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ANNEX I

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of Central Asia for 2024

**Action Document for EU-Central Asia Global Gateway:
Support to the development of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor**

ANNUAL 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	EU-Central Asia Global Gateway: support to the development of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor OPSYS number: ACT-62824 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 Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)
4. Programming document	Asia and the Pacific - Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	Priority Area 1 – Regional Integration and Cooperation - sub-regional programme for Central Asia SO 7 - Support to the development of the Trans-Caspian Transport Network, which will help transform Central Asia into an important link in trans-regional transport and logistics networks by creating alternative transport routes. ER 7: Tangible progress is achieved in the implementation of the 33 infrastructure projects and 7 soft connectivity measures identified in the Study on Sustainable Transport Connections between Europe and Central Asia (published in June 2023). SO 3 – Enhancement of intra-regional trade (also via supporting intra-regional harmonisation of selected import requirements), business dialogue and business-government dialogue at regional and inter-regional levels. Support for cooperative

	<p>solutions to cross-border challenges and better economic and people-to-people connections among border areas.</p> <p>ER 3: Increased trade in goods and services between Central Asian countries and between Central Asian countries and the wider region. Increased income-generating activities and improved livelihoods in border areas.</p>			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	<p>150 Government and Civil Society</p> <p>210 Transport and Storage</p>			
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<p>Main SDG: SDG 11 -Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Other significant SDGs: SDG 8 - Decent job and economic work, SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.</p>			
8 a) DAC code(s)	21010 - Transport policy and administrative – 100%			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	Multilateral Organisations – 40000 (OPSYS is 47000)			
9. Targets	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Migration</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Education</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance</p>			
10. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Connectivity @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	energy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	health	<input type="checkbox"/>		

	education and research			
	Migration @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities ¹ @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020130 Total estimated cost: EUR 30 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 30 000 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of financing	Direct management through procurement Indirect management with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.2			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has highlighted the need for direct, reliable, sustainable, and efficient trade and transportation routes between Europe and Asia. This programme will contribute to the development of seamless transport connections (including land and maritime transport modes) between Europe and Asia within the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor (TCTC), to reduce transit time between Europe and Central Asia, and strengthen cooperation and sustainable opportunities for low-carbon and resilient economic development in the region.

The programme will focus on improving soft connectivity (i.e. trade and transport facilitating) and gender-responsive regulatory frameworks, improving intra-regional cooperation and coordination in Central Asia and along the TCTC and facilitating investments in green and climate-proofed key infrastructure of the TCTC. To achieve this, it will provide technical assistance to Central Asian governments and possibly other relevant stakeholders (e.g. private transport and logistics operators) at both regional and national levels. The Action will advance regulatory and legislative reforms and assist with improving soft connectivity aspects in the TCTC, such as customs procedures, harmonisation of documentation, safety and security standards, interoperability aspects, market and sector transformation and logistics coordination, taking into consideration greening opportunities and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. In order to facilitate an inclusive and coordinated approach of investments and reforms along the TCTC, the programme will also provide support services to a TCTC Coordination Platform that will provide strategic guidance for the Action implementation. This Platform was launched on 12 June 2024², as a direct follow-up to the EU-Central Asia

¹ For more information, please consult: The European Commission inequality marker - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu) and Inequality Marker – Complementary Guidelines Application of the I-Marker to SSC fiches and Action Documents | Capacity4dev (europa.eu)

² European Commission and Kazakhstan host the launch of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor Coordination Platform, 12 June 2024 https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kazakhstan/european-commission-and-kazakhstan-host-launch-trans-caspian-transport-corridor-coordination_en?s=222

Transport Investors Forum held in January 2024³, and ensures also representation of Corridor countries to the west of the Caspian Sea. Finally, to unlock investment and accelerate the development of the TCTC, the programme will support preparatory studies for potential projects, assessing options for sustainable and low-carbon resilient pathways for the green transition. By removing soft connectivity obstacles that hinder trade, investment and transport and supporting the coordination and acceleration of climate-proofed infrastructure investments, the programme will help increase regional trade and sustainably reduce land transport times, aiming for a less carbon-intensive connection between Asia and Europe.

The proposed Action will be the main contribution to the new priority sector that is envisaged to be added to the Central Asia chapter in the Asia Pacific Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 (RMIP), pending the finalisation of the Mid-Term Review process. This action would then contribute to the amended RMIP Priority Area 1- Regional integration and cooperation, Sector 2: Partnering for prosperity, Specific Objective 7 - Support to the development of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor. The action would also contribute to the new Expected Result 7: Tangible progress is achieved in the implementation of the 33 infrastructure projects and 7 soft connectivity measures identified in the Study on Sustainable Transport Connections between Europe and Central Asia (published in June 2023)⁴. This new Specific Objective was added in the context of increased geopolitical importance of the EU-Central Asia partnership, and in line with the Global Gateway strategy positive offer for smart connectivity between EU and Central Asia. The action will also directly contribute to SDG 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and indirectly to SDG 8 - Decent job and economic work and SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure; and SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. The action will also directly contribute to DAC Code 150 - Government and Civil Society and 210 - Transport and Storage.

1.3 Zone benefitting from the Action

The Action shall be carried out in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, included in the list of ODA recipients.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

An enhanced partnership with the five Central Asian republics is crucial for the European Union, in light of their strategic geographical location and the key role of the region as a connecting bridge between Asia and Europe, its vast natural resources and significant market potential. Russia remains a strong political, economic and security partner for Central Asian countries, albeit with a growing influence of China and Türkiye, and increasing links to Azerbaijan, the Gulf states and India. Central Asian states are currently developing ties with a large number of partners, and have repeatedly expressed interest in the EU as one of them. Developing transport connectivity between Europe and Central Asia is therefore an opportunity for shared economic green growth but also essential to avoid isolating and potentially antagonising a crucial region.

Central Asia, historically a vital part of the Silk Road, occupies a strategic position in modern transportation routes. The region serves as a critical link between major manufacturing hubs and consumer markets across an east-west axis, while also connecting regions rich in energy resources with importing countries on a north-south axis. The extension of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) to regions neighbouring the EU offers the opportunity to develop a faster connection from Central Asia to Europe, based on high social,

³ Investors Forum for EU-Central Asia Transport Connectivity 29-30 January 2024, at SQUARE Brussels
https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/investors-forum-eu-central-asia-transport-connectivity_en

⁴ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/international-relations/study-sustainable-transport-connections-central-asia_en

environmental, and financial standards, including specifically the countries of the South Caucasus and Türkiye as key stakeholders of the TCTC.

The recent invasion of Russia to Ukraine has emphasised the importance of Central Asia in diversifying transit trade away from the Northern Corridor through Russia. Furthermore, maritime routes between Asia and Europe have recently been affected by disruptions and security concerns in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, off the coast of West Africa, and in the South China Sea. Against this backdrop, the development of the existing TCTC (which involves land and maritime transport modes) emerges as a priority for competitive and sustainable Asia-Europe trade.

The TCTC's significance also as a network that provides cross-border connectivity between countries of the region is further amplified by the recent economic upswing in Central Asia, characterised by increasing and diversified regional trade with emerging economic partners. The region has experienced a consistent annual growth rate of approximately 5% since 2021, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Central Asia's total GDP has reached \$432 billion, with overall trade reaching \$212 billion. The region's export structure primarily consists of raw materials, energy products, and commodities. It has critical importance for the EU in supplying critical raw materials, as well as alternative and reliable energy supplies.⁵ Additionally, improved intra-regional connectivity based on a networked approach will strengthen regional integration and economic development in Central Asia.

Despite its strategic importance, the TCTC requires improvements to provide a seamless and competitive transport network. In addition to infrastructure investments in the region, soft measures need to be implemented to overcome operational inefficiencies, regulatory gaps, border crossing delays and other soft barriers, which also hinder the potential of this network.

The Action will also support the managing of the recently established TCTC Coordination Platform, that will facilitate collaborative efforts towards the implementation of priority projects in hard and soft infrastructure in Central Asia, with the long-term objective of making the TCTC a sustainable, safer and faster route linking Europe and Asia in no more than 15 days. This includes coordination with activities in the South Caucasus and Türkiye relevant for strengthening the operational efficiency and seamless connections across the TCTC. Platform participants include the European Commission services and the EEAS, Ministries of the five Central Asian countries, EU Member States, concerned Ministries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye, relevant International Financing Institutions, as well as Ministries from G7 partners or possibly other donors active in the region ready to adhere to the Global Gateway approach.

The Action will contribute to enhanced transport connectivity in Central Asia, a Global Gateway flagship that emerged from the Study on Sustainable Transport Connections between Europe and Central Asia (published in June 2023) and the subsequent Global Gateway Investors Forum for EU-Central Asia Transport Connectivity (held in January 2024), but it will also serve as an enabler for other areas of connectivity, by facilitating the export of critical raw materials and energy products to Europe. It is also aligned with the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the five countries under the Paris Agreement, which highlight the transport sector as a significant contributor to CO₂ emissions, particularly in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, with multiple opportunities to achieve positive environmental and climate outcomes through sustainable connectivity.

The Action directly complements the programme “Securing Connectivity in Central Asia” of AAP 2024 Action 2, which aims to reduce the risks associated with increasing transboundary flows of goods and people. The Action is also aligned and complementary with the EU Programme for Prosperity in Central Asia (AAP 2023) and its three components of advancing the connectivity agenda of Central Asia. The Prosperity Programme contributes to improving soft connectivity specifically on issues of trade facilitation and digitalisation, whereas the present Action focuses on transport digitalisation, interoperability, and inter-modality (including oversize

⁵<https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/europe-and-central-asia-economic-update#:~:text=Central%20Asia%3A%20The%20pace%20of,production%20by%206%25%20in%202023.>

cargo), enhanced Public-Private-Partnership environment, transport market liberalisation, tariff-setting mechanism and increased coordinated funding. Moreover, implementation of soft connectivity activities under the Action (SO1) will be aligned and coordinated with other ongoing programmes by like-minded donors such as the United States Department of Commerce Commercial Law Development Programme and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). The implementation of the Action will further be done in close consultation with DGs MOVE and NEAR to ensure alignment of support efforts in all partner countries along the TCTC, and specifically with the extension of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) to the Eastern Partnership region, including the South Caucasus.

2.2 Problem Analysis

The TCTC faces significant challenges in terms of regulatory frameworks, soft connectivity and infrastructure development. Regulatory harmonisation with EU and international standards is crucial but hindered by differences in legal systems and administrative capacity among Central Asian countries. Soft connectivity progress is needed in a number of areas of regulatory reform, such as customs procedures, tariff setting, market liberalisation and harmonisation of documentation, in order to streamline trade routes, reduce costs, and stimulate economic activity.

Additionally, facilitating investments in key infrastructure projects is essential for unlocking the Corridor's full potential and reducing transit times between Europe and Central Asia. Addressing these challenges is vital for realising the objectives of fostering regional cooperation and sustainable economic development. This needs to be accompanied by structured coordination of different strands of work and investments, involving all relevant stakeholders, including governments all along the TCTC, investors, and eventually the private sector.

The TCTC involves multiple intermodal changes between road, rail and maritime transport. The available infrastructure for this is often incomplete, limited in capacity and out of date, which results in unpredictable and long transport times along the Corridor, as well as high prices that affect the competitiveness of the route and, in turn, its attractiveness to economic operators. These obstacles are exacerbated by a lack of interoperability of systems, a low degree of digitalisation in both commercial freight and customs documentation as well as the respective information flows.

Intra-regional connectivity is still poorly developed but would be required to improve the links among countries and unlock the potential of further growth through regional trade. The inadequate transport connectivity negatively impacts communities by limiting access to goods, services, and employment opportunities. Long transit times and logistical inefficiencies potentially disrupt supply chains, affecting livelihoods and economic well-being. Reduced transit times and improved connectivity will therefore enhance access to markets, job opportunities, and essential services, thereby promoting social inclusion and human development in the region.

The Central Asian region is increasingly vulnerable to climate change effects, as warmer temperatures and more volatile weather patterns disrupt ecosystems and infrastructures, increasing the frequency of extreme droughts, floods, heat waves, and forest fires. While the financial cost of protecting and strengthening the resilience of countries in the region to the impacts of climate change is substantial, it is far outweighed by the cost of inaction or delayed climate-proofed investments, particularly in the transport sector. If no action is taken, the World Bank estimates the economic damages from droughts and floods in Central Asia are projected to be up to 1.3% of GDP per annum. For this reason, Central Asian countries have all made commitments under the Paris Agreement to decarbonise their economies in different sectors, implementing structural and

institutional reforms accompanied by climate action to ensure that investments are green, productive and able to mobilise private climate finance.

There has so far only been limited coordination in the prioritisation of infrastructure investments and regulatory reform efforts, needed to respond to the complexity of ensuring seamless connectivity across several countries along the TCTC. Additionally, it is important to facilitate investments in key infrastructure, such as through preparatory studies, to accelerate infrastructure developments.

Key stakeholders in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan include: Ministries of Transport, Presidential Administrations and/or Ministries of Foreign Affairs, other relevant Ministries, state agencies, state owned companies, local authorities, civil society organisations, private sector entities (business associations, logistics operators), international financial institutions (IFIs), and international organisations. In Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the group of stakeholders includes port authorities.

The Ministries of Transport in all countries are crucial partners in coordinating regulatory reforms and implementing infrastructure development plans outlined in the national strategies. Other line Ministries, responsible for trade, investment strategies, digitalisation, etc. are complementary in driving and implementing regulatory reforms, especially on soft connectivity. Customs agencies are key interlocutors for measures to streamline cross-border transport. Local authorities ensure that projects align with community needs. Civil society organisations provide insights into social, environmental, and economic impacts, facilitating community engagement. The private sector contributes expertise and resources to infrastructure development, while IFIs and international organisations offer financial and technical support.

The Action will work to ensure alignment with the national development, transport and climate strategies, including among others: Kazakhstan's Development Plan for 2023–2027, Kyrgyzstan's Concept for the Development of Railway Transport for 2021–2025, Tajikistan's transport development programme, Turkmenistan's Transport Diplomacy Development Programme and Uzbekistan's 2030 strategy for transport development, and the five NDCs under the Paris Agreement. It will strive to involve local authorities and civil society organisations in project planning and foster collaboration between public and private sectors.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective of this action is to advance the green development of seamless transport connections between Europe and Central Asia and within the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.

The Specific Objectives of this action are to:

1. Improve soft connectivity and gender-responsive regulatory frameworks in Central Asia and along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, including regulatory approximation with EU and international technical standards and best practices in low carbon and resilient development.
2. Improve effectiveness of intra-regional cooperation and coordination in the field of transport, connectivity and trade with a focus on the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.
3. Increase investments in green and climate-proofed key infrastructure of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.

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

Contributing to Specific Objective 1: Improve soft connectivity and gender responsive regulatory frameworks in Central Asia and along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor; including regulatory approximation with EU and international best practices in low carbon and resilient development.

Output 1.1. Enhanced government capacity for development of a simplified, harmonised, paperless and gender-responsive environment for customs and trade in line with international transport and logistics Conventions and relevant EU standards.

Output 1.2. Improved mechanisms and processes for sustainable transport connections and for interoperability of national railway systems as well as inter-modality across the various modes of land and sea transport.

Output 1.3. Improved government capacity for policy development and implementation relevant for public-private partnerships that incorporate gender principles (PPP)

Output 1.4. Improved government capacity for gender-responsive reforms and liberalisation of the transport market.

Output 1.5. Improved tariffs setting mechanisms along the TCTC.

Output 1.6. Improved capacity of government and transport asset owners for optimisation of transport asset management and related funding mobilisation.

Contributing to Specific Objective 2: Improve effectiveness of intra-regional cooperation and coordination in the field of transport, connectivity and trade with a focus on the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.

Output 2.1. Enhanced technical capacity of the TCTC coordination platform established by the EU and its partners.

Output 2.2. Strengthened cross-border cooperation and coordination mechanisms among the Coordination Platform members.

Output 2.3. Improved information and data sharing mechanisms within the TCTC coordination platform.

Contributing to Specific Objective 3: Increase investments in green and climate-proofed key infrastructure of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.

Output 3.1. Enhanced availability and dissemination of resources related to development of preparatory studies, pre-feasibility, and feasibility studies for green and climate proofed investment projects on the corridor.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Activities relating to Output 1.1

- Provide technical assistance and support to relevant government agencies in drafting, revising and implementing legislation and regulatory frameworks, incorporating EU and international standards where applicable.
- Organise workshops, seminars, and training programmes aimed at building the capacity of government officials, policymakers, and private sector stakeholders.
- Support digitalisation of customs documents according to international conventions, while seeking alignment with EU standards or, where applicable, the international standards on which systems developed in the EU rely upon, in coordination with DG MOVE.

- Mobilise senior level expertise in the EU transport sector, including from EU Member States public administrations (“Twinning-like”), to be partnered with relevant national bodies in the Central Asian countries.

Activities relating to Output 1.2

- Provide technical assistance and support to relevant government agencies in drafting, revising and implementing legislation and regulatory frameworks, incorporating EU Technical Specifications for Interoperability (ITS) and other EU and international standards where applicable.
- Organise workshops, seminars, and training programmes aimed at building the capacity of government officials, policymakers, and private sector stakeholders.
- Support digitalisation of transportation documents according to international conventions, while seeking alignment with EU standards or, where applicable, the international standards on which systems developed in the EU rely upon.
- Mobilise senior level expertise in the EU transport sector, including from EU Member States public administrations (“Twinning-like”), to be partnered with relevant national bodies in the Central Asian countries.

Activities relating to Output 1.3

- Provide technical assistance and support to relevant government agencies in drafting, revising and implementing legislation and regulatory frameworks, incorporating EU and international standards where applicable.
- Organise workshops, seminars, and training programmes aimed at building the capacity of government officials, policymakers, and private sector stakeholders.
- Mobilise senior level expertise in the EU transport sector, including from EU Member States public administrations (“Twinning-like”), to be partnered with relevant national bodies in the Central Asian countries.
- Support identification of potential climate-proofed infrastructure projects that could be developed through PPP arrangements, or other means.

Activities relating to Output 1.4

- Provide technical assistance and support to relevant government agencies in drafting, revising and implementing legislation and regulatory frameworks, incorporating EU and international standards where applicable.
- Organise workshops, seminars, and training programmes aimed at building the capacity of government officials and policymakers.
- Mobilise senior level expertise in the EU transport sector, including from EU Member States public administrations (“Twinning-like”), to be partnered with relevant national bodies in the Central Asian countries.

Activities relating to Output 1.5

- Provide technical assistance and support to relevant government agencies in drafting, revising and implementing tariff mechanisms, incorporating EU and international standards where applicable.
- Organise workshops, seminars, and training programmes aimed at building the capacity of government officials, policymakers, and private sector stakeholders.

- Mobilise senior level expertise in the EU transport sector, including from EU Member States public administrations (“Twinning-like”), to be partnered with relevant national bodies in the Central Asian countries.

Activities relating to Output 1.6

- Provide technical assistance and support to relevant government agencies in drafting, revising and implementing legislation and regulatory frameworks, incorporating EU and international standards where applicable.
- Organise workshops, seminars, and training programmes aimed at building the capacity of government officials, policymakers, and private sector stakeholders.
- Mobilise senior level expertise in the EU transport sector, including from EU Member States public administrations (“Twinning-like”), to be partnered with relevant national bodies in the Central Asian countries.

Activities relating to Output 2.1

- Provide administrative support to the TCTC coordination platform, including but not limited to organising (content and logistics) and minuting meetings, managing correspondence, information exchanges, drafting of concepts and maintaining documentation.
- Facilitate communication among members of the TCTC coordination platform and with external stakeholders.
- Coordinate regular meetings of the TCTC coordination platform, including scheduling, invitations, agenda setting, documentation and logistical arrangements.
- Collect and disseminate information on events relevant for the TCTC.

Activities relating to Output 2.2

- Organise workshops, seminars, and training programmes for government officials, private sector stakeholders, and other relevant bodies.
- Support working groups or task forces on specific TCTC objectives.
- Provide organisational and logistics services for events organised by the Platform, including the annual organisation of the Investors Forum for EU-Central Asia Transport Connectivity, ad-hoc events and working groups, etc.
- Operate a project database for the TCTC, including mapping, collecting and organising information on projects.
- Identify and map potential additional projects essential for achieving the objectives for the Corridor.
- Provide knowledge management and technical assistance.
- Regularly monitor and report on the progress, results and impact of this action.
- Promote green investment opportunities in climate proofed key infrastructure projects through targeted outreach activities and engagement with potential investors and financiers.

Activities relating to Output 2.3

- Develop and maintain an online information portal as part of the TCTC coordination platform. Facilitate data exchanges related to transport and trade along the TCTC.

- Partner with data providers such as government agencies, international organisations, research institutions, and private sector entities to access and share transport and trade-related data sets.

Activities relating to Output 3.1

- Produce project preparation studies as well as mitigation measures and management plans to address identified risks, impacts and opportunities, including climate change.
- Produce environmental and social impact assessments as part of the feasibility studies to evaluate the potential environmental and social effects of investment projects.
- Produce climate risk assessments to identify alternatives and inform green and climate-proofed investments in key infrastructures.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

All the activities undertaken within this action will follow the do no harm principle and will actively contribute to improving environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation and adaptation in the transport sector of the five Central Asian countries in line with their NDCs under the Paris Agreement, and other relevant national development and climate policies. Particularly on the activities related to hard infrastructure feasibility studies, comprehensive environmental and social impact assessments and climate risks assessments in line with EU standards will be a requisite. The investment in hard infrastructure will mostly be on railway, considered a clean mode of transport. The environmental and climate dimensions will be promoted and fully integrated in activities related to transport and trade governance (legislations, regulatory frameworks, training, and capacity building, etc.)

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 signifies a commitment to address the differentiated needs of women, girls, and vulnerable groups, as well as the specific risks they face, throughout all phases of the TCTC development. Gender equality will be mainstreamed across all project components, beginning with the collection of gender-disaggregated data. This data will inform policies and actions that consider the unique challenges and opportunities for women, minorities, and other vulnerable populations within the context of the corridor's development.

Human Rights

The action is designed to uphold human rights principles throughout the activities. Additionally, it aims to foster inclusive economic growth, promote sustainable development, enhance regional cooperation, and address the specific needs of vulnerable communities along the corridor. Through collaborative efforts with stakeholders, the Action will seek to ensure equitable access to opportunities and benefits, while also mitigating potential risks and challenges.

Disability

Considerations for people with disabilities regarding access to resources and services will be mainstreamed throughout the action, specifically in relation to the support on regulatory frameworks.

Reduction of inequalities

Activities within the Action will adhere to the principles of good governance, internationally recognised human rights standards, and gender equality. Additionally, the project will uphold the rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, ensuring a holistic approach that fosters inclusive and sustainable development while respecting the dignity and rights of all individuals and communities involved.

Democracy

By supporting regional cooperation, this Action will contribute to strengthening democracy and good governance in the region, making sure that the voices from all countries are reflected. Concurrently, it will prioritise initiatives that advance democratic principles, such as transparency and accountability. By fostering inclusive decision-making processes that include the voices of civil society, the project seeks to contribute to an enabling environment for democratic governance.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The key measures that this action will include are robust stakeholder engagement to address concerns, capacity-building initiatives to enhance local expertise, transparent regulatory frameworks to ensure compliance, community engagement for social safeguards, cross-border cooperation for seamless transit, adoption of innovative technologies for efficiency, and continuous monitoring for effective implementation. All these measures ultimately contribute to fostering peace, resilience, and conflict sensitivity within these countries.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The Central Asian region is prone to almost all types of disaster risk of a natural (geological, geophysical, meteorological, agrometeorological, hydrological), man-made, ecological, biological and social origin. While developing the TCTC, environmental and climate change considerations will be integrated as cross-cutting issues throughout the implementation of actions, where relevant. Given that the development of transportation routes can significantly impact the environment and climate, the project will prioritise addressing these concerns. Additionally, it will work towards ensuring that infrastructure planning takes into account needs for disaster resilience, where relevant.

Other considerations if relevant

N/A

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
External: Risks related to the external environment	Deteriorating political or security situation which impacts reforms, intra-regional cooperation,	Medium	High	Continuous monitoring of political developments and engaging in proactive diplomacy. Developing contingency plans to adapt project activities and maintaining open

	and the investment climate.			channels of communication with regional stakeholders.
Internal: Risks related to planning, processes and systems	Differences in legal systems, administrative capacity, and differing interests negatively impact harmonisation of regulatory frameworks.	Medium	Medium	Promoting a phased approach to regulatory harmonisation. Providing technical assistance and capacity-building to enhance administrative capacity and legal expertise and promote exchange between national administrations.
Internal: Risks related to people and the organisation	Inadequate government human resources for implementation.	Medium	Medium	Providing technical assistance and investing in comprehensive training programmes and capacity-building. Implementing performance evaluation mechanisms and providing ongoing support and mentoring.
External: Risks related to the external environment	A worsening economic and financial situation affects availability of funding for infrastructure investments and regulatory reforms.	Medium	Medium	Conducting comprehensive risk assessments and stress tests to identify potential vulnerabilities and develop contingency plans.
External: Risks related to the external environment/political decisions and priorities	Lack of political support from partner governments to carry out country-specific activities.	Low	Medium	Engaging in structured exchanges to secure buy-in and support for project activities, including clear communication channels and regional studies and holding regular consultations with governments to address concerns and build consensus on project priorities and objectives.
Internal: Risks related to communication and information	Lack of communication and coordination between key stakeholders leading to overlapping activities and investments.	Medium	Medium	Using the steering mechanism to facilitate coordination. Implementing regular stakeholder meetings to promote transparency and collaboration. Creating a well-designed coordination platform will

				be key for the accomplishment of the project and investment plans.
Geopolitical Risks	Geopolitical developments, such as increased competition in trade and infrastructure investments, which affect implementation and ownership.	Medium	High	Continued dialogue and engagement, specifically with Central Asian partners, and coordination with like-minded partners and investors to promote European standards.

Lessons Learnt:

Regarding lessons learnt from related programmes, the recently finished regional Ready4Trade and Central Asia Invest projects show that regional integration is growing but still far from being fully exploited. There are improvements in import and export procedures among Central Asian countries. Identified actions could be extending monitoring and evaluation to ensure evidence-based policy making, increasing trade facilitation and support to regulatory frameworks for freight, infrastructure upgrade and regional coordination. The last three items match with the indicative activities of the present Action Document; the first, trade facilitation along the TCTC, will be a main objective under the Prosperity Programme adopted in AAP 2023.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

IF technical assistance for improved transport connectivity and gender-responsive regulatory frameworks is provided to the relevant stakeholders in Central Asia in the areas of customs and trade environments, interoperability, implementation of public private partnerships, market liberalisation, tariff setting, transport asset management and funding and IF transport standards are harmonised, regulatory barriers to smooth transport connectivity are reduced and communication and cooperation between relevant stakeholders ensured, THEN soft connectivity and gender responsive regulatory frameworks in the region will improve and align better with EU and international best practices, including in low carbon and resilient development.

IF the TCTC coordination platform receives technical support and IF cross-border cooperation and coordination mechanisms among the coordination platform members are strengthened, THEN intra-regional cooperation in the field of transport, connectivity and trade will improve along the Corridor.

IF preparatory studies for green and climate-proofed investment projects on the Corridor are supported and IF public-private partnership frameworks and mechanisms are developed and IF private sector participation in infrastructure development along the TCTC and IF green investment in key climate-proofed infrastructure projects is promoted, THEN green investments in key climate-proofed infrastructure of the TCTC will be facilitated.

Consequently, IF soft connectivity and gender responsive regulatory frameworks will improve and align better with EU and international best practices, including in low carbon and resilient development, and IF intra-regional cooperation on transport, connectivity and trade will improve and IF more green investments in climate-proofed key TCTC infrastructure are facilitated, WHILE Central Asian governments and stakeholders continue to prioritise the development of TCTC as a strategic initiative for regional economic integration and actively participate in the coordination mechanism, THEN transport connections between Europe and Central Asia will become greener, more seamless and transport connectivity and cooperation within the TCTC will be enhanced. The result will be the increased efficiency and reliability of the TCTC, reducing transit time between Europe and Central Asia, and strengthened regional cooperation and sustainable and inclusive economic opportunities for low carbon resilient development.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

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

On the basis of this logframe matrix, a more detailed logframe (or several) may be developed at contracting stage. In case baselines and targets are not available for the action, they should be informed for each indicator at signature of the contract(s) linked to this AD, or in the first progress report at the latest. New columns may be added to set intermediary targets (milestones) for the Output and Outcome indicators whenever it is relevant.

- At inception, the first progress report should include the complete logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets).
- Progress reports should provide an updated logframe with current values for each indicator.
- The final report should enclose the logframe with baseline and final values for each indicator.

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

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

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

Results	Results chain (a): Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (a): (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	Advance the development of seamless transport connections between Europe and Central Asia and within the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.	<p>1. Logistic Performance Index OPSYS 240-70</p> <p>2. Increased trade in goods and services between Central Asian countries and between Central Asian countries and the wider region. Increased income-generating activities and improved livelihoods in border areas. *Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme (RMIP) Expected Result 3</p> <p>a) Increase of trade</p> <p>b) Number of tariff/non-tariff barriers reduced</p> <p>c) Number of harmonised standards (including environmental and ethical standards), certifications of products and custom procedures</p> <p>d) Number of simplified customs procedures approved and implemented</p>	<p>1.Regional Average -2.5 (2023)</p> <p>2.</p> <p>a) TBD during inception (2023)</p> <p>b) TBD during inception (2023)</p> <p>c) TBD during inception (2023)</p> <p>d) TBD during inception (2023)</p>	<p>1. Regional Average 2.7 (2028)</p> <p>2.</p> <p>a) Increase of volume of by at least 10% (2028)</p> <p>b) TBD during inception (2028)</p> <p>c) TBD during inception (2028)</p> <p>d) TBD during inception (2028)</p>	<p>1. Logistics Performance Index</p> <p>2. Official statistics</p>	Not applicable
Outcome 1	1. Improve soft connectivity and gender-responsive regulatory frameworks in Central Asia and along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor; including	1.1 Number of improved tools and products developed and/or adopted by sector institutions and operators (of	1.1. 0 (2024)	1.1. 10 (at least one for each country); of which 3	1.1. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention	Central Asian governments prioritise the development of TCTC as a strategic initiative for regional economic integration and

	regulatory approximation with EU and international best practices and in low carbon and resilient development.	<p>which number of those gender-responsive) OPSYS 210-50</p> <p>1.2 Number of regulations and standards relating to trade, investment and business in partner countries which have been aligned to EU/international standards *OPSYS 990-62</p>	1.2. 0 (2024)	gender-responsive (2028) 1.2. 5 (2028)	1.2. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention.	enhanced global connectivity.
Outcome 2	2. Improve effectiveness of intra-regional cooperation and coordination in the field of transport, connectivity and trade with a focus the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor	<p>2.1 Percentage of stakeholders that strongly agree or agree that TCTC coordination platform is effective and useful</p> <p>2.2 Number of harmonised regulations or simplified procedures implemented to facilitate cross-border trade and transport in the region</p>	<p>2.1. 0 (2024)</p> <p>2.2. 0 (2024)</p>	<p>2.1. 75 percent (2028)</p> <p>2.2. 10 (2028)</p>	<p>2.1. Surveys by the subcontractors</p> <p>2.2. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention</p>	Central Asian governments and other relevant stakeholders actively participate in the coordination mechanism and contribute to its working mechanisms.
Outcome 3	3. Increase investments in key infrastructure of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.	<p>3.1. Number of new infrastructure projects within the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor (TCTC) route, disaggregated by status (initiated/completed)</p> <p>3.2. Total amount of investment secured for key infrastructure projects along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor (TCTC) corridor in EUR.</p> <p>3.3 Total length of transport infrastructure supported by the EU (kms): (a) roads, (b) railways, (c) waterways (GERF 2.18)**</p>	<p>3.1. 0 (2024)</p> <p>3.2. 0 (2024)</p> <p>3.3 0 (2024)</p>	<p>3.1. tbc in the inception phase</p> <p>3.2. tbc in the inception phase</p> <p>3.3 tbc in the inception phase</p>	<p>3.1. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention</p> <p>3.2. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention</p> <p>3.3 Baseline and endline studies conducted and budgeted by the EU-</p>	<p>The economic and financial situation is robust for the project development as well as the administrative capacity and regulatory environment.</p> <p>The geopolitical changes not shifting the interest of the CA governments from the TCTC route.</p> <p>Partner financial institutions can provide competitive offers project financing.</p>

					funded intervention	
Output 1 relating to Outcome 1	1.1. Enhanced government capacity for development of simplified, harmonised, paperless and gender-responsive environment for customs and trade in line with international transport and logistics Conventions and relevant EU standards. .	<p>1.1.1 Number of capacity building measures (seminars, workshops, training events, exercises, peer reviews, needs assessments, technical assistance) implemented *OPSYS 758</p> <p>1.1.2 Number of new or revised regulations implemented by relevant government agencies based on technical assistance and support provided</p> <p>1.1.3. Number of digitalisation-related standardisation reforms a) developed/revised with EU support OPSYS 250-44</p>	<p>1.1.1. 0 (2024)</p> <p>1.1.2. 0 (2024)</p> <p>1.1.3. 0 (2024)</p>	<p>1.1.1. 15 (2028), of which 5 are gender-responsive</p> <p>1.1.2. 5 (2028)</p> <p>1.1.3. 5 (2028)</p>	<p>1.1.1 Progress reports for the EU funded intervention</p> <p>1.1.2 Progress reports for the EU funded intervention; text of law and regulations</p> <p>1.1.3. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention; text of law and regulations</p>	The relevant Ministries and agencies have the absorption capacity and enough human resources to implement the changes recommended.
Output 2 relating to Outcome 1	1.2. Improved mechanisms for sustainable transport connections and for interoperability of national railway systems as well as inter-modality across the various modes of land and sea transport	<p>1.2.1. Number of policies aligned with ADR (Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road) developed with support of the EU intervention</p> <p>1.2.2. Number of policies/mechanisms aligned with EU standards, including the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI), and standards related to cargo safety and weight / dimension with support of the EU intervention</p>	<p>1.2.1. 0 (2024)</p> <p>1.2.2. 0 (2024)</p>	<p>1.2.1. tbc in the inception phase</p> <p>1.2.2. tbc in the inception phase</p>	<p>1.2.1. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention; text of law and regulations</p> <p>1.2.2. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention</p>	The relevant Ministries and agencies have the absorption capacity and enough human resources to implement the changes recommended.

Output 3 relating to Outcome 1	1.3. Improved government capacity for policy development and implementation relevant for public-private partnerships that incorporate gender principles (PPP).	1.3.1. Number of public and private sector representatives trained by the EU-funded intervention with increased knowledge and or skills on public private partnerships in transport sector that incorporate gender equality and sustainability principles, disaggregated by sex and sector.	1.3.1. 0 (2024)	1.3.1. tbc in the inception phase	1.3.1. Pre- and post-training test reports	A conducive environment and interest of relevant actors for PPP exist.
Output 4 relating to Outcome 1	1.4. Improved government capacity for gender-responsive reforms and liberalisation of the transport market.	1.4.1. Number of policies for liberalisation developed with support of the project	1.4.1. 0 (2024)	1.4.1. tbc in the inception phase , including number of gender responsive reforms	1.4.1. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention; text of law and regulations	The relevant Ministries and agencies have the absorption capacity and enough human resources to implement the changes recommended.
Output 5 relating to Outcome 1	1.5. Improved tariffs setting mechanisms along the TCTC are supported.	1.5.1. Number of tariff setting mechanisms developed with support of the EU-funded intervention	1.5.1. 0 (2024)	1.5.1. tbc in the inception phase	1.5.1. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention	Policy makers and tariff setting entities show readiness for clear and transparent tariff setting.
Output 6 relating to Outcome 1	1.6. Improved capacity of government and transport asset owners for optimisation of transport asset management and related funding mobilisation.	1.6.1. Number of government and transport asset owners staff trained by the EU-funded intervention with increased knowledge and/or skills in transport asset management, disaggregated by sex and institution	1.6.1. 0 (2024)	1.6.1. tbc in the inception phase	1.6.1. Progress reports for the EU funded intervention Pre- and post-training test reports	Government agencies and transport owners show interest and availability.

Output 1 relating to Outcome 2	2.1. Enhanced technical capacity of the TCTC coordination platform established by the EU and its partners	2.1.1. Number of meetings facilitated by the secretariat with support of the EU-funded intervention to ensure alignment between project activities and broader objectives of the TCTC (including green and low carbon development). 2.1.2. Number of resources (e.g., reports, best/green practices) developed and disseminated by the coordination platform with support of the EU-funded intervention.	2.1.1. 0 (2024) 2.1.2. 0 (2024)	2.1.1. 10 (2028) 2.1.2. 10 (at least one for each country) (2028)	2.1.1. Independent assessment, project reports 2.1.2. Coordination Platform Database	The implementing partner is mobilised in a timely manner and establishes operational working relationships with the key stakeholders.
Output 2 relating to Outcome 2	2.2. Strengthened cross-border cooperation and coordination mechanisms among the Coordination Platform members is facilitated.	2.2.1. Existence of project database under the Coordination Platform 2.2.2. Number of projects documented and incorporated into the TCTC project database with support of the EU-funded intervention. 2.2.3. Percentage of platform members reporting improved communication and collaboration skills on TCTN development after their participation	2.2.1. 0 (2024) 2.2.2. 0 (2024) 2.2.3. 0 (2024)	2.2.1. 1 (2028) 2.2.2. 33 (2028) 2.2.3. 20% increase (2028)	2.2.1. Coordination Platform Database 2.2.2. Coordination Platform Database 2.2.3. Coordination Platform Database and Programme survey	The implementing partner is mobilised in a timely manner and establishes operational working relationships with the key stakeholders.

Output 3 relating to Outcome 2	2.3. Improved information and data sharing mechanisms within the TCTC coordination platform.	2.3.1. Number of transport and trade-related data exchanges facilitated through the TCTC coordination platform with support of the EU-funded intervention,	2.3.1. 0 (2024)	2.3.1. Quarterly Data Exchange (2028)	2.3.1. Coordination Platform Database	The implementing partner is mobilised in a timely manner and establishes operational working relationships with the key stakeholders.
Output 1 relating to Outcome 3	3.1. Enhanced availability and dissemination of resources related to development of preparatory studies, pre-feasibility, and feasibility studies for green and climate proof investment projects on the corridor.	3.1.1. Number of feasibility, pre-feasibility, environmental and social impact and climate risk assessments completed with support of the EU-funded intervention for potential green and climate-proofed transport infrastructure projects linking Europe and Central Asia	3.1.1. 0 (2024)	3.1.1. 10 (at least one for each country) (2028)	3.1.1. Project reports	Constructive exchanges between public and private lenders continue to develop infrastructure investment pipelines.

4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the partner countries.

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 54 months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this Financing Decision.

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

4.3 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁶.

4.3.1 Direct Management (Procurement)

Procurement will contribute to achieving Specific Objective 2: Improved intra-regional cooperation and coordination in the field of transport, connectivity and trade with a focus on developing the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.

This call for tender is intended to be launched in Q4 2024 under a suspensive clause prior to the adoption of the Financing Decision. This is justified because of the high political importance to start the procedure in order to deliver quick results on the TCTC Coordination Platform, including the organisation of high-complexity events in Q1-Q2 of 2025.

4.3.2 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

A part of this Action may be implemented in indirect management with one or more entities, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

For SO 1: technical expertise in the transport sector in Central Asia, including on regulatory procedures, standards harmonisation, digitalisation processes for customs and other relevant authorities, gender equality and climate change resilience mainstreaming. Moreover, experience and capacity to implement activities in the five Central Asian countries will be needed.

For SO 3: Capacity to implement and/or delegate to relevant IFIs complete feasibility studies on transport infrastructure investment projects in the region, including multimodal transportation, logistics and border/customs infrastructure following EU gender equality and environmental standards; Capacity to implement the hard infrastructure investment projects stemming from the feasibility studies in the five Central Asian countries.

The implementation entails activities designed to :

1. Improve soft connectivity and gender-responsive regulatory frameworks in Central Asia and along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, including regulatory approximation with EU and international best practices in low carbon and resilient development and,

⁶ 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.

2. Increase investments in green and climate-proofed key infrastructure of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor.

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

If this Action cannot be implemented as specified in 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 due to circumstances outside the Commission's control, and as a fallback option, in case no suitable option with one or more entrusted entities is found, activities under SO1/SO3 may be implemented in direct management through procurement of technical assistance services. Activities under SO2 may be implemented in indirect management with an entrusted entity fulfilling the criteria set out in point 4.3.2 SO1 if a suitable option with procurement under direct management is not found.

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

4.4 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3	
Specific Objective 1: Improved soft connectivity and gender responsive regulatory frameworks in Central Asia and along the TCTC; including approximation with EU and international best practices composed of	12 000 000
Indirect management with one or more entrusted entities – cf. section 4.3.2	12 000 000
Specific Objective 2: Improved intra-regional cooperation in the field of transport, connectivity and trade with a focus on developing the TCTC composed of	3 000 000
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	3 000 000
Specific Objective 3: Facilitation of the Investments in key infrastructure of the TCTC are facilitated composed of	15 000 000
Indirect management with one or more entrusted entities - cf. section 4.3.2	15 000 000
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.3.1	3 000 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	May be covered by another Decision
Contingencies	N/A
Totals	30 000 000

4.5 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

Overall guidance and prioritisation of this Action will be provided through the TCTC Coordination Platform that will be supported through SO 2. The Platform will be convened on a regular and voluntary basis and will bring together the relevant like-minded donors, investors, stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in the implementation and operation of measures taken to further develop the TCTC. The Platform may meet three to four times a year at senior / middle management level, at the invitation of the European Commission services in close coordination with the European External Action Service and the concerned EU Delegations.

A technical level Steering Committee will be created, chaired by the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan, involving as main members the Ministries of Transport of the Central Asian countries. Steering Committee meetings could be held back-to-back with the senior/middle management level Coordination Platform meetings when convenient. Specific sessions will be organised for each SO, involving the main Steering Committee members, SO-specific implementing partners and, where relevant, thematic/sectoral stakeholders as observers.

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.

Entities implementing the Action will be required to closely cooperate with the implementers of other EU-funded programmes, notably the Central Asia Prosperity Programme. Additionally, thematic collaboration will be required with coordination efforts on trade and transport facilitation measures, such as the one undertaken by the US government under its Commercial Law Development Programme, and relevant sectoral groups of the TCTC Coordination Platform.

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 partners shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the Action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the Action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy. These reports shall include the results of studies to collect baseline and endline data for the relevant indicators. Moreover, the implementing partners will also conduct surveys to compile information on relevant indicators, with timing to be decided during the inception phase. .

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).

Additionally, the Commission may conduct further project monitoring visits, facilitated by its own staff or independent consultants directly engaged by the Commission for impartial monitoring reviews (or engaged by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for conducting such reviews).

Regarding roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis, and monitoring: the implementing partners will coordinate and oversee activities on a country-by-country basis, providing aggregated and regular reports to the European Commission.

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

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the Action, a mid-term, final and/or ex-post evaluations may be carried out for this Action or its components via independent consultants and/or through a joint mission jointly with implementing partners if relevant.

The mid-term evaluation will be carried out for problem solving and learning purposes, in particular with respect to coordination and monitoring efficiency among members of the Coordination Platform and stakeholders.

The final and ex-post evaluations will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that this is the first time an Action is implemented fully on the transport sector in Central Asia.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least one month in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports may be shared with the partners and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, apply the necessary adjustments. The financing of the evaluation may be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

5.3 Audit and Verifications

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

6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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

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 multi-annual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.