

EN

ANNEX

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe

Exceptional Assistance Measure regarding Uzbekistan

1. IDENTIFICATION

Action:	Stabilising Uzbekistan's border region through support to Afghan citizens and Uzbek host communities
Action Reference:	NDICI CR 2022 / 04
Cost:	EUR 1 600 000 (European Union (EU) contribution).
Budget Line:	14 02 03 10
Duration:	Maximum 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
Lead service:	FPI

2. ACTION SUMMARY

Faced with the deepening crisis in their home country, many Afghans in Uzbekistan are unable or unwilling to return to Afghanistan. While most of the initially issued visas have since expired, Afghans in Uzbekistan are unlikely to return to their homes or to be resettled in third countries in the short to medium term. Uzbek authorities have pledged not to expel them but their legal status is unclear and their socio-economic situation dire. A majority of the 13 500 Afghans officially registered by Uzbek authorities has settled within host communities in the relatively poor Surkhandarya Region along the border with Afghanistan. Public services are scarce in this region, revenue from trade is decreasing following border closures, and there is a reported risk of the spread of extremist ideologies. The additional pressure on resources stemming from the influx of Afghans raises concerns that tensions with host communities could arise and that the local vulnerability to extremist ideologies could increase.

Working through inclusive interventions targeting both Afghans and host communities, this 18-month action aims to improve social cohesion and stability in the region. This will include facilitating access to inclusive education, social and legal aid services, and promoting skills for greater resilience among the youth. Activities will specifically strengthen the capacity of social services, notably to help prevent and respond to child abuse and exploitation, gender-based violence, and sexual exploitation. It will also facilitate formal and non-formal multi-lingual

education for school-age Afghan and host community children, as well as building of practical skills for young women and men. The action will support the establishment of a case management system that enables to track the needs of Afghan citizens and vulnerable groups in host communities alike. There will be a particular focus on promoting the participation of girls and young women as a cross-cutting priority.

3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

3.1 BACKGROUND

With the takeover of power by the Taliban regime in 2021, the socio-economic situation of the population in Afghanistan worsened radically, causing massive displacement both internally and across borders.

Uzbekistan, sharing a 144 km border with the north of Afghanistan, initially assessed that no Afghan citizens had fled into Uzbekistan. However, the Government has since registered the arrival of some 13 500 Afghans in Uzbekistan, entering the country mainly on short term visas and mainly staying in the already economically deprived Surkhandarya region.

While Uzbekistan is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not have a national asylum system, its Government seeks to help address immediate and humanitarian needs of the Afghan population, including by enabling the international community to operate a humanitarian logistical hub in Termez in the Surkhandarya Region.

The Government has also committed not to expel Afghans for as long as they have no safe place to go to and has, in line with joint EU-UN policy recommendations, agreed to conduct a rapid needs assessment to better understand the situation of Afghan citizens in the border region, including with regard to sustaining stability and social cohesion in Surkhandarya region.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR CRISIS RESPONSE ACTIONS UNDER THE RAPID RESPONSE PILLAR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION INSTRUMENT

Faced with the deepening crisis in their home country, many Afghans in Uzbekistan are unable or unwilling to return to Afghanistan. They are mostly settled in the relatively poor Surkhandarya Region, bordering Afghanistan, putting further strains on a socio-economically deprived host-community. The local economy of the region has been hard hit by restrictions over the past years in trade and exchanges across the border. The additional pressure on local resources raises concerns that tensions with host communities could arise and that the vulnerability to extremist ideologies could increase. This constitutes an exceptional and unforeseen situation in the sense of Article 4(4) of the NDICI Regulation. An adequate response cannot be provided under any other European Union Instrument due to the urgency with which the funds are required and due to available resources already being firmly committed.

Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph, points (f), (l), and (p) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to (f) support for reinforcement of State capacity - in the face of significant pressures to rapidly build, maintain or restore its core functions, and basic social and political cohesion; (l) support for measures to ensure that the specific needs of women and children in crisis and conflict situations, including

preventing their exposure to gender-based violence, are adequately met, and (p) support for measures to address the potential impact of sudden population movements with relevance to the political and security situation, including measures addressing the needs of host communities.

3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Risks	Chance	Project response
Tensions arise related to pressure on limited resources	High	Inclusive support to host communities and Afghan citizens will mitigate the risk of tensions, targeted activities will be made available to respond directly where tensions occur.
Lack of conflict sensitivity and resolution capacity of local actors	Low	There is generally good local capacity for inclusive community-level responses in emergency situations, additional trainings will also be provided.
Activities create aid dependency and are not sustainable over the longer term	High	The action will put an emphasis on ensuring continued government attention to ensure adequate follow-up support.
Further arrivals from Afghanistan overstretch response capacity	Medium	Emphasis is put on improving the ability of local authorities to upscale inclusive education and protection systems with limited additional resources if necessary.
Corruption	Low	An appropriate control environment is ensured by the implementing partner.
Afghan citizens are expelled	Low	There is a strong government commitment and the action will further contribute to a conducive environment for Afghan citizens to stay in peaceful coexistence with their host community.

4. OBJECTIVES

4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the action is to improve social cohesion and stability in the Surkhandarya Region of Uzbekistan where most of the Afghans in Uzbekistan reside.

4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

4.2.1 Strengthen social cohesion and mitigate risk of abuse through equitable access to social services and recourse to legal aid.

- 4.2.2 Sustain peace and mitigate risks of violence and abuses through inclusive access to pre-school, school-age, and vocational education.

5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The main expected results/outcomes include:

Expected Result (1): Afghans and host communities in the Surkhandarya Region have access to inclusive social services and appropriate legal aid.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1.1 Facilitate systematic case management in the Surkhandarya Region;
- 5.1.2 Provide direct support to local social services in communities with a large caseload, including trainings on gender and conflict sensitivity;
- 5.1.3 Provide access to appropriate legal aid and strengthen local capacities in this regard.

Expected Result (2): Afghans and host communities have access to inclusive formal and non-formal education.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.2.1 Facilitate inclusive pre-school and school-age education in communities where Afghans reside, with a particular focus on girls;
- 5.2.2 Facilitate an inclusive vocational education offer for youths and adults;
- 5.2.3 Provide support to the refurbishment, furnishing of infrastructure as necessary.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

The Commission will ensure that the appropriate 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 measures¹.

6.1.1 Indirect management with a pillar assessed 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: the nature of the action, the strong presence on the ground, the extensive experience from similar actions. The implementation by this entity covers all parts of this action.

6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 1 600 000**. A breakdown among components is provided hereunder, and is indicative.

¹ 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.

Indicative budget breakdown

Components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
Component 1: composed of		
6.1.1. – Indirect management with an international organisation	1 600 000	n/a
Total	1 600 000	n/a

6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action shall be implemented under indirect management. It will be devolved and sub-delegated to the **European Union Delegation in Uzbekistan**, with the support of the Commission for the conclusion of the contracts implementing the action.

6.4 PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final report. Each 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 outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the Logframe matrix. The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

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).

6.5 EVALUATION

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation will not be carried out for this action or its components.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.6 AUDIT

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 audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.7 COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated at the start of implementation.

In terms of legal obligations on communication and visibility, the measures shall be implemented by the Commission, the partner country, contractors, grant beneficiaries and/or entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, the financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

The Communication and Visibility Requirements for European Union External Action (or any succeeding document) shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.

7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

In the context of the EU Comprehensive Approach, attention will be given to maximising operational linkages and synergies with other EU funded activities on the ground.

This action is complementary to the EU project Enhancing the Capacities of Surkhandarya Region to Educate and Train Afghan Citizens launched in December 2021 and implemented by UNDP, which is primarily focused on the Educational Centre for Training Afghan Citizens in Termez providing emergency support to Afghan students and organising TVET programmes and short-term courses on basic professions.

The proposed action is also complementary to the priorities of the EU Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) aimed at contributing to increased security and stability of the Central Asian region. In early April 2022, BOMCA undertook a fact-finding mission to Surkhandarya Region identifying new specific actions targeting the border area with Afghanistan.

Synergies will be also established with the two components of the ongoing EU support to states in Central Asia for their citizens returned from conflict zones implemented through a one-UN approach as well as with other regional programmes such as the EU Rule of Law for Central Asia. The proposed action is also in line with the EU efforts to countering terrorism and violent extremism anchored in a number of EU strategies.

The sustainability of the proposed action is facilitated by the integrated approach of UNICEF. They have agreements with several relevant ministries like the Ministry of Pre-School Education (MOPSE), the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MOELR) that these ministries will integrate the developments undertaken

by the action (like new curriculums and multilingual approaches), in the regular management of the ministries activities. Moreover, France, Germany and the United States have already expressed their readiness to contribute to this action with additional funds.