



EN

THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multiannual support measures in favour of the Overseas Countries and Territories for 2023 and 2024

Action Document for Support measures OCT 2023-2024

MULTIANNUAL MEASURE

This document constitutes the multiannual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and support measures in the sense of Article 80 DOAG and of Article 24 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Title /OPSYS Basic Act | Support measures OCT 2023-2024 OPSYS reference: ACT-61968 Financed under Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland (DOAG). |
| 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 at the following location: Brussels and Overseas Countries and Territories. |
| 4. Programming document | No MIP – horizontal support measures |
| 5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results | No link with MIP - horizontal support measures The overall objective of the Action is to strengthen the OCTs' capacities to engage in the EU-OCT policy dialogue and to formulate/implement strategic policies, regulatory frameworks and cooperation programmes and to provide support to OCTA. |
| PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION | |
| 6. Priority Area(s), sectors | Public sector and administrative management |
| 7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | Main SDG is: SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong institutions. Other significant SDGs are: SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls SDG 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal |
| 8 a) DAC code(s) | 15110 – Public sector policy and administrative management – 100% |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 8 b) Main Delivery Channel | Central Government (recipient) – 12001 | | | |
| 9. Targets | <input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input 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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | Aid to environment @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Disaster Risk Reduction @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Nutrition @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | RIO Convention markers | Not targeted | Significant objective | Principal objective |
| | Biological diversity @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Combat desertification @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Climate change mitigation @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Climate change adaptation @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 11. Internal markers and Tags: | Policy objectives | Not targeted | Significant objective |
| Digitalisation @ | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services | | YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Connectivity @ | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| transport people2people energy | | YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | digital connectivity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| | Migration @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Reduction of Inequalities @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Covid-19 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| BUDGET INFORMATION | | | | |
| 12. Amounts concerned | Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.050100 Total estimated cost: EUR 3 400 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 3.4 million for year 2023 and 2024 The contribution is for an amount of EUR 2 200 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2023 and for an amount of EUR 1 200 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2024 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: - Procurement - Grants | | | |
| 14. Type of measure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperation facility <input type="checkbox"/> Measures in favour of Civil Society | | | |

1.2 Summary of the Action

The 13 Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are non-sovereign entities linked to Denmark, France and the Netherlands. OCTs are neither part of the EU territory nor of the EU single market. Relations between the OCTs and the EU date back to the signature of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

The OCTs are associated with the European Union through successive Overseas Association Decisions, currently the Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG) adopted on 5 October 2021. This Annual Action Plan comes in the context of the implementation of the DOAG.

The OCT cooperation facility aims to respond to OCTs' needs, in particular the formulation of new actions, transversal support measures, support to policy dialogue and strategic communication as well as for the organisation of the annual EU-OCT Forum.

In 2000, the OCTs decided to set up the OCT Association (OCTA) to coordinate and represent their interests towards the EU¹.

The Action "Support measures OCT 2023-2024" will combine the OCT cooperation facility and possible support to OCTA. The cooperation facility will be a flexible and demand-driven facility to rapidly mobilise technical expertise and support to underpin the EU-OCT partnership. It builds on similar measures in place in 2021 and 2022.

For 2024, the support to OCTA will be technical assistance, and not an operating grant as in the past, due to recent OCTA's management and financial difficulties (audits ongoing on 2020, 2021 and 2022 grants). For 2025, the situation will be reevaluated to assess the possibility of a direct operating grant to OCTA.

The Action of EUR 3.4 million will be subject to a multiannual decision in 2023.

¹ OCTA was registered in Belgium as a non-profit association (ASBL) in March 2003.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

There are thirteen Overseas Countries and Territories, spread from the Poles to the Tropics, associated with the Union. Despite the big diversity among them, OCTs share similar characteristics, which represent particular challenges to ensure economic growth: geographical isolation resulting in high transportation costs, small size of their economy (in particular small size of the local market), high dependency on imports (including of energy sources) and sometimes on financial transfers, poor diversification of exports of goods and services, low competitiveness of the local industries and, limited institutional capacity. In the context of globalization, efforts to enhance OCTs' competitiveness and unlock the potential in the OCTs are necessary, in order to ensure that OCTs' assets are capitalized upon for achieving sustainable growth, while taking into account the regional contexts and difficulties. Furthermore, strengthening the resilience of OCTs is essential in order to address the vulnerabilities of OCTs related to economic, social, environmental and natural shocks.

The EU-OCT partnership, and in particular this Action, is framed by the Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG), including its references to the contribution of civil society to OCTs' developments (recital 12), gender equality and women empowerment (recital 13), education as a lever for sustainable development (recital 26) and the importance of cultural diversity and identity (recital 27).

The objective of the support to OCTA is to strengthen its institutional capacity. Nevertheless, these last years OCTA had some severe administrative and financial difficulties, and audits have been launched in 2023 on 2020, 2021 and 2022 grants. While waiting for the results and possible following actions, the support in 2024 will take the form of technical assistance. The possibility of a new operating grant for 2025 is nevertheless still mentioned in this action document.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis:

Having limited populations and resources, the OCTs suffer from limited administrative capacity. This may result in difficulties in managing European programmes or lack in formulated policies in some sectors. As per article 74 of the DOAG, the Union shall contribute to the achievement of the association's overall objectives through the provision of adequate financial resources and appropriate technical assistance aimed at strengthening the OCTs' capacities to formulate and implement strategic and regulatory frameworks.

In parallel, each OCT has the primary responsibility for the formulation of strategies, priorities and arrangements in order to ensure to the best extend possible the ownership principle embedded in the DOAG.

In this spirit, the Action "Support measures OCT 2023-2024" aims to support the local administration by providing financial resources for capacity building by means of studies, technical assistance or evaluations, in order to ensure the ownership and sustainability of the programmes funded by the EU.

The activities will focus mainly on the areas of mutual interest, such as the economic diversification of OCTs' economies; the promotion of green growth; the sustainable management of natural resources; the adaptation to and mitigation of impacts of climate change; the promotion of disaster risk reduction; the promotion of education, research, innovation and scientific cooperation activities and the promotion of social, cultural and economic exchanges between the OCTs, their neighbours and other partners, enhanced public finance management frameworks, etc.

In 2000, the OCTs decided to set up the OCT Association (OCTA) to coordinate and represent their interests towards the EU. The objective of the support to OCTA is to strengthen the institutional framework, in order to help OCTA accompany the OCT in the framework of the EU-OCT partnership. Because of the administrative and financial issues the association experimented in 2022, the Commission decided to reevaluate the cooperation with the association, in light of the conclusions of the ongoing audit reports. Therefore, technical assistance is envisaged for 2024, instead of an operating grant, and possibly an operating grant for 2025, once all contractual issues are solved.

In addition to the Commission services (and notably the services acting as the Contracting Authority), the relevant stakeholders are the OCTs' governments or their EU-based representatives, including OCTA. Whenever possible, broad consultations, notably with non-governmental organisations, would be sought.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective of this Action is to finance the OCT cooperation facility, which aims to strengthen the OCTs' capacities to engage in the EU-OCT policy dialogue and to formulate/implement strategic policies, regulatory frameworks and cooperation programmes and to provide support to OCTA.

The Specific Objectives of the OCT cooperation facility are:

- i. demand driven support for the implementation of the DOAG, the design and implementation of OCT policies, strategies² and programmes and their monitoring and evaluations as well as better awareness of EU horizontal programmes for which OCTs are eligible.
- ii. foster a more coherent and informed approach on themes of common interest such as the Green Deal, trade or cross-cutting issues³, within the OCTs as well as inter- and intra-regionally, including with Outermost Regions, ACP countries and other countries by means of studies, training and capacity building.
- iii. support the EU-OCT policy dialogue including for the organisation of the annual EU-OCT Forum.
- iv. support to youth initiatives in the EU-OCT partnership.
- v. more holistically enhance the visibility of the EU-OCT partnership and support strategic communication actions to promote the partnership, through both public awareness campaigns and targeted political communication activities.

The Specific Objectives of the support to OCTA are:

- i. to strengthen the capacity of the association.
- ii. ensure the running of the association to fulfil its role towards its 13 members.
- iii. fund priority activities approved in the annual OCTA workplan, in case of an operating grant in 2025.

The Outputs to be delivered by this Action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives are:

- 1.1 Technical Assistance for implementation of EU Programmes.
- 2.1 Studies in the areas of common interest.
- 3.1 Training on EU procedures attended by the OCTs.
- 4.1 Seminars and Conferences with participation of the OCTs.
- 5.1 Technical assistance for OCTA.

3.2 Indicative Activities⁴

Activities related to Output 1.1:

Carrying out studies or technical assistance including in support of programming/implementation of the DOAG. Audits and evaluations of projects when they cannot be financed from other sources;

Activities related to Output 2.1:

Studies in the areas of common interest. Provision of expertise that would facilitate and increase the understanding of issues concerning development, trade, environment, climate change etc. by key OCTs' actors (policy-makers and/or other relevant stakeholders);

Activities related to Output 3.1:

Supporting the OCT bodies and institutions, as well as national or regional agencies, in maintaining or improving their levels of implementation and monitoring of new and ongoing projects; when this support cannot be provided

² Technical assistance needs that are identified at the moment of the formulation and relate to the MIP/Action Document priority area benefitting from the bilateral programmes (budget support or not), should be funded from the bilateral envelope financing agreement.

³ Such as gender equality

⁴ When possible, the relevant activities would mainstream the principle of gender equality and human rights-based approach.

within the projects or programmes themselves.

Activities related to Output 4.1:

Organising the conferences, seminars and trainings considered relevant by the Commission. This may also include the funding of the annual OCT-EU Forums and inter and intra-regional seminars including with Outermost Regions, ACP countries and other third countries and territories; Supporting the participation of OCTs representatives in events related to international cooperation initiatives and in regional integration processes and participation of non OCTs representatives in OCTs' events.

Activities related to Output 5.1:

Provide technical assistance to OCTA in relation to the EU programmes accessible to OCTs, and the organisation of inclusive trainings, seminars⁵, including activities of coordination.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

As this Action supports all OCTs horizontally in all aspects of the EU-OCT partnership, it has the potential indirectly to contribute to a number of cross cutting objectives in support of climate change, environmental protection, gender equality, education, and resilience (including disaster risk reduction).

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 B (not requiring an EIA, but for which environment aspects will be addressed during design).

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 the Action will be informed by OCTs' policies on gender and draws inspiration for the EU Gender Action Plan III⁶ especially its third pillar related to strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women and in its forth pillar related to advancing equal participation and leadership for its component in support to the youths⁷. The DOAG also promotes the mainstreaming of gender equality into all initiatives as a key contribution to the successful achievement of the SDGs.

Human Rights

The Action will contribute to the promotion of human rights, in particular economic, social, and cultural rights by creating spaces enabling exchanges between OCTs and Europe. Human rights and intercultural dialogue could therefore be supported by the OCT cooperation facility notably through activities and studies informed by the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) principles: respect for all rights, non-discrimination, transparency, participation and accountability.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this Action is labelled as D0. This implies that working on disability-related issues is not a main objective of the Action. However, disability mainstreaming would be promoted whenever possible (notably through studies, evaluations and the organisation of events and the publication of materials).

Reduction of inequalities

Not applicable.

⁵ Whenever possible, the venues of events and their products would be made accessible to people with disabilities.

⁶ GAP III is not directly applicable for the OCTs.

⁷ I.e. in the Youth Priority programme the participation of young women is very relevant.

Democracy

Not applicable.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

Not applicable.

Disaster Risk Reduction

As this Action provides support to all OCTs horizontally in many aspects of the EU-OCT partnership, it has the potential to contribute indirectly to a number of cross cutting objectives in support of climate change, environmental protection, gender equality, education, and resilience (including disaster risk reduction).

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

| Category | Risks | Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low) | Impact (High/ Medium/ Low) | Mitigating measures |
|---------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| Planning, processes and systems | Funds are not properly planned to allow contracting in timely and equity manner | Medium | Medium | Establishment of pipeline of activities by the contracting authority with the close cooperation of the OCTs, the respective EU Delegations and OCTA |
| External risk | Weakness in OCTA's governance. | High | Medium | Assistance to identify needs for technical assistance. |
| People and the organisation | Lack of involvement and commitment from the OCT governments and authorities in the process of reinforcing the structure of OCTA | High | High | More transparent information from OCTA to OCTs. Increased involvement of all stakeholders, notably with enhanced participation of youth, women and indigenous people. Ongoing improving communication on OCTA file with all OCTs. Tripartite meetings should discuss and approve the annual workplan of OCTA. |

Lessons Learnt:

Since the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) an OCT cooperation facility demand-driven supported the EU-OCT partnership including the formulation of new programmes and the organisation of the annual Forum.

It is necessary to have a new OCT cooperation facility each year at the disposal of the EU- OCTs cooperation to support the implementation of the DOAG including through background studies of future cooperation and consultation seminars as well as the annual EU-OCT Forum.

The Commission is downsizing its support to OCTA due to lack of capacity of the association in the previous years. The Commission prefers targeted technical assistance for the management of OCTA, at least for 2024. In the future OCTA could receive support in the form of grant, after a due and conclusive assessment of their administrative situation.

3.5 The Intervention Logic⁸

The underlying intervention logic for this Action is to support the EU-OCTs partnership. This programme will be divided into several contracts to engage consultants and policy advice in form of technical assistance to conduct relevant assessments and support policy development in the context of the DOAG programmes.

In addition, specific contracts will be awarded for studies on the topics requested by the OCTs or the European Commission. Specific training, seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. will be financed in order to strengthen OCTs capacities including for their inter- and intra-regional engagement with Outermost Regions, ACP countries and other third countries and territories.

This support will help OCTA reinforce capacities in the key functions of its mandate for a better contribution to the sustainable development of the OCTs and to the implementation of the Overseas Association Decision including Greenland (DOAG). In the long run, and combined with OCTs' efforts, it should lead to an improved EU-OCT political and policy dialogue and greater impact of the DOAG.

The underlying intervention logic is that this Action will help OCTA to support a coordinated institutional dialogue of OCTs with the EU, to inform OCTs and build their capacities (inter alia, to better know and access horizontal Union programmes, to raise their voice in international fora of interest, notably related to small island challenges (COP, Ocean initiatives, etc.) and to implement other activities as identified by the Executive Committee, following conclusions of discussions about the workplan in the tripartite meetings.

As this Action helps OCTA to support all OCTs horizontally in all aspects of the EU-OCT partnership, it has the potential indirectly to contribute to a number of cross cutting objectives in support of climate change, environmental protection, human rights, gender equality, education, and resilience (including disaster risk reduction).

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

Given the nature of this Action a Logical Framework Matrix is not required at Action level.

4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this Action, it is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with a partner country/OCT.

4.2 Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this Action, during which the activities described in section 3.2 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 48 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 measures⁹.

⁸ [@TEI Methodological Note to Support Design](#)

4.3.1 Direct Management (Grants)

Grants: (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The Support measures to OCTA will consist of annual operating grant to directly co-finance the institutional strengthening of the organisation and the regular functioning of its Secretariat, as well as the implementation of the activities as identified by the Executive Committee of OCTA and described above. The list of activities and priorities of each year will be further detailed in the annual roadmaps of OCTA.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The grant applicant for this direct award is OCTA as a legal entity, registered in Belgium as a non-profit association (ASBL). The statutes of OCTA were revised in February 2023.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA).

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified in line with the provisions of Article 195(c) of FR because the beneficiary (OCTA) is in a factual monopoly situation. Indeed, OCTA is the only organisation composed of all the OCTs listed in Annex II TFEU, and the only organisation mandated by the OCTs to improve EU-OCT political and policy dialogue and promote strategic partnerships for the sustainable development of the OCTs members of OCTA.

If issues, as shown by audits, are not resolved, an operating grant will not be an option and the amount dedicated to this grant will take the form of technical assistance.

4.3.2 Direct Management (Procurement)

The overall objective of the Action is to strengthen the OCTs' capacities to engage in the EU-OCT policy dialogue and to formulate/implement strategic policies, regulatory frameworks and cooperation programmes. The OCT cooperation facility will be a flexible and demand driven facility to rapidly mobilise technical expertise and support to underpin the EU-OCT partnership. It builds on similar support measures in place in the previous period.

This Action also aims to support OCTA, notably its main objectives of disseminating valuable information on the relationship between the EU and the OCTs to its members and building their capacities (inter alia, to better know and access horizontal Union programmes). OCTA will provide a list of technical assistance needs according to its activities to be approved by the Commission.

In case the issues that OCTA is facing currently, are not support resolved by July 2024, and the Commission is not in a position to support OCTA through technical assistance, the reserved funds to OCTA will be used through technical assistance to OCTs.

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.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this Action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation, which applies to OCTs according to the DOAG).

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.

4.5 Indicative Budget

| Indicative Budget components | EU contribution (amount in EUR) |
|---|--|
| Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3 | |
| Procurement total envelope under section 4.3.2 | 2 900 000 |
| Grants – total envelope under section 4.3.1 | 400 000 |
| Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3 | 0 |
| Strategic communication and public diplomacy | 100 000 |
| Totals | 3 400 000 |

4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

On the initiative of the Commission services responsible for the implementation of the DOAG, seminars, studies or technical assistance measures will be financed in relation to the identification, programming and implementation of activities contained in the DOAG.

Requests for funding referring to individual OCTs will be channelled and/or initiated through the corresponding EU Delegation, EU Office or through Headquarters and will have to be duly motivated regarding objectives to be achieved, relevance and impact. Requests for funding can also be made by OCTs/OCTA in accordance with modalities set out above.

The demands for funding will inform the respective services in the Commission in establishing an annual pipeline of actions to be financed. The final funding decisions will be made by the relevant Commission services. This will reduce the identified risk of the use of the funds not being properly planned.

Where relevant, use will be made of possible framework contracts where the European Commission is identified as beneficiary. Alternatively, use will be made of the relevant framework contracts when the OCTs are identified as beneficiaries.

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 its contribution to this Action and ensuring effective coordination.

5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1 Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this Action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the Action and elaborate regular 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. Efforts will also be made to obtain where and when possible sex and youth disaggregated data to feed the monitoring.

All monitoring and reporting need to assess how the Action is considering the principle of gender equality and human rights-based approach.

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, an evaluation will not be carried out for this Action or its components.

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

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country/OCT 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/OCT, jointly decide on the follow up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

In addition, as appropriate, all evaluations should assess to what extent the Action is taking into account gender equality, women's empowerment and disability inclusion. Such expertise would be sought in the evaluation teams.

The financing of the evaluation may be covered by another measure constituting a Financing Decision.

5.3 Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this Action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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

At country/OCT 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 through this present Action, allowing to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions of the EU-OCT partnership with sufficient critical mass to be effective.

Strategic communication and public diplomacy activities may be implemented under the OCT cooperation facility and be in line with the 2022 document 'Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for External Actions' to ensure awareness, understanding and perception of the EU and its partnership with the OCTs is commensurate with the scale, scope and ambition of our sustained engagement.

With varying emphasis, activities may focus on the following complementary types of audience:

- Wider audiences, comprising citizens, especially in the 18-35 age bracket, who are not involved in policy, advocacy or international relations, and who may hardly be aware of the EU.
- Key political and opinion leaders and the wider diplomatic community which will be targeted through political communication, especially in the context of Summits, high level events and visits.
- Specialised audiences, made up of opinion leaders, activists and other multipliers who already have a stake in the sphere of policy, advocacy and international relations. These may include civil society, youth and women's groups, academia, business organisations, trade unions, and other such fora and networks.

Any strategic communication and public diplomacy activities undertaken will reflect the EU's political priorities and objectives and will be implemented via procurement. As such, it is envisaged that a contract for strategic communication and public diplomacy may be contracted under a framework contract or via tender.