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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX III

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of Nepal
for 2024

Action Document for Support Measures – Cooperation Facility for Nepal – Strategic Communication

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 24 of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Support Measures – Cooperation Facility for Nepal– Strategic Communication OPSYS number: ACT-62774 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (<u>NDICI-Global Europe</u>)
2. Team Europe Initiative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting (inter alia) TEI.
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in Nepal
4. Programming document	Multi-annual indicative programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for Nepal
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	Support measures, cooperation facility objectives relating to strategic communication: Strategic communication: 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 other 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 SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: SDG 5 Gender Equality
8 a) DAC code(s)	43010- Multi-sector (100%)
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	62000: Private sector in recipient country

09. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" 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			
10. 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	(methodology for tagging under development)			
	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				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line (article, item): 14 02 01 31 South and East Asia Total estimated cost: EUR 300 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution/ EUR 300 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of financing	Direct management through: - Procurement			
14. 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 global and regional strategies, in particular Global Gateway- which also contributes to gender equality, due to the commitment to address gender equality throughout its five priority sectors-. By integrating the gender perspective, the action will also contribute to the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) 2021-2025 of the Delegation to Nepal, as well as to Gender Action Plan III, particularly its pillar four, "The EU leads by example"¹.

Finally, it is important to mention that all EU external actions should be guided by a gender transformative approach (GTA) and use a GTA lens in determining priorities and actions in policy dialogue all sector interventions².

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 Nepal and the wider Asia-Pacific region are outlined by various EU strategies, notably the Indo-Pacific Strategy (2021) and Global Gateway Strategy (2021). 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, disability-inclusive, and equality.

Ensuring these strategic priorities are known, understood, and well perceived by audiences in Nepal 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.

¹ EU GENDER ACTION PLAN (GAP) III – AN AMBITIOUS AGENDA FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN EU EXTERNAL ACTION, JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL, 25.11.2020

² DG for International Partnerships, 'Mid-term evaluation of the EU Gender Action Plan III', 08.05.2023

As they are part of the values and principles of the EU strategies, it is necessary to briefly contextualise the situation in Nepal regarding gender equality and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Therefore, despite a progressive framework in Nepal (its 2015 Constitution promotes equality and inclusiveness), Nepal ranks 106th out of 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap index, and 118th out of 160 countries in the Gender Inequality index 2017³. The governance systems, guaranteed by the Constitution, provide opportunities for societal transformation, by reducing gender inequalities and social exclusion, aligning Nepal's national and international commitments. These include the Agenda 2030, for Sustainable Development, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)⁴. Efforts involve incorporating gender equality into national development policies and programmes, creating a gender-responsive budget system and promoting basic rights to equality and justice through planned or ongoing social and infrastructure programmes⁵.

Regarding the situation of persons with disabilities, the data from Nepal census 2021, reveal that 2.2% of the Nepali Population have some form of disability. Among the male population, 2.5% and the entire female population, 2.0%, have some disability⁶. Furthermore, Nepal ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, ad passe the Disability Rights Act in 2017, establishing constitutional directives to support persons with disabilities and marking it illegal to discriminate based on disability. Yet, perception of persons with disability in Nepal remains generally negative, due to persistent and deep-rooted Hindu religious beliefs associating disability with sinning in a previous life. Women and girls with disability face greater marginalisation and discrimination and tend to be hidden away by families. Thus, widespread stigma compounded by the intersectionality of certain factors, combined with structural inaccessibility, create significant barriers to have equal access to resources and participate in decision-making⁷.

This action will build on the extensive preparatory work on strategic communication that the delegation has done in the previous years. The delegation currently has developed the tools to implement campaigning and ensuring strategic outreach to target audiences, in particular youth.

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 Nepal 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 campaigns 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.

As the action aims to integrate the gender perspective and the inclusion of persons with disabilities, it is important that the communication strategy not only uses inclusive language but also informs about the projects and programs developed by the Delegation that have included integrated these aspects. Additionally, it is crucial that from the initial phase, individuals from these groups are included. In this regard, inclusive visuals could be reinforced with inclusive language. Societal perceptions and media portrayal can feed into gender stereotypes, not only through imagery and narratives, but also language. Gendered language is so common that it can be difficult for many to even notice it. Language powerfully reflects and influences attitudes, behaviour and perceptions, thus using language that integrates a gender perspective can help to reduce gender stereotyping, promote social change and contribute to achieving gender equality. Therefore, it is essential to adopt an intersectional approach and make communication more inclusive by mainstreaming disability inclusion and gender equality in all areas.

³ Gender Action Plan III- 2021-2025, Country Level Implementation Plan- CLIP Nepal, EUD to Nepal, 2021

⁴ Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy 2021-2023, Government of Nepal, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP), November 2021

⁵ Country Gender Equality Profile Nepal, SUOMI Finland and UN Women, 2023

⁶⁶ Disability Data from Nepal Census 2021, National Federation of the Disabled- Nepal (NFDN), April 2023

⁷ Persons with disabilities and climate change in Nepal: Humanitarian impacts and pathways for inclusive climate action, OCHA, July 2023

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

The main target audiences covered by the action are:

- Primary: Wider audiences, especially in the 18-35 age bracket, mostly urban, who are not actively involved in policy, advocacy or international relations.
- Secondary: Key political and opinion leaders which will be targeted through political communication, especially in the context of Summits, milestones and high-level visits.

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 Nepal among selected target audiences.

The Specific Objective (Outcome) of this action is to:

- 1) Measurably increase awareness, understanding and perception of the EU priorities - including gender equality and inclusion-, in particular Global Gateway

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

- 1.1 Public campaigns and content marketing, focused on Global Gateway cooperation priorities, are designed and implemented 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. In particular, the following indicative activities are foreseen:

Activities related to Output 1.1

- Design and roll out at the best strategic level (national, provincial, local) of public campaigns aimed at young citizens 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, integrating a gender equality, human rights-based approach (HRBA), and disability-inclusive perspective.
- Design and implement a content marketing strategy focused on promoting the key priorities implemented under the cooperation portfolio, in particular those under Global Gateway, taking into account its commitment to gender equality.
- Design and implement communication activities to support Summits, missions and visits that support the objective of increasing awareness of the EU's partnership with Nepal.
- Undertake regular monitoring of all activities against clearly defined results, outcome, and impact key performance indicators, ensuring content, channels and approaches can be constantly adjusted to meet the objectives set.
- As relevant, undertake research required to ensure strategic communication activities are data-driven and measurable. This may include audience analysis and perception surveys, and media landscape.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

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

The EIA (Environment Impact Assessment) screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment)].

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

The Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening concluded that this action is [no or low risk (no need for further assessment)]

The strategies promoted (Global Gateway, Indo-Pacific Strategy, EU Green Deal) have a strong climate change component, which this action will help promote. In addition, the implementation will follow a low carbon logic as it has been already the rule in the delegation, following green events rules such as no single use plastic, promoting digital banners and info to reduce use of paper, 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 and will include women and women's rights organisations in the design and participation.

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, and whenever possible include people with disabilities in the design and participation.

Reduction of inequalities

The action will consider communication with a rights-based principles, particularly emphasizing the right to gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and target, as appropriate, vulnerable communities.

Democracy

All strategic communication activities will be values driven, integrating key democratic principles (participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency).

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The Action will take into account the diversity of Nepal, ensuring good intersectional representation, and when useful, deliver contents in Nepali and other national languages. Diversity and Inclusion are core values that will be promoted.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The Action will consider different communication channels to ensure resilience to disasters, with a strong component of digital content.

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
Political	Increasing political power struggles and unresolved ethnic, social, and regional	Medium	low	Separate the action from political and governmental communication, and

	conflicts or tensions. Return of general strikes, riots, and violent clashes.			managing the communication of achievements of programmes.
Health	Dengue and other outbreaks of COVID, which affect a high number of people slowing down the productivity. In Nepal, the health care situation is inadequate.	Medium	Medium	Ensure that the implementing team has a strong back up system
Gender Equality	Lack of gender responsive analysis could reinforce existing gender inequalities and non-realization of human rights in the sector, and hinder the efficiency and sustainability of the action.	Medium	Medium	Knowledge and tools of gender mainstreaming are available. Gender-sensitive monitoring, use of sex-disaggregated data, and gender-sensitive indicators. Gender mainstreaming is applied in all phases of the support services.

Lessons Learnt:

Due the specificity of this measure there are no major risks and assumptions. However fully successful implementation will depend on, among other things:

- good coordination between EU Delegation and Headquarters;
- ‘whole of Delegation’ approach to strategic communication and public diplomacy
- ensuring coherence between different funding sources, notably those managed by EEAS and FPI
- good management of the various contracts;
- high quality of experts supplied;
- design of multi-annual, repetitive communication approach;
- Integrating a gender equality, HRBA, and disability-inclusive perspective, as well as ensuring-when possible- the inclusion and participation of representatives of women’s and persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of the action.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is to support the EU-Nepal 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 Budget Support: N/A

4.4 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 measures⁸.

4.4.1 Direct Management (Procurement)

The procurement will contribute to achieving the overall objective of this action which is to position the EU as a partner of reference for Nepal among selected target audiences.

4.5 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.

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).

4.6 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.4	
Outcome 1: Strategic communication composed of	300 000
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.1	
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.4.1	300 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	covered by another Decision
Contingencies	
Totals	300 000

⁸ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

4.7 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

A strategic communication steering group will be established at Delegation level to oversee and validate the overall implementation of the action. This action will be coordinated by the Head of Cooperation, in consultation with INTPA HQ unit responsible for communication, in accordance with the country-level strategic plan which has been developed. This should dovetail with specific press & information and public diplomacy activities funded through other envelopes. It is the responsibility of the EU Delegation to ensure communication related to Global Gateway is fully integrated into the country-level strategic plans.

The strategic communication and public diplomacy envelope will be managed by the Head of Cooperation, in agreement with the responsible communication unit in DG INTPA, fully respecting the cooperation facility guidelines.

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 the communication activities undertaken under 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 views 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.

Finally, all monitoring and reporting shall assess how the action is considering the principle of gender equality, human rights-based approach, and rights of the persons with disabilities, including inclusion and diversity.

Indicators shall be disaggregated at least by sex.

5.2 Evaluation

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

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 (duty-bearers) 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.

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

The 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. Campaigns and content marketing activities under this action will focus primarily on reaching new audiences, 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. As relevant, communication activities may also be undertaken targeting more specialised audiences. These activities will be based on a multiannual strategic plan which reflects the objectives of the EU Delegation as a whole, avoiding duplication with communication activities funded via other budget lines.