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THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX 2

of the Commission Implementing Decision amending Commission Implementing Decision C(2022)8416 of 16.11.2022 on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Kingdom of Lesotho for 2022

Action Document for Cooperation Facility and Support Measures for Civil Society in Lesotho

ANNUAL PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and measures in the sense of Article 23 of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Cooperation Facility and Support Measures for Civil Society in Lesotho CRIS number: NDICI AFRICA/2021/43703 OPSYS number: ACT-60797 / JAD.1004933 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (<u>NDICI-Global Europe</u>)/ Overseas Association Decision/European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation Regulation
2. Team Europe Initiative	<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, supporting (inter alia) TEI on Green Deal
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in the Kingdom of Lesotho
4. Programming document	Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	Support measures (3.1. Measures in favour of civil society – 3.2. Cooperation facility)
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Support measures
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): 17 – Partnerships for the goals Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: SDG 1 – No Poverty SDG 5 – Gender Equality SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
8 a) DAC code(s)	14010 – Water sector policy and administrative management – 20.8%

	23110 – Energy policy and administrative management – 20.8% 15110 – Public sector policy and administrative management – 20.9% 15150 – Democratic participation and civil society – 37.5%			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society – 20000 European Commission – Development Share of Budget – 42001			
9. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
10. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Internal markers and Tags:	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

	digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Connectivity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity	YES	NO	
	energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	transport	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Migration @ (methodology for tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities @ (methodology for marker and tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): BGUE-B2022-14.020122-C1-INTPA Total estimated cost: EUR 8 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 8 000 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of Financing	Direct management through: - Grants - Procurement			
14. Type of Measure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperation facility <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measures in favour of Civil Society			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The European Union's cooperation strategy with Lesotho, the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027, focusses on two priority areas: (1) green and resilient economy and (2) good governance, peaceful and just society. Under the first priority area, EU cooperation aims to facilitate Lesotho's move towards a circular economy that becomes increasingly sustainable and self-sufficient with regard to energy generation and consumption and that provides affordable access for all to energy, water and sanitation. Under the second priority area, EU cooperation supports the process of national reforms undertaken by Lesotho and the improvement of service delivery to the citizenry, particularly social protection.

This action will contribute to both priority areas by strengthening civil society and the equitable participation and representation of women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity in policy- and decision-making at all levels, and by establishing a cooperation facility to support the implementation of the Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 and Team Europe Initiatives, including strategic communication activities to promote the values that inspire the partnership between Lesotho and the European Union.

The action foresees two components. The first component will establish a funding mechanism for civil society that provides diversified types of support tailor-made to the size and capacity of civil society actors. It will also provide capacity building for local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) (project management, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), financial capacity development, institutional strengthening, human rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming, etc.), promote evidence-based research and advocacy, and a platform for structured dialogues and participation.

The second component, the cooperation facility, will help mobilise long- and short-term expertise in a flexible, timely and demand-driven manner to support the preparation and implementation of national strategies, EU cooperation, as well as strategic communication and public diplomacy activities, following an audience-segmented communication approach.

This action is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and particularly SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals). It also contributes to the EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society, the EU Human Rights and Democracy Strategy and the EU Gender Action Plan III^{1 2}. By supporting the implementation of energy and water strategies and programmes and mobilising citizen participation in the definition and implementation of these policies, this action also contributes to the **Global Gateway strategy** and Green Deal Team Europe Initiative.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a mountainous country in Southern Africa, with a unique geography as it is entirely surrounded by South Africa. Around 80% of Lesotho's land is more than 1 800 m above sea level with an average elevation of 2 161 metres. Lesotho is included in the list of least-developed countries (LDCs)³ with a per capita gross national income of **USD 1,028⁴ (current, 2021)**. It is a small and largely rural country of about 2.1 million people, of whom more than 99% are ethnic Basotho. About 60% of Basotho live in the districts of Berea, Leribe, Maseru, and Mafeteng, in the arable lowlands. The remaining population lives in six districts that include the Senqu River Valley and comparatively more mountainous lands. Most people live in rural areas, but the share of the urban population has increased substantially, from 14% in 1990 to 29% in 2020⁵. Population growth has slowed since the early 1990s, from 2% a year to slightly more than 1%⁶.

Lesotho has suffered from political instability and internal conflicts, ever since gaining independence from the United Kingdom in October 1966. This has negatively impacted on both its socio-economic development and its ability to profit from regional economic integration. Today, Lesotho remains the only least developed country in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). It is confronted with a multitude of developmental challenges. Poverty is widespread and the level of inequality is one of the highest in the world. Social services delivery to citizens and economic activities are insufficient to lift the country out of poverty. There has been little progress despite the substantial inflow of international assistance over the decades since independence. Landlocked, food-insecure, and energy-dependant, Lesotho remains also extremely vulnerable to external shocks. Ranked as 124th out of 182 countries, it shows decreasing climate readiness and increased vulnerability over the last years⁷. Along these long lasting trends, the Covid-19 pandemic has further deteriorated and already fragile economy, largely reliant on foreign remittances and the export of primary products.

¹ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf

² The Gender Action Plan III is a Joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy which was welcomed through EU Presidency Conclusions of 16 December 2020 endorsed by 24 Member States.

³ https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/ldc_list.pdf

⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.ADJ.NNTY.PC.CD?locations=LS>

⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=LS>

⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=LS>

⁷ ND Global Adaptation Index, 2019

Even though some progress has been achieved regarding women rights, work still needs to be done in Lesotho to achieve gender equality. The adolescent birth rate is 90.8 per 1.000 women aged 15-19 as of 2017, down from 91 per 1.000 in 2016. As of 2024, only 25% of seats in parliament were held by women. In 2018, 16.5% of women aged 15-49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Also, women and girls aged 15+ spend 15.6% of their time on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 6.2% spent by men⁸.

Natural resources, including renewables, exist in abundance in Lesotho and if used in a sustainable and equitable manner have the potential to transform the country's economy into one that is green, circular and resilient. Lesotho is endowed with a great potential for renewable energy generation but it currently imports the majority of its electricity. Lesotho supplies a third of water to the economic powerhouses of Gauteng (the region of Johannesburg and Pretoria) and yet less than a third of its population has access to safely managed drinking water. Improved access to water and electricity is expected to unlock commercial opportunities and introduce trade possibilities between Lesotho, South Africa and the wider region, resulting in jobs and socio-economic development. At the same time, in order to overcome political instability and establish a conducive environment for this vision to be realised, Lesotho has embarked on national reforms in seven areas: constitutional, parliamentary, security sector, public sector, judiciary, economic and media reforms.

Against this backdrop, the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for Lesotho focusses on two priority areas: (1) green and resilient economy – contributing to the Green Deal Team Europe Initiative for Lesotho and (2) good governance, peaceful and just society. Under the first priority area, EU cooperation aims to facilitate Lesotho's move towards a circular economy that becomes increasingly sustainable and self-sufficient with regard to energy generation and consumption and that provides affordable access for all to energy, water and sanitation. Under the second priority area, EU cooperation will support the process of national reforms undertaken by Lesotho, and efforts to improve service delivery to the citizenry, particularly social protection.

The MIP is fully aligned with Lesotho's second five-year National Strategic Development Plan – Phase 2 (NSDP II). The NSDP II consists of four key priority areas: (1) Enhancing Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth and Private Sector-led Job Creation, (2) Strengthening Human Capital, (3) Building Enabling Infrastructure, and (4) Strengthening National Governance and Accountability Systems. In terms of policy alignment, the policies set out in the Plan are consistent with the United Nation's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union Agenda 2063. Furthermore, the MIP is aligned with EU external political priorities and puts focus on key challenges related to environment and climate change, such the European Green Deal and the Global Gateway.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis:

Civil society in Lesotho continues to engage in a wide range of activities, including advocacy and lobbying, human rights, democracy and governance, capacity building, gender equality and development. However, the absence of a formalised structured way of engagement constraints the role of CSOs in national development. As the role of CSOs is not often understood, there is often a perception of organisations being deemed as "opposition in disguise" or "unwelcome watchdogs". Nevertheless, they create connections between national and international communities, contribute to the accountability of the political system and articulate the demands from the grassroots to the authorities and political elites. By mobilising on issues and concerns among the population, CSOs are pursuing change and reform in the political system. CSOs are not always able to monitor the effective implementation of domestic laws and compliance with international conventions to which Lesotho is a party. Nevertheless, they have been consulted on draft legislation for which it had made proposals such as the Amendment of the Children and Protection and Welfare Act to end child marriage and the National Reforms Bill. Civil Society is also active in the fields of civic education, elections monitoring, national reforms, policy formulation and advocacy.

A flexible, timely, and demand-driven cooperation facility is crucial to proactively support the objectives of the Multiannual Indicative Programme and the Team Europe Initiatives and address unforeseen needs and demands before

⁸ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/lesotho>

they impact adversely on the various stages of project cycle and its management. The main challenge concerning the technical cooperation facility under the previous programming cycle (2014-2020) was represented by procurement delays which inhibited its optimal use. In order to overcome this challenge and reduce transactional costs related to multiple small contracts, the new cooperation facility will therefore be implemented in direct management and follow a “fewer and bigger” approach. The cooperation facility will also enable the EU to have a targeted and strategic communication on its priorities and programmes, following a “whole-of-Delegation” approach, in stark contrast with the historically piecemeal focus on project-related, partner-implemented communication – something that has kept the EU reasonably “visible” amongst a limited stakeholder audience, but has not enabled us to reach or engage public opinion to any real degree.

As of December 2020, only 33.6% of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective were available, with gaps in key areas, in particular: key labour market indicators, such as the unemployment rate and gender pay gaps. In addition, many areas – such as gender equality and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women’s access to assets (including land), and gender equality and the environment – lack comparable methodologies for regular monitoring. Closing these gender data gaps is essential for achieving gender equality commitments in Lesotho.

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

The key stakeholders for the civil society support measures are civil society organisations including women organisation, human rights defender, and youth associations who represent the diversity of the human rights holders (people). A recent mapping identified over 70 active organisations in Lesotho. It will be important to ensure maximum inclusiveness and support small-scale actors and youth, beyond the traditional NGOs. To that end, financial support will need to be differentiated, through sub-granting. As outlined in section 3.4., local civil society organisations have limited financial capacity, resulting in possible difficulties when managing large EU grants. This was highlighted by a Results-Oriented Monitoring mission carried out in 2021 and expenditure verifications. To mitigate such risks, the action will envisage relying on intermediate structures while providing sub-granting that caters to different needs and capacity levels of beneficiary organisations. In addition, financial capacity development could be provided via the cooperation facility and other instruments.

With regard to the cooperation facility, the main stakeholders will be targeted government and non-governmental actors involved in the focal sectors of EU cooperation in Lesotho. The cooperation facility is multi-sectoral in nature, as it will support initiatives that strengthen duty bearers, public administration and enhance government effectiveness, as well as reform processes and measures linked to the priorities of the MIP. The main stakeholders and target groups for strategic communication and public diplomacy will be identified during the implementation, ensuring a differentiated approach between specialised audiences (political and diplomatic counterparts, opinion leaders, activists, media, civil society, and academia) and wider audiences comprising ordinary citizens (women and men), especially youth.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to strengthen civil society in Lesotho and to establish a cooperation facility to support the implementation of the Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 and Team Europe Initiatives, including strategic communication activities.

The Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are to:

1. Strengthen the equitable participation and representation of women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity in policy- and decision-making at all levels;
2. Support Lesotho’s development strategies, the implementation of the Multiannual Indicative Programme and Team Europe Initiatives;
3. Promote the values that inspire the partnership between Lesotho and the European Union.

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

- 1.1 The enabling environment for civil society⁹ in Lesotho is strengthened and a strategic framework for civil society engagement at national level is in place;
- 1.2 The participation of CSOs, including youth and women's organisations and independent media, in domestic policies of Lesotho and in the EU programming cycle and in international processes is reinforced;
- 1.3 CSOs are equipped with increased project management knowledge, human rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming (including disaggregated indicators) skills and technical capacities for improved and consistent engagement;
- 1.4 Gender transformative policies, strategies and legislation are developed with the participation of civil society in an inclusive manner;
- 2.1 The preparation and implementation of programmes under the Multiannual Indicative Programme and Team Europe Initiatives is improved, in complementarity with regional or global programmes, including the Country Level Implementation (CLIP);
- 2.2 The institutional capacity to design, plan, implement and monitor gender sensitive public policies and state reforms in areas relevant to the EU – Lesotho cooperation is supported;
- 3.1 The EU's strategic communication and public diplomacy strategy is established and implemented in line with the multi-annual strategic communication and public diplomacy plan;
- 3.2 Public awareness, understanding and recognition of the EU in Lesotho is commensurate with the scale, scope and ambition of our partnership.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Activities relating to Output 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 (Outcome 1)

- Establish of a funding mechanism (e.g. through financial support to third parties) that provides diversified types of support tailor-made to the size and capacity of civil society actors;
- Provide capacity building for local CSOs (project management, M&E, financial capacity development, institutional strengthening, human rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming, etc.);
- Organise evidence-based research and advocacy activities (with a focus on the priority areas of the MIP, namely water, energy, governance and social protection);
- Organise structured dialogues to bridge the gap between civil society, including youth movements and women organisations, user groups, professional associations, independent media, etc. and policy-makers;
- Develop campaigns to strengthen accountability, raise awareness, and support societal demands around themes of national relevance (national reforms, gender-based violence, climate change, etc.)

Activities relating to Output 2.1 and 2.2 (Outcome 2)

- Mobilise long- and short-term expertise in a flexible, timely and demand-driven manner to support the preparation, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of EU's cooperation;
- Support capacity development and institutional building through technical assistance and exchange of public expertise -including through TAIEX and Twinning, when relevant;
- Support policy dialogues: conferences, events, studies, fellowships, exchange platforms to support sector dialogues leading to policy reforms and engagement with the government and other stakeholders;
- Facilitate joint programming, including Team Europe and CLIP coordination, for a more effective partnership and results;
- Contribute to the design and implementation of programmes and policy dialogue with gender-disaggregated data, studies, and updates of the Gender Country Profile.

⁹ The EU considers CSOs to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. They include membership-based, cause-based and service-oriented CSOs. Among them, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, foundations, research institutions, organisations on gender equality, the empowerment of women and LGBT, cooperatives, professional and business associations, and the not-for-profit media. Trade unions and employers' organisations, the so-called social partners, constitute a specific category of CSOs. Source: Communication "The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations", COM(2012) 492 final.

Activities relating to Output 3.1 and 3.2 (Outcome 3)

- Develop an audience-segmented communication strategy with main messages, target groups, delivery channels, baselines and time-bound targets;
- Finance communication campaigns and activities, visibility actions on EU policies and cooperation, ~~and the fight against disinformation;~~
- Support public diplomacy specific interventions **as part of campaigns (where relevant)** to promote EU policies as well as its multilateral agenda in Lesotho.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Outcomes of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The EIA (Environment Impact Assessment) screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment).

Outcome of the CRA (Climate Risk Assessment) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening concluded that this action is no or low risk (no need for further assessment).

The cooperation facility will support the implementation of the TEI Green Deal and MIP's priority areas, in particular Priority Area 1 – Green and resilient economy (energy, water). This includes technical assistance for the operationalisation of related actions as well as support to the strengthening of capacity and regulatory frameworks in the areas of energy, water and land management. The cooperation facility will also support strategic communication around these actions and the underlying values inspiring Lesotho-EU cooperation in these areas. Actions in support of civil society will target the participation of women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity in policy- and decision-making at all levels, including awareness on climate and environmental issues, in complementarity with the other priorities of the MIP.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that gender mainstreaming will be a principle objective of the proposed action. Civil society support measures will contribute to the development of campaigns to promote women empowerment, gender equality and gender mainstreaming as well as the development of and support to rights-based and gender transformative approaches. The cooperation facility will include expertise on gender equality-related issues in order to make sure that all the above-mentioned activities are gender mainstreamed and that the Lesotho's GAP III country level implementation plan (CLIP) is duly implemented. This design of this action has been informed by the country gender equality profile of 2016, the cooperation facility will contribute to an updated profile.

Human Rights

The proposed action will advance and disseminate the EU Human Rights and Democracy Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan 2020-2024. Further, the EU will ensure that basic human rights principles are upheld by all partners (respect to all human rights, non-discrimination, participation, accountability, and transparency). A Human Rights Based Approach will be followed, focusing on rights holders and duty bearers and on ensuring civil society can support their resilience to the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that the promotion and protection of disability rights will be a significant objective of the action. Empowerment of groups living in the most vulnerable situations, including people with disability and HIV/AIDS will be prioritised as part of the support to civil society.

Democracy

The proposed action will contribute to and support principles of democracy and governance, seeking to uphold the Constitutional principles of the partner country and to increase participation in policy- and decision-making while strengthening accountability mechanisms and transparency. Ultimately, the aim is to strengthen the ability of policy-making to deliver a social and green deal for all Basotho, thus reinforcing people's trust in the institutions of democratic governance.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The history of Lesotho, since its independence in 1966, has been marked by political instability (one-party rule, military regime, transition to multi-party democracy, coup attempts). Following the political crisis in 2014 and Southern Africa Development Community's mediation, all political parties pledged to embark on a national reform process leading to a national reforms process. Civil society has played a key role in this process aimed at ensuring peace and resilience in Lesotho and this action will ensure it continues to do so.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Measures will be undertaken to support disaster management response as envisaged in the MIP. Various initiatives are outlined that target climate change, soil and restoration, including biodiversity, and support social protection initiatives. It is foreseen to include a Crisis Modifier in the relevant implementation contracts. The Crisis Modifier will allow the implementing partner to respond quickly and expand horizontally and vertically in cases of both minor and major crisis. Such an expansion can be activated based on agreed emergency triggers.

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
External environment	Political, social and legal instability of the country.	Medium	High	Political dialogue and diplomacy by the EU and other development partners, underlining the negative repercussions of instability on development cooperation. Policy dialogues especially concerning the National Reforms, supported and financed by the EU.
Planning, Processes and Systems	Macroeconomic instability.	Medium	High	Policy dialogue especially with the participation at the Improvement and Reform Steering Committee for the Public Financial Management and Public Sector Modernisation (IRSC) and Implementation of IMF Article IV recommendations. Follow up of key economic indicators.
People and the Organisation	Insufficient interest on the part of stakeholders in the activities.	Low	Low	The indication is that government authorities are very much interested in using the EU cooperation to leverage up the investments in key sectors like water and energy.

People and the Organisation	Non-availability of qualified experts of the EU Member States or other countries.	Low	Low	The competitive bidding to international tenders will give guarantees that the consultants hired meet the expectations and perform adequately.
People and the Organisation	Low capacity, especially financial capacity, of civil society organisations resulting in fiduciary risks.	Medium	Medium	Capacity building and coaching will be prioritised in the design and implementation of the programme, with a focus on financial capacity. The EU Delegation is already providing such support through the civil society global operational facility.
Communication and information	Communication and visibility activities fail to reach the target groups.	Low	Medium	Activities will be based on a solid perception analysis and differentiated to cater for different target groups.

Lessons Learnt:

The major lesson learnt from previous and ongoing civil society support concerns their limited financial capacity and the resulting difficulty in managing large EU grants. This was highlighted by a Results-Oriented Monitoring mission carried out in 2021 and expenditure verifications. To mitigate such risks, the action will envisage relying on intermediate structures while providing sub-granting that caters to different needs and capacity levels of beneficiary organisations. In addition, financial capacity development could be provided via the cooperation facility and other instruments.

The technical cooperation facility under the European Development Fund (EDF) suffered from procurement delays that resulted in low commitment levels. We expect that the change in implementation modality from indirect to direct management and a “fewer and bigger” approach will reduce transaction costs and expedite procurement to ensure the facility is fit for purpose. In addition, to fill existing gaps and reduce procurement delays, the related procurement will be launched with a suspensive clause.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

In order to ensure the maximum inclusiveness and support small-scale civil society actors, this action will rely on sub-granting schemes that provide diversified types of support tailor-made to the size and capacity of actors, beyond the traditional and one-size-fits approach of calls for proposals. Focus will be on supporting the development of actors, not necessarily actions and priorities set by donors. Assistance could be foreseen to organise a structured dialogue and help bridge the gap between civil society, especially youth movements and women organisations, and policy-makers (women and men). The provision of capacity building and coaching, besides financial support, is a key element of the intervention logic.

The underlying intervention logic for the cooperation facility is to support the EU-Lesotho partnership. It will enable the EU to establish an instrument to support the implementation of the MIP and to build capacity within public institutions through demand-driven activities (ranging from technical assistance, exchange of experts to organisation of events and trainings). In order to ensure ownership and relevance of the actions, the activities will nonetheless be linked to the policy dialogue with the authorities and the priority areas of the MIP.

A single communication and visibility contract will streamline and give coherence to the communication strategy of the EU Delegation, following a “whole-of-Delegation” approach. The intervention logic will put emphasis on the development, as a preliminary step, of a coherent strategy that defines the perceptions, messages, key target groups and delivery channels and only later develops communication products and materials.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

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

4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the 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 **84 months** from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

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 adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU¹⁰.

4.3.1 Direct Management (Grants)

Grants: (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

¹⁰ www.sanctionsmap.eu. 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, the OJ prevails.

The proposed grant(s) are intended to support civil society organisations to ensure that women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity participate equally in policy- and decision-making at local, national, and international levels, and are represented in these policies and decisions.

It will contribute to the achievement of Objective 1, Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 of the Action.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The type of organisations targeted are national and international civil society organisations that are non-governmental and non-profit making.

This call has been launched in June 2024 under a suspensive clause prior to the adoption of this amended Decision. This is justified in order to allow sufficient implementation period for grantees, taking into account the extended operational implementation period.

4.3.2 Direct Management (Procurement)

Procurements are planned to contribute to achieving the specific objective 1 and 2 and outputs 2.1, 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2 of this Action (cooperation facility and visibility and communication).

A call for tenders will be launched under a suspensive clause prior to the adoption of this Decision. This is justified because of the need to operationalise the cooperation facility as soon as possible in order to support the identification, formulation and implementation of programmes under the MIP.

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

Should the direct management modality described in section 4.3.1 prove to not be possible for reasons outside of the Commission's control, then the Action would be implemented under indirect management as follows:

Indirect Management with a pillar assessed entity:

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: (i) experience in Lesotho or in the Southern African Development Community, (ii) experience in the area of governance and rule of law and in particular in supporting civil society, (iii) experience in the management of sub-granting schemes or similar innovative financial support mechanisms.

The implementation by this entity entails the implementation of activities related to Output 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 (Outcome 1).

4.4 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply subject to the following provisions:

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

4.5 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
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Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3	
Objective 1, Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 – Support to Civil Society composed of	
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	3 000 000
Objectives 2 and 3, Outputs 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 – Cooperation Facility composed of	
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2	4 700 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2	300 000
Audit – cf. section 5.3	
Totals	8 000 000

4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The contracting authority for the programme shall be the Delegation of the European Union to Lesotho. For the cooperation facility, an annual activity plan will be prepared by the respective contractors on the basis of the annual objectives which will be set by the Delegation in coordination with the relevant national stakeholders. In view of the necessary flexibility, these plans will be indicative.

For the support to civil society, the responsibility for the implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the remaining activities will be with the beneficiaries of the grant(s) as per contractual requirements set by the Practical Guide for EU funded actions. A Project Steering Committee will be established to oversee the strategic implementation of the civil society support measures. Its composition will be defined during the inception phase. The EU Delegation will ensure that any form of steering committee encompasses a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure the representation of vulnerable people, including right holders such as vulnerable and marginalised groups.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

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. Indicators shall be disaggregated at least by sex. All monitoring and reporting shall assess how the action is taking into account the rights-based approach and gender equality.

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 importance of the action, a final evaluation may be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

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 the civil society support component may introduce innovative financing support mechanisms (sub-granting) and that the cooperation facility supports, for the first time, a “whole-of-Delegation” approach.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 30 days 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 dissemination¹¹. 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.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract.

5.3 Audit and Verifications

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

6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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

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

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

Please briefly summarise the key elements of the relevant strategic plan below. Where such a plan has, exceptionally, not yet been adopted, the Delegation is developing it and will provide the following information:

1. The audiences targeted
2. For each group targeted, the principal communication objective, couched in terms of measurable outcomes
3. The core narrative, formulated in terms not of what we do in the country concerned , but why we do it

4. Preliminary suggestions for content (messages, straplines, hashtags), partnerships (influencers) and channels
5. Key administrative information: timeline, budget and the programme manager responsible for implementation.