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ANNEX III

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the support measures – cooperation facility–strategic communication the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2023

Action Document for Support Measures – Cooperation Facility for the Republic of Uzbekistan

– Strategic Communication¹

ANNUAL PLAN

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 24(2) of Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Support Measure – Cooperation Facility for the Republic of Uzbekistan – Strategic Communication OPSYS number: ACT-61876 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 the Republic of Uzbekistan
4. Programming document	Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for the Republic of Uzbekistan
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	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.
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Not applicable

¹ This Action Document covers strategic communication only. It should be read in conjunction with, and is complementary to, Action Document Support Measures and Cooperation Facility for Asia and the Pacific 2022 which covers other support measures.

7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<p>Main SDG: SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals</p> <p>Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets:</p> <p>SDG 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p> <p>SDG 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</p> <p>SDG 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</p> <p>SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p> <p>SDG 9 - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p> <p>SDG 10.7 – Responsible and well managed migration</p> <p>SDG 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p> <p>SDG 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p> <p>SDG 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p>			
8 a) DAC code(s)	<p>22010- Communications Policy and Administrative Management (100%)</p> <p>43010- Multisector (100%)</p>			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	<p>Other - 90000</p>			
9. Targets	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Migration</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance</p>			
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"/>
	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"/>

11. Internal markers and Tags:	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	/
	Connectivity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	transport people2people energy digital connectivity	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	/
	Migration @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities @	<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: 14 02 01 30, Middle East and Central Asia Total estimated cost: EUR 1 200 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 1 200 000			
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 and visibility activities designed to raise awareness, understanding and perception of the EU and its partnership with Uzbekistan in line with the priorities identified in the MIP as well as relevant global and regional strategies. These will roll out Global Gateway branding and campaigning and will serve to demonstrate the EU's partnership with the region and position the EU as a trusted and reliable partner, including through Global Gateway flagships and Team Europe Initiatives, programmes, and approaches.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

The Government of Uzbekistan has embarked on a path of ambitious reforms. The European Union partnership helps further develop and implement those reforms, with a focus on three priority areas. Firstly, effective governance, which includes digitalisation of public services and anti-corruption measures; secondly, sustainable economic growth, which

means a green transition while leaving no one behind; thirdly, climate resilient agri-food systems that are adapted to the changing climate and ensure food security and adequate nutrition for the population. The cross-cutting areas in EU supported programmes are human rights including gender equality, and digitalisation. The EU's MIP 2021-2027 for Uzbekistan is designed around those priority areas and cross-cutting issues, which are mutually reinforcing and in line with Uzbekistan's national priorities.

The currently negotiated Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the European Union and Uzbekistan is a reflection of the depth and strength of the bilateral relations. Uzbekistan's access to the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) brings benefits to both the Uzbek economy by increasing revenue from the export of goods and to the Uzbek people by ensuring their rights and freedoms are respected and embraced. The European Union supports Uzbekistan on its path to becoming a sustainable democratic society with a modernised, resilient and green economy.

The EU's vision, interests and priorities in the wider Central Asian region are outlined by various EU strategies and initiatives, notably the EU-Central Asia Strategy (2019), Global Gateway Strategy (2021), the EU-Uzbekistan Team Europe Initiative (TEI) "Support to a modern and sustainable agri-food sector and resilient rural livelihoods", the regional TEI on Water-Energy-Climate Change in Central Asia and the Regional TEI on Digital Connectivity.

They outline the EU's positive role in the Central Asian region and the Republic of Uzbekistan, in particular, on 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 gender equality.

Ensuring these strategies and TEIs are known, understood and well perceived by targeted audiences and the general public is essential for their successful implementation, as well as to help positioning the EU as a trusted and reliable partner for the Republic of Uzbekistan. The focus will not only be on what the EU does, but also on why, by emphasising shared values, interests and impact, and promoting the EU's leadership role in the above-mentioned fields.

Strategic communication activities will focus on the above-mentioned MIP priorities, strategies and TEIs, and target inter alia, leaders in the public and private sectors, opinion makers/influencers, youth, women, other specific target groups and the general public as appropriate. The activities will include a wide range of tools and means to achieve the communication goals.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Strategic communication plays a key role in strengthening the EU's role in the world. While significant efforts have been made to raise awareness of the EU's role as a development cooperation partner, a more strategic approach moving away from fragmented, project-specific partner-implemented communication and visibility activities, is essential to showcase the EU's added value as a partner for Uzbekistan and its people. By consolidating strategic communication resources under the Support Measures envelope, professional, data-driven activities can be designed with the scale and focus needed to be effective. 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 as a valuable partner for the country.

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

- 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 not be aware of the EU;
- Key specialised audiences, including opinion leaders, activists, private sector and other multipliers who already have a stake in the sphere of policy, advocacy and international relations.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective of this action is to increase awareness about the EU and support the EU's political priorities and values in Uzbekistan, including the priority areas of the country and regional multiannual indicative programmes, and linkages with EU Global Gateway, Green Deal and TEIs.

The Specific Objective of this action is to:

1. Improve measurably the general awareness and perception of the EU, its Member States and interests in Uzbekistan among both the wider and specialised audiences, including the state institutions.

The Outputs to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objective are:

- More young people, women, NGOs representatives, young activists are involved in EU-funded projects, activities and benefit from them;
- Reach, engagement & follower growth on EU Delegation social media platforms;
- Earned media articles (with evaluation of the number per topic, tone, language, media outlets).
- Political communication activities and large-scale public campaigns are designed and implemented to make the EU's brand positioning more understandable, visible and influential to target audiences;
- Positive offline mentioning of the EU by political leaders and decision-makers in EU focal areas;
- Positive public mentioning of the EU in its focal cooperation areas by political leaders, decision-makers, experts, opinion leaders and other stakeholders (with evaluation of the number per topic, tone and language).

3.2 Indicative Activities

Design and implementation of large-scale, public awareness campaign highlighting the EU's role as a partner for the country/people. The campaign will focus on selected priorities outlined in the MIP/RIP and relevant strategies (in particular Global Gateway) and illustrated through Global Gateway flagships and TEIs, both nationwide and locally. There will be a strong emphasis on Uzbekistan's regions and aligning EU priorities with current national interests (e.g. European Year of Skills). Campaigns will illustrate EU/international human rights values. Public awareness campaign may include, but is not limited to:

- Audio-visual assets (TV and radio spots, social media clips, etc.)
- Human interest stories (formatted according to channels and audience)
- Out of home advertising (billboards, etc.)
- Real world or digital "activations"
- Partnerships (with influencers, media partnerships, etc.)
- Audience research (segmentation, persona development, etc) as required
- Perception/opinion surveys (data collection and analysis) as required
- Regular monitoring & reporting (to ensure optimisation of campaign content performance)

Specialised communication on political and policy priorities, illustrated through the results/impact of the cooperation portfolio, in particular Global Gateway flagships. This may include but is not limited to:

- Audio-visual assets
- Factsheets, infographics, data visualisations
- Human interest stories (for all relevant channels, including web and social media)

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

The proposed action aims at positively influencing Uzbekistan's efforts towards a green transition of the economy, in particular towards climate smart and eco-friendly agri-food systems, and a greener energy sector, also addressing land

degradation, sustainable management of water resources, resource efficiency and the circular economy, and thereby contributing to the reduction of harmful environmental and health practices/impacts.

The enhanced cooperation on innovation and digitalisation will also contribute to promoting more efficient technologies and processes benefitting a green transition.

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. The produced communication materials will contribute to the positive image of women’s role in green transition, digitalisation and other EU priority areas in the country.

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

The situation of civil society, human rights and gender equality remains sensitive and one avenue of addressing it will be through a policy dialogue as a result of the various initiatives proposed in the Global Gateway action. It is focused on and aligned with the Global Gateway initiative which entails both hard and soft initiatives of which democracy is an integral part of. Global Gateway will also have a strong impact on the implementation of the EU gender action plan (GAP III) and in women’s economic empowerment in key areas of the green deal and digitalisation agenda. Democratic participation and debate will also be a part of the partnerships that are being rolled out, such as the urban partnership and water partnership.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

As of 2022, women in Uzbekistan make up 49.7% of the total population (down from 50.6% in 1991), yet only 13.2% of women over the age of 25 have completed higher education compared to 20% of men in the same age category. Support for integrated water resource management and the development of municipal infrastructure especially for drinking water, sanitation, wastewater, solid waste and climate-resilient irrigation networks is expected to help tackle inequalities and build the resilience of sectors (e.g. water access) and vulnerable communities/populations. The produced communication materials will follow a “do no harm” approach and consider potential sensitivities faced by communities living in border areas, as well as sensitivities relevant to water resource management and other EU supported sectors. The materials will be produced considering the potential impact on the EU local and regional partners.

Disaster Risk Reduction

n/a

Other considerations if relevant

n/a

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
Shift of the state leadership	Political orientation of the authorities,	M	H	Tailoring our key messages to decision makers, focusing on rule of law, human

towards authoritarian ruling	which might not be supportive to certain value-driven actions and polarisation of the society due to different external actors.			rights and Uzbekistan's international obligations.
Radicalisation of society	Radicalisation of the part of the society, based on religion, traditional values or patriarchal trends, opposing the EU values.	M	H	Focusing on educational development, increasing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) capacities to provide jobs and assisting the society's economic development.
Contradicting media narrative/disinformation	Popularity of Russian narrative and Russian media channels in local media sphere, which is often critical towards EU. Targeted disinformation by Russian and pro-Russian subjects. Might be a particularly high-risk factor due to ongoing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.	M	M	<p>Combatting disinformation through media campaigns, support to independent media and influencers.</p> <p>Providing an alternative viewpoint on local and international news.</p>

Lessons Learnt:

Successful implementation will depend on, among other things:

- good coordination between EU Delegations and Headquarters;
- ‘Whole of Delegation’ approach to strategic communication;
- 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-Uzbekistan partnership. It will enable the EU to build support for priorities under the national 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 increased 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 in duly justified cases.

4.3 Implementation Modalities

The programme will be implemented through direct management using procurement contracts.

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 measures².

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 implementation 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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² 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.

	(amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3	
Outcome 1: Strategic communication composed of	1 200 000
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3	
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.3	1100 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2	50 000
Audit – cf. section 5.3	50 000
Contingencies	n/a
Totals	1 200 000

4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

At headquarters (HQ) level, the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) will regularly report on the implementation of the action to the strategic communication and public diplomacy coordination mechanism between the relevant Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS), which will provide any necessary strategic guidance and support at HQ level. Regular two-way communication between the HQ and Delegations will be ensured in the design and implementation of communication activities. Delegations will ensure the involvement of all relevant EU services operating in the country/region at Delegation level, in order to ensure alignment with their whole-of-Delegation multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy plan. INTPA will participate in project teams for regional flagships to ensure communication priorities and milestones are clearly defined. As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the European Union, the Commission may participate in the above-mentioned governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action and may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, for the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU and its contribution to this action and ensuring effective coordination.

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 annual progress reports 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
- media items published in top tier media
- video views and view through rate
- message recall and follow-up.

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation(s) will not be carried out for this action or its components.

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

The evaluation reports 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.

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

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 campaigns and political communication, particularly around the EU Green Deal, GAP III, 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.

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