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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX 2

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Kingdom of Eswatini for 2023

Action Document for Cooperation Facility and Support to Civil Society Organisations in Eswatini

ANNUAL PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and action plans/measures in the sense of Article 24 of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Cooperation Facility and Support to Civil Society Organisations in Eswatini OPSYS number: ACT-62206 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (<u>NDICI-Global Europe</u>)/ Overseas Association Decision/European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation Regulation
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 Kingdom of Eswatini
4. Programming document	Eswatini Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021 - 2027 ¹
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	Support Measures: horizontal and transversal activities to contribute to all objectives of the Eswatini 2021-2027 MIP
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Not applicable
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): 17 - partnerships for the goals Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: SDG 1 – No Poverty SDG 5 – Gender Equality SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

¹ COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION adopting a multiannual indicative programme for the Kingdom of Eswatini for the period 2021-2027, C(2022)7325 of 19 October 2022 .

	SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions			
8 a) DAC code(s)	DAC code 113 – Secondary Education/Vocational Training – 42% DAC code 114 – Post-Secondary Education – 23% DAC code 160 – Social Protection – 35%			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	European Commission – Development Share of Budget – 42001 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society - 20000			
9. 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			
10. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input 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
Digitalisation @		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy		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"/>	

	digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Connectivity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	people2people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Migration @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
BUDGET INFORMATION				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020122 Total estimated cost: EUR 5 500 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 5 500 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of financing	Direct management through: Grants- Procurement Indirect management with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.3.			
14. Type of measure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperation facility <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measures in favour of Civil Society			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The overall objective of the action is to contribute to the efficient and effective implementation of the European Union's cooperation with Eswatini, for the period 2021-2027 that focusses on one priority area: human development and social inclusion.

The action will contribute to the implementation of Eswatini's development agenda and will support the EU-Eswatini partnership by promoting dialogue, expertise exchange, communication activities and engagement with civil society.

The Action includes two main components:

- (1) The **Cooperation Facility (EUR 2 500 000)** will support horizontal measures to enhance the overall impact of the Eswatini's MIP single priority of human development and social inclusion; support capacity development through technical assistance, exchange of public expertise and twinning to contribute effectively to the EU cooperation actions and to a conducive environment for private sector development. It will also support strategic communication and visibility activities on EU cooperation and public diplomacy interventions towards the wider public and specialised audiences to raise awareness of the EU-Eswatini partnership, and to promote EU policies and values as well as its multilateral agenda in the partner country; political and policy dialogues in areas of strategic interest, as well as peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges to foster sector dialogues leading to a conducive business environment to facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market; mobilising long and short term expertise in a flexible, timely and demand driven manner to support the preparation and implementation of EU cooperation actions and strategic communication and visibility activities on EU cooperation and public diplomacy interventions.

- (2) The **Support to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) (EUR 3 000 000)** aiming at strengthening CSOs role as actors of governance representing different groups, including those in more vulnerable situations. It will address capacity constraints ranging from lack of funding, human resources, inadequate equipment, no strategic planning and budgeting abilities and lack of managerial and project implementation capacity by strengthening their capacity to advocate for key areas such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law, gender equality and women's empowerment.

The EU will aim to bring support as close as possible to people in vulnerable situations by working wherever possible with and through civil society organisations and the private sector, while encouraging a continued comprehensive and inclusive dialogue among all national stakeholders. A focus on women and girls and strengthening the role of CSOs in the development process of the country is emphasised as they play a key role in enhancing plurality of voices, participation and social inclusion for the youth, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups.

Based on the priorities identified in the CSO Roadmap and on lessons learned from past cooperation, the “Support to CSOs in Eswatini” component will indicatively target the following measures:

- Supporting an enabling environment for civil society for a more inclusive participation in development policy and the decision-making processes.
- Strengthen capacities and opportunities of civil society and grassroots organisations across all its dimensions in EU priority areas to promote women, youth and people with disabilities social inclusion, empowerment and human rights.
- Support the role of CSOs in the promotion of fundamental values, good governance, policy development and the protection of human rights through women, people with disabilities and youth coalitions/platforms.

The action will also contribute to the implementation of the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP). It will be well-aligned with the Gender Action Plan III², in particular to its thematic area of engagement “Promoting equal participation and leadership”, and take recommendations from the Spotlight Initiative, where appropriate.

The action will also contribute to the realisation of the Youth Action Plan in EU external action for 2022-2027³, in particular to its pillar “Engage: increasing the voice of young people in policy and decision-making at all levels”.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

The MIP 2021-2027 priority area aims to achieve increased national capacities for human development through direct interventions in the national TVET system and through interrelated support for actions targeting social inclusion, job creation and civic participation. Support measures will further enhance EU-Eswatini cooperation in related areas of policy dialogue and advance EU strategic communications and public diplomacy. The expected results will contribute to the economic and social security of populations living in vulnerable situations and to the political stability in the country and, indirectly, in the SADC region.

The cooperation facility will build on lessons learnt from the previous EDF capacity strengthening and technical cooperation support programs. It will work across the existing current national development plan and strategies,

² JOIN (2020) 17 final of 25.11.2020 - European Union Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) 2021-2025. An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action.

³ European Commission (2022). Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action 2022-2027.

at all stages of the EU – Eswatini cooperation to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, building capacity of line ministries, public bodies, private sector and non-state actors.

Existing opportunities which offer viable entry points for dialoguing on gender equality and women's empowerment, leading to gender mainstreaming at national level include: Women's coalitions such as the Swaziland Rural Women's Assembly, Liphimbo labo Make, Women's Cooperatives, Burial Societies, , Swaziland Cross Border Traders Association, World Women Prayer group Zwelonke,⁹ and the Gender Consortium.⁴

Eswatini faces significant gaps in terms of effective governance and efficient performance in the successful accomplishment of youth empowerment programmes, specifically referring to the participation of youth in the design, governance and evaluation of those programmes. There are a number of national youth platforms and bodies, such as the Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund (YERF – promoting youth employment) and the Eswatini National Youth Council (ENYC – coordinating body for all Youth Programmes mandated by the Government of Eswatini) which have no youth representation on their boards or selection committees. The same situation occurs in the Ministry of Youth, DPMO and many youth-serving CSOs and development partners. Initiatives like the newly established EU Youth Sounding Board and the UNICEF and UNDP Youth Advisory Committees are very new and quite innovative.

Support measures to CSOs and the cooperation facility will be instrumental in enabling the participation of a strengthened Civil Society including the youth in the elaboration and implementation of the foreseen actions under MIP 2021-2027, as well as ensure that EU support in the country and the values it represents are communicated and visible.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Collaboration between the EU and Eswatini's civil society has played, and continues to play, an important role in improving social justice and human rights in the country, as well as service provision to complement government social programmes. Civil society in Eswatini is comprised of diverse institutions, ranging from grass-roots community-based organisations (CBOs) serving specific local needs, to professional CSOs and faith-based organisations, political foundations and parties, trade unions and employers' federations. The last EU funded projects implemented through CSOs have shown a serious lack of administrative, financial and contractual capacity.

In this light, the EU Delegation has recently implemented a series of actions to improve organisational and institutional capacities and competences of CSOs that will strengthen the CSO sector as a whole. In parallel, under the CSO thematic line only one direct grant was awarded to an International NGO, working in partnership with several local CSOs, to mitigate the risks of low absorption, bad management and possibly recovery orders.

Against this background, the EU Delegation to the Kingdom of Eswatini seeks to reinforce its support for development of civil society as part of a long-term, demand-driven and flexible support mechanism. This capacity building intervention will, on the one hand, mainly target CSOs working in the areas of human rights, gender equality and women empowerment, youth participation, people with disabilities inclusion and focus on current and potential EU grant rights-holders. On the other hand, the intervention will support the EU programming in Eswatini for the period 2021-2027, by acquiring data and providing analysis on gender, youth and inclusivity programmes and actors in the country.

A flexible, timely, and demand-driven cooperation facility is crucial to proactively support the objectives of the EU MIP 2021-2027 and address unforeseen needs and demands before they affect adversely on the various stages of project cycle and its management. Procurement delays were the main challenge to the technical cooperation facility under the previous programming cycle (2014-2020), which inhibited its optimal use and impact. In order to overcome this challenge and reduce transactional costs related to multiple small contracts, the new cooperation facility will therefore be implemented in direct management and follow a "fewer and bigger" approach. The cooperation facility will also enable the EU's targeted and strategic communication on its priorities and

⁴ [Eswatini Gender Analysis Country Level Implementation Plan \(CLIP\) 2021](#)

programmes, following a comprehensive EU approach, to go beyond a fragmented, project-related and partner-implemented communication as a lesson learnt from the past.

The EU has continued support towards CSO activities is fundamental to maintaining inclusive civic engagement around the implementation of the country's development agenda and the protection of fundamental values and human rights. Government considers civil society organisations as partners recognised for decentralising services, challenging funds and serving the most vulnerable and most remote areas.

The majority of CSOs focus on human rights (including gender equality, gender-based violence (GBV), the rights of people with disabilities, LGBTQI+), food security and public health (HIV/AIDS, sexual reproduction health and rights etc.). Comparatively fewer CSOs focus on issues of economic justice, financial inclusion, climate change and demography.

CSO funding has been dwindling in recent years due to several factors ranging from Eswatini's classification as a lower-middle income country (LMIC), the political context and instability since the 2021 unrest, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public spending, changing donor priorities, climate disasters and, most recently, Russia's war against Ukraine.

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

The main stakeholders under the cooperation facility will be targeted government and other stakeholders involved in the focal sectors of EU cooperation in Eswatini. The multi sectoral cooperation facility will support initiatives that strengthen technical line ministries, government departments and agencies as well as non-state actors such as broader civil society organisations and private sector. The main stakeholders and target groups for strategic communication and public diplomacy will be identified during the implementation, ensuring a differentiated approach between specialised audiences (political and diplomatic counterparts, opinion leaders, activists, media, civil society, and academia) and wider audiences comprising ordinary citizens (women and men), especially youth.

The key stakeholders for the civil society support measures are civil society organisations, including women organisation, human rights defenders, LGBTQI+, people with disability and youth associations who represent the diversity of the human rights holders (people). To ensure the inclusion in the decision making process, participation in governance, the financial support to local CSOs will need to be differentiated, through sub-granting. As outlined in section 3.4., local civil society organisations have limited financial capacity, resulting in serious difficulties when managing EU grants. To mitigate such risks, the action will envisage relying on intermediate structures (EU Member States Agency and/or international NGO) while providing sub-granting that caters to different needs and capacity levels of beneficiary organisations.

The ultimate rights-holders will be the people of Eswatini who will benefit from the improved effectiveness and implementation of the country's development strategy and from an enhanced effectiveness of the EU-Eswatini cooperation.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective** of this action is to strengthen civil society in Eswatini and to establish a cooperation facility to support the implementation of the EU MIP 2021-2027, including strategic communication and public diplomacy activities.

The **Specific Objectives** of this action are:

SO 1. Support Eswatini's development strategies and the implementation of the EU MIP 2021-2027.

SO 2. Strengthen capacities and equitable participation of Civil Society Organisations in the country, in particular CSOs active in promoting women and youth socio-economic inclusion and empowerment.

SO 3. Promote the values that inspire the partnership between Eswatini and the European Union through strategic communication and visibility activities on EU cooperation and public diplomacy interventions.

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

1.1 contributing to Specific Objective 1:

Output 1.1: The implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the EU partnership with Eswatini is efficient and effective, in complementarity with regional or global programmes, including the Country Level Implementation (CLIP);

Output 1.2: Reinforced policy and political dialogue on key areas covered by the MIP;

1.2 contributing to Specific Objective 2:

Output 2.1: The enabling environment for civil society in Eswatini is strengthened and CSOs operating for inclusion and empowerment are more structured and coordinated with a specific focus on prevention and support of Gender-based Violence victims as well as People With Disabilities (PWD);

Output 2.2: CSOs are equipped with increased project management knowledge, human rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming, skills and technical capacities for improved and consistent engagement;

1.3 contributing to Specific Objective 3:

Output 3.1: The EU's strategic communication and public diplomacy strategy is established and implemented in line with the multi-annual strategic communication and public diplomacy plan enhancing awareness;

Output 3.2: Public awareness, understanding and recognition of the EU in Eswatini is commensurate with the scale, scope and ambition of our partnership.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1.1 and 1.2:

- Mobilise long- and short-term expertise in a flexible, timely and demand-driven manner to support the implementation and monitoring/evaluation of EU's cooperation; as well as independent audit or verification of contracts/agreements commissioned by the Commission.
- Support research and analysis informing the EU-Eswatini policy dialogue under the thematic areas of the MIP;
- Support capacity development and institutional building through technical assistance and exchange of public expertise – including through TAIEX and twinning, when relevant;
- Technical assistance for the identification, development and potential collaboration of Eswatini in Team Europe initiatives in the SADC region and/or wider continental initiatives;
- Capacity building and networking to strengthen cooperation between key non-governmental and private sector stakeholders and target audiences (i.e. youth, students, academics, think tanks, CSOs, businesses, creative industries);
- Training, conferences and seminars (including logistical support to participation);

Activities related to Output 2.1 and 2.2:

- Establishment of a funding mechanism (e.g. through financial support to third parties) that provides diversified types of support tailor-made to the size and capacity of civil society actors;
- Provide capacity building for local CSOs (project management, M&E, financial capacity development, institutional strengthening, human rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming, etc.);

- Activities to strengthen CSOs and grassroots groups to respond to GBV and other violations of women's, people with disabilities and youth human rights;
- Advocate and lobbying to raise awareness and public understanding of gender and citizenship discrimination, including strengthening of a coordinated GBV response at community level;
- Strengthening coordination, networking and outreach of women and youth coalitions/platforms;

Activities related to Output 3.1 and 3.2:

- Strategic communication, public diplomacy, fighting disinformation and ensuring EU visibility to enable broad policy objectives and efficiency in implementation of EU policies and EU funded programmes;
- Strengthen networks and long-term relationships with key target audiences and partners (e.g. youth, students, academics, think tanks, CSOs, private sector, creative industries), including leveraging existing EU programmes;
- Training, conferences and seminars (including logistical support to participation);
- Awareness raising, strategic communication and visibility campaigns and public diplomacy, including specific interventions to promote EU policies, identity, values and culture;

The Cooperation Facility, as well as the other outputs, is not limited to the above activities and may be adapted to meet emerging priorities identified during implementation of the MIP.

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).

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 mainstreaming will be integrated throughout the action and comprise a significant objective of the Support Measures component. Attention will be given to ensure that gender equality, women's empowerment as well as GBV education and services are integrated into Support Measures to CSOs and Cooperation Facility components. The action will also use disaggregated data and GAP III indicators to monitor its contribution to the EU commitments to gender equality and ensure the GAP III country level implementation plan (CLIP) is duly implemented.

Human Rights

The action will advance and disseminate the EU Human Rights and Democracy Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan 2020-2024. The action will further ensure that all partners (respect to all human rights, non-discrimination, participation, accountability, and transparency) uphold principles of human rights. A human rights based approach will be followed, focusing on rights holders, duty bearers and on ensuring civil society can play their oversight role supporting communities' resilience to the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty and inequality.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that the promotion and protection of disability rights will be a significant objective of the action. Empowerment of groups living in the most vulnerable situations, including people with disability and HIV/AIDS will be prioritised as part of the support to civil society. The Action will in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, and the EU Guidance Note Disability inclusion in EU external action.

Reduction of inequalities

As per the Inequality Marker, the Action is labelled I-1. The action includes reduction of inequalities as a significant cross-cutting objective, specifically targeting gender equity through reduction of income disparity, resources power inequality and engagement in policy dialogue to address inequalities in citizenship. The Action will also participate in reducing inequalities by strengthening the CSOs' capacities, in particular CSOs active in promoting women and youth socio-economic inclusion and empowerment.

Democracy

Activities supported under the Cooperation Facility will promote democracy, rule of law and good governance that is intrinsic to gender equality and women's empowerment, support stability and resilience as well as strengthen political relations between the EU and Eswatini.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

Actions targeting reduction of gender inequalities, promotion of human rights and support for income generation by women will contribute to national conflict resolutions and resilience, especially among women and youth.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Climate change mitigation and adaptation activities are not part of the MIP, but Disaster Risk Reduction in the country is addressed through ECHO funded programmes.

Other considerations if relevant

Not applicable

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
1. External environment	Risk 1: Domestic political instability	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political dialogue and diplomatic outreach by the EU Donor coordination platform Social inclusion and engagement with youth
2. Planning, processes and systems	Risk 2: Low capacities for implementation by project partners	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building measures identified and implemented Choice of capable implementing partner
3. People and the organisation	Risk 3: Insufficient community engagement	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community outreach and communications prioritised Engagement with CSOs at community levels

3. People and the organisation	Risk 4: Low interest and engagement by national and local government	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong current support by central government suggests low risk • Communications and engagement with local government to be prioritised
4. Legality and regularity aspects	Risk 5: Advocacy measures not supported at political and regulatory levels	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building strong alliances for advocacy with i.e. the Human Rights Commission, the Gender and Family Issues Department. • Research findings of the impact of gendered citizenship.
5. Communication and information	Risk 6: Communication, information and visibility activities are insufficiently targeted	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication, information and visibility activities to be prioritised, sufficiently funded, strategically implemented and monitored for impact • Communication, information and visibility activities to prioritise the overall purpose of EU cooperation with the country.
6. Gender equality	Risk 7: Insufficient or inadequate gender mainstreaming could reinforce gender inequalities and the non-realisation of human rights in the sector and hinder the efficiency and sustainability of the action.	Medium	High	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 project cycle.

Lessons Learnt:

The major lesson learnt from previous and ongoing support to local civil society organisations concerns their limited financial, administrative, contractual and project management capacity and the resulting difficulty in managing EU grants and consequent financial risk for the EU. To mitigate such risks, the Delegation has already, since 2020, not launched calls for proposals but instead relied on intermediate structures while providing sub-granting that caters to different needs and capacity levels of beneficiary organisations. The EU Delegation will continue implementation along those same lines. In addition, financial, administrative and contractual capacity development will be provided via the cooperation facility and other instruments.

The implementation of the European Development Fund (EDF) programmes through Programme Estimates suffered from procurement delays that resulted in low commitment levels. We expect that the change in implementation modality from indirect to direct management and a “fewer and bigger” approach will reduce transaction costs and expedite procurement to ensure the facility is fit for purpose.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for the cooperation facility is to support the EU-Eswatini partnership. It will mobilise expertise, technical assistance, capacity building, awareness raising, communication and visibility as well as training, conferences and seminars in support of the implementation of EU-Eswatini cooperation and of the MIP to enhance the overall impact of the human development and social inclusion programme. The Cooperation Facility will support EU Eswatini cooperation, public diplomacy, including through relevant studies, workshops and strategic communication identified as priorities in the country MIP. Strategic communication, fighting against disinformation, promoting access to information and participation and visibility activities will improve and consolidate the narrative on EU's cooperation and strategic partnership, following a comprehensive EU approach.

In order to ensure the maximum inclusiveness and support civil society organisations, this action will rely on sub-granting schemes that provide diversified types of support tailor-made to the size and capacity of actors, beyond the traditional and one-size-fits approach of calls for proposals. The provision of capacity building and coaching, besides financial support, is a key element of the intervention logic. This action will complement interventions under Action 1 to address skills and economic challenges faced by groups living in vulnerable situations with a focus on women and girls to provide holistic solutions to social and economic exclusion.

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 envisaged to conclude a Financing Agreement with the Kingdom of Eswatini.

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 60 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

The Commission's responsible authorising officer may agree extensions of the implementation period in duly justified cases.

4.3 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁵

⁵ 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.

4.3.1 Direct Management (Grants)

Grants: (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grant is to achieve the expected results listed in **SO2** (Strengthen capacities and equitable participation of Civil Society Organisations in the country, in particular CSOs active in promoting women and youth socio-economic inclusion and empowerment) and outputs 2.1 and 2.2.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The type of potential applicants for funding are International Organisations and/or International NGOs (non-governmental and non-profit making) and their associations which will be selected using the following criteria:

- competence and expertise in capacity strengthening and support to CSOs;
- capacity to work with local civil society/local government ensuring their involvement and ownership;
- added value and operational capacity to work in support of local CSOs/CBOs also through innovative management/financial support mechanisms.

4.3.2 Direct Management (Procurement)

Procurements are planned to contribute to achieving the specific objective **SO 1** - Support Eswatini's development strategies and the implementation of the EU MIP 2021-2027, and **SO 3** - Promote the values that inspire the partnership between Eswatini and the European Union through strategic communication and visibility activities on EU cooperation and public diplomacy interventions, and outputs 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2 of this Action (cf. section 3.1).

4.3.3 Changes from indirect to direct management mode (and vice versa) due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

Should the direct management modality described in section 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 prove to not be possible for reasons outside of the Commission's control, the action or a part of it may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

(i) experience in Eswatini or in the Southern African Development Community, (ii) experience in the area of governance and rule of law and in particular in supporting civil society, (iii) experience in the management of sub-granting schemes or similar innovative financial support mechanisms, (iv) experience in strategic communication, visibility and public diplomacy activities, (v) experience in provision of short and long-term expertise and technical assistance.

The implementation by this entity entails that this modality should contribute to achieve the expected results listed in SO 1, SO 2 and SO 3.

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 realization of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

4.5 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3	
Objective 1, outputs 1.1/1.2 Cooperation Facility and Objective 3, outputs 3.1/3.2 Strategic communication and public diplomacy	
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2	2 500 000
Objective 2, outputs 2.1/2.2 Support to CSOs	
Grant (direct management) cf. section 4.3.1	3 000 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2	0
Audit – cf. section 5.3	0
Contingencies	
Totals	5 500 000

4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The contracting authority for the programme shall be the Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Eswatini.

For the cooperation facility, an annual activity plan will be prepared by the implementing entities based on the annual objectives, which will be set by the Delegation in coordination with the relevant national stakeholders. In view of the necessary flexibility, these plans will be indicative.

For the support to civil society, the responsibility for the implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the remaining activities will be with the beneficiaries of the grant(s) as per contractual requirements set by the Practical Guide for EU funded actions. A Project Steering Committee will be established to oversee the strategic implementation of the civil society support measures. Its composition will be defined during the inception phase.

The EU Delegation will ensure that any form of steering committee encompasses a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure the representation of people in vulnerable situations, including right holders such as those in vulnerable situations and marginalised groups.

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 and may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, for the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU 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

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).

All monitoring and reporting shall assess how the action is considering the principle of gender equality, human rights-based approach, and rights of persons with disabilities including inclusion and diversity Indicators shall be disaggregated at least by sex.

5.2 Evaluation

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

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

The 2021-2027 programming cycle will adopt a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

Regional and global strategic communication and public diplomacy funds will be managed from headquarters.

At country level, action documents for specific sector programmes are no longer required to include a provision for communication actions promoting the programmes concerned. These resources will instead be consolidated in Cooperation Facilities established by support measure action documents, allowing Delegations to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.

To that end, Delegations are first developing short strategic communication and public diplomacy plans that reflect the objectives of the EU in this domain, initially covering the period up to the Mid-Term Review (MTR). The plans will be endorsed by a coordination mechanism comprised of Commission services and the EEAS, and will be reviewed, modified and extended as appropriate as part of the MTR process.

As the strategic communication plan will be prepared and adopted within the TCF, once this action is approved, the following information will be provided:

1. The audiences targeted
2. For each group targeted, the principal communication objective, couched in terms of measurable outcomes
3. The core narrative, formulated in terms of why we do specific communication activities
4. Preliminary suggestions for content (messages, straplines, hashtags), partnerships (influencers) and channels
5. Key administrative information: timeline, budget and the programme manager responsible for implementation.