to the Partnership Priorities jointly agreed between the EU and Lebanon, whose core objective is to improve the living conditions of refugees and vulnerable host communities in Lebanon. In particular, the Action will strengthen the self-reliance of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This will improve their prospects in their host country as well as in their country of origin, if and when the conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified return are met.

The action is aligned with the Joint Communication "Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean"³, in particular its priority "Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition" and the accompanying , Economic and Investment Plan.

¹ <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/results-and-indicators/social-protection-0>

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24224/st03001en16docx.pdf>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_426

The action will contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the SDG 1 on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. The action is also aligned with the “Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)” launched by the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank in December 2020 in response to the explosion of the Port of Beirut. The interventions to be implemented for a period of five years will build on the experience and lessons learnt of the current programme linking social assistance with complementary services and support a coherent approach to building a social protection in Lebanon. The action responds to the political commitments made at the Brussels Conferences on “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region”, and it feeds into the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). It is also in line with the Gender Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in External Relations 2020 – 2025⁴ (GAP III) adopted in 2020. The GAP III provides an ambitious external policy framework for achieving progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment, in coherence with the Gender Equality Strategy⁵.

2.2. Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis

In response to the extreme poverty situation affecting 90% of Syrians in Lebanon⁶, the UN is providing Syrian households with cash (poverty-targeted) programmes that barely allow the families to cover basic needs (covering up to 1.1 million people). The compounded crises have also exacerbated long-standing gaps in the Lebanese social insurance and social health protection system and chronic inequities in access to employment-related social security. Social contributions and fiscal revenues - that constitute the backbone of financing for the existing social insurance system - are plummeting, necessitating urgent reform to avoid *de facto* privatization of mechanism of social (health) protection for the working population.

The National Social Protection Strategy has been drafted, through the ongoing programme funded by the EU Trust Fund, “The EU Regional Trust Fund’s support for improved social protection in Lebanon – Addressing lifecycle vulnerabilities through social grants”. The Strategy is the guiding document of the government on social protection, and includes five pillars: social assistance, financial access to services, social welfare, social insurance and labour activation for the most vulnerable. Through the Inter-ministerial Committee on Social Policy, re-activated by the prime minister in May 2022, it is foreseen that the Strategy will be ready for implementation by the end of 2023. The Strategy covers primarily Lebanese citizens, but both the government and the international community aim to align the type of social support provided to refugees with the national system for Lebanese, notably to avoid further social tensions. It is envisaged that the Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment Panel, set up by the World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), will be finalised in the course of 2023 and will provide a harmonised and updated poverty line in Lebanon.

The multi-layered crises in Lebanon have worsened the already fragile socio-economic conditions and had

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184

⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

⁶ Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon -VASYSR 2022 <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/96732>

significant consequences on the well-being of women, children, and marginalized groups such as LGBTQI+ persons, migrant workers and people living with disabilities. According to the last 2022 report of the Gender-based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS)⁷, female survivors continue to constitute the majority of survivors seeking services given the disproportionate exposure of women and girls to Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Social assistance to refugees from Syria in Lebanon:

These compounded and prolonged crises have impacted the socioeconomic vulnerability of refugees from Syria, in particular women, children, elderly and people with disabilities who are specifically exposed due to their limited access to resources and services and due to the curtailment of economic activities as well as dramatic inflation in the prices of essential commodities. Between October 2019, when the crisis began, and April 2020, there was a 56.1% rise in the average price (in Lebanese Pounds) of the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB).⁸ By October 2020, there had been a 174% increase in the price of food and 175% increase in non-food costs. Inflation and the currency devaluation tripled the cost of living in 2020. By October 2021, the cost of the food SMEB had increased by 728% and by December 2021 by 998% compared to prices in October 2019, while the cost of non-food basic needs was 217% higher than in 2019.⁹ Almost 90% of refugees from Syria were living in extreme poverty by 2020, with a similar proportion in 2021 unable to afford the SMEB.¹⁰

The multi-purpose cash assistance provided to refugees from Syria, through WFP is complementary to the cash assistance provided by other donors to WFP and to UNHCR. The two UN agencies are managing a large-scale operation reaching over 1.1 million refugees from Syria with monthly assistance that is the only lifeline for most refugees who have no choice but to continue living in deteriorating conditions in displacement.

Durable solutions for those displaced by the Syrian crisis remain difficult. In the short-term perspective, the EU and the international donors have focused on contributing to temporary solutions, upholding protection space in refugee-hosting countries and supporting sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance, as this is an important element for the decision to return by refugees, if and when conditions for return become conducive.

With international support, over 245,000 refugee families identified as poor and extremely poor, receive monthly social assistance under the multi-purpose cash assistance and the food e-vouchers programmes managed by the WFP and UNHCR. The EU and major donors have been supporting this social safety net for the refugees in the spirit of humanitarian and development nexus. The continuous deterioration of the situation of refugees, requires a continuation of this assistance, while ensuring that cash assistance for

⁷ <https://www.gbvims.com/>

⁸ The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) is defined as the critical needs which a household requires in order to meet their critical essential needs, on a regular or seasonal basis, and on its average cost. The 'critical essential needs' are defined as the critical goods and commodities, utilities and services required by households to ensure survival minimum living standard. Much of the price rise in 2019-2020 was as a result of loss of value of the currency and consequent inflation in prices.

⁹ WFP (2020) ACR 2020; WFP (2021) ACR 2021; WFP (2021) Lebanon CSP Evaluation

¹⁰ Ibid.

refugees is being disbursed coherently across programmes. Social assistance to address extreme poverty should be integrated with social assistance for lifecycle vulnerabilities, with a particular focus on persons with disabilities. Linking social assistance, either for extreme poverty or for lifecycle vulnerabilities, with complementary services and schemes, including the social health protection or access to training and life skills capacity building, can ensure a reduced dependency on providing monthly assistance to a large group of beneficiaries. Increased analysis of the social safety net for refugees needs to be conducted to improve the targeting methodology and to ensure alignment with the assistance provided to the Lebanese in need.

In addition, the EU supports social grants for persons with disabilities, through the ongoing EU Trust Fund (EUTF) Madad programme implemented by UNICEF and ILO. According to the MOSA technical design note on the National Disability Allowance (NDA), the programme initially covers all people with disabilities aged 18-28 years old, thereby limiting coverage – and cost – to 24,455 individuals in the first 18 months. The NDA began validation of eligible individuals in February 2023, with first payments done in April 2023. The ongoing support for the NDA is leading to positive outcomes in strengthening the national disability system, including support to Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA)'s Rights and Access Programme, Disability Centres, and the national disability registry. The NDA will also increase outreach and identification of people with disabilities and strengthen linkages and referrals for people with disabilities (PwD) into other services.

Social assistance for extremely poor Lebanese:

The social safety net for Lebanese currently heavily relies on international funding and, in the absence of a national social registry, it does not provide an efficient, adequate and integrated assistance for those in need; the administrative and political deadlock in the country had a major impact on improving the system. The EU remains the top actor in promoting reform in this sector, including through the support for the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy. Other major actors, also contributing to the co-funding of this multi-donor action, are: Germany, Canada, Norway, Ireland, and the UK.

With the support of the EU and international donors, social assistance has been scaled up for Lebanese extremely poor under the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP) since the beginning of the crisis, benefitting over 60,000 families with a view to reach 75,000 in 2023. Through collaboration with the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the NPTP has developed as the national social safety net for Lebanese, under the direct implementation of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

In January 2022, the World Bank has started to implement the Lebanon Emergency Crisis and COVID-19 Response Social Safety Net Project (ESSN) as concessionary loan to provide social assistance for 12 months using the same criteria and methodology as the NPTP and aiming to reach in total at full cruising speed 147,000 extremely poor families. The ESSN launched a new registration process for Lebanese households on a new electronic Social Safety Net platform, managed by the Central Inspection.

In 2023, the Government of Lebanon has requested the World Bank to provide a loan for a second phase of ESSN for a total of USD 300 million, to start in January 2024 for a duration of 18 months, subject to the World Bank's Board approval and ratification by the Parliament in Lebanon.

In close coordination with the World Bank and major grant donors to the NPTP, the EU, together with Canada, have been leading intense policy discussions to advocate for one Social Safety Net in Lebanon, based on the lessons learnt so far. The action will respond to the deteriorating living conditions in Lebanon, and will aim to reach Lebanese and refugees in particular women, children, elderly and people with disabilities who are specifically exposed due to their limited access to resources and services, who live below the extreme poverty line and who face vulnerabilities that impede them from meeting basic needs (poverty, disability, etc).

The EU will support the government to build a social protection registry in the country, to cover for all social security, social assistance and social services, on the basis of the model put forward by the WB ESSN, with funding approved through the Commission Implementing Decision of 9.11.2022¹¹ on the financing of the special measure in favour of Lebanon for 2022. This support will also be informed by the ongoing technical assistance mobilised by the European Commission through SOCIEUX+ in Lebanon, at the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

An integrated social assistance system for extremely poor Lebanese families is urgently needed to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of assistance currently provided through international funding for grants, loans or through government public funding.

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

The primary stakeholders and direct beneficiaries of this proposed action are refugees from Syria and host communities. The Action aims to contribute to maintaining social assistance to Lebanese and refugees' households, working more on system strengthening for assistance to Lebanese and on aligning the assistance for refugees, in the spirit of the National Social Protection Strategy.

Before the Lebanese elections in May 2022, the Prime Minister re-activated the Inter-Ministerial Committee¹² on Social Policy in November 2021, following the second Consultative meeting of the 3RF. The Committee has been tasked to work on the approval of the National Social Protection Strategy.

The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) is the key actor in terms of social assistance, social services and livelihoods, for which it is responsible for providing guidance and support. However, it has limited capacity to ensure its leadership in the coordination and alignment of the complex interventions provided by the different actors. The diversity of support coupled with the sharpened political focus on social protection requires strategic response and reinforced leadership.

Civil society organisations have a key role in the implementation, monitoring and advocacy related to social assistance provided in Lebanon. Lebanese and international NGOs will be actively involved in monitoring

¹¹NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2022/ACT-61023

https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/C_2022_7910_F1_ANNEX_EN_V1_P1_2264750.PDF

¹² Inter-Ministerial Committee on Social Policy is headed by the Minister of Social Affairs and comprising the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Labor, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and Higher Education, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Economy & Trade

and improving delivery of integrated social assistance to the beneficiaries through activities related to Output 1.1. of this action. In addition, civil society will continue to be engaged in regular forums for coordination, including the Social Protection Coordination Forum.

2.3. Lessons Learned

The EU remains a leading actor in both policy dialogue and financial investment in the sector of social protection in Lebanon.

With regards to the refugees from Syria, the socio-economic situation is deteriorating and more refugees have taken the risks of irregular migration to Europe in 2022. The multi-purpose monthly assistance provided through the UN (WFP and UNHCR) and co-funded by all international donors active in Lebanon, has been the main lifeline of the refugees also in 2022. Syrian households are becoming more stressed and adopting more consumption-based strategies as the economic situation in Lebanon continues to worsen.

An independent evaluation of the programme CAMEALEON, funded by the EU, Germany and Norway, has shown the important role of the consortium of NGOs, in signalling important challenges for the final beneficiaries when it comes to the implementation of the programme, such as safety at bank ATMs, costs related to communicating with the UN and journeys to the ATMs, and finally, the limitations in understanding the targeting criteria used. These are important issues that will continue to be improved throughout the implementation of the programme. Continued involvement of the civil society in the sector remains important, also with a view to inform about the impact of assistance on social cohesion and the need to ensure alignment of the transfer values for different groups of the population.

In addition, a comprehensive external Evaluation of UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance under ECHO in Lebanon (2019-2021) has been finalised in January 2023, pointing to important recommendations for the continuation of the assistance to refugees from Syria by both agencies, specifically as regards the targeting methodology. Assistance to refugees from Syria in Lebanon will continue to be provided by the EU in the spirit of complementarity and the humanitarian and development nexus approach.

Donor coordination on social assistance for refugees from Syria in Lebanon, in which the EU plays a key role, has informed best approaches with regards to social assistance to extremely poor Lebanese families. The implementation of the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP), with the support of international grants and in collaboration with the WFP has provided sustained assistance to over 60,000 Lebanese families in need in 2022, with a view to support 75,000 families in 2023.

Post-distribution monitoring of the programme by WFP, showed that the provision of NPTP assistance was marked by a significant rise in the proportion of NPTP households with acceptable Food Consumption Scores (FCS). By July 2022, however, deteriorating living conditions and inflation contributed to a 24% decrease in the proportion of households with an acceptable FCS. In parallel, the number of households who resorted to using consumption-based coping strategies, such as reliance on less preferred/expensive food, reducing the number of meals per day and portion size, increased from September 2021 to July 2022.

The launch of the World Bank's programme Emergency Social Safety Net Project (ESSN) has shown the need for increased coordination between the international funding in the sector, provided through grants and loans. The implementation of ESSN, meant to support up to 147,000 additional Lebanese families in extreme poverty, as a shock response mechanism. In practice, close coordination and monitoring of the programme, has shown that Lebanon needs **one social safety net**, to be managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs. This would achieve transparent registration and graduation/referral, as well as more accountability to the population and greater ownership of the government. One coherent social assistance system for the Lebanese has become an essential and urgent measure, and a marker of aid effectiveness, given that the social safety nets in Lebanon are entirely funded through international funding. The current action and the policy dialogue that it will inform when it comes to social assistance, is based on a Due Diligence process for One Social safety net in Lebanon (finalised in March 2023), that looks at lessons learnt from the implementation of NPTP so far and the implementation of ESSN since 2022. It is also based on the work conducted so far by UNICEF, ILO and the World Bank on scenarios of providing an integrated social assistance allowance to poor and vulnerable families, that combines contributory and non-contributory assistance.

This action is also informed by the Outcome Evaluation of the EU Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, which assessed the outcomes achieved by EUTF Syria-funded interventions and identify lessons learned and possible gaps, to inform future programming processes. According to the evaluation, the social protection sector is highly performant in mitigating the long-term impact of the protracted refugee crisis and the deepening economic crisis on the most vulnerable, including through immediate effects that meet the urgent needs of beneficiaries in terms of access to food and housing.

The existing EUTF Madad ongoing contract with UNICEF and ILO supports three main components; (i) development and implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy, its coordination mechanisms, and support to the development of a unified registry, (ii) development of the set of social grants and launch of the National Disability Allowance, and (iii) support to civil society to engage in the national debate on social protection. Important policy discussions are facilitated through the implementation of this programme. For example, the Aide Memoire of the joint Inter-Agency Social Protection regional mission of April 2022 (UNICEF, ILO, WFP with EU and the World Bank), the poverty and social grant components are interlinked and interact with each other in complementarity, creating a social protection floor of benefits that are additional where relevant. Integrated contributory and non-contributory approaches can achieve broader and more inclusive coverage, with more gradual impact on limited domestic fiscal resources. The scale-up of the NPTP/ESSN is underway, however achieving universal coverage of social grants will take time and will require a gradual approach, prioritizing through the use of eligibility criteria in a way that does not compromise their rights-based objectives. These lessons and policy orientation will be directly applied to the implementation of this Action.

Continued advocacy and policy dialogue for an inclusive social protection system in Lebanon has been continued and scaled up with the EU in the lead, together with major donors, and this led to the agreement of the Council of Ministers in 2022 to approve the National Strategy for Social Protection drafted with the support of the UN, subject to some revisions¹³. The Strategy is the only sector wide national policy

¹³ The Social Protection Strategy has been approved in September 2022, through a written decision by the prime-minister to restrict the population covered by the strategy to Lebanese only, while noting the importance to align the assistance provided to refugees.

document, which can ensure provision of social benefits to the most in need, sound financial planning and efficient mobilisation of national and international resources. The position of the government has been that the Strategy should focus on Lebanese citizens, in its first implementation phase.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to improve the socio-economic living conditions of poor and vulnerable social groups in Lebanon.

The Specific Objectives (Outcomes) of this action are:

1. The socio-economic insecurity of refugees from Syria and host communities facing poverty and life-cycle vulnerabilities is reduced;
2. The development of an inclusive national social assistance system with gender sensitive focus linking social assistance with complementary services and programmes is supported under the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy.

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

- 1.1 Basic social assistance for extremely poor and vulnerable social groups amongst Lebanese host communities is provided;
- 1.2. Basic social assistance for extremely poor and vulnerable social groups amongst refugees from Syria is provided;

- 2.1. An integrated social assistance system in Lebanon is promoted
- 2.2. The participation of civil society to monitoring and advocacy is promoted

3.2. Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1.1 and 1.2:

- **Provision of social assistance** to the extremely poor and vulnerable refugees from Syria and host communities.
- Based on the Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment Panel, currently being finalised, and other sources, promote a common gender-sensitive basis for extreme poverty and vulnerability criteria, with a view to **develop an alignment plan between social safety nets for refugees and national systems**, specifically regarding assessment tools, transfer values, registration, monitoring and evaluation.

Activities related to Output 2.1:

- Promote the full adoption and **start of the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy**, through capacity building and improved coordination for integrated social assistance provision in Lebanon and the development of a **dedicated inclusive and gender sensitive national governance mechanism** with clear ToRs, membership, and meeting schedules. This activity will build upon continuous dialogue among the Ministry of Social Affairs, the World Bank and the United Nations, that set the ground for such a mechanism.

- Promote the set up and implementation of **one social safety net** and further institutionalise the **National programme for persons with disabilities**, including through a national plan, in line with the National Social Protection Strategy, to provide integrated assistance to those in need, and to enhance the capacity of the social assistance unified system to respond to shocks through horizontal and vertical expansion criteria
- Develop an **integrated system for referral to complementary services** focusing on linking **social assistance programmes to health protection mechanisms**, with a view to reduce coverage to healthcare costs for marginalised groups and vulnerable segments of the population.

Activities related to Output 2.2:

- **Monitoring and advocacy activities** conducted by civil society to improve the implementation of the social safety net in Lebanon and ensure accountability to beneficiaries, while giving a voice to civil society in the participation on policy discussions related to social assistance.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Outcomes of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening: The SEA screening concluded that no further action was required.

Outcomes of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening: The EIA screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment).

Outcome of the Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project). The CRA screening concluded that this action is at no or low risk (no need for further assessment).

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. This implies that gender equality and empowerment of women will be addressed through the provision of social assistance, or referral for self-employment. The action will contribute towards the GAP III priorities: “ensuring freedom from gender-based violence”; “promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights”; “strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women”. The assistance to Lebanese beneficiaries will be informed by a gender study conducted as part of the implementation of the NPTP and commissioned by the Canadian government.

Human Rights

In line with the New European Consensus on Development, this Action integrates the Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and its working principles (participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency) to ensure that no one is left behind. The social protection system promoted will be based on inclusiveness of all people living in Lebanon, with independence of their nationality, covering all individuals and leaving no one behind.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that the Action will pay particular attention in benefiting households integrating People with Disabilities (PwD). Specific activities are directed to providing persons with disabilities with monthly social assistance.

Democracy

Working with civil society to improve the social assistance system in Lebanon and to increase the government’s ownership and the institutionalisation, will achieve greater democratic participation in setting up a coherent social protection system in Lebanon.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

Social stability is a significant focus of this Action. Social cohesion activities will be implemented in a participatory and transparent approach involving refugees residing in Lebanon and Lebanese beneficiaries in need, regardless of their different societal, economic, political and religious background. The action will constantly monitor social tensions through the systems in place as part of the LCRP (social stability sector), and through specific activities of social assistance distribution monitoring conducted by the partners.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Not applicable.

3.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
External Environment	The Lebanese currency is further devalued, resulting in high levels of inflation and increased levels of poverty among populations in Lebanon	High	Medium	The EU Delegation will advocate for disbursement of EU funding in hard currency, to avoid losses in exchanges, and to adapt the assistance to the evolution of the market. Increased donor coordination and coherence between grants and loans will enable to reach more population in a more efficient manner. The action envisages increased financial commitments from the government for providing for Lebanese citizens that are poor and/or vulnerable.
External environment	Increasing social tensions and political opposition to the presence of refugees from Syria in Lebanon in a	High	Medium	Mitigating measures to maximise the support available and policy dialogue for the reforms and macroeconomic stability needed.

	context of deepening socio-economic crisis and competition over resources and access to public services.			
External environment	Socio economic and protection situation of refugees deteriorates	High	Medium	In all policy dialogues, the EU Delegation will aim to align the assistance provided to poor Lebanese and to refugees, while advocating for increased ownership and responsibility of the government for providing social assistance to the Lebanese citizens in need. As one of the top five donors continuously contributing to the LCRP, the EU will continue to lead policy discussions on preserving a protection space for the refugees (EU Delegation in coordination with ECHO field Office).
External Environment	Lebanese authorities' reticence to work toward "one social safety net"	Low	High	The EU and Canada, as main donors of social assistance in Lebanon, increase the policy dialogue on building one social safety net.
Planning, process and systems	Insufficient involvement of concerned government, ministries, departments, etc	Low	High	In the spirit of the 3RF, and the LCRP, the EU Delegation will pursue continued policy dialogue with national authorities, emphasising the mutual benefits of the action for host communities and refugees. Support to referral between social assistance, social services, and access to welfare will ensure engagement from different authorities.
Planning, process and systems	Continued institutional fragmentation in the social protection/ assistance fields.	High	Medium	Consultations undertaken in the context of the approval and implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy should facilitate policy dialogue on a comprehensive approach. The component focusing on establishing one social assistance system in Lebanon, aims to increase

				coordinated support to the government for the efficient provision of social assistance under the framework of the Social Protection Strategy.
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External Assumptions

The context in Lebanon will continue to be difficult politically and economically, but there will not be major operational constraints for the implementation of the activities. It is assumed that some level of political stability will pave the way to mobilisation of domestic financial resources to contribute to social assistance for the Lebanese by the end of the implementation.

3.5. Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that providing a social assistance to people in need, to respond to both their vulnerabilities related to extreme poverty and to other lifecycle vulnerabilities, in a coherent and integrated manner, will reduce socio-economic insecurity of refugees and host communities facing poverty and life-cycle vulnerabilities.

Assuming a renewed commitment of the Ministry of Social Affairs and government commitment to policy dialogue on the necessary long-term reforms and the support to the most vulnerable, together with the commitment of partners to coordinate the actions,

IF social assistance will be disbursed to cover the basic needs of the extreme poor and most vulnerable and in a way to pursue alignment between social safety nets for refugees and national systems,
 THEN basic social assistance is provided for vulnerable social groups among refugees and host communities.

IF the National Social Protection Strategy is finalised and implemented, and institutionalisation of one social safety net and the National programme for persons with disabilities is taking place, and IF an integrated system for referral to complementary services focusing on linking social assistance programmes to health protection mechanisms is set up,
 AND IF civil society participation to monitoring and advocacy is improved
 THEN an integrated social assistance system in Lebanon can be set up to promote social cohesion and stability and increased participation of civil society to monitoring and advocacy for the continuous improvement of the social assistance programmes in Lebanon is ensured.

IF basic social assistance is provided for extremely poor and vulnerable refugees from Syria and host communities, THEN the socio-economic insecurity of refugees and host communities facing poverty and life-cycle vulnerabilities is reduced,
 IF an integrated social assistance system in Lebanon can be set up to promote social cohesion and stability and increased participation of civil society to monitoring and advocacy for the continuous improvement of the social assistance programmes in Lebanon is ensured,
 THEN the development of a national social assistance system linking social assistance with complementary services and programmes, under the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy is supported.

IF the socio-economic insecurity of host communities and refugees facing poverty and life-cycle vulnerabilities is reduced, and
IF the development of a national social assistance system linking social assistance with complementary services and programmes, under the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy is supported,
THEN the socio-economic living conditions of poor and vulnerable social groups in Lebanon will be improved.

3.6. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact 1 Impact 2	To improve the socio-economic living conditions of poor and vulnerable social groups in Lebanon.	1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, disaggregated by gender nationality and age 2 Proportion of local and refugee population receiving social benefits	1 est. 75% Lebanese, 89% refugees from Syria 2 67.5% Lebanese, 87% refugees from Syria	1. est. 65% Lebanese, and 79% refugees from Syria 2. 75% Lebanese, 90% refugees from Syria	World Bank and United Nations reports	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	1. Socio-economic insecurity of refugees from Syria and host communities facing extreme poverty and life-cycle vulnerabilities, is reduced	1.1. Percentage of population benefiting from the programme not incurring new debts to meet basic needs disaggregated by gender, age 1.2. Percentages of households befitting of the programme with per-capita expenditure equal to or below the SMEB, disaggregating female-headed households. 1.3 Percentages of persons with disabilities benefiting from the programme referred to specialised services	1.1 37.8% 1.2 22% 1.3.20%	1.1. 25% for refugees from Syria over three years 1.2 reduction of 12% over three years after year 1 1.3. 100% of those assisted	1.1 and 1.2. World Food Security Outcome Monitoring 1.3. Ministry of Social Affairs and UN reports	Government commitment to support the programme, including a commitment to policy dialogue and long term reforms and support to the most vulnerable populations living in Lebanon. Commitment of all partners to coordinate activities in the social protection sphere. Commitment to coherent and comprehensive vulnerability assessments / analysis for all persons in Lebanon
Outcome 2	2. An inclusive national social assistance system with gender sensitive focus	2.1. Status of implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy, pillar on	2.1. Not implemented	2.1. adopted and implemented	Ministry of Social Affairs	

	developed, linking social assistance with complementary services and programmes, under the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy	Social assistance (0. Drafted, 1. Adopted 2. Implemented)				Commitment to explore fiscal space for longer term government financing for social assistance for Lebanese.
Output 1 related to Outcome 1	1.1. Basic social assistance for extremely poor and vulnerable social groups amongst Lebanese host communities provided	1.1.1. Number of vulnerable Lebanese individuals provided with cash assistance disaggregated by gender, age	1.1.1. 360 000	1.1.1 TBC following the revised poverty rate (upon completion of the Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment Panel LVAP)	Project documents	
Output 2 related to Outcome 1	1.2. Basic social assistance for extremely poor and vulnerable social groups amongst refugees from Syria provided	1.2.1. Number of vulnerable refugees provided with cash assistance disaggregated by gender, age	1.2.1. 180 000	1.2.1. TBC following the revised poverty rate (upon completion of the Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment Panel LVAP)		
Output 1 related to Outcome 2	2.1. An integrated social assistance system in Lebanon is promoted	2.1.1. Number of beneficiaries of cash assistance referred for complementary health,	2.1.1. TBC following the revised poverty rate	2.1.1 TBC following the revised poverty		

		education, and protection services (disaggregated by gender, age and kind of assistance) 2.1.2. National Plan to provide an inclusive and integrated social assistance to populations in need, in place	(upon completion of the Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment Panel LVAP) 2.1.2. No National Plan for social assistance	rate (upon completion of the Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment Panel LVAP) 2.1.2. National Plan in place		
Output 2 related to Outcome 2	2.2. The participation of civil society to monitoring and advocacy is promoted	2.2.1. Number of civil society initiatives on social protection (meetings, presentations, briefings) 2.2.2. Number of recommendations from CSO taken on board to improve the programmes	2.2.1. 2 2.2.2. 2	2.2.1. 6 2.2.2. 6		

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

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

4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3.1 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is sixty (60) months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this financing Decision.

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

4.3. Implementation Modalities

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

4.3.1. Direct Management (Grants)

4.3.1.1. Grants

a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The grant shall contribute to achieving *Output 2.2. Increased participation of civil society to monitoring and advocacy for the continuous improvement of the social assistance programmes in Lebanon.*

b) Type of applicants targeted

Local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and other civil society organisations.

4.3.2. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity

4.3.2.1. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with one or more pillar-assessed entities, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- a) Capacity to implement large-scale social assistance schemes for vulnerable groups in Lebanon.

b) Capacity to implement large-scale cash assistance programmes with refugee populations, in particular in protracted crisis and emergency context;

c) Track record of working with government institutions implementing social assistance programmes.

The implementation by this entity entails implementing the activities leading to *Output 1.1. Provision of basic social assistance for vulnerable social groups amongst Lebanese host communities* and *1.2. Provision of basic social assistance for vulnerable social groups amongst refugees*.

4.3.2.2. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with one or more pillar-assessed entities, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

a) Capacity to lead complex policy agenda on social protection in difficult contexts;

b) Capacity to promote advocacy and research related to social protection and forced displacement in the region;

c) Track record of working with government institutions implementing social assistance programmes.

The implementation by this entity entails implementing the activities leading to *part of Outcome 1 and Output 2.1. Set up an integrated social assistance system in Lebanon to promote social cohesion and stability*.

4.3.3. 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 '4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.2' cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission, the modality of implementation by grants under direct management would be used according to the section '4.3.1.1'.

If the implementation modality under direct management as defined in section '4.3.1. (grants)' 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 the following criteria:

a) Capacity to monitor large scale social assistance schemes

b) Track record of working with government institutions implementing social assistance programmes

c) Operational presence in Lebanon and experience working with UN organisations

d) Capacity to lead policy advocacy on social assistance and social protection in general.

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)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3.	
<p>Part of Outcome 1. Reduce socio-economic insecurity of refugees from Syria and host communities facing extreme poverty and life-cycle vulnerabilities composed of:</p> <p>Output 1.1 Basic social assistance for extremely poor and vulnerable social groups amongst Lebanese host communities is provided;</p> <p>Output 1.2. Basic social assistance for extremely poor and vulnerable social groups amongst refugees from Syria is provided;</p>	63 000 000
Indirect management with pillar assessed entity cf. section 4.3.2.1	63 000 000
<p>Part of Outcome 1. Reduce socio-economic insecurity of refugees from Syria and host communities facing extreme poverty and life-cycle vulnerabilities composed of:</p> <p>Output 1.1 Basic social assistance for extremely poor and vulnerable social groups amongst Lebanese host communities is provided;</p> <p>Output 1.2. Basic social assistance for extremely poor and vulnerable social groups amongst refugees from Syria is provided;</p> <p><i>And</i></p> <p>Outcome 2. Support the development of a national social assistance system linking social assistance with complementary services and programmes, under the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy, composed of</p> <p>Output 2.1. An integrated social assistance system in Lebanon is promoted</p>	15 000 000
Indirect management with Pillar assessed entity– cf. section 4.3.2.2.	15 000 000
Outcome 2. Support the development of a national social assistance system linking social assistance with complementary services and programmes, under the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy , composed of	2 000 000

Output 2.2. The participation of civil society to monitoring and advocacy is promoted	
Grants (direct management) - cf. section 4.3.1.	2 000 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision
Strategic communication and Public diplomacy – cf. section 6	will be covered by another Decision
Totals	80 000 000

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The action will be implemented using, to the extent possible, the organisational set up already in place when it comes to social assistance for refugees and host communities (output 1.1). The EU and donors have already started the policy discussions around the setup of a Social Assistance Steering Committee, led by the government and with the participation of major donors and the World Bank.

In addition, for the implementation of the activities under Output 2.2. contributing to *Increased participation of civil society to monitoring and advocacy for the continuous improvement of the social assistance programmes in Lebanon*, it is envisaged to continue promoting participation from civil society to the structures in place, including the Social Protection Partners Forum, chaired by the EU, the UN and WB, in the spirit of the 3RF.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its Outputs and contribution to the achievement of its Outcomes, and if possible at the time of reporting, contribution to the achievement of its Impacts, as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix. Advancement on gender equality should be monitored and reported.

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

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

The Implementing partners will be the ones in charge of preparing, presenting and submitting the reports. The reports must respect the contractual documents and be submitted as defined at the contract. The EUD will be in charge of the analysis and approval of the reports in collaboration with the services at Headquarters. The EUD will require additional information to complement the reports or specific clarifications when considered necessary.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance and the nature of the action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the nature of the investment made by the EU in the social protection sector in Lebanon, and the unstable context in which living conditions for all populations are gradually deteriorating, with no end in sight.

The Commission shall form a Reference Group (RG) composed by representatives from the main stakeholders at both EU and national (representatives from the government, from civil society organisations (private sector, NGOs, etc.), etc.) levels. If deemed necessary, other donors will be invited to join. The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 3 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation exercise and missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner 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 delegation 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 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.