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**THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**ANNEX II**

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

**Action Document for Women's Economic Empowerment in Uzbekistan**

**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

<b>1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment in Uzbekistan OPSYS number: ACT-62619 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
<b>2. Team Europe Initiative</b>	No
<b>3. Zone benefiting from the action</b>	The action shall be carried out in the Republic of Uzbekistan
<b>4. Programming document</b>	Multi-annual indicative program 2021-2027 for Uzbekistan
<b>5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results</b>	<p>Priority area 2: Inclusive, digital and green growth</p> <p>This priority area focuses on supporting a digital green transition, climate change, sustainable management of natural resources (including water stress), and promoting an investment friendly and gender responsive environment that can create green jobs, including by strengthening digital literacy and the application of science and technology in a market-led green transition.</p> <p>The specific objective is to support sustainable, gender and youth responsive, climate-resilient and low-carbon economic transformation that delivers innovation, modernisation and opportunity</p> <p>Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modernisation of the VET sector, including by strengthening overall policy and capacity to lead VET reform and its coordination with wider green growth and gender equality and youth initiatives. Such support will be coupled by an increased attention to issues of equitable access to educational opportunities.</li><li>• Government, civil society, media and public oversight institutions have increased awareness, knowledge and capacity contributing to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls, to ensure women's full and effective participation in political, economic and public life.</li></ul>

<b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b>				
<b>6. Priority Area(s), sectors</b>	130 - Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health; 151 - Government and Civil Society-general; 160 - Other infrastructure and services; 240 - Banking and financial services			
<b>7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	Main SDG: SDG 5 Gender Equality Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SDG 1 No poverty: national targets 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.b</li> <li>- SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing: national target 3.7</li> <li>- SDG 4 Quality education: national targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5</li> <li>- SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth: national targets 8.1, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6</li> <li>- SDG 10 Reduced inequalities: national targets 10.1, 10.2</li> <li>- SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions: national target 16.2</li> </ul>			
<b>8 a) DAC code(s)</b>	16020 Employment creation (34%) 13030 Family planning (33%) 13020 Reproductive health care (33%)			
<b>8 b) Main Delivery Channel</b>	40000 – Multilateral Organisations			
<b>9. Targets</b>	<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 type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
<b>10. Markers (from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective @</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>
	<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	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"/>
<b>11. Internal markers and Tags:</b>	<b>Policy objectives</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Digitalisation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Connectivity @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity energy transport health education and research	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Migration @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities <sup>1</sup> @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET INFORMATION</b>				
<b>12. Amounts concerned</b>	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020130 Total estimated cost: EUR 5 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 5 000 000			
<b>MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
<b>13. Type of financing</b>	<b>Indirect management</b> with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.1			

## 1.2 Summary of the Action

In late 2016, the Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) launched a comprehensive set of reforms to transition to modernise the country and open it up to the world. As part of this process, gender equality and women's empowerment have gradually moved towards the centre of the government's agenda. The GoU has implemented many new laws to address the problem of gender-based and domestic violence, and to promote women's economic empowerment in the country. Over the past years, Uzbekistan has also undergone significant demographic

<sup>1</sup> 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)

changes, including a sharp rise in the fertility rate, decrease in contraceptive use and persisting issue of early pregnancy. The recent demographic trends in Uzbekistan reinforce women's traditional role of childbearers and caregivers and effectively reduce women's participation in the labour force. Female labour force participation continues to decrease with each additional child, while equal participation in the economy would raise Uzbekistan's GDP by 29% and potentially lift 700,000 people out of poverty. At the same time, Uzbekistan witnesses the resurgence of traditional patriarchic values that determine rigid and often harmful social norms and strict gender roles for women and men. This view of the society and the household limits women's freedom of choice and access to opportunities; perpetuates discrimination and intolerance, especially discrimination against women, and is one of the main drivers of inequality in Uzbekistan. The sharp increase in fertility rate and early pregnancies, effectively hinders women's economic participation and empowerment and has a detrimental effect on Uzbekistan's economic development as well.

The Action will address the following gaps: (1) Absence of a mechanism to challenge and address the harmful social norms and gender stereotypes affecting women's empowerment and economic participation; (2) Lack of available and disaggregated data on access to and attitudes towards sexual and reproductive health and rights; (3) Lack of systematic access to evidence-based and unbiased information on sexual and reproductive health, contraception and to family planning services; (4) Lack of support for parents and other caregivers to infuse key normative principles such as gender equality and inclusion to transform power structures in future generations; (5) Limited availability of socio-emotional skills and digital and STEM skills programmes for adolescent girls.

To address these gaps, the proposed Action aims to address gender stereotypes and harmful social norms and promote women's equal participation in the economy and labour force. To achieve this, the Action will work on three pillars (SOs): SO 1 focusing on Women's Economic Empowerment and targeting women, adolescent girls, including girls with disabilities, institutions and private sector entities to create an environment where women acquire the skills and access the support they need to achieve economic empowerment; SO2 focusing on tackling gender stereotypes and harmful social norms along with family planning, where the project activities will focus on changing the perception on gender stereotypes and harmful social norms, including by working with community and religious leaders, and promote access to quality pre-marriage and family planning counselling along with gender-transformative parenting; SO3 focusing on ensuring families access to modern family planning resources, by developing a logistics management system to handle the distribution of family planning resources in accordance with women's expressed needs.

## 2 RATIONALE

### 2.1 Context

In late 2016, the Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) launched a comprehensive set of reforms to transition to modernize the country and open it up to the world. The reforms encompass all spheres of the society and its functioning, from economic policy to social protection, environment and climate change, promoting human rights and improving relations with neighboring countries. The GoU has also undertaken efforts to address sectoral challenges and bottlenecks, taking steps to improve basic health services for the population, introducing new and expanding the existing social protection measures, investing in education and employment programs with a particular focus on women and girls. In 2019, Uzbekistan was declared country of the year by The Economist, which argued that "no other country traveled so far". Since then, Uzbekistan has been gradually privatizing assets and attracting foreign investments, and its start-up and tech scenes have been developing rather quickly. At the Tashkent International Investment Forum 2024, Uzbekistan has emerged as a premier business destination and unveiled plans to position itself as a regional IT hub with the Tashkent IT Park already being the largest IT hub in Central Asia. The Government of Uzbekistan has set ambitious economic and social development goals. It aims to reduce poverty by half by 2026 and reach an upper middle-income country status by 2030.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are among the topics that have gradually shifted towards the centre of the government's agenda, with an increasingly open public debate on women's rights and the gender-based and domestic violence. For the past seven years, the country has seen tremendous advancements in terms of policy and public debate about the issues of gender equality, violence against women and particularly the persistence of domestic violence. Since 2019, the government enacted the landmark law "On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence", established hotlines and network of 29 Rehabilitation centres for longer-term support to women affected by domestic violence. In 2023, Uzbekistan also approved law ZRU#829 which effectively criminalizes several types of domestic and gender-based violence. In the same year, an inter-sectoral working group under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice developed a law on the protection of children from all forms of violence, which is expected to be approved by the Senate in the coming months.

Uzbekistan has also mandated equal pay for work of equal value, and removed restrictions to women's employment in industrial jobs and jobs considered dangerous. Thanks to these and other reforms, including a new Labour Code integrating new provisions in line with international standards and best practices adopted in October 2022 and effective as of April 2023, the World Bank recognised the country as one of the top improvers in its "Women, Business and Law" report published in March 2024. The reforms have positively impacted two key indicators of the report, Pay and Marriage, leading to an 11.9-point increase in Uzbekistan's position, which now stands at a score of 82.5 in the 2024 WBL index.

Over the past years, Uzbekistan has undergone significant demographic changes, and particularly a sharp rise in fertility rate (from 2.4 in 2017 to 3.3 in 2021), a decrease in contraceptive use (from 65% in 2006 to 59% in 2021, and from 22% to 1.9% for girls between 15 and 19 years old) coupled with doubling rates of teenage pregnancies and higher rates of early marriages and unmet needs for birth spacing. In 2022, 3.4% of women aged 20-24 were married before they reached the age of 18. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2021-2022 shows that the highest unmet need for family planning among women lies in the 20-29 age range. Moreover, only 14.8% of married women have comprehensive knowledge about HIV/STIs, which is also a proxy indicator of lack of adequate knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, STI/HIV prevention and family planning.

COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted the availability and quality of contraceptives and family planning counseling services resulted in unstable financing of contraceptives' procurement.

The demographic trends in Uzbekistan where women have more children reinforces their traditional role of childrearing and caregiving, reducing their participation in the labour force. The World Bank Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment provides a clear snapshot of the situation, highlighting that young women in fact have higher unemployment rates (15.5% versus 10% for males) and that the share of young women not in employment, education or training (NEET) has reached 42% while the share of male NEET is only 8%. As of 2024, female labour force participation in Uzbekistan lags behind men by 28 percentage points. Studies show that female labour force participation decreases with each additional child by about 10-15% age points among women aged 25-39 in Uzbekistan. At the same time, if women participated in the economy equally as men, the national income in Uzbekistan would rise by 29%, and matching women's pay with men's would lift over 700,000 people out of poverty.

The acceleration in the birth rates observed in Uzbekistan is linked to the lack of awareness on the benefits of family planning. At the same time, Uzbekistan witnesses the resurgence of traditional and religious values in the society which place a higher emphasis on family and child-bearing. These values bring forward a patriarchic idea of the family and of the society, with rigid gender roles assigned to women and men, girls and boys. While the man is supposed to be the breadwinner, the woman should spend most of her time taking care of household duties, cooking, cleaning, caring for kids. In this outlook, women are generally subject to a male authority, such as that of a father, a brother, a husband. This view of the household structure effectively limits women's freedom of choice and access to opportunities; perpetuate discrimination and intolerance, especially discrimination against women, and are one of the main drivers of inequality – and, as a result, of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence – in Uzbekistan.

## 2.2 Problem Analysis

The recent demographic trends in Uzbekistan, particularly increased number of births, early pregnancy rates and contraceptive use, are highly influenced by the persistence of deeply rooted harmful social norms and gender stereotypes, particularly on the role of women and men in the society. After giving birth, women are often pressured to not seek work or training opportunities and prioritize staying home to perform unpaid household, look after children and care work. This means that the sharp increase in fertility rate and early pregnancies, effectively hinders women's economic participation and empowerment and has a detrimental effect on Uzbekistan's economic development as well.

Over the past years, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women identified several gaps related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, availability of family planning and support to women's empowerment and participation in labour force, which the proposed projects aims at addressing:

- Absence of a sound, culturally sensitive and coordinated mechanism to challenge and address the harmful social norms and gender stereotypes affecting women's empowerment and economic participation.
- Lack of available and disaggregated data on access to and attitudes towards sexual and reproductive health and rights, and particularly within the context of existing socio-economic inequalities.
- Lack of systematic access, both for women and girls and for young families, to evidence-based and unbiased information on sexual and reproductive health, contraception and to family planning services.
- Absence of support for parents and other caregivers to elevate parenting, particularly by infusing key normative principles such as gender equality and inclusion by promoting positive gender norms and socialization to transform power structures in future generations.
- Limited availability of socio-emotional skills and digital and STEM skills programmes for adolescent girls, limiting their empowerment, transition into adulthood and participation in the labour force.

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

Government stakeholders to the project include the Committee on Family and Women Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Digital Technologies of the Republic of Uzbekistan, regional authorities in the target regions.

Non-governmental stakeholders include faith-based organisations, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Local and regional media, the private sector.

## 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

### 3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective of this action is **to promote women's equal participation in the economy and labour force of Uzbekistan without being affected by gender stereotypes and harmful social norms.**

The Specific Objectives of this action are to:

1. To ensure women's, including women with disabilities' access to public goods, services and resources enabling them to secure decent work and grow their businesses.
2. To encourage a positive shift in societal perceptions around gender stereotypes and harmful social norms limiting women's empowerment to contribute to upholding women's rights and promoting women's economic participation in the workforce.
3. To ensure women of fertile age have access to a full range of modern family planning resources distributed at the primary level based on evidence-informed needs.

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

- 1.1 Stakeholders have access to up-to-date information on the business and support services ecosystem for women and households.
- 1.2 Women in the target regions acquire employable hard and soft skills through capacity building and vocational training opportunities.
- 1.3 Women in the target regions access business and self-employment opportunities.
- 1.4 Public and private sector partners have the capacity to integrate gender equality into their daily business including investments and procurement.
- 1.5 Technical capacity of institutions is strengthened to improve the production, analysis and generation of knowledge in the area of women's economic empowerment and care.
- 2.1. The knowledge base on societal perceptions regarding gender stereotypes and harmful social norms is strengthened.
- 2.2. Young families and couples in the pre-marriage phase access targeted quality pre-marriage, family counseling and parenting services.
- 2.3. Increased awareness of country specific norms and stereotypes: the public is more aware of rights to reduce the impact of stereotypes and change the roles of men and women.
- 2.4. Community and religious leaders raise citizens' awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and family planning issues.
- 3.1. The knowledge base on family planning services is strengthened to allow data-informed decision-making.
- 3.2. A management implementation system for the distribution and accessibility of family planning resources is active.

### 3.2 Indicative Activities

- SO1. Women in the target regions, including women with disabilities access public goods, services and resources enabling them to secure decent work and grow their businesses.
- OP1.1. Stakeholders have access to up-to-date information on the business and support services ecosystem for women and households.
- A1.1.1. Assessment of women's entrepreneurship ecosystem, including legal review
  - A1.1.2. Mapping exercise of human resources and skill needs of private sector
  - A1.1.3. Analysis of family friendly policies needs and potential for application through desk review and focus group discussions
  - A1.1.4. Consolidation of case studies and best practices on family-friendly policies
- OP1.2. Women in the target regions acquire employable hard and soft skills through capacity-building and vocational training opportunities.
- A1.2.1. Local accelerator programme: training cycle for women and girls covering financial literacy, communication skills, leadership, entrepreneurship and digital literacy
  - A1.2.2. Employability training for adolescent girls
  - A1.2.3. Targeted training cycles to develop employable skills in the private sector
- OP1.3. Women in the target regions access business and self-employment opportunities.
- A1.3.1. Organisation of Women's Entrepreneurship Expo
  - A1.3.2. Enhancing access to financial services and products for women
  - A1.3.3. Matching female labour force to private companies
- OP1.4. Public and private sector partners have the capacity to integrate gender equality into their daily business including investments and procurement.
- A1.4.1. Expansion of Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) programme to raise awareness of selected private sector companies to mainstream gender equality into their policies and practices
  - A1.4.2. Building capacity and raising awareness on gender responsive procurement
- OP1.5. Technical capacity of institutions is strengthened to improve the production, analysis and generation of knowledge in the area of women's economic empowerment and care.
- A1.5.1. Conduction of time-use survey

- A1.5.2. Assessment on estimation of the value of unpaid care work
- A1.5.3. Capacity building/strengthening in using gender data
- A1.5.4. Development of knowledge products on care economy and investment in care policies

OC2. A positive shift in societal perceptions around gender stereotypes and harmful social norms limiting women's empowerment contributes to upholding women's rights and promoting women's economic participation in the workforce.

OP2.1. The knowledge base on societal perceptions regarding gender stereotypes and harmful social norms is strengthened

A2.1.1. Gendered life-course analysis of data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2021-2022

A2.1.2. Assessment of root causes of harmful social norms and gender stereotypes

OP2.2. Young families and couples in the pre-marriage phase access targeted quality pre-marriage, family counseling and parenting services.

A2.2.1. Improvement of family planning services by expanding pre-marriage counseling services and organizing training sessions for pre-marriage counselors

A2.2.2. Create and distribute comprehensive guides for counselors and brochures

A2.2.3. Organize discussions by counselors on these topics in colleges, universities, focusing on the importance of informed decision-making regarding marriage and family life.

A2.2.4. Provide comprehensive advice as part of pre-marriage counseling

A2.2.5. Adaptation and roll-out of gender-transformative parenting support programme for frontline workers

OP2.3. Increased awareness of country specific norms and stereotypes: the public is more aware of rights to reduce the impact of stereotypes and change the roles of men and women.

A2.3.1. Awareness-raising seminars and training courses for journalists, content creators, and social media influencers

A2.3.2. Innovative communication solutions

OP2.4. Community and religious leaders raise citizens' awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and family planning issues.

A2.4.1. Workshops for religious leaders

A2.4.2. Capacity building for community leaders

OC3. Women of fertile age have access to a full range of modern family planning resources distributed at the primary level based on evidence-informed needs.

OP3.1. The knowledge base on family planning services is strengthened to allow data-informed decision-making.

A3.1.1. Study among women in rural areas on their satisfaction with family planning services in primary health care facilities

OP3.2. A management implementation system for the distribution and accessibility of family planning resources is active.

A3.2.1. Pilot a logistics management system to streamline the distribution and accessibility of family planning resources for medical staff - Reproductive health centers and primary healthcare level

A3.2.2. Development of web-based Logistic Management Information System (LMIS) for stock management

### 3.3 Mainstreaming

#### **Environmental Protection & Climate Change**

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

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening concluded that no further action was required.

**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 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 no or low risk (no need for further assessment).

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### **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 G2. This implies that gender equality is a significant objective of the Action. Every component of the proposed action promotes gender equality and women's empowerment, both through practical support (e.g., thorough life skill capacity building programmes), through the establishment of a systematic mechanism to put in place measures to challenge and collectively revise harmful social norms and gender stereotypes limiting women's freedom and opportunities, or through the generation of data, analytics and knowledge on themes related to sexual and reproductive health and rights and women's economic empowerment.

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### **Human Rights**

The Action will implement a human rights-based approach and build on the "leave no one behind" principle, and particularly focus on vulnerable women and adolescent girls. Throughout its components, the Action will contribute to ensuring women's right to freedom and access to opportunities and support services, and access to sexual and reproductive health.

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### **Disability**

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1.

This implies that the Action has been screened for disability inclusion, with disability as a significant objective of the action. The Action will ensure people and particularly women with disabilities have access to the training programmes provided as part of component 1, and that disability inclusion is mainstreamed throughout activities and data collection exercises. Wherever possible, data collection is disaggregated by disability (yes/no).

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### **Reduction of inequalities**

As per Inequality Marker, in view of the socio-economic dimension adopted by this action, which also focuses on the most vulnerable women, this action is labelled as I-2. This means that inequality reduction is a principal objective of this Action.

The main determinant of inequality tackled by this project is the lack of equal access to economic opportunities and participation in the labour force for women in the target regions. This driver is linked to the persistence of harmful stereotypes and social norms that dictate the role of women and men in the household, and that lead to women focusing mostly on looking after the house and taking care of the children while men's role is to be breadwinners for the entire household. The lack of women's empowerment – including women with disability – and strict social norms lead to a loss in economic opportunities and, as a result, in a slower economic growth for Uzbekistan. Each project activity works around sub-sections of this inequality determinant, either by tackling access to proper family planning, by fostering women's empowerment and participation in the labour force, or by fostering gender transformative models of family.

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### **Democracy**

The Action will take into account democratic, participatory decision-making, involving all those who engage and have a direct stake in gender equality, women's empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

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### **Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience**

At the impact level, the proposed Action targets the Uzbek society as a whole. Social and security risks stemming from activities aiming at revising existing social norms and, ideally, the existing rigid gender roles may more or less strongly impact the society. For this reason, the project consortium will conduct every activity with duly consideration of the cultural context and include men and boys as participants and targets of the Action, fostering positive patterns of behaviour and building on social connectors while shifting the focus from dividers.

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### **Disaster Risk Reduction**

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The proposed Action does not include any significant components related to Disaster Risk Reduction.

**Other considerations if relevant**

N/A

### 3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)</b>	<b>Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)</b>	<b>Mitigating measures</b>
External environment	Deeply ingrained inequitable social norms and pervasive gender stereotypes hinder the impact of the programme.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	Each activity of the project, while based on international best practice, will undergo adequate contextualisation to ensure that it is adapted and addresses existing social norms and beliefs informing practices and attitudes towards gender stereotypes and harmful norms in Uzbekistan. At the same time, the project team will work with stakeholders and, when applicable, with beneficiaries on the development of the activities, to make sure that they effectively tackle the key issues that the project aims to address.
External environment	Shifts in government priorities impact the political commitment to implement reforms and bolster the national effort towards women's empowerment, challenging harmful stereotypes and social norms.	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	Monitoring the political situation and maintaining a solid working relationship with the GoU to mitigate the risk of deprioritisation of gender equality, women's empowerment and harmful stereotypes and social norms.
External environment	A drastic fluctuation in the exchange rate will affect the project.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Implementing partner(s) will monitor the situation and swiftly communicate with the EUD in Uzbekistan in case parts of the budget needs to be readapted, providing a clear justification.
External environment	Stigma prevents women with disabilities from participation in project activities.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Implementing partner(s) will liaise with stakeholders, especially at the community level, to ensure that women with disabilities are encouraged to participate in project activities, and introduce and call for zero discrimination at the beginning of meetings, trainings and other activities.
Communication and	Miscommunication on the messages proposed by the project jeopardises the Action and is mistaken for an attempt	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	The key messages will be informed by evidence collected through an assessment process as part of the project activities and the wider project team, will weigh in the crafting

informati on.	at cancelling all local culture traditions.			and mainstreaming of the messages to ensure cultural sensitivity.
Planning, processes and systems	Lack of access to educational institutions for project activities (due to government and local authorities resistance to project activities).	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Regular liaising with and involvement of GoU and local authorities, including in the decision of which institutions to include in the project activities.
Planning, processes and systems.	Lack of implementation of e-systems and mismanagement of resources.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Extensive trainings with Q&A and troubleshooting to ensure that the developed platform works adequately and represents a clear benefit to healthcare workers.

### Lessons Learnt:

The proposed Action will be built on experiences in addressing the root causes of gender inequalities by engaging a wide range of government bodies, civil society and women's organisations, media representatives, and other non-traditional partners. Strong focus is given to partnering with faith-based organisations, civil society organisations, conducting innovative communication campaigns, and working with men. The Action will build upon the achievements of the regional programme "Spotlight Initiative"<sup>2</sup> (2020-2023), which strengthened the capacities of several CSOs in Uzbekistan, including in their efforts to engage grassroots CSOs. When relevant, linkages will be sought with the regionally established network of CSOs Spotlight. Positive changes to shift social perceptions around gender roles and tackle gender stereotypes to foster a more equal and just society.

The proposed Action will benefit to the maximum extent from the lessons learned and best practices of several projects implemented by UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF (included EU-funded) such as:

- the Regional UN Women and UNFPA project "EU4Gender Equality: Together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence". (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine). Since its launch in 2020, the programme reached more than 41 million in the six target countries, 22 civil society and women's organisations received small grants to implement innovative initiatives, and close to 4,000 men benefited from 49 newly established fathers' schools. The programme has produced positive shifts in attitudes towards gender equality, particularly on the idea that both women and men should be equally responsible for unpaid care work.
- the sub-regional Action "Phase II of the EU-UN Support to the States in Central Asia for their Citizens Returned from Conflict Zones" (October 2023 to March 2024) implemented by UNICEF Uzbekistan. As part of this project, UNICEF Uzbekistan, in cooperation with the National Agency for Social Protection (NASP), designed a comprehensive framework and implementation plan for a programme on family strengthening and support. The programme primarily targets children and their caregivers repatriated from Iraq and Syria, eventually extending to all vulnerable families, given the resource constraints. It focuses on parenting education, counselling, referral to support services, and life skills education for adolescents.
- UNICEF-UNFPA Joint Programme on Child Marriage, and UNFPA program on Gender Biased Sex Selection. These programs have successfully addressed harmful practices through policy advocacy, community engagement, and support services, and have received strong support from the European Union. By integrating the lessons learned and best practices from these initiatives, the Action will enhance efforts to shift societal perceptions, promote gender equality, and empower women and girls in Uzbekistan. This alignment amplifies the impact of the proposed intervention and ensures that the project activities are informed by evidence-based strategies and contribute to the broader global agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment. Lessons learnt through these and other programmes implemented in Uzbekistan include:

<sup>2</sup> <https://spotlightinitiative.org/>

- Working through influential and respected members of the society, empowering them with rights-based messages and evidence is an effective strategy to maximise positive impacts, avoid negative ones and uphold the do-no-harm approach throughout the intervention. In Uzbekistan, working with faith-based organisations and key service providers such as healthcare institutions, police, psychosocial support service providers and so on has proved successful.
- Training and capacity building activities will need to be institutionalised, with supportive supervision put in place to systematically train and bring up-to-date new staff at service providers.

### 3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that

**PROVIDED THAT:** Political will to address gender stereotypes and harmful social norms preventing the full realization of women's empowerment and participation in the labour force remains high,

**IF:** Women in the target regions access public goods, services and resources enabling them to secure decent work and grow their businesses,

**AND:** A positive shift in societal perceptions around gender stereotypes and harmful social norms limiting women's empowerment contributes to upholding women's rights and promoting women's economic participation in the workforce,

**AND:** Young and new families access quality evidence-informed family planning services fostering gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

**THEN:** women will equally participate in the economy and labour force of Uzbekistan without being affected by gender stereotypes and harmful social norms,

**WHICH WILL:** advance Uzbekistan's path towards gender economy and economic growth

**BECAUSE:** evidence from similar interventions and past experiences has shown that providing access to resources, training, and raising awareness leads to increased informed choice, empowerment, economic participation, and societal acceptance of gender equality.

**Assumptions:**

- **Political Will:** the government remains committed to addressing gender stereotypes and promoting women's empowerment.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholders actively participate and utilize the resources and training provided by the project.
- **Cultural Acceptance:** Communities are open to changing harmful social norms and gender stereotypes. The risk lies in deep-seated cultural beliefs and resistance to change. To address this, the project will employ culturally sensitive approaches, engage community and religious leaders, and conduct sustained awareness campaigns to foster acceptance and support for gender equality initiatives.
- **Economic Conditions:** Economic stability supports the growth of businesses and employment opportunities for women.

### 3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

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	Women equally participate in the economy and labour force of Uzbekistan without being affected by gender stereotypes and harmful social norms	1 # of project participants reporting improved welfare and wellbeing	1 TBD	1 TBD	1 TBD	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Women in the target regions, including women with disabilities access public goods, services and resources enabling them to secure decent work and grow their businesses.	1.1 % of women reporting feeling empowered and confident to access decent work, business and employment opportunities disaggregated by age, area of residence and disability 1.2 % of institutions and potential allies mainstreaming a gender perspective and promoting women's empowerment in their work 12 months after the end of activities 1.3 Number of people directly benefitting for EU supported interventions that aim to reduce social and economic inequalities (GERF 2.39)	1.1 TBD 1.2 TBD 1.3 0	1.1 90% 1.2 90% 1.3 500	1.1 Post-activity survey 1.2 Survey 1.3 Activity report	
Outcome 2	A positive shift in societal perceptions around gender stereotypes and harmful social norms limiting women's empowerment contributes to upholding women's rights and promoting women's economic participation in the workforce.	2.1 # of activity participants reporting increased, behaviour-changing awareness on gender stereotypes and harmful social norms - disaggregated by sex, age, area of residence	2.1 TBD	2.1 70%	2.1 Pre- and post-tests, post-activity surveys	
Outcome 3	Women of fertile age have access to a full range of modern family planning resources distributed at the primary level based on evidence-informed needs.	3.1. # of women of fertile age have access to a full range of modern family planning resources disaggregated by age, disability status, area of residence	3.1 TBD	3.1 500,000	Ministry of Health reports	
Output 1 relating to Outcome 1	1.1 Stakeholders have access to up-to-date information on the business and support services ecosystem for women and households.	1.1.1 # informative reports and knowledge products produced with up-to-date information on the	1.1.1 0	1.1.1 4	1.1.1 Knowledge products	

		business and support ecosystem for women				
<b>Output 2 relating to Outcome 1</b>	1.2 Women in the target regions acquire employable hard and soft skills through capacity-building and vocational training opportunities.	<p>1.2.1 Ratio of female to male who have benefitted from Vocational Education and Training/Skills development and other active labour market programmes leading to jobs</p> <p>Disaggregated by sex, age, disability status, and ethnicity</p> <p>1.2.2 # of women graduating from online programme</p> <p>1.2.3. # of women graduating from offline programme disaggregated by age, and area of residence</p> <p>1.2.4. # of women successfully registering their business after requesting assistance disaggregated by age, and area of residence</p> <p>1.2.5. # of women accessing financial resources from crowdfunding platforms disaggregated by age, and area of residence</p>	<p>1.2.1 0</p> <p>1.2.2 0</p> <p>1.2.3 0</p> <p>1.2.4 0</p> <p>1.2.5 0</p>	<p>1.2.1 1:0</p> <p>1.2.2 1,500</p> <p>1.2.3. 3,000</p> <p>1.2.4. 300</p> <p>1.2.5. 500</p>	<p>1.2.1 Data collected by VET schools (or Ministry of Education), and other agencies, implementing partners in charge of supporting VET/ skills development learning programmes</p> <p>1.2.2 Platform certificates, final test scores</p> <p>1.2.3. Final test scores, attendance lists</p> <p>1.2.4. Activity reports, participant lists</p> <p>1.2.5. Activity reports</p>	
<b>Output 3 relating to Outcome 1</b>	1.3 Women in the target regions access business and self-employment opportunities.	1.3.1. # of women accessing support, services and products for business development, employment and entrepreneurship - disaggregated by age, area of residence, disability	1.3.1. TBD	1.3.1. TBD	1.3.1. Activity reports	
<b>Output 4 relating to Outcome 1</b>	1.4 Public and private sector partners have the capacity to integrate gender equality into their	1.4.1. # of companies committing to mainstreaming gender equality in	1.4.1. 0	1.4.1. TBD	1.4.1. Post-activity survey	

	daily business including investments and procurement.	<p>their practices post-training – disaggregated by sector</p> <p>1.4.2. # of companies implementing gender-responsive procurement 12 months after the training – disaggregated by area</p> <p>1.4.3. # of institutions committing to Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)</p>	<p>1.4.2. 0</p> <p>1.4.3. TBD</p>	<p>1.4.2. TBD</p> <p>1.4.3. TBD (6)</p>	<p>1.4.2. Post-activity survey</p> <p>1.4.3. Official documents and declarations</p>	
<b>Output 5 relating to Outcome 1</b>	1.5 Technical capacity of institutions is strengthened to improve the production, analysis and generation of knowledge in the area of women’s economic empowerment and care.	1.5.1 % of training participants proficient in using gender data in their work – disaggregated by sex, age, area of residence	1.5.1. TBD	1.5.1. 90%	1.5.1. Pre- and post-tests	
<b>Output 1 relating to Outcome 2</b>	2.1. The knowledge base on societal perceptions regarding gender stereotypes and harmful social norms is strengthened	2.1.1 # of knowledge products produced on social perceptions on gender stereotypes and harmful social norms	2.1.1 0	2.1.1 2	2.1.1 Knowledge products	
<b>Output 2 relating to Outcome 2</b>	2.2 Young families and couples in the pre-marriage phase access targeted quality pre-marriage, family counseling and parenting services.	<p>2.2.1 # of couples receiving quality pre-marriage family and parenting counselling with focus on gender equality, SRHR – disaggregated by age, area</p> <p>2.2.2 # of counsellors with solid knowledge on gender equality, reproductive health and rights, including existing challenges and societal pressures related to intra-familial marriages – disaggregated by sex, age, area</p> <p>2.2.3. # of men and women of fertile age aware of about the SRHR, gender equality and family planning issues – disaggregated by sex and age, area of residence, income level</p>	<p>2.2.1 0</p> <p>2.2.2 TBD</p> <p>2.2.3. TBD</p>	<p>2.2.1 3,000</p> <p>2.2.2 247</p> <p>2.2.3. 500,000</p>	<p>2.2.1 Activity report, attendance records of service providers</p> <p>2.2.2 Pre- and post-tests</p> <p>2.2.3. Attendance lists, activity reports</p>	



		<p>2.2.4. # of students in colleges and universities nationwide are aware of informed decision-making regarding marriage and family life and family planning - disaggregated by sex, area, income level</p> <p>2.2.5. # of district and community specialists knowledgeable on gender-transformative parenting – disaggregated by area</p> <p>2.2.6. # of families who benefitted from the gender-transformative parenting support</p> <p>Disaggregated by sex, area, household income level</p>	<p>2.2.4. 0</p> <p>2.2.5. 0</p> <p>2.2.6. 0</p>	<p>2.2.4. 10,000</p> <p>2.2.5. 400</p> <p>2.2.6. 1,000 families (including 1,500 caregivers and 2,000 adolescents)</p>	<p>2.2.4. Activity and event reports, post-event surveys</p> <p>2.2.5. Pre- and post-tests</p> <p>2.2.6. Project reports</p>	
<p><b>Output 3</b></p> <p><b>relating to Outcome 2</b></p>	<p>2.3. Increased awareness of country specific norms and stereotypes: the public is more aware of rights to reduce the impact of stereotypes and change the roles of men and women.</p>	<p>2.3.1. # of journalists, content creators, and social media influencers capacitated on SRHR and FP issues, gender-sensitive reporting and representation – disaggregated by sex, age</p> <p>2.3.2 # of grassroot organizations, CSOs benefitting from EU support (GERF 2.28)</p>	<p>2.3.1 Pending pre-test</p> <p>2.3.2 0</p>	<p>2.3.1 50</p> <p>2.3.2 10</p>	<p>2.3.1 Pre- and post-tests</p> <p>2.3.2 Activity reports</p>	
<p><b>Output 4</b></p> <p><b>relating to Outcome 2</b></p>	<p>2.4. Community and religious leaders raise citizens' awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and family planning issues.</p>	<p>2.4.1 # of community leaders and religious leaders with solid knowledge on gender equality, reproductive health and family planning issues – disaggregated by sex, age, area</p> <p>2.4.2 # of CSO representatives fully capable to provide accurate information on reproductive health and rights, including to people with</p>	<p>2.4.1. TBD</p> <p>2.4.2. TBD</p>	<p>2.4.1 100</p> <p>2.4.1. 40</p>	<p>2.4.1. Post-workshop survey</p> <p>2.4.2. Pre- and post-test</p>	

		disabilities and engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality - disaggregated by sex, age, area				
<b>Output 1 relating to Outcome 3</b>	3.1. The knowledge base on family planning services is strengthened to allow data-informed decision-making.	3.1.1. # of surveys/data initiatives produced on women's satisfaction with family planning services	3.1.1. 0	3.1.1. 1	3.1.1. Knowledge product	
<b>Output 2 relating to Outcome 3</b>	3.2. A management implementation system for the distribution and accessibility of family planning resources is active.	3.2.1. # of health providers working with family planning resources proficiently using the Logistics Management Information System – disaggregated by sex, age, area	3.1.2. 0	3.1.2. 33	3.1.2. Activity reports	

## 4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the the Republic of Uzbekistan

### 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 60 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

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

### 4.3 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU 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<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4.3.1 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

This action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- Proven track record in in countries with similar contexts formulating and implementing ambitious policies to deliver on the goals of gender equality, women's economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning services. Its research and operations teams have designed a series of tools and approaches specifically dedicated to that goal;
- Dedicated expertise in analysing public policies and development operations in all fields related to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (women's economic empowerment and participation, gender stereotypes and harmful social norms, family planning and parenting services, access to sexual and reproductive health);
- A specific conceptual framework and technical assistance offer to align women's economic empowerment, harmful social norms and access to family planning and parenting support and services.
- Relevant expertise and operational capacity to efficiently implement projects in the areas of gender equality, women's economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning services.
- Long-term productive partnerships with local, regional, and national institutions working in the above-mentioned areas.

The implementation by this entity entails activities to promote women's equal participation in the economy and labour force of Uzbekistan without being affected by gender stereotypes and harmful social norms as per specific objectives and outputs in section 3 which this modality will contribute to achieve.

<sup>3</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu). Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

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

Due to exceptional circumstances, the indirect management mode in the section 4.3.1, could be implemented in direct management (procurement) through a service contract.

#### 4.4 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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

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

#### 4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
<b>Implementation modalities</b> – cf. section 4.3	
Specific objectives 1, 2 and 3 - Indirect management with an entrusted entity- cf. section 4.3.1	4 900 000
<b>Evaluation</b> – cf. section 5.2 <b>Audit</b> – cf. section 5.3	100 000
<b>Totals</b>	5 000 000

#### 4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The Action will benefit from dedicated Admin/Financial Assistant (100%) and Communication Associate (100%), and Women's Economic Empowerment Specialist (100%) and Programme Assistant (100%) supervised by main implementing entity. The team will possess the appropriate skill mix to ensure effective technical, operational and administrative project management through the Project's implementation. A government liaison focal point will be appointed within the project team to facilitate relations with and engagement of government stakeholders within the project activities. In addition, the Project Coordinator will participate to the quarterly Gender Theme Group meetings to coordinate on the project activities with other stakeholders and join forces wherever possible. The Action will also count on the technical support of a multidisciplinary team of technical officers of the implementing entities' regional and headquarter offices.

##### **Project Management Unit**

The Project Coordinator will supervise the implementation of the Action and coordinate the extended project team, requesting technical guidance and support where necessary. The Administrative and Finance Assistant will be tasked with the project's administration, finance, logistics and procurement. The Communication Associate will be in charge of the communication and outreach components, as well as of the visibility initiatives. The Project Coordinator will work with the Administrative and Finance Assistant and with the Communication Associate on a daily basis, and hold regular coordination meetings. The Project Coordinator will liaise regularly with the extended project team to receive technical guidance and practical support when necessary. Implementing entity propose this Project Management Unit to successfully cover all thematic

aspects of the project and access high-quality technical guidance from implementing entity and its partner's specialists to successfully address the intersection of gender equality and women's empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning. In addition, the large communication and outreach component requires a team member fully dedicated to communication.

A team of national and international consultants will work under the overall supervision and operational support of the implementing entity's representation in Uzbekistan, with the technical guidance of the Project Coordinator on the ground and of regional and headquarters advisors remotely. Long- and short-term experts will be mobilized from the network of the implementing entity's experts in the region to address specific tasks.

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.

#### **The Steering Committee**

A coordination mechanism (referred to as the "Steering Committee" will be established to facilitate the effective and efficient collaboration between the implementing entity, the host Government and the EU Delegation for the effective management of the Joint Programme. The Steering Committee will approve work plans and will meet regularly, e.g. every six months. Implementing entity and its partners will maintain a close and timely communication and information sharing with all partners and stakeholders

## **5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

### **5.1 Monitoring and Reporting**

The project has preliminarily defined a set of milestones and results-oriented objectively verifiable indicators that will be reviewed in the Project inception phase. Attention will be paid to the simplicity, measurability, adequacy, relevance and timeliness of the indicators included in the logical framework matrix, and as appropriate, to the extent to which these indicators are results-based, i.e. they focus on the results and outcomes as opposed to the mere conclusion or conduction of an action. Where possible, the project will collect primary information to set up a baseline that will identify targets for specific indicators. This will be finalized during the first months of the project, since some of these primary data will need to be drawn from specific assessments or studies.

All indicators for activities targeting both women and men have a sex disaggregation; in addition, wherever possible, disaggregation by income level, age and region is present. Being disability inclusion a significant component of the project, disaggregation by disability is present as well. All monitoring and reporting shall assess how the action is taking into account inequality reduction. The Distributional Impact Assessment tool (DIA) will be applied, as a data source whenever other sources (national, regional, local data) are not available to monitor whether expected outputs have, to a large extent, benefited socio-economically disadvantaged groups, households and individuals. The DIA can also be performed at the start of the implementation phase to a) locate where the most vulnerable live and target them geographically; b) identify main drivers of inequalities (e.g. reasons for not accessing some services) c) unveil intersectionalities (e.g. bottom 40 income who are women, children etc.).

The project work plan will be an important document for the purposes of monitoring and of assessing performance from the point of view of project management. The work plan will be prepared during the project formulation and finalized in detail during the inception phase. It will also be adjusted and updated as needed

during the project' implementation. Because of its importance in the process of shaping the work plan and the logical framework, the inception phase will be a key milestone of the first part of the project and will serve to fine-tune some of the activities and expected results.

To promote accountability, learning and passing lessons, and meaningful participation of all stakeholders at all phases of the project, the implementing entity will ensure an inclusive and participatory approach in the monitoring and design of interventions.

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).

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).

**Monitoring** Regular monitoring of the progress of implementation of project activities will be ensured by all of the project staff in their specific roles. Continuous monitoring will generate quantitative feedback on the implementation, preventing deviations from operational objectives, ensuring accountability for spending and enabling the evaluation of the process.

## 5.2 Evaluation

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

It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that this type of specific programme is rather new to the partner country and lessons from the evaluation may support future programmes using the same approach.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 30 days in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation plan (or component in the foreseen evaluation) should assess the distributional impact of activities undertaken on the socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, households or groups. This can be done through the Distributional Impact Assessment tool (DIA). The DIA analysis looks at the effective targeting of beneficiaries of development interventions, identifying if more than 40 per cent of beneficiaries are at the bottom two quintiles of the income or wealth distribution. It also allows to evaluate whether effective targeting has been done towards women, children and youth or other disadvantaged groups (e.g. ethnic minorities) or at territorial level. Expertise on inequality reduction will be ensured in the evaluation teams.

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.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract.

### 5.3 Audit and Verifications

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

## 6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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

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.