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ANNEX

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Kingdom of Lesotho for 2024

Action Document for Inclusive Lesotho

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme within the meaning of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, within the meaning of Article 23 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Inclusive Lesotho OPSYS number: ACT-62590 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Team Europe Initiative	No
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in the Kingdom of Lesotho
4. Programming document	Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	Specific Objective 2.2.1: “Enhanced political stability and trust in the political system”. Expected Result: “Enhanced accountability and inclusiveness of the political system”.
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Priority area 2 – Good governance, peaceful and just society
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions Other significant SDGs: 4 – Quality Education 5 – Gender Equality 10 – Reduced inequalities
8 a) DAC code(s)	15110 – Public sector policy and administrative management – 10% 15150 – Democratic participation and civil society – 30% 15151 – Elections – 40% 15152 – Legislatures and political parties – 10% 15153 – Media and free flow of information – 10%
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	21000 – International NGO

	40000 – Multilateral Organizations				
9. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services		YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
Connectivity @		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
digital connectivity energy transport health		YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		

	education and research			
	Migration @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020122 Total estimated cost: EUR 4 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 4 000 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of financing	Indirect management with entrusted entity/ies to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.4.1 and 4.4.2			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The European Union's cooperation strategy with Lesotho, the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027¹, focusses on two priority areas: (1) green and resilient economy and (2) good governance, peaceful and just society. This action stems from the second priority area, and especially its specific objective 1: "Enhanced political stability and trust in the political system", and intends to support the Kingdom of Lesotho in the implementation of selected key recommendations of the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM)'s report of 2022. In particular, key recommendations made with regard to civic education and participation, gender equal representation, voter registry and transparency of party and campaign financing. In this context, the action will contribute to the enhancement of public trust and inclusion in the political system and to building the basis for political stability and sustainable development. Following a thorough assessment of past actions in the same sector in the country and in the region, and extensive in-country consultations with relevant Government officials, international partners and civil society, the action identifies three components for implementation.

The first component aims to strengthen citizen's participation and inclusion in democratic and election processes especially for the population living in vulnerable situations. It includes activities such as: revision of education curricula to incorporate continuous civic education, support to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in implementing continuous civic and voter education, and support for media and civil society organisations including women's organisations and organisations of persons with disabilities, to monitor and report on the conduct of elections. The election monitoring will cover the election process in general, as well as monitoring of accessibility for persons with disabilities, media and social media monitoring to combat disinformation and hate speech, particularly on violence against women in politics and political and campaign finance monitoring. The component also includes inclusiveness and internal democracy trainings for political parties, as well as support to dialogue and consensus building on political and campaign finance with the IEC, relevant ministries, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and political party leaders.

The second component aims to establish an inclusive, gender sensitive, and accurate voter registry with sustainable maintenance systems ensuring its continuous integrity and reliability. It includes activities such as: technical assistance to IEC to improve procedures, training and management of the voter registration, supporting an accessibility audit and upgrading of IEC's ICT infrastructure, security and systems, and establishing linkages for data cross-referencing between the voter registry and civil registry. The IEC website will be upgraded with new modules providing opportunity for fully accessible online voter registration and updates on elector records. Voters will also be able to look up their polling station allocation online.

The third component aims to strengthen the capacity of the IEC to administer elections. The action will provide electoral cycle support to IEC in planning and implementing election operations, voter registration, candidate nomination, awareness, polling, counting, and election dispute resolution. It will provide legal support to IEC in

¹ Commission implementing Decision of 14.12.2021 adopting a multiannual indicative programme for the Kingdom of Lesotho for the period 2021-2027 - C(2021)9086.

improving the regulatory framework and establishing rules and procedures. IEC will be supported with trainings on civic education, voter registration, and political and campaign finance. Regular reviews will be organised to assess IEC's progress in achieving the objectives of its Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028.

The action contributes to SDG 16 – Peace Justice and Strong Institutions. Other relevant SDGs include 4 – Quality Education, 5 – Gender Equality, 10 – Reduced Inequality. Further, the action will contribute to the five year National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) 2023/24 – 2027/28. By contributing to uphold democratic values and promote transparency, Inclusive Lesotho supports the overall EU action in Lesotho, notably in the field of energy and water, in the spirit of the Global Gateway's 360 degrees approach. It also contributes to the EU Action Plan Human Rights and Democracy² and the EU Gender Action Plan III^{3 4} and the thematic priority 3.4. *Advancing equal participation and leadership*. Likewise, it will contribute to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵. Lastly the action directly contributes to the realisation of key priority recommendations of the European Union Election Observation Mission to Lesotho 2022, and is in line with the objectives of the IEC Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028.

1.3 Zone benefitting from the Action

The Action shall be carried out in Lesotho, which is included in the list of ODA recipients.

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. Lesotho is included in the list of least-developed countries (LDCs)⁶ with a per capita gross national income of USD 1,028 (current, 2021)⁷. In 2023 Lesotho was ranked 82 out of 156 countries with a gender gap index of 0.70⁸. The country's economy grew by 2% in 2023.⁹ Lesotho is largely rural, with 60% of citizens living in the arable lowlands (Mafeteng, Maseru, Berea, and Leribe) and 40% in the six relatively mountainous districts. The citizens of Lesotho are ethnically Sotho (99%), and the country has a strong diaspora abroad – latest statistics refer to 202,200¹⁰ citizens abroad, with remittances constituting 23.8% of GDP in 2022¹¹.

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. Lesotho experienced several disputed election outcomes in the past. Since 1993, the country held seven competitive elections, five of which were followed by episodes requiring regional diplomacy or military intervention by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Frequent government changes, floor crossing and snap elections have led to electoral fatigue resulting in a steady decrease in voter turnout and a deep distrust in elected institutions. Party allegiance is very volatile, and a continuous proliferation of political parties has contributed to a further fragmentation of the political landscape.

On 7 October 2022, Lesotho held its 11th legislative polls to elect 120 members of its National Assembly. These were the first elections observed by an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM), whose deployment and consequent recommendations were welcomed by political stakeholders in Lesotho, including the government. Despite a generally peaceful election, there were a number of shortcomings evidenced in observer reports such as: legal uncertainties and lack of clarity on election procedures, inaccuracies in the voter registry, interference in

² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_action_plan_on_human_rights_and_democracy_2020-2024.pdf

³ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf

⁴ 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.

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>

⁶ https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/ldc_list.pdf

⁷ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.ADJ.NNTY.PC.CD?locations=LS>

⁸ [WEF GGGR 2023.pdf \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org/publications/gggr-2023.pdf)

⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lesotho/overview>

¹⁰ 2020, https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?focus=profile&t=2020&i=stock_abs_origin&cm49=426

¹¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=LS-ZF>

media, uneven playing field among parties and candidates, abuse of state resources, voter apathy and decrease of voter turnout, errors in announcement of results, and unclear procedures for election dispute resolution. Critical election operations such as voter registration and voter education were hampered by significant delays in issuing of funding to the IEC. The voter turnout for the 2022 elections was 37.7%, the lowest in the country's history, with reports of eligible voters not finding their name on the roll, in part due to late changes of constituency boundaries. To be noted however that this data is biased by the lack of update of the registry, that increasingly includes deceased persons.

These elections resulted in a multi-party coalition government, led by the 2022-newly formed Revolution for Prosperity (RFP). One of the key challenges of the current government has been to fulfil the expectations for change that were expressed by the Basotho and to adopt the long overdue national reforms to which the new Prime Minister had committed. While the reduction of ministries (initially from 26 to 15, now 20) sent a strong signal of change, progress on institutional reforms has been overall slow and engagement with coalition representatives and opposition parties has been minimal, raising criticism from backbenchers and opposition.

Women represent 50.6% of the population of Lesotho, however only 23.3% of the outgoing National Assembly members were women, falling short of SADC's equality commitment. Most women had difficulties to pass the parties' internal selection processes to become candidates. A total of 837 women were nominated for "first past the post" (FPTP) seats, accounting for 35.5 % of candidates. Among the 48 parties' proportional lists, only 6 had a woman in first position.

The 31 women elected (26%) constitute a slight increase from the 29 women in the outgoing National Assembly. Twelve women and 67 men were elected in the 79 FPTP seats. The affirmative "zebra" (zip) system intending to enhance women representation for proportional candidate lists resulted in a better representation of women in the National Assembly, with 19 women elected along 21 men, but still remains below regional objectives. Women are still strongly underrepresented in political parties' top decision-making bodies¹².

There are many reasons for the low representation of women in politics. Women's entry into electoral politics is constrained by gender bias in the electoral system and in society, including among women voters; the demanding political system, with frequent changes in leadership before the end of terms; and structural issues. The proportional representation system, through which women have primarily been elected to parliament, as opposed to the first-past-the-post system, which tends to elect male candidates, is also indicative of deep-rooted biases that continue to limit women's representation in decision-making¹³. There is also very limited representation of persons with disabilities in the political landscape of Lesotho, with only one candidate with disability having been elected as Member of the National Assembly during the 2022 elections.

Although Lesotho ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, it was only recently defined as a key priority of the government when the Parliament enacted the Persons with Disability Equity Act of 2021, which establishes the Persons with Disability Advisory Council to provide for equal opportunities. Members of the Council were formally appointed in July 2023. In Lesotho, persons with disabilities constitute 3,7% of the population, of which 59% are women¹⁴. Many persons with disabilities have limited access to basic services, education, healthcare, transportation and other social services. Persons with disabilities also have limited opportunities to participate in society, as they are not typically included in the labour force, decision-making processes, governance, politics or the private sector¹⁵.

The Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for Lesotho focuses on two priority areas: (1) green and resilient economy – directly contributing to the Global Gateway and the Green Deal Team Europe Initiative for Lesotho and (2) good governance, peaceful and just society. Under the second priority area, EU cooperation intends to support the implementation of national reforms undertaken by Lesotho (the related EDF-11 programme is currently suspended due to stalling of the reforms before Parliament); access to justice and improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system and oversight bodies, 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) 2023/24 – 2027/28, and with the "Gender and Development Policy 2018-2030". The NSDP II consists of four

¹² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-lesotho-2022/eu-election-observation-mission-lesotho-2022-final-report_en

¹³ <P1715600219ee403708dad08cfff91db633.pdf> (worldbank.org)

¹⁴ Lesotho population census 2006.

¹⁵ [Children and Young People with disabilities in Lesotho.pdf](#)

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 Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union Agenda 2063.

The proposed action will be implemented nation-wide in Lesotho. It aims to support equal participation in democratic processes, establish an inclusive, accessible and accurate voter registry, and strengthen the capacity of IEC in the administration of elections in view of the next general elections taking place in 2027. The proposed action emphasises the EU's role as a key supporter of good governance in general, and democratic and electoral processes in particular. This action is aligned with the Peace priority of the European Consensus for Development and contributes to the overall EU action in Lesotho, notably in the field of energy and water, in the spirit of the Global Gateway 360 degrees approach, by supporting good governance, democracy and rule of law and will contribute to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions . Further, the action will contribute to the goals of the Gender Action Plan III, enhancing women, including those with disabilities, participation in decision-making processes. The action is also aligned with the Youth Action Plan in EU External Action, in their objective of enhancing civic and political youth participation. Lastly the action directly contributes to the realisation of key priority recommendations of the [European Union Election Observation Mission to Lesotho 2022](#)¹⁶. The action will also contribute to the achievement of objectives of the IEC Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028, Objective 1 – Organisational Development, Objective 2 – Voter Registration, Objective 4 – Election Operations, Objective 5 – Responsive Legal Framework, and Objective 6 – Inclusivity.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis:

Elections in Lesotho are hampered by a number of legal, financial, and technical issues. The 2022 EU EOM report noted gaps in the electoral legal framework in relation to the budgetary independence of the IEC, political and campaign finance, right to vote for persons with cognitive impairment and also other disabilities, right to appeal against IEC decisions, and procedures for the IEC Tribunal. Although mandated by the legislation, the IEC has not issued any regulations or procedures leading to uncertainties and lack of clarity on election procedures. Critical election operations such as voter registration and voter education were hampered by significant delays in issuing of funding to the IEC. The literature review and consultation with stakeholders pointed to a number of deficiencies in the administration of the election such as: inaccuracies in the voter registry, interference in media, uneven playing field among parties and candidates, abuse of state resources, voter apathy and decrease of voter turnout, errors in announcement of results, and unclear procedures for election dispute resolution.

Component 1 - Participation: Voter apathy, election fatigue, and distrust stemming from unmet political promises is a significant problem in Lesotho. There are limited opportunities for citizens to participate in democratic processes, and lack of awareness about the civic rights and responsibilities. Stakeholders identified gaps in education curricula, which do not incorporate civic education elements in primary and secondary education. Although the IEC is mandated to conduct voter education, its efforts are limited and activities are only carried out for a short period leading up to the elections, despite employing permanent voter education assistants in each district. Observers also noted lack of accessibility in polling stations, which hinders participation of persons with disabilities. Regarding women's participation and leadership, the EOM noted that women make up 26% of the national parliament and are under-represented in political parties' top decision making bodies.¹⁷ The law does not provide for limits to campaign funding and campaign spending and contributions from outside the country are not subject to public scrutiny.¹⁸ The IEC capacity to oversee and carry financial controls is limited. In the 2022 election, the AU EOM reported interlocutors' complaints about vote buying, however no formal complaint appears to be made to the IEC.¹⁹ Local observers noted that the campaigns were highly monetized beyond the limit.²⁰

Component 2 – Voter registry: Inaccuracies in the voter registry are considered by many as the primary threat to the integrity of elections in Lesotho. The key issues include: eligible voter's name not appearing in the roll, deceased, duplicates, missing voters, inaccurate allocation of polling stations and other data inconsistencies. An

¹⁶ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-lesotho-2022/eu-election-observation-mission-lesotho-2022-final-report_en

¹⁷ EU EOM (2022) Final Report on 2022 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho. P.27

¹⁸ EU Election Observation Mission to Lesotho Final Report National Assembly Elections – 7 October 2022 p.5

¹⁹ African Union EOM (2022) Preliminary Statement on 2022 National Assembly of the Kingdom of Lesotho p.4

²⁰ Lesotho Council of NGOs (2022) Interim Observation Mission Statement p.7

analysis of voter registry data against population census projections shows young voters (18-29 years) appeared under-represented in the voter registry for the 2022 elections.²¹ There is a lack of adequate cooperation between the IEC and government institutions responsible for updating citizen's civil records (births, deaths, changes of residence) as well as limited to no exchange of information from the civil registry to the IEC, which would enable the IEC to identify potential updates in the voter registry. Due to limited and delayed funding available, the IEC faces challenges in administering voter registration, with voter registration centres often being too distant from electors, (which is a significant barrier for women, persons with disabilities and rural communities to access their right to vote), insufficiencies in ICT and data processing equipment, and lack of clear procedures for quality assurance. The data processing software for maintaining voter registration data is not owned by the IEC, posing risks to the long-term security and integrity of the voter registration data. The National Assembly Electoral Act (2011) only permits people inside the country to cast their votes on election day. An amendment was passed in 2022 to introduce diaspora voting, however, this was later rendered invalid by courts, as part of the reforms that the current government intends to resubmit to Parliament.

Component 3 – Election operations: Most of Lesotho's election problems stem from lack of adequate capacity within the IEC to administer elections. Insufficient and delayed funding affect the implementation of operations. The IEC has the mandate to issue regulations to further interpret and regulate the electoral process – in December 2023, it adopted, along its 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, also secondary legislation with regards to Internal Communication Policy, Social Media Policy, Asset Management Policy and Procedure, and an HR Policy. The ICT branch is under-resourced with voter registration systems being owned by entities outside the country. There is a limited capacity to enforce and oversee political and campaign finance, although it made some advances in 2023 in terms of deregistration of “fake” political parties (created to access party financing). In the last election, errors in calculating the allocation of proportional seats negatively affected stakeholders' trust in the IEC, however, the IEC was prompt in identifying this mistake via its own internal audit.

Summary of key stakeholders (duty bearers and right holders):

- **Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), under the Ministry of Law and Justice:** The IEC will be the primary beneficiary of the action. The IEC is mandated by Constitution to organise, conduct and supervise elections and is responsible, among others, for: boundary delimitation, voter registration, political party registration, voter education, polling and counting, and election dispute resolution.
- **Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police:** The department of National Identity and Civil Registration (NICR) is responsible for registering and affirming the identify and status of citizens in the country. The action will provide technical support and ICT support to the IEC and NICR in establishing quality checking and data verification tools between the voter registry and civil registry.
- **Ministry of Education and Training:** The action will provide support to the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) to integrate civic education in the formal education curriculum for primary and secondary schools, including special education schools for children with disabilities.
- **Political Parties:** The action will encourage political parties to engage in national dialogue and in reporting to increase transparency of party and campaign finances, and adopt good practices towards inclusion and internal governance.
- **The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offenses (DCEO) and oversight bodies:** Their support and close coordination will be particularly sought in relation to collaborating with IEC in promoting transparency of political and campaign financing, and in combating related illegal practices.
- **Civil society organisations:** The project will provide support to CSOs to support citizen participation and inclusion in electoral process. The action will promote engagement of CSOs, including faith-based organisations, representing diverse groups including youth, women, persons with disabilities, the LGBTIQ+ community and diaspora.
- **Other government agencies and public institutions:** The action will ensure collaboration, where required, with other government agencies: the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, and the Lesotho Communications Authority.

²¹ EU EOM (2022) Final Report on 2022 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho. P.14

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective of this action is to enhance participation and inclusion in the political system in Lesotho and to strengthen the administration of elections.

The Specific Objectives of this action are to:

1. Strengthen citizens' participation and inclusion (especially women, persons with disabilities, youth and other vulnerable groups²²) in democratic and election processes, and their awareness on political financing transparency.²³
2. Establish an inclusive, accessible, and accurate voter registry with sustainable maintenance systems ensuring its continuous integrity and reliability.
3. Strengthen the capacity of the Independent Electoral Commission to administer inclusive, accessible, fair and transparent election operations in all stages of the electoral cycle.

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

- 1.1 Increased participation and inclusion of youth, women, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ and other vulnerable groups in democratic and election processes.
- 1.2 Enhanced transparency of elections through CSO and media monitoring and reporting of elections.
- 1.3 Enhanced awareness of internal democracy, inclusiveness and gender equality within political parties and transparency in their financing.
- 2.1 Improved procedures, training, operations and management of voter registration.
- 2.2 Enhanced data quality checking and verification through cross-referencing voter registration data with civil registry.
- 2.3 Upgraded and accessible Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) infrastructure, security and systems.
- 3.1 Established legal and regulatory frameworks, and improved election procedures and practices, including on political and campaign finance.
- 3.2 IEC's capacities to plan and administer election operations throughout all stages of electoral cycle is strengthened.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Activities relating to Output 1.1

- Revised education curriculum to include civic education in primary and secondary education, including in any special education facilities. Curriculum programmes will integrate a human rights-based approach and focus specifically on women, youth, people with disability, and other vulnerable groups.
- Technical support to the IEC in developing and implementing a Civic and Voter Education Plan to ensure continuous civic and voter education, encouraging participation of women, youth, including out-of-school youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+, ethnic minorities and diaspora, and other vulnerable people.
- Develop and broadcast fully accessible public information products during the elections
- Supporting actions dedicated to eliminating obstacles (including physical barriers) to electoral participation for persons with disabilities (e.g., use both radio and TV, including with sign language interpretation as necessary, easy-read material, collaborate with CSOs to strengthen awareness, etc.)
- Supporting actions dedicated to eliminating obstacles to electoral participation for women and youth LGBTIQ+, ethnic minorities and diaspora, and other vulnerable people

²² Vulnerable groups include people at risk of multi-dimensional poverty in line with national definitions and the categorisations of the National Information System on Social Assistance (NISSA)

²³ The activities under this component will act in complementarity with the planned support to civil society organisations to ensure equal participation and representation in policy- and decision-making, under the programme "Support to Civil Society and Cooperation Facility in Lesotho".

Activities relating to Output 1.2

- Supporting CSOs', and where relevant faith-based organisations', independent monitoring and observation of the upcoming national elections including elections campaign, polling and counting; women's political participation, accessibility for persons with disabilities, monitoring of media and social media, and political and campaign finance.
- Capacity building and peer monitoring for media editors and journalists on ethics of reporting accurately and responsibly prior to and during elections to combat disinformation, hate speech and discrimination and violence against women in politics.

Activities relating to Output 1.3

- Support to dialogue and consensus building on political and campaign finance with the IEC, relevant ministries, CSOs and political party leaders (e.g: high-level conference, dissemination of international standards, support to draft legislation, etc.).
- Trainings and community meetings/dialogue for political parties to advance internal democracy and inclusiveness within the party, and assisting the political parties in creating and implementing programmes, directly linking policy proposals to the electorate's concerns.
- Strengthen intra-party democracy, specifically focusing on gender equality, disability and youth inclusion.

Activities relating to Output 2.1

- Technical and advisory support to the IEC in strengthening voter registration systems, and development and implementation of the Voter Registration Strategy.
- Analysis of voter registration data by constituency to support targeted voter awareness campaigns, and targeted planning, and implementation of operations during registration for the upcoming elections.

Activities relating to Output 2.2

- Technical and ICT support to the IEC and Ministry of Home Affairs in establishing a connection between the voter registry and civil registry for cross-checking of data.
- Support to regular coordination mechanisms between the IEC and the Ministry of Home Affairs to establish procedures and communication protocols, including on data security.

Activities relating to Output 2.3

- Support to the upgrading and accessibility of ICT infrastructure of the IEC: purchase of servers and/or domain servers, disaster recovery infrastructure, firewall systems, and tablets for voter registration.
- Updating the IEC website with new features, for example online voter registration and online checking of polling station allocation.

Activities relating to Output 3.1

- Legal support to the IEC on electoral law review, development of secondary legislation and procedures following amendments to the electoral law, and ensuring the guidelines and manuals are compliant with the changes to the law.
- Advisory support to the IEC, DCEO²⁴, and where necessary law enforcement offices and other oversight bodies to strengthen political and campaign finance oversight, including internal control systems, review of regulations, procedures and forms for reporting of annual and campaign finance.
- Technical support to the IEC to enhance its election dispute resolution system, including by establishing procedures and timelines for handling and resolving election disputes with concerned actors (e.g. judiciary).

Activities relating to Output 3.2

- Advisory support to the IEC in planning and implementation of electoral operations including development of procedures, guidelines, and training materials on voter registration, candidate nomination, polling and counting, and election dispute resolution.
- Supporting the IEC in its implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the IEC Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028 by conducting regular annual reviews, and by enhancing the capabilities of IEC staff responsible for leading strategic objectives.

²⁴ Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offenses (DCEO)

- BRIDGE trainings for IEC personnel, CSOs, media, and political parties on Civic and Voter Education, Political and Campaign Finance, and Voter Registration to enhance understanding of the topics and practical skills to contribute to the electoral process.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Outcomes of the SEA screening (relevant for budget support and strategic-level interventions)

N/A

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

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

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

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

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per the OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that gender quality is a significant objective of the proposed action. The activities to support civic participation in democratic processes 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 project will involve CSOs, including women and LGBTIQ+ organisations, in monitoring of election processes, including women's representation in political parties, candidate lists, and elected in parliament. Advisory support activities will aim to incorporate gender considerations into election management and operations.

Human Rights

The proposed action will advance and disseminate the EU Human Rights and Democracy Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan 2020-2024. Additionally, the EU will request implementers and partners to the action the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the action's execution, including the right to vote, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, right to stand as candidate, right to participate in public affairs, and principles of non-discrimination, accountability, and transparency. A Human Rights-Based Approach will be employed, concentrating on the roles of rights holders and duty bearers, and on empowering civil society to support their resilience.

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 persons with physical, mental, visual or hearing disability is part of the activities. The action will involve Disabled Persons's Organisations (DPOs) in monitoring accessibility during elections. The action will also fund small-scale interventions aimed at improving access to election information, voter registry and polling stations for persons with disabilities.

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, including from the diaspora, in policy- and decision-making while strengthening accountability mechanisms and transparency. The actions will support citizen's participation in democratic processes and strengthen the IEC's capacity to administer credible elections as a cornerstone of democracy. The aim is to support inclusion and participation in the political system in Lesotho, 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, non-acceptance of election results). Through

support to improved civic and voters' education, assistance in establishing an inclusive voter registry, increased transparency in party and campaign financing and strengthened administration of elections, the project will advance the principles of democracy and governance to contribute to long term peace and resilience in Lesotho.

Inequality Reduction

As per the Inequality Marker, this Action has been labelled as an I-1. Inequality reduction is a significant objective of the Action. Promoting participation of the people at risk of multi-dimensional poverty and traditionally marginalised groups is a key step towards their empowerment. Increasing political participation will have a direct impact on their ability to advocate for their interests and rights, which can have an ultimate effect on inequality reduction.

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, including due to stalled legal reform.	Medium	High	Political dialogue and diplomacy by the EU and other development partners, underlining the negative repercussions of instability on development. Policy dialogues especially concerning the National Reforms, supported and financed by the EU.
External environment	Early/extraordinary elections or referenda	High	Low	In case of early elections, the action will prioritise the activities aimed at supporting imminent election processes, procedures, training, awareness and observation of elections. It is not envisioned for the project to support the referendum, although the project activities would contribute to strengthening IEC's capacity in administering the referendum should it take place.
People and the Organisation	Lack of cooperation between project partners, e.g. IEC and Ministry of Home Affairs	Low	High	Concerned stakeholders requested support and contributed shaping the action. However, divergences may arise during implementation over solutions proposed. The steering and technical committees, as well as policy dialogue, will continue to promote key partners' collaborative engagement.
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 and will be administered in complementarity with the CSO support measure. Implementation modalities to reduce fiduciary risks will be foreseen.

External environment	Wrong perception of foreign interference in elections	Low	Medium	Ensure the key stakeholders are informed about the project objectives, activities and implementation modalities. Provide technical advice to stakeholders in strengthening their capacity to deliver, while remaining uninvolved in direct task execution.
People and the Organisation	Compromised security of civil and voter registration data management systems	Low	High	Engage a voter registration expert to provide the IEC with a way forward and strategy for implementation of the voter registration, and an ICT expert to advise on strengthening cyber-security mitigation measures. Maintain technical advisory role without access to the civil and voter registration data.

Lessons Learnt:

The EU EOM report stressed the need to avoid rolling out civic education campaigns only months prior to the elections, but rather plan civic education as a continuous activity. Previous EU actions such as the Participatory Initiative for Social Accountability (PISA II) pointed at the positive impact that civic education and dialogue between elected officials, local authorities and communities can have. This action builds on this success, but also learns from the challenge experienced by this programme in terms of sustainability – the civic libraries and aggregation centres set up by PISA II were not able to run after the programme’s closure, for lack of funds to continue leasing these spaces. This is why the current action aims at introducing civic education in established institutions such as schools, and closely associating existing IEC permanent voter education assistants to lead and coordinate activities in each district.

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 other EU instruments.

Another lesson emphasises the need to consider security and integrity risks when supporting voter registration processes. It is important to maintain an advisory capacity. Some actions that can be supported include: identification of technological requirements, support in drafting hardware/software specifications, and supporting the functionality testing of hardware and software. It is particularly important to strictly avoid direct involvement in the procurement or development of software, as well as accessing databases, to ensure the impartiality and integrity of the support provided. It is important to deploy adequate communication and visibility activities to ensure a correct public understanding of the extent of EU support in this field.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that IF the activities in 3.2 are undertaken and the assumptions of political parties being open to improving inclusiveness within their structures hold true, THEN the outputs of increased participation and inclusion of groups in vulnerable situations (1.1), enhanced transparency of elections through CSO/media monitoring of elections (1.2), and enhanced awareness of internal democracy within political parties (1.3), will be produced. By actively engaging youth, women, persons with disabilities, the LGBTIQ+ community, ethnic minorities and diaspora, and other vulnerable groups, these outputs work to broaden the democratic space, ensuring that all segments of society are represented and can actively participate in the political process.

IF the activities meant to address voter registration issues from both operational and technical standpoint are undertaken and the assumptions that the IEC and the Ministry of Home Affairs are willing to engage and collaborate with exchange of information relevant for maintaining the electoral roll hold true, THEN the outputs of improved voter registration procedures and operations (2.1), cross-checking of voter registration data with civil registry data (2.2), and upgrading of ICT systems (2.3) will be produced. If these Outputs are delivered AND the assumptions at the level of Output hold true, THEN the outcome will be realized as the IEC would be establishing an accurate, accessible and inclusive voter registry. and able to establish a sustainable systems to maintain the integrity of the electoral roll.

IF the activities are undertaken and the assumptions hold true, THEN, the outputs related to establishing legal and regulatory frameworks and election procedures (3.1), and strengthening of IEC's capacity to plan and administer elections (3.2) would be realised. If the Outputs are delivered AND the assumptions at the Output level hold true, THEN the outcome would be realised because IEC's capacity would be strengthened to deliver on all election operations including voter registration, candidate nomination, awareness, polling, counting and election dispute resolution. The assumption is that IEC will collaborate with the action and undertake effective actions to achieve its mandate, including implementation of the IEC Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028.

If the outcomes are achieved and the assumptions at this level hold true, THEN the action would contribute to the described impact of enhancing participation, gender equality, and inclusion in elections and strengthen the administration of elections This is because effective implementation and achievement of project outputs directly lead to participation and inclusion of citizens in the political system in Lesotho. Ultimately, this can also have an effect on reduction of inequalities.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators: (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and year: 2028)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To enhance participation and inclusion in the political system in Lesotho and to strengthen the administration of elections	BTI Index on Political Participation Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments (GAP III, SDG 5.5.1, EU RF 1.8)	1. BTI Index 2024 on Political Participation 7.5 (2024)1	1. 8.5	https://bti-project.org 4	Not applicable
Outcome 1	1. Strengthen citizens' participation and inclusion (especially women, persons with disabilities, youth and people at risk of multi-dimensional poverty) in democratic and election processes, and their awareness on political financing transparency	1.1 Percentage of voter turnout (IEC Strategic Plan indicator 3.4a) 1.2 Percentage of voters/electorate reached through civic and voter education campaigns (IEC Strategic Plan indicator 3.5.2.1f) (if possible, disaggregated by sex, age, disability, NISSA level, disability, ethnicity, area of residence)	1.1 37.8% (EU EOM 2022) 1.2 N/A	1.1 45% 1.2 50%	1.1 IEC Election Reports 1.2 Media and social media reports	IEC, CSOs and media collaborate in implementation of activities
Outcome 2	2. Establish an inclusive, accessible and accurate voter registry with sustainable maintenance systems ensuring its continuous integrity and reliability.	2.1 Percentage of new eligible voters included in the roll (IEC Strategic Plan indicator 3.5.2.1c) disaggregated by age and sex, NISSA level,	2.1 10.7% (IEC data, from 2017 to 2022) 2.2 4% (IEC data)	2.1 17% 2.2 10%	2.1 IEC voter registration database 2.2 IEC voter registration database	IEC is provided sufficient and timely funding for voter registration operations

		and disability, ethnicity, area of residence whenever possible. 2.2 Percentage of ineligible voters records removed from the roll from previous elections disaggregated by age and sex, NISSA level, disability, ethnicity, area of residence				
Outcome 3	3. Strengthen the capacity of the Independent Electoral Commission to administer fully accessible election operations in all stages of the electoral cycle.	3.1. Key recommendations of EU EOM report implemented by IEC 3.2 Existence of up-to-date data available, on women in politics	3.1. 1 (2024) 3.2. No	3.1 5 3.2. Yes	3.1. Analysis of EU EOM report recommendations 3.2. IEC reports, country gender analyses, international organisations	Effective collaboration between implementing organisation and IEC
Output 1 relating to Outcome 1	1.1 Increased participation and inclusion of youth, women, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+, ethnic minorities and diaspora and other vulnerable groups in democratic and election processes	1.1.1 Curricula revisions developed, including accessibility improvements 1.1.2 Percentage of polling stations accessible for persons with disabilities (IEC Strategic Plan indicator 3.5.6.1 b)	1.1.1 N/A 1.1.2 58% (EU EOM)	1.1.1 Curricula developed 1.1.2 80%	1.1.1 Curricula documents 1.1.2 Observer reports	The Ministry of Education and Training approves the civic education curricula revisions
Output 2 relating to Outcome 1	1.2 Enhanced transparency of elections through CSO and media monitoring and reporting of elections	1.2.1 Number and coverage of observers deployed by CSOs	1.2. 200 observers for 15% of polling stations (EU	1.2.1 500 observers for 40% of polling stations	1.2.1 IEC reports	Observers and media are accredited to observe and are able to recruit

		<p>1.2.2 Neutrality and share of airtime among parties/contestants</p> <p>1.2.3 Extent to which local and national media portray positive images of women and girls (including those with disabilities in political and public life (GAP 3)</p> <p>1.2.4 Number of campaigns focused on women and girls participation in political and public life (GAP 3)</p> <p>1.2.5 Domestic election observation methodology and planning: number of plans and guidelines</p>	<p>EOM observation)</p> <p>1.2.2 N/A</p> <p>1.2.3 tbc</p> <p>1.2.4 tbc</p> <p>1.2.5 baseline 0</p>	<p>1.2.2 tbc</p> <p>1.2.3 tbc</p> <p>1.2.4 tbc</p> <p>1.2.5 target 7 (citizen observer handbook, e-day observation form, observer training plan, deployment plan, security plan, observer payment plan, contingency plan)</p>	<p>1.2.2 Lesotho Communication Authority reports</p> <p>1.2.3 tbc</p> <p>1.2.4 tbc</p> <p>1.2.5 Project management team</p>	<p>and deploy members to monitor elections</p>
<p>Output 3</p> <p>relating to Outcome 1</p>	<p>1.3 Enhanced awareness of internal democracy within political parties and transparency in their financing</p>	<p>1.3.1 Number of party submitting due financial reports to the IEC</p> <p>1.3.2 % increase in stakeholders, particularly political parties, in adherence to the electoral code of conduct by all (IEC Strategic Plan 3.4c)</p>	<p>1.3.1 tbc</p> <p>1.3.2 tbc</p>	<p>1.3.1 20</p> <p>1.3.2 75%</p>	<p>1.3.1 IEC data</p> <p>1.3.2 IEC data</p>	<p>Political party members attend training and are open to including members from vulnerable communities</p>

Output 1 relating to Outcome 2	2.1. Improved procedures, training, operations and management of voter registration	2.1.1 Voter registration strategy developed 2.1.2 Analysis of voter registration data	2.1.1 0 2.1.2 0	2.1.1 100% 2.1.2 100	2.1.1 Voter registration strategy 2.1.2 IEC Analysis	IEC is provided sufficient and timely financing to implement voter registration
Output 2 relating to Outcome 2	2.2. Enhanced data quality checking and verification through cross-referencing voter registration data with civil registry	2.2.1. Percentage of voter registration records cross-verified with the civil registry database	2.2.1 0	2.2.1 70%	IEC ICT reports	There is synergy and cooperation between IEC and Ministry of Home Affairs
Output 3 relating to Outcome 2	2.3. Upgraded and accessible Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) infrastructure, security and systems	2.3.1. Number of ICT equipment provided to ICT 2.3.2 Online accessible voter registration and online polling station allocation inserted in IEC website 2.3.3 Number of voters from diaspora members (disaggregated by sex, age when available)	2.3.1. 0 2.3.2 0 2.3.3 tbc	2.3.1. tbc 2.3.2 both features in IEC website 2.3.3 tbc	2.3.1 IEC ICT reports 2.3.2 IEC Website 2.3.3 IEC Report	ICT equipment is delivered
Output 1 Relating to Outcome 3	3.1. Established legal and regulatory frameworks, and improved election procedures and practices	3.1.1. Number of key EU EOM recommendations addressed in legal and procedural framework	3.1.1. 1	3.1.1. 4	Analysis of EU EOM report with legal framework	IEC endorses observer recommendations and is willing to establish procedures and regulations for elections
Output 2 Relating to outcome 3	3.2. IEC's capacities to plan and administer election operations throughout all stages of electoral cycle is strengthened	3.2.1. Number of IEC Strategic Operational objectives implemented	3.2.1. 0	3.2.1. tbc	IEC and programme reports	Effective collaboration is established with IEC

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 48 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 of the Budget Support Component

N/A

4.4 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU 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 TFEU²⁵.

4.4.1 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission services using the following criteria: (i) overall technical and institutional capacity; (ii) technical expertise and experience in implementation of electoral support programs, including provision of technical assistance to Electoral Management Bodies; (iii) experience in participation and inclusion work with CSOs; (iv) presence, or willingness to establish presence, in Lesotho; and (v) recognised political neutrality.

The implementation by this entity entails Objective 1 of the action. The same entity, on the basis of the same criteria above, may also be considered for Objective 2 and 3 of the action.

4.4.2 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission services using the following criteria: (i) overall technical and institutional capacity; (ii) technical expertise and experience in implementation of electoral support programs, including provision of technical assistance to Electoral Management Bodies; (iii) experience and presence, or willingness to establish presence, in Lesotho; and (iv) recognised political neutrality.

The implementation by this entity entails Objectives 2 and 3 of the action.

²⁵ 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.

4.4.3 Changes from indirect to direct management mode due to exceptional circumstances

In case of exceptional circumstances, or if negotiations with one or both entities above fail, the change to a direct management mode (procurement) may be envisaged.

The procurement could thus cover either Objective 1, or the combination of Objective 1, 2 and 3.

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

4.6 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3	
Objective 1 – Participation – composed of outputs 1.1, 1.2. and 1.3.	
Indirect management with an entrusted entity- cf. section 4.4.1	1 400 000
Objective 2 – Voter registry – composed of outputs 2.1., 2.2. and 2.3	
Indirect management with an entrusted entity- cf. section 4.4.2	1 500 000
Objective 3 – Election operations – composed of outputs 3.1 and 3.2	
Indirect management with an entrusted entity- cf. section 4.4.2	800 000
Evaluation and monitoring - cf. section 5.2	300 000
Audit – cf. section 5.3	
Totals	4 000 000

4.7 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The EU Delegation and the implementing partners will agree upon the appropriate formats for the steering committee of the programme, to be held twice a year, and more frequent technical committees that may be needed under each respective component .

The Steering Committee analyses the political context within which the Action will be implemented and, from time to time, adjusts strategies to ensure responsiveness of strategic approach and activity implementation. It provides direct project oversight, ensures the achievement of stated objectives, provides quality assurance, and takes responsibility for programmatic priorities and the focus of annual implementation plans; overall allocation of resources across components; coordination with other national and international partners. The steering committee will involve relevant institutional stakeholders as well as representatives of targeted groups including youth, women, LGBTIQ+, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and diaspora.

A Technical Committee may be established under each component, in order to discuss implementation technical issues, to analyse and monitor programme implementation, to decide on how to manage new challenges and to share information. Programme managers and other technical staff from the institutions belonging to the Steering Committee will take part in the quarterly meetings. Extraordinary meetings will be organised if requested by one of the members.

Other relevant partners and donors shall be invited to both groups as observers and external experts could be invited if considered necessary. The implementing partners will assist both groups and will act as the Secretariat.

The implementing partners will be responsible of the day-to-day management of the agreements and the implementation of activities.

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, 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). Indicators shall be disaggregated at least by income, when possible, and based on national definitions. All monitoring and reporting shall assess how the action is taking into account inequality reduction on gender and disability as required.

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).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

As part of its continuous evaluation, the Commission, via a service contract, may ensure a monitoring system relying on a structured data collection and information mechanism, using the data in the logframe as the baseline. The implementing partners will ensure cooperation and support to this monitoring, and commit to integrate the suggestions and indications issued. The monitoring system will integrate a learning mechanism that evaluates at intervals and allows progressive adjustments to the programme.

5.2 Evaluation

A mid-term or final evaluation may be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

The mid-term evaluation may be carried out for problem solving and learning purposes, in particular with respect to ensuring that the action is on track for the national election and is ensuring sustainability to the activities implemented. The evaluation team should include expertise on gender equality-related issues and disability.

The final evaluation may be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that lessons learned from voter registration support could inform the implementation of other electoral support programmes in Africa.

All evaluations shall assess the extent to which the action is taking into account inequality reduction as well as how it impacts the most vulnerable (based on national definitions, e.g. NISSA). Expertise on inequality reduction will be ensured in the evaluation teams.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 30 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 may be shared with the partners and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination.²⁶ The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, apply the necessary adjustments.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a service 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.

In line with the 2022 “[Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for External Actions](#)”, 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.

²⁶ See best [practice of evaluation dissemination](#)

Appendix 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary Intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

Articulating Actions or Contracts according to an expected chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure efficient monitoring and reporting of performance;

Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);

Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

Primary Interventions are identified during the design of each action by the responsible service (Delegation or Headquarters operational Unit).

The level of the Primary Intervention chosen can be modified (directly in OPSYS) and the modification does not constitute an amendment of the action document.

The intervention level for the present Action identifies as (tick one of the 4 following options);

Action level (i.e. Budget Support, blending)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
Group of actions level (i.e. top-up cases, different phases of a single programme)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (OPSYS): n/a
Contract level		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	Indirect Management with Entrusted Entity 1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 2	Indirect Management with Entrusted Entity 2 (if different from Entity 1)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 3	Direct Management with service contract (monitoring and/or evaluation)
Group of contracts level (i.e. series of programme estimates, cases in which an Action includes for example four contracts and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of contracts 1	n/a