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ANNEX II

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

Action Document for Support Measures – Cooperation Facility for Tajikistan– 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 NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Support Measure – Cooperation Facility for Tajikistan – Strategic Communication OPSYS number: ACT-62034 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Team Europe Initiative	<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting (inter alia) TEI.
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in Tajikistan
4. Programming document	Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for Tajikistan
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
8 a) DAC code(s)	43010- Multi-sector (100%)

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

8 b) Main Delivery Channel	11000: Donor government 11004: Other public entities in donor country			
9. Involvement of multilateral partners	No			
10. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" 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 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"/>
	12. Internal markers and Tags:	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant 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		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

	people2people energy digital connectivity		<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 (article, item): 14 02 01 30, Middle East and Central Asia Total estimated cost: EUR 350 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 350 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
14. Type of financing	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 Tajikistan, in line with the priorities identified in the country MIP as well as relevant global and regional strategies, in particular the Global Gateway. The action will serve to demonstrate the EU's partnership with the country and position the EU as a trusted and reliable partner, in particular by rolling out campaigns related to the EU's priorities and activities in the country.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

The Central Asian region is a key partner for the European Union in shaping the international rules-based order and in addressing global challenges. The EU's current vision, interests, and priorities in Tajikistan and the wider Central Asian region are outlined by the EU Strategy on Central Asia and fully aligned with the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Global Gateway Strategy. These comprehensive strategies outline the EU's positive offer to the Central Asian 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 that these strategic priorities are known, understood and well perceived by both specialised and general public audiences in Tajikistan is essential to help position the EU as a trusted and reliable partner for the country (and wider Central Asian 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.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Strategic communication plays a key role in strengthening the EU's role in the world. Despite the EU being one of the most important and privileged development partners in Tajikistan, the visibility and recognition of the EU's

contribution amongst the Tajik population is limited. This is due to several factors. First and foremost, the past and current fragmented, project-specific partner-implemented communication and visibility activities have largely failed to demonstrate the EU's added value as a partner for Tajikistan and its people. Secondly, the official national media, Russian commercial channels and an online sphere crowded with competing cultural, entertainment and religious influences, poses a significant challenge for the EU to create a space for its own pro-active communication and feed it in real time with relevant messages bringing our work into the public discussion domain. Thirdly, around 70% of Tajikistan's population live in rural areas, without access to internet. The internet penetration rate lies somewhere around 30-40%. The percentage of social media users amongst the Tajik population is around 15%. While the EU in recent years has been active and effective on social media in the country, there is a great need to scale up efforts to reach populations in regions, districts, and rural areas without social media accounts and/or internet access.

Although sharing some of the above-mentioned challenges, the general sentiment is that other partners are better known and recognised than the EU.

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 and unified 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 target audiences covered by the action are:

- Wider audiences, comprising ordinary citizens, especially in the 15-35 age bracket, who are not involved in policy, advocacy or international relations, and who may hardly be aware of the EU. Particular attention should be paid to populations in regions, districts and rural areas with limited or no access to internet and/or social media.
- Key political and opinion leaders as well as talented youth (future leaders) will be targeted through political communication, especially in the context of events and 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 Tajikistan among selected target audiences.

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

- 1) Measurably increase the awareness, understanding and perception of the EU's priorities (in particular Global Gateway), values and achievements in Tajikistan.

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, planned, implemented, and monitored.

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 may include:

- Design, roll out, and monitor at national level of a major public campaign – mainly under Global Gateway branding – gender sensitive, aimed at ordinary citizens, primarily in the 15-35 age bracket, who are not involved in policy, advocacy or international relations, with the objective of measurably increasing the awareness, understanding and perception of the EU's partnership with Tajikistan. Campaigns may include both online (including social media) and in-situ activities. Research on how to engage media (in particular, local media in

rural, remote areas) in the campaign will be carried out. All campaigns will be based on clearly defined qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators. Regular monitoring against these KPIs will allow content, channels and approaches to be constantly adjusted to meet the objectives set.

- Design, implement and monitor political communication activities under the branding of Global Gateway, including to:
 - Support high-level political events and visits, targeting key political and opinion leaders, the wider diplomatic community, and the media.
 - Support the organisation of public events in regions/districts/rural areas to raise awareness of the EU, its activities, and values, amongst the part of population that is generally unaware of the EU.
- Developing a new strategic approach for social media communication, including professionalisation and expansion of content formats. This may be done by working together with influencers, opinion-makers and/or social media professionals.
- If required, undertake research to effectively design and plan the strategic communication activities and ensure that they 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.

The strategic communication activities under this action should to the extent possible be carried out under the branding of Global Gateway and focus in particular on the priorities established in the EU's bilateral MIP for Tajikistan for the period 2021-2027 (i.e. Inclusive Green and Digital Economy; Human Development; and Natural Resource management, efficiency and resilience building) as well as the two regional Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) on digitalisation and water, energy and climate respectively.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

To the extent possible, it should be ensured that any activities under this action do no harm to the environment or contribute to climate change. Any visibility material produced under this action should to the furthest extent be produced in an environmentally sustainable way. Furthermore, activities under this action might contribute to raising awareness of environmental and climate change issues amongst the population of Tajikistan.

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

Communication activities will focus on key policy objectives and Global Gateway priorities, including the promotion of democratic values and high standards.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

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 particular sensitivities relevant to water resource management and other EU-supported sectors. The materials will be produced considering the potential impact on the EU's 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
Information and communication	Content does not reach or resonate with intended target audiences	L	H	Audience research, including in-depth perception surveys, to be carried out. The outcomes of this research will inform the design and implementation of activities. This action will focus on both online (e.g. social media) and offline activities, to cover the Tajik population as broadly as possible.
Information and communication	Lack of access to media space	M	H	Diversification of channels to reach audiences.
Information and communication	Misunderstanding of the EU communication and/or reputational crisis/ disinformation	M	H	Regular monitoring and adaptation of communication activities and messaging to address any misunderstandings and disinformation. Actively promoting own EU narratives.
Information and communication	Content is not adequately tailored to the audiences targeted and channels used	L	M	Media landscape analysis will be carried out in order to ensure the most relevant channels and formats are adopted to reach the target audiences.
Information and communication	COVID-19 or other health measures are put in place limiting physical events and activities	L	M	Activities will be designed to reach audiences both online and offline, ensuring a range of channels are adopted and minimising the risk of disruption caused by restrictions on one or the other.

Lessons Learnt:

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;
- good management of the various contracts;
- high quality experts supplied.

3.5 The Intervention Logic²

The underlying intervention logic for this action is to support the EU-Tajikistan 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 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 measures³.

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 @TEI Methodological Note to Support Design

³ 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	350 000
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3	
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.3	350 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2	May be covered by another Decision
Audit – cf. section 5.3	
Totals	350 000

4.6 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, in accordance with the country-level strategic plan which has been developed. This should be aligned 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 and TEIs are fully integrated into these country-level strategic plans. Detailed Terms of Reference will be prepared for each activity. The EEAS-INTPA-FPI-NEAR 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/contractor's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner/contractor 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, e.g. in terms of values and contributions (financial and in terms of results obtained)
- 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 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 the 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 15-35 age bracket, who are not involved in policy, advocacy, or international relations, and who may hardly be aware of the EU. Particular attention should be paid to populations in regions, districts, and rural areas with limited or no access to internet and/or social media.
- Key political and opinion leaders as well as talented youth (future leaders) and the wider diplomatic community which will be targeted through political communication, especially in the context of Summits, events and visits.

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