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ANNEX XIV

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multiannual action plan for the thematic programme on human rights and democracy for 2022-2024

Action Document for Supporting Media Actors & Harnessing New Technologies

MULTIANNUAL PLAN
This document constitutes the multiannual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and action plans in the sense of Article 23(2) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/947.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Supporting Media Actors & Harnessing New Technologies CRIS reference OPSYS reference: ACT-60825 / JAD.972096 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (Global Europe)
2. Team Europe Initiative	YES This Action is part of the Global Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on Democracy
3. Zone benefiting from the action	Global
4. Programming document	Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy 2021-2027
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	To safeguard an environment conducive to the full exercise of all fundamental freedoms, online and offline. To promote a human rights-based approach to new technologies.
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Priority 4 of the MIP: Safeguarding fundamental freedoms, including harnessing the opportunities and addressing the challenges of new technologies
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: SDG 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels Other significant SDGs: SDG 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls SDG 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

	SDG 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries			
8 a) DAC code(s)	Main DAC code : 15153 – Media and free flow of information Sub-code 1 : 22040 – Information and communication technology (ICT) Sub-code 2 : 15160 – Human rights Sub-code 3 – 15170 – Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel @	20000 – Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society 40000 – Multilateral organisations			
9. Targets	☐ Migration ☐ Climate ☐ Social inclusion and Human Development ☒ Gender ☐ Biodiversity ☐ Education ☒ Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			

10. Markers **(from DAC form)**	**General policy objective @**	**Not targeted**	**Significant objective**	**Principal objective**
	Participation development/good governance	☐	☐	☒
	Aid to environment @	☒	☐	☐
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	☐	☒	☐
	Trade development	☒	☐	☐
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	☒	☐	☐
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	☒	☐	☐
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	☒	☐	☐
	Nutrition @	☒	☐	☐
	RIO Convention markers	**Not targeted**	**Significant objective**	**Principal objective**
	Biological diversity @	☒	☐	☐
	Combat desertification @	☒	☐	☐
	Climate change mitigation @	☒	☐	☐
	Climate change adaptation @	☒	☐	☐
11. Internal markers and Tags:	**Policy objectives**	**Not targeted**	**Significant objective**	**Principal objective**
	Digitalisation @	☐	☐	☒

	Tags: digital connectivity		☐	☐
	digital governance		☐	☐
	digital entrepreneurship		☐	☒
	job creation		☐	☒
	digital skills/literacy		☐	☒
	digital services		☐	☐
	Connectivity @	☒	☐	☐
	Tags: transport		☐	☐
	people2people		☐	☐
	energy		☐	☐
	digital connectivity		☐	☐
	Migration @ (methodology for tagging under development)	☒	☐	☐
	Reduction of Inequalities (methodology for marker and tagging under development)	☐	☒	☐
	Covid-19	☐	☒	☐

BUDGET INFORMATION

12. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.02 02 11
	Total estimated cost: EUR 32 000 000 EUR
	Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 32 000 000
	The contribution is for an amount of EUR 9 400 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2022 and an amount of EUR 22 600 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2023, subject to the availability of appropriations for the respective financial years following the adoption of the relevant annual budget, or as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths

MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

13. Type of financing	**Direct management** through:
	- Grants with entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.1
	Indirect management with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.2

1.2 Summary of the Action

The new wave of 'autocratisation' characterised by increasing executive power, erosion of democratic institutions, and a general constriction of fundamental freedoms is putting increased pressures on democracy. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this trend, with extraordinary measures used to shrink civic space both physically and online. Throughout this period, media freedoms have continued to deteriorate, reaching the lowest level for a decade. According to the latest studies, freedom of expression is under threat in at least 32 countries. In this context, it is necessary to reinforce the key role free media plays in democracies and democratising countries, through support to journalists and independent civil society organisations working with media.

The rise in threats to media freedoms is characterised by an increase in the targeting of journalists, bloggers online activists and human rights defenders, the encroachment upon civil liberties and freedom of expression in the online and offline spheres, censorship and surveillance, as well as media capture. Digital technologies have been used to encroach upon fundamental human rights and undermine democratic system, just as they present opportunities to increase accountability and participation. Hate speech, fake news and cyber-harassment are spreading online, often leading to hate crime and violence. Disinformation and interferences undermine electoral processes.

Supporting civil society and independent media to leverage the full potential of new technologies as well as countering their misuse and abuse is key towards mitigating the negative effects of these new technologies. The actions outlined in this document aim to increase the resilience of journalists and independent civil society organisations to the political and economic factors that undermine them. Based on the founding values of the EU and international human rights law, this action aims to promote and protect democracy (including elections) and human rights worldwide through actions focused on supporting and promoting media independence and freedom and by harnessing the opportunities and combating the challenges of new digital technologies, including in electoral processes. This program aims to effectively protect and support journalists, bloggers and other media workers and to strengthen public awareness and inclusive debate on the centrality of human rights and democracy in the regulation and use of new technologies. This action also will provide resources for digital security for civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

The EU will support a global initiative in support of journalists and media actors working in most difficult contexts. This should complement the short-term support for safety and security of journalists provided by the ProtectDefenders.eu mechanism. The global flagship will have two objectives: long term support for journalists and media outlets at risk and capacity building for journalists and media actors. Risks for media actors are defined as repressive environment, risk of capture, conflicts, or extinction risk due to inadaptation to new technologies.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

The world is currently experiencing a new wave of autocratisation characterised by increasing executive power, erosion of democratic norms, and a general constriction of fundamental freedoms. Several sources of data support these concerns: the V-DEM Democracy Index, International IDEA's Global State of Democracy, the EIU Democracy Index, the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) Report and Freedom House all point to a decline in democracy in virtually all regions of the world. Liberal democracies diminished over the past decade from 41 countries to 32, with a population share of only 14%, while 68% of the global population is living under autocratic regimes. The number of democratising countries is also dwindling, down by almost half compared to 10 years ago – there are now only 16 such countries, which are home to just 4% of the global population.

In this context, fundamental freedoms and rights have been under threat. Media freedom has decreased globally, as indicated by the World Press Freedom Index to the lowest levels seen since 2013. These findings also correspond to the decline in freedom of expression online and offline observed by Freedom House as a growing trend in this last decade. V-Dem Annual Democracy Report notes an increased crackdown on freedom, with freedom of expression being under threat in 32 countries. Journalists, bloggers, online activists and human rights defenders are increasingly persecuted, defamed, harassed, arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned, tortured, and even killed. As the Committee for Protecting Journalists reports, a record number of 293 journalists were jailed in 2021 and 24 journalists killed the same year. As these actors have become more effective in challenging injustice, oppression and brutality, so has the repression against them. This has had a particularly worrying effect on media freedom, as it has negatively impacted their ability to perform their role of providing reliable and evidence-based information to citizens.

Journalist, bloggers, online activists, independent media organisations, collectively known as media actors, and human rights defenders have been further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Extraordinary measures have been used as a means of centralising power and supressing individual freedoms and rights. Amongst these rights and freedoms, freedom of expression and of assembly have been some of those most affected by the crisis under

the guise of laws and regulations combating disinformation, as indicated by the findings of International IDEA's Global State of Democracy.

The rise of new technologies has radically transformed our societies and economies. These have allowed journalists, bloggers, online activists and human rights defenders to monitor and document human rights abuses, raise concerns on violence or fraud during election time. Thanks to the access to devices and fast connexions, civil society representatives and citizens from all over the world, have been able over the last years to share footages, pictures and written proofs of human rights violations such as extra-judicial killings or excessive use of force by law enforcement. This increased documentation has been key in supporting a stronger human rights advocacy from CSOS, EU and UN alike. However, these new technologies have also been misused for the purpose of disinformation, online surveillance, censorship, cyber-harassment, and abusive data collection. Online disinformation, including in social media, poses new challenges, in particular to electoral integrity and democratic decision-making. As new technologies and internet in particular can be a powerful tool mobilised by citizens and civil society to promote human rights, many governments have and are trying to curtail access to open, free and secure internet through State-imposed internet shutdowns or network disruptions. The NGO Access Now, documented in the first five months of 2021, at least 50 internet shutdowns in 21 countries worldwide, including the longest internet shutdowns on record. In recent years, many independent media and civil society organisations have documented the growing use of spyware software to spy on human rights defenders (e.g. Pegasus software), while some States are implementing wide-scale surveillance programmes.

Journalists and civil society organisations have been on the forefront in highlighting the danger of misusing digital technologies for the suppression of fundamental freedoms and rights. Therefore, the actions presented in this document aim to empower journalist, bloggers, online activists, human rights defenders and CSOs to respond to the challenges of new technologies for democracy and human rights.

Protecting and promoting human rights and democracy are founding values of the European Union and represents a key priority of EU's external action. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2020-2024, adopted by the Council identifies for the first time digital and human right as a major priority of EU external human rights policy. 'This priority will be translated into action through the support to independent media and CSOs to contribute to revealing the full potential of digital technologies for the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy and to countering their misuse and abuse.

The EU is world leader in supporting democracy around the world and has been leading the regulatory response to the challenges caused by the new technologies, including through initiatives such as the GDPR, the DSA/DMA or the Artificial Intelligence (AI) legislative proposal. Moreover, the EU has a longstanding tradition of investing in the support of media actors and the promotion of media freedom, with demonstrated success in a series of initiatives. As a result, it is well positioned to act in support of journalists and civil society organisations to enable them to respond to these new challenges.

2.2   Problem Analysis

Media plays an important role in democracy as it enables public scrutiny. The ability of media to fulfil this function is dependent on political and technological shifts, which might either strengthen or weaken media. Current trends have had a damaging effect on freedom of expression and the ability of media to operate effectively, with media freedom eroding in multiple countries. Researchers note that "the scale, speed and power of digital technologies magnifies historic concerns for the protection of human rights that were threatened by paper information and communication systems. The capacity of public and private actors to surveil, censor and oppress has exponentially increased with digital technologies". Furthermore "Basic human rights such as freedom of expression, privacy, free assembly or the right to a fair trial are all heavily impacted by new information and communication technologies.[1]"

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[1] Wagner, Ben, Kettemann, Mattias C., Vieth, Kilian(eds), Research Handbook on Human Rights and Digital Technology, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019

Leading media organisations argue that the environment offers a competitive advantage to authoritarian regimes, with economic, political and technological trends undermining independent media and dissent more widely. Three specific problems affecting the work of media actors stand out:

1. Harm to journalists, activists, human rights and democracy defenders

The misuse of digital technologies has led to the spread of disinformation and hate speech, new forms of violence, violations and abuses, state surveillance and censorship that limits freedom of expression. The power to realise or restrict rights online is increasingly exercised by states and private actors through the levers of control they exert on physical access to the online space and on the nature of the content published in these spaces. Governments are increasingly making use of laws and regulations which place control over the internet by adopting laws, policies and technologies that limit access, punish internet speech or block access to content online.

Journalists, bloggers, online activists, human rights defenders and CSOs play a crucial role in identifying and raising public awareness on issues of public interest, such as the ones mentioned above. Due to the nature of their work, they have increasingly become the targets of online harassment, disinformation campaigns, censorship and state surveillance. These tools are used to monitor and threaten journalists, HRDs and online activists, particularly women, making the online space increasingly policed and dangerous.

This action empowers journalists, bloggers, online activists and human rights defenders, especially women, to answer to these challenges, while also offering them the tools to protect themselves from risks such cyberattacks, and through offering them mechanisms of protection when they are at risk.

2. Difficulty for young journalists and media workers in more problematic countries to acquire academic and professional experience.

Stakeholders and our own EU delegations point out the difficulty for young journalists and media workers to acquire advanced academic and professional experience in order to enhance their journalistic career and to exercise their profession in an independent, effective and scrupulous way.
The problem is more acute in countries under an authoritarian regime or involved in conflict situation or where independent media do not have access to any resource for their development.
This action supports a global initiative of country-to country exchange for journalists' and media workers' learning and professional development, notably for countries where access to professional development opportunities is more difficult, there is a greater need for independent and fact-checking journalism and where media workers are facing censure, threats and difficult work conditions.

3. Media capture and the need to harness the power of new technologies

Digital technologies have transformed the media environment, posing both challenges and opportunities. Media actors now have learning needs linked to these new technologies, and in particular how to collect, verify and disseminate information in the online environment. Many traditional media actors can struggle to adapt and survive, becoming vulnerable to external political and economic pressure compromising their independence. In the most extreme cases this can lead to media capture, where much of the media ecology is controlled directly or indirectly by vested political/economic interests, often of a small elite. Media capture is becoming one of the biggest threats to the independence of the media sector, impacting countries as diverse as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Tanzania, Turkey, etc.

In this case, supporting media actors to adapt to new digital technologies can be an opportunity for independent journalist, bloggers, and online activists and human rights defenders to bring a plurality of opinions to an otherwise shrinking space. Creating a global programme for learning, knowledge sharing and benchmarking, as outlined in this action, will enable independent media to answer to these growing issues and make the best use of new digital technologies.

4. Harm to democracy, electoral processes & human rights

Digital technologies have given rise to a series of new challenges to human rights, and democracy (including elections). Freedom of expression is nowadays frequently restricted in the form of governments censoring content online. Subjective decisions by institutions and companies who design computer algorithms to process information also interfere with freedom of speech. The right to privacy in the digital sphere has received a lot of attention in recent years, as evidence continues to resurface that private data can be accessed ever more easily by third parties, including state authorities, companies or criminals. Revelations about state surveillance and the collection of personal data by large corporations have raised the level of awareness amongst the general public and motivated many actors to work on transitioning the right to privacy in the online sphere[2].

Artificial intelligence systems are increasingly being used in all areas of public life. However, the lack of adequate regulation on the development and deployment of AI-powered technology poses a threat to our digital and human rights. Civil Society Organisations constantly call on EU and other organisations to foreground fundamental rights in Artificial Intelligence[3].

Disinformation leads to an increase in polarisation and even cases of violent unrest. Having access to reliable sources of information is particularly important during crucial moments such as the run-up to and aftermath of elections, or during protests and civic demonstrations. In this case, independent free media and civil society action is necessary to counterweight the damaging effects of disinformation. Reliable reporting, monitoring and fact checking are important to creating an environment in which citizens can take informed decision based on accurate information.

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

Professional and other media workers, bloggers, online activists, human rights and democracy defenders:
The activities will support media workers to increase their skills and capacities to work in increasingly unsafe (digital) environments affected by media capture and few opportunities for training. Special support is foreseen for those media actors at constant risk online and offline. The project will prioritise women and youth, who are particularly affected by the increase of human rights violations online and offline.

CSO organizations are amongst those who are either direct victims of disinformation campaigns, or whose causes suffer from illegal or unfair hate speech online caused by bots, or whose actions online are under surveillance and blocked. CSOs in developing countries have low media and digital literacy and low capacity to mobilize against both attacks. As, in particular since COVID, a growing part of the professional communications are online, there is an urgent need to strengthen the digital security skills of CSOs and HRDs all around the world.

This action supports CSOs to promote independent media and a digital sphere compliant with human rights standards. This action will increase their capacities to monitor the state of freedom of press, to report on violations of civil liberties and human rights in the digital sphere, and to provide evidence on best practices in supporting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the digital sphere.

Media regulators, journalism associations, unions, media councils, involved lawyers, etc will be empowered to continue their work in promoting a plurality of views in the media in situations where media is under threat of being captured by economic and political actors, and to challenge, including through strategic litigation, when new technologies are misused to hinder human rights compliance.

State authorities and legislators will be supported to build capacities in an equitable, inclusive, and transparent manner in the face of the societal transformations expedited through increased adoption of digital technologies.

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[2] S*urveillance and censorship: The impact of technologies on human rights*, Study for the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights -
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/549034/EXPO_STU(2015)549034_EN.pdf

[3] Civil society calls on the EU to put fundamental rights first in the AI Act - https://www.fidh.org/en/international-advocacy/european-union/civil-society-calls-on-the-eu-to-put-fundamental-rights-first-in-the

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective** (Impact) of this action is to promote and protect democracy, counter threats to democratic and electoral processes and safeguard fundamental freedoms worldwide through supporting media independence and by harnessing the opportunities and countering the challenges of new digital technologies.

The **Specific Objectives** (outcomes) of this action are to:
1 Protect and enhance professional capacities of journalists, bloggers, online activists, and human rights defenders
2 Promote a human rights-based approach to digital technologies and counter their misuse and abuse

The **outputs** to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:
For SO1
1.1. Strengthened capacities of media actors for the promotion of freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism online, combatting hate speech, extremism and disinformation including through a country-to-country exchange programme

1.2. Increased capacities to harness digital technologies and alternative media models to counter media capture and support sustainable media

For SO2
2.1 Enhanced capacities of CSOs, media actors, human rights defenders and democracy activists to counter the negative effects of new technologies, including interferences in democratic and electoral processes
2.2. Enhanced regulatory frameworks for digital environments and Artificial Intelligence that respect human rights

3.2 Indicative Activities

As (parts of) the Action may be implemented through grants, detailed activities will be listed in the guidelines, taking into account current policy and context developments. While the specific activities are to be proposed by the CSOs when applying to the call for proposals, the following non-exhaustive list is suggested :

For SO 1 (Component 1): Protect and enhance professional capacities of journalists, bloggers, online activists, and human rights defenders
- A global initiative of country-to country exchange for journalists' and media workers' learning and professional development to use new digital tools and professional methodologies to investigate, analyse data, fact-check, map, report, illustrate, including on topics such as anti-corruption, environment, disinformation, especially around elections time etc.
- Capacity building programmes designed for women, youth and minority groups media actors to integrate journalism curricula and experiment the use of technology in media environments,
- Public awareness, advocacy or communication to promote of laws and practices that protect freedom of opinion and expression and uphold democratic principles and human rights in the digital sphere
- Supporting independent media actors to confront disinformation through media self-regulation, to create guidelines and principles on combating disinformation
- Provide in the medium term support to journalists and media actors at risk, exiled or displaced, including: financial support, legal support related to migration issues, education and language training, etc.
- Support for developing new business models and adaptation to new technologies, including through micro-grants, mentoring, peer-to-peer learning
- Support for building and maintaining networks of journalists and media actors to train and work on cross-country investigations, fact-checking, etc.

For SO 2 (Component 2): To promote a human rights-based approach to digital technologies and counter their misuse and abuse

- technological tools to enhance privacy and security of people living in non-democratic regimes when using Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- CSO tools and platforms to investigate online censorship, surveillance and attacks against human rights and democracy activists, media actors, CSOs;
- support advocacy towards tech companies to make them align with human rights obligations, including by creating spaces of dialogue and interaction between business and civil society
- public awareness, advocacy and accountability across all areas of digital rights;
- capacity building/strengthening of governments to prepare better for ethical development and deployment of AI applications within their respective jurisdiction. Expertise can be shared and grounded in EU legislative work on AI
- Provide training & capacity building/strengthening to CSOs, journalists, media actors, Human Rights and democracy defenders to be better prepared to respond to and protect from the threats of new technologies such as censorship, cyber-attacks, surveillance, internet shutdowns and/or internet disruptions, including around elections time and issues surrounding data protection and the use of data including in the context of elections.

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). Finally, in the framework of the European Green Deal23 and the Guidelines for integrating the environment and climate change24, the action will aim to help protect the environment and combat climate change as a cross-cutting issue in its activities.

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 this action will be actively promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women through dedicated programmes. As the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III rightly points out, 'Gender equality is a core value of the EU and a universally recognised human right, as well as an imperative to well-being, economic growth, prosperity, good governance, peace and security'. This action is especially relevant to GAP III's thematic area of engagement number 4 'Promoting equal participation and leadership', contributing in particular to the following GAP III objective: 'Enabling conditions created for equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making'. Gender equality will thus be a significant objective of this action (OECD-DAC marker G1) and will be mainstreamed across all results and activities.

Human Rights
The action also uses the human **rights-based approach (HRBA)** as a methodology, working towards strengthening the capacities of rights-holders to make their claims and of duty-bearers to meet their obligations, and applying its five principles: 1) all rights are applied; 2) participation and access to the decision-making process; 3) non-discrimination and equal access; 4) accountability and access to the rule of law; and 5) transparency and access to information.

Disability
As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. In line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New European Consensus on Development, this action applies

the **'leave no one behind'** principle, aiming to reduce vulnerabilities and addressing inequalities, including those towards persons with disabilities.

Democracy
The actions help to implement the **European Commission's priorities for 2019-2024**[4], as regards making the EU a **stronger global actor**, responding efficiently to global challenges, projecting its values and contributing to peace and prosperity in the world, and as regards **democratic change**. The Action is in line with the **Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy**[5], where democracy features prominently, and with the **New European Consensus on Development**[6], in particular paragraph 61, which states that *'The EU and its Member States will promote the universal values of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and human rights for all, because they are preconditions for sustainable development and stability'*.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience
The action will also duly consider and mainstream conflict sensitivity and will contribute towards building peaceful and resilient societies. It will apply the "do-no-harm" and "leave no one behind" principles.

Disaster Risk Reduction
By promoting transparency, access to information and combating disinformation, the action will also contribute towards disaster risk reduction at global level.

Other considerations if relevant
The action will also duly consult and involve **civil society** in its design and implementation, in line with the Communication on engagement with Civil Society[7] and will aim to engage and involve **young people**, in view of the upcoming EU Youth Action Plan (YAP), duly considering young people's issues. The action will pay special attention to harnessing the opportunities and dealing with the challenges of the **digital transformation**, in particular its impact on democratic governance and human rights, in accordance with the EU's policy on Digital4Develpoment[8]. Additionally, it will also take into consideration the importance of supporting anticorruption efforts through the use of media actors.

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
1	Shrinking civic space will not allow programme activities in some the most challenging environment.	M	H	Creating a global programme that relies on virtual networks can side step some of the issues posed by shrinking civic space
2	Risk of overlapping activities and	M	L	Close coordination with ProtectDefenders.eu will ensure that there

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4 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024_en
5 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy"Policy'.
6 The New European Consensus on Development "- 'Our world, our dignity, our future".
7 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM%3A2012%3A0492%3AFIN%3AEN%3APDF
8 Digital4Development: mainstreaming digital technologies and services into EU Development Policydevelopment policy, available at : https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/swd-digital4development_part1_v3.pdf

	duplication with already existing projects and initiatives.			will be no to limited overlap on actions related to the protection and safety of human rights defenders, including journalists, bloggers and online activists.
1	The COVID-19 health crisis does not allow travel and in-person meetings.	H	M	Meetings will be held online as necessary, with physical meetings only when they add value and it is practical to organise them. Hybrid solutions will be explored when possible using safe communication channels for sensitive information.
1	Increase in internet shutdowns, online censorship and digital practices of mass surveillance.	L	M	Support the design capacity building programmes that enable target stakeholders to overcome these challenges. The EU will continue to increase its advocacy/political actions to call States to repeal surveillance measures, shutdowns and network disruptions. Member States have publicly condemned such practices.
	Technical evolutions arrive at a particular fast-pace, outdate quickly the knowledge on certain practices/mechanisms.	M	M	Working closely with tech experts/ human rights and tech experts to ensure that measures deployed are in line with the emerging challenges
1	The digital divide in terms of access to technology based on gender, socio-economic background and accessibility disrupts project activities.	M	M	Capacity building and mentoring/exchange programmes will focus on targeting marginalised groups and prioritising the inclusion of women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Lessons Learnt:

The design of this action primarily draws lessons from the following projects financed under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in 2014-2021.

· *Together for reliable information.* This project was launched as a response to the challenges media faced due to the COVID-19 crisis. The project provided grants to journalists and media houses in 17 Sub-Saharan African countries allowing them to continue production of quality public interest content to their audiences. This allowed vulnerable media organisation to continue reporting during the crisis. The project also had a monitoring component focused on attacks against journalist, legal analysis and monitoring of policies that impact press freedom, which produced valuable information on the needs of media actors and the state of media freedoms.

- Three projects selected through the 2018 EIDHR global call for proposal in 2018 promoting the use of digital tools to promote civic participation. *Supporting meaningful civic engagement for improved accountability by leveraging digital technologies* focused on developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and ensuring public access to information and fundamental freedoms. *BRYCA: Building Resistance in Youth in Central Asia to the influence of illegal hate speech and misinformation online and on social media* promoted media literacy and encouraged young people to blog as a means to diversifying information sources. *Exposing bot disinformation in Brazil* focused on promoting transparency on the use of bots and enhancing news agencies fact-checking capabilities. These projects promoted the use of new technologies in a responsible way. This action build upon these learnings.

- *'Media and freedom of expression in the framework of EU democracy support (Media4Democracy)'* helped EU Delegations to increase understanding and implementation of the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline. The technical assistance increased the number of Delegations' actions in support of media.

- *'Supporting Democracy – A Citizens' Organisations Programme'*. This project helped EU Delegations to involve civil society in the EU democracy pilot exercise, particularly in elaborating and implementing the democracy action plans. The facility helped Delegations to work in depth with civil society on democratic accountability, promote digital technologies for democratic participation and tackle shrinking civil space.

- This action will also build on *Erasmus Mundus Journalism* (coordinated by the Aarhus University and the Danish School of Media), the DG Connect *Rising stars programme* and Member States' initiatives (as the Václav Havel Journalism Fellowship) and on the inputs of the 2011 feasibility study on the preparatory action "ERASMUS for journalists", committed by DG Information Society and Media.

- These actions will be implemented in complementarity with the Multiannual Action Plan 2021-2024 of the Civil Society Organisations Thematic Programme

Other relevant organisations have implemented actions, from which lessons can be learned:

- Published every year since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the **World Press Freedom Index** is an important advocacy tool based on the principle of emulation between states. Because it is well-known, its influence over governments is growing, and many heads of state and government fear its annual publication. The Index is a point of reference that is quoted by media throughout the world and used by diplomats and international entities such as the United Nations and the World Bank.
- **Freedom House** publishes their annual flagship report **'Freedom in the World'** which assesses the real-world rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals, amongst which freedom of expression is one of those monitored. Following this, the organisation also produces a spinoff report of freedom of expression, with a focus on freedom of press or freedom on the net.
- **UNESCO** produces reports monitoring press freedom. Amongst one the latest reports is **'Reporting Facts: Free from Fear or Favour, In-Focus edition of the World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development'** which analyses the factors interfering with editorial independence. The organisation is a point of reference on supporting media development due to its long-standing commitment to supporting knowledge sharing.
- **UNESCO** has adopted of a comprehensive global standard-setting instrument to provide AI with a strong ethical basis. It aims not only to protect but also promote human rights and human dignity, and to be an ethical guiding compass and a global normative bedrock allowing to build strong respect for the rule of law in the digital world.

Overall, the lessons learnt highlight the importance of supporting the essential work of media actors, human rights and democracy defenders and harnessing the power and combating the challenges rising from the new technologies.

3.5   The Intervention Logic

Evidence shows that independent media actors fulfil a vital role in democracies but are currently under duress due to a series of political, economic and social factors that are underpinned by the growing trend of autocratisation, the development of new technologies and the COVID-19 crisis. A programme designed to protect, capacitate and connect independent media actors will provide essential support to media actors, CSOs, human rights and democracy defenders working in increasingly shrunken civic spaces, enabling them to survive the crisis.

The learning, training, fellowship programmes will help media actors to explore different media markets and models. Supporting their sustainability will enhance a plurality of opinion and enable media actors to counter the threat of media capture. By being able to respond to these challenges, media actors can continue their vital work in providing citizen with accurate and reliable reporting which enables citizens to make informed decisions.

This action will support CSOs, human rights and democracy defenders to understand, research and be protected from human rights abuses and attacks on democracy facilitated by misuse of new technologies. This understanding will enable CSOs and individuals to adapt their work to the new dangers, to advocate for respect of human rights online, to advocate and discuss with social media platforms.

This action will support state authorities and CSOs efforts to adapt legislation related to digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence. The activities will enhance legislation and local norms which are respectful of human rights and are in line with international and EU positions on human rights in the digital sphere.

By doing this, we strengthen and protect democracy and fundamental human rights.

This action is Union's contribution to the Team Europe Initiative on Democracy – TED. This action will be integrated in the third pillar of TED, "Media and digitalisation". TED will not intervene in the management of the individual grant-funded projects, which will be independent of the TED structures, but will instead ensure that they are coordinated with similar EU Member States actions and that the action as a whole is contributing to the results identified in TED's pillar three."

TED will ensure that actions contracted covered by this AD will be coordinated with similar EU Member States actions. Beneficiaries of the actions will be asked to collaborate and communicate with TED Secretariat to ensure coordination between democracy support actions. Narrative reporting from the actions may be shared with TED Secretariat to ensure lessons learned and coordination.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

This indicative logframe constitutes the basis for the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the intervention.

On the basis of this logframe matrix, a more detailed logframe (or several) may be developed at contracting stage. In case baselines and targets are not available for the action, they should be informed for each indicator at signature of the contract(s) linked to this AD, or in the first progress report at the latest. New columns may be added to set intermediary targets (milestones) for the Output and Outcome indicators whenever it is relevant.
- At inception, the first progress report should include the complete logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets).
- Progress reports should provide an updated logframe with current values for each indicator.
- The final report should enclose the logframe with baseline and final values for each indicator.

The indicative logical framework matrix may evolve during the lifetime of the action depending on the different implementation modalities of this action.

The activities, the expected Outputs and related indicators, targets and baselines included in the logframe matrix may be updated during the implementation of the action, no amendment being required to the Financing Decision.

PROJECT MODALITY (3 levels of results / indicators / Source of Data / Assumptions - no activities)

Results	Results chain (@): Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (@): (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To promote and protect democracy and safeguard fundamental freedoms' worldwide through actions focused on supporting and promoting media independence and freedom and by harnessing the opportunities and counter the challenges of new digital technologies.	1. Number of non-EU countries improving their country situation score under the World Press Freedom Index (MIP indicator) 2. Number of non-EU countries improving their country situation score under the Freedom House Index on Freedom of the Net (MIP indicator)			Worldwide Governance Indicator – Voice and Accountability dimension. World Press Freedom Index as reported by Reporters without Borders Freedom House Index Freedom of the Net Index	*Not applicable*
Specific Objective 1	1. Protect and enhance professional skills, abilities and capacities of journalists, bloggers, online activists, and human rights defenders	1.1 Number of journalists, bloggers and other media workers that received concrete assistance from the EU (physical protection, legal counselling, emergency sheltering, relocation and return plans, among others). (MIP indicator) (disaggregated by sex –and age) 1.2 Number of journalists, bloggers and other media actors who benefited from EU-funded training or participated to professional development activities, including for adapting to digitalisation and online platforms disaggregated by sex (MIP indicator)			EU intervention monitoring and reporting systems: (i) interim and final reports from implementing organisations, (ii) ROM reviews and (iii) evaluations Press articles Reports of specialised media organisations	

		1.3 Number of women and youth journalists trained (disaggregated by country of origin)				
Specific Objective 2	2. To promote a human rights-based approach to digital technologies and counter their misuse and abuse	2.1 Number of CS-led advocacy strategies and campaigns to raise awareness on unlawful restrictions on fundamental freedoms funded by the EU (MIP indicator)			EU intervention monitoring and reporting systems: (i) interim and final reports from implementing organisations, (ii) ROM reviews and (iii) evaluations Press articles Reports of specialised media organisations	
Output 1 **related to SO 1**	1.1 Strengthened capacities of media actors for the promotion of freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism online, combatting hate speech, extremism and disinformation	1.1.1 Number of media equipped by the Action with necessary tools to collect/record information 1.1.2 Number of young journalists and media workers from third countries participating in country-to-country exchanges for learning and professional development.			1.1 Annual reports by Freedom House 1.2 Annual reports by Freedom House 1.3 Data reported by UNESCO. Civil society data is	

		.1.2 Number of civil society and media institution representatives trained by the EU intervention on advocacy (disaggregated by sex) 1.1.3 Number of people reached through civil society campaigns/events on access to information, freedom of expression, hate speech, gender-based violence online, extremism and disinformation in the use of media thanks to support of the EU intervention, disaggregated by sex, age and topic covered during training 1.1.4 Quality of independent reports on media freedom produced by or supported by the intervention 1.1.5 Number of CSO and media organization representatives participating in development/amendment of laws and policies on freedom of expression and access to information, with support from the intervention (disaggregated by sex) 1.1.6 Status of development/amendment of laws and policies on freedom of expression and access to information 1.1.7 Number of meetings/exchanges/ conferences on access to information and freedom of expression with the participation of civil society, media institutions and public policy makers			available in reports from CPJ and Reporters without Borders (RSF) 1.4 EU interventions monitoring and reporting systems: annual and final reports from implementing organisations 1.5 Press articles 1.6 List of equipment provided to media outlets	
Output 2 **related to SO 1**	1.2 Increased capacities to harness digital technologies and alternative media models to counter media	1.2.1 Number of media outlets that develop reliable business plans thanks to support of the Action			EU intervention monitoring and reporting systems: (i)	

	capture and support sustainable media	1.2.2 Number of journalists, bloggers and other media actors who benefitted from EU-funded trainings, including for adapting to digitalization and online platforms.			interim and final reports from implementing organisations, (ii) ROM reviews and (iii) evaluations Press articles Reports of specialised media organisations	
Output 1 **related to SO 2**	2.1 Enhanced capacities of CSOs, media actors, human rights and democracy activists to counter the negative effects of new technologies	2.1.1 Number of CS-led advocacy strategies and campaigns to raise awareness on unlawful restrictions on fundamental freedoms funded by the EU 2.1.2 Number of digital tools developed with EU support for the protection and promotion of human rights, disaggregated by type of actor			EU intervention monitoring and reporting systems: (i) interim and final reports from implementing organisations, (ii) ROM reviews and (iii) evaluations Press articles Reports of specialised media organisations	
Output 2 **related to SO2**	2.2 Enhanced regulatory frameworks for digital environments and Artificial Intelligence that respect human rights	2.2.1 Number of countries supported by the EU to a) develop and/or revise, b) implement digital-related policies / strategies / laws / regulations (EU RF indicator) 2.2.2 Number of inclusive dialogues and consultations on the regulation and use of new technologies with government's			EU intervention monitoring and reporting systems: (i) interim and final reports from implementing organisations, (ii) ROM	

		authorities in partner countries, promoted and facilitated by EU-funded actions 2.2.3 Number of NGOs supported by the EU-funded intervention in the detection and oversight of compliance of online activities and policies with human rights and democratic standards			reviews and (iii) evaluations

4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude any financing agreement with a 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 72 months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this Financing Decision.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures[9].

4.3.1 Direct Management (Grants)

Grants: (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The grants will contribute to achieving all objectives under this action.
 Financial Framework Partnership Agreements (FFPAs)) may be launched with global civil society partners which illustrate the commitment of the European Commission to support CSOs not only as providers of aid but also as pivotal actors of governance. These FFPAs would allow for further alignment of CSO initiatives and European Union's policy priorities through partnerships that highlight mutual interest and common shared objectives. FFPAs would allow this Action to reach different kinds of actors than those best placed to compete in global calls for proposals.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

NGOs, foundations, public bodies, international organisations, non-for-profit organisations

4.3.2 Indirect Management with a Member State Organisation or an international organisation

A part of component 2 may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: a) experience with research, development of recommendations on technology and Artificial Intelligence respectful of Human Rights; b) commitment to human rights and democracy; c) global outreach, especially in developing countries; d) experience with managing EU projects. The implementation by this entity entails the sub-objective 2.2 Enhanced regulatory frameworks for digital environments and Artificial Intelligence that respect human rights.

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[9] 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.

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

If the above-mentioned implementation modalities cannot be implemented due to exceptional circumstances, those in indirect management may be replaced by direct management through the award of grant contracts; and those in direct management may be replaced by indirect management with a Member State Organisation, an EU specialised agency or an international organisation.

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.

4.5   Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Third-party contribution, in currency identified
Component 1 composed of	EUR 20 000 000	
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	EUR 20 000 000	
Component 2 composed of	EUR 12 000 000	
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	EUR 11 000 000	
Indirect management with a Member State organisation or international organisation> cf. section 4.3.2.	EUR 1 000 000	TBD
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 **Audit** – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Totals	EUR 32 000 000	

4.6   Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

An overall **Strategic Committee** will be established to provide strategic guidance, ensure coordination among its two components and review overall implementation. It will be chaired by the European Commission's DG INTPA

4.7   Pre-conditions

NA

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, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support).

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).

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a(n) final evaluation(s) may be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the Commission or via an implementing partner.
It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that this action is a pilot being tested.
Gender equality expertise as appropriate will be ensured in monitoring and evaluation teams.
The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least one month in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.
The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country 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, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

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.

It will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

However, action documents for specific sector programmes are in principle no longer required to include a provision for communication and visibility 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.

As per Article 47 of Regulation (UE) 2021/947 on derogations from visibility requirements, security issues or political sensitivities may make it preferable or necessary to limit communication and visibility activities in certain countries or areas or during certain periods. In such cases, the target audience and the visibility tools, products and channels to be used to promote a given action will be determined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation and agreement with the EU.

Appendix 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

An Intervention[10] (also generally called project/programme) is the operational entity associated to a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Interventions are the most effective (hence optimal) entities for the operational follow-up by the Commission of its external development operations. As such, Interventions constitute the base unit for managing operational implementations, assessing performance, monitoring, evaluation, internal and external communication, reporting and aggregation.

Primary Interventions are those contracts or groups of contracts bearing reportable results and respecting the following business rule: 'a given contract can only contribute to one primary intervention and not more than one'. An individual contract that does not produce direct reportable results and cannot be logically grouped with other result reportable contracts is considered a 'support entities'. The addition of all primary interventions and support entities is equivalent to the full development portfolio of the Institution.

The present Action identifies as

Action level		
☐	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
Group of actions level		
☐	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#): \<Present action\> \<Other action\>
Contract level		
☒	Group of contracts	Every contract signed by an authorising officer will be a PINTV

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[10] ARES (2021)4204912 - For the purpose of consistency between terms in OPSYS, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI have harmonised 5 key terms, including 'action' and 'Intervention' where an 'action' is the content (or part of the content) of a Commission Financing Decision and 'Intervention' is a coherent set of activities and results which constitutes an effective level for the operational follow-up by the EC of its operations on the ground. See more on the concept of intervention.