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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX II

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of Lao People’s Democratic Republic for 2023

Action Document for Support Measures – Cooperation Facility for Lao PDR – Strategic Communication¹

ANNUAL PLAN

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

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Support Measures – Cooperation Facility for Lao PDR – Strategic Communication OPSYS number: ACT-62070 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (<u>NDICI-Global Europe</u>)
2. Team Europe Initiative	<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting (inter alia) Green TEI in Lao PDR (EU, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Switzerland)
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in Lao PDR
4. Programming document	Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 for Lao PDR (European Joint Programming Strategy 2021-2025 for Lao PDR)
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	MIP Cooperation Facility objectives relating to strategic communication: Strategic communication: political communication and large scale public campaigns designed to raise awareness, understanding and perception of the European Union’s partnership with the country, particularly around Global Gateway flagships and Team Europe Initiatives.
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Not applicable
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: SDG 17, partnerships for the goals Other significant:

¹ This Action Document concerns strategic communication activities only. Public diplomacy activities will be covered by another Action Document.

	Zero Poverty (SDG 1); Zero Hunger (SDG 2); Quality Education (SDG 4); Gender Equality (SDG 5).Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8); Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10); Climate Action (SDG 13); Life on Land (SDG 15); Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)			
8 a) DAC code(s)	43010- Multi-sector (100%)			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	61000– Private sector in provider country			
9. Involvement of multilateral partners	No			
10. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
11. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Internal markers and Tags:	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation @ digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

	Connectivity @ transport people2people energy digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration @ (methodology for tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities (methodology for marker and tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
13. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14 02 01 31 South and East Asia Total estimated cost: EUR 250 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 250 0000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
14. Type of financing²	Direct management through: - Procurement			
15. Type of measure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperation facility <input type="checkbox"/> Measures in favour of Civil Society			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The action will support the implementation of strategic communication activities designed to raise awareness, understanding and perception of the EU and its partnership with the country, in line with the priorities identified in the country MIP as well as relevant global and regional strategies.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

The Asia-Pacific region's growing economic, demographic, and political weight makes it a key partner for the European Union in shaping the international order and in addressing global challenges. The EU's current vision, interests and priorities in Lao PDR and the wider Asia-Pacific region are outlined by various EU strategies, notably the Indo-Pacific Strategy (2021)³ and Global Gateway Strategy (2022)⁴. These comprehensive strategies outline the EU's positive offer to the Asia-Pacific region, from sustainable and inclusive prosperity to connectivity, climate, research and human development. They are underpinned by shared values and principles, including democracy and human rights, security, sustainability, and equality.

Ensuring these strategic priorities are known, understood and well perceived by both specialised and general public audiences in Lao PDR is essential to help position the EU as a trusted and reliable partner for the country (and wider Asia-Pacific region). The focus will not only be on what the EU does, but why, including by emphasising shared values, interests and impact, and promoting the EU's leadership role on these key priorities.

² Art. 27 NDICI

³ [European Commission. 2021. The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. 16 September.](#)

⁴ [European Commission. 2021. The Global Gateway. 1 December.](#)

The strategic communication will include the EU's values in relation to the areas prioritised in the MIP, such as Green and Inclusive Economy, Human Capital and Good Governance, promoting the gender and human rights-based approach. There is a clear commitment by the European Partners to integrate key cross-cutting issues such as gender, youth, environment, digitalisation and nutrition, in all the envisaged interventions⁵.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Strategic communication plays a key role in strengthening the EU's role in the world. Fragmented, project-specific partner-implemented communication and visibility activities have largely failed to demonstrate the EU's added value as a partner for Lao PDR and its people. By consolidating strategic communication resources in the Support Measures, the EU Delegation will be able to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication actions with the scale and focus necessary to be effective on a national scale. This will ensure more impactful communication on the EU's international partnerships objectives and external policy priorities. The action will therefore contribute to raising awareness, understanding and perception of the EU and its role in the country.

The main stakeholders covered by the action are:

- Wider audiences, comprising ordinary citizens, especially in the 18-35 age bracket, who are not involved in policy, advocacy or international relations, and who may hardly be aware of the EU.
- Key specialised audiences, including opinion leaders, activists and other multipliers who already have a stake in the sphere of policy, advocacy and international relations, including human rights defenders and organisations defending the human rights of women and persons with disabilities.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to position the EU as a partner of reference for Lao PDR among selected target audiences.

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

- 1) Measurably increase awareness, understanding and perception of the EU priorities, in particular Global Gateway and Green Deal, while reflecting key strategic priorities of the Team Europe Strategy in Laos⁶ (including, environment and climate change, responsible trade and investment, youth and gender).

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

- 1.1 Political communication activities and large-scale public campaigns are designed and implemented with an emphasis on gender equality, to make the EU's brand positioning more understandable, visible and influential to target audiences.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Based on Article 24 of the NDICI Global Europe Regulation, the Support Measures - Cooperation Facility may cover support expenditure for the implementation of the Instrument and for the achievement of its objectives. This includes strategic communication activities related to the political priorities of the EU, which is the sole aim of this Action Document. In particular, the following indicative activities are foreseen:

Activities related to Output 1.1

- Design and roll out at national level of (a) major public campaign(s) aimed at ordinary citizens, primarily in the 18-35 age cohort, with the objective of measurably increasing the awareness, understanding and perception of the EU's partnership with the country. All such campaigns will be data-driven and based on clearly defined

⁵ [2021-2027 Multiannual Indicative Programme \(MIP\) for Lao PDR](#).

⁶ [Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025](#)

qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators (KPIs). Regular monitoring against these KPIs will allow content, channels and approaches to be constantly adjusted to meet the objectives set.

- Design and implement political communication activities to support Summits, events and visits by College members;
- Support the integration of relevant regional programmes into country-level strategic plans, particularly those that are flagship Global Gateway and/or Team Europe initiatives.
- Undertake research required to ensure strategic communication activities are data-driven and measurable. This may include audience analysis and perception surveys, media landscape, as well as monitoring and evaluation activities to measure impact of communication activities undertaken.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation considerations will be mainstreamed throughout the action, with a clear focus on sustainable agriculture and improved forest governance, management and conservation. A large share of the funds of this action will be used for communication activities related to environment protection and combating climate change (mitigation, adaptability, reforestation, sustainable agriculture, sustainable consumption and production, ecotourism, etc). The action will contribute to advocacy on natural resource management, climate change and the green economy (including the climate diplomacy week), particularly amongst/by the youth and women. Communication efforts will have specific focus on the political narrative of a stronger economic partnership between the EU and Laos especially in green areas. The focus will be on, but not limited to, the link between agriculture and forestry, agro-ecology and forestry management, climate change and environment agenda. In addition, all events and actions supported will follow a “green” approach (such as limited use of single plastic items, waste recycling, etc).

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 will be mainstreamed across all activities, ensuring strategic communication activities are inclusive and gender-sensitive.

Human Rights

All strategic communication activities will be values driven, integrating the key principles (participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency) of the human rights based approach.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that the action is considered relevant for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. All activities will be designed to ensure they are inclusive and accessible.

Democracy

Lao PDR is a single-party state with limited political and civil freedoms. While the Constitution guarantees the freedoms of expression and of the press (article 44), restrictions remain omnipresent and are characterised by an atmosphere of self-censorship. Yet, the action will indirectly address democratic governance processes by supporting events and/or campaigns for increased citizen-state interactions, civil society, parliamentary accountability and a more effective administration of justice to facilitate more inclusive and responsive national development.

The EU’s engagement with Lao PDR, as Indo-Pacific partner, will seek to solidify and defend the rules-based international order, by promoting inclusive and effective multilateral cooperation based on shared values and principles, including a commitment to respecting democracy, human rights and the rule of law.⁷

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

Overall, the internal situation is firmly under control. A series of potential sources of tensions might generate some conflict in the medium to long term. However, none of them is currently expected to lead to open or violent conflict

⁷ Ibid.

or create a risk of instability in a foreseeable near future. The Action is not expected to support activities in this area.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Laos is highly exposed and vulnerable to natural hazards (such as flooding, drought, etc.) which can significantly impact the socioeconomic sectors, and to a certain extent threaten food security and livelihoods, especially in rural areas. At the same time, Lao PDR also depends heavily upon natural resource exploitation for economic growth and the hydroelectric power projects may intensify pre-existing vulnerability to natural hazards and environmental degradation. The Action is not expected to support activities in this area, however, disaster risk reductions are being mainstreamed along with the climate change adaptation aspects.

Other considerations if relevant

- Gender

The action will contribute to the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 GAP III⁸, with a focus on its thematic areas of engagement “Advancing equal participation and leadership”, “Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women” and “Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation”. In this action, the EU will continue supporting women’s and girls’ full enjoyment of human rights and gender equality, empowering them for active involvement in civic and political decision-making. Gender-responsive rights-based approach principles participation, non-discrimination/equality, accountability and transparency should guide the planning and implementation of the Action. Studies and advisory services will fully integrate gender aspects, including Gender-specific indicators and evidence generation based on data disaggregated by sex. The programming part will promote gender-specific assessments such as gender analysis. The action will ensure a balanced representation of women and men to the greatest extent possible.

- Human rights

Labour rights as a sub-category of human rights (including the abolition of child labour) will be adequately reflected in the communication activities as well, especially in relation to fair trade, responsible investment, and land-use planning.

- Trade

Increase awareness understanding of opportunities arising from GG EU trade incentive schemes like ‘Everything But Arms’ or in the future perhaps an application for ‘GSP+’ (if key international conventions have been ratified and are effectively implemented).

- Disability

The Action will ensure that rights of persons with disabilities will be respected, and the planned activities are disability responsive and inclusive. The Action will invite to attend to organisations representing people with disabilities when possible.

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
Lessons Learnt:				
<p>Due the specificity of this measure there are no major risks and assumptions. However fully successful implementation will depend on, among other things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – good coordination between EU Delegation and Headquarters; – ‘whole of Delegation’ approach to strategic communication and public diplomacy 				

⁸ [European Commission. 2020. EU Gender Action Plan III – An ambitious agenda for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in EU External Action. 25 November.](#)

- ensuring coherence between different funding sources, notably those managed by EEAS and FPI
- good management of the various contracts;
- high quality of experts supplied.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is to support the EU-Lao PDR partnership. It will enable the EU to build support for priorities under the country MIP and key global and regional strategies.

By targeting specified audiences through professionally designed and implemented strategic communication activities, the action will contribute to measurably increase awareness, understanding and perception of the EU's partnership with the country.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

Given the nature of this Action a Logical Framework Matrix is not required at Action level.

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 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 36 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 action will be implemented in direct management through procurement.

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.

4.4 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
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	(amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities	
Outcome 1: Strategic communication composed of	250 000
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3	
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.3	250 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	covered by another Decision
Contingencies	-
Totals	250 000

4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

A strategic communication and public diplomacy steering group will be established at Delegation to oversee and validate the overall implementation of the action, in accordance with the country-level strategic plan which has been developed. It is the responsibility of the EU Delegation to ensure communication related to TEIs are fully integrated into these country-level strategic plans. Detailed Terms of Reference will be prepared for each activity. The Commission services and EEAS strategic communication and public diplomacy Coordination Mechanism will provide any necessary strategic guidance and support at HQ level.

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.

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).

Examples of key indicators for measuring the performance of this operation may include:

- positive perception of the EU as a partner
- social media reach and engagement
- media items published in top tier media
- website visits, bounce rate and conversation rate
- video views and view through rate
- message recall and follow-up

Key indicators for measuring the performance of this operation will be derived from the Contractor Assessment Form to be completed at the end of the assignments covering performance of the contractor, performance of experts and overall performance.

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation may be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants.

Should it materialise, it will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels, taking into account in particular the fact that the action is designed to implement a new approach to Delegation-led strategic communication activities at country-level.

The evaluation reports may be shared with the partners 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, apply the necessary adjustments.

The financing of the evaluation may 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

Strategic communication activities will be implemented to ensure awareness, understanding and perception of the EU and its partnership with the country is commensurate with the scale, scope and ambition of our sustained engagement. Public facing campaigns and political communication, particularly around the Global Gateway priorities and Team Europe initiatives, will focus not only on what the EU does, but why, including by emphasising shared values, interests and impact, and promoting the EU's leadership role on key priorities.

With varying emphasis, activities will focus on two complementary types of audience:

- Wider audiences, comprising citizens, especially in the 18-35 age bracket, who are not involved in policy, advocacy or international relations, and who may hardly be aware of the EU.
- Key specialised audiences, made up of opinion leaders, activists and other multipliers who already have a stake in the sphere of policy, advocacy and international relations.

These activities will be based on a multiannual strategic plan which reflects the objectives of the EU Delegation as a whole.