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### ANNEX

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

### **Exceptional assistance measure regarding Afghanistan**

#### **1. IDENTIFICATION**

Action:	Promoting inclusive dialogue and supporting media resilience in Afghanistan
Action Reference:	NDICI CR 2022 / 09
Cost:	EUR 10 000 000 (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**

The seizure of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021 following the departure of the foreign troops has left a shrinking civic space, where civil society actors, media workers and human rights defenders, in particular women, have been subjected to threats, violence and arrests.

In line with the Council Conclusions on Afghanistan adopted on 21 September 2021<sup>1</sup>, this exceptional assistance measure aims to promote peacebuilding, social accountability and inclusive dialogue and to support media inside and outside Afghanistan. It will contribute to create opportunities for dialogue between Afghan civil society actors and the de facto authorities, and to promote inclusive dialogue among Afghan, regional and international actors. It will also focus on strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to promote a peaceful and inclusive Afghan society with respect for human rights, including women's and minority rights. Moreover, this measure will support media resilience inside Afghanistan by improving the viability of the Afghan media sector and promoting safety and the protection of journalists, especially women, still working in the country. It will also contribute to improve access to quality and trustworthy public information.

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<sup>1</sup><https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11713-2021-REV-2/en/pdf>

### **3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

#### **3.1 BACKGROUND**

Since the Taliban takeover in the summer of 2021, the context in Afghanistan has deteriorated. The country is facing a severe humanitarian and economic crisis and the overall human rights situation is worsening. Civic space is shrinking and civil society actors, media workers and human rights defenders, in particular women, have been subjected to threats, violence and arrests. Afghan women face formal restrictions limiting their access to public and political life. Many journalists and civil society actors have left the country and restrictions on media, safety fears and financial constraints are making it increasingly difficult for remaining journalists to work. The abandonment of the previous intra-Afghan talks removed a space for structured political negotiations and several structures relevant for human rights and representative governance have been dissolved or have become unable to function.

The EU's commitment to peace and stability in Afghanistan and to supporting its people was articulated in the Council Conclusions adopted on 21 September 2021. Part of the action will build on the EU Afghanistan Peace Support Mechanism (APSM). The Taliban takeover of Kabul and the disintegration of the former government drastically changed the context in which EU APSM has been operating and adjustments to the approach is needed in order to reflect the support to peace-building activities in the new context. In this framework, the action will seek to tackle the current threats to the gains made over the last two decades in Afghanistan. It will respond to the challenges to peace, human rights, accountability and inclusion, whilst also seeking opportunities to strengthen the prospect for a right-based, peaceful and socially cohesive Afghan society.

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

The rapid power and political changes following the withdrawal of international forces in Afghanistan and the various repercussions on the Afghan population and humanitarian situation 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 (a), (l), (n) and (q) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to (a) support, through the provision of technical and logistical assistance, for the efforts undertaken by international, regional and local organisations and by State and civil society actors in promoting confidence-building, mediation, dialogue and reconciliation, transitional justice, women's and youth empowerment, in particular with regard to community tensions and protracted conflicts; (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; (n) support for measures to promote and defend respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, and the related international instruments, and (q) support for measures to promote the development and organisation of civil society and

its participation in the political process, including measures to enhance the role of women in such processes and measures to promote independent, pluralist and professional media.

### 3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

<b>Risk</b>	<b>High (H), medium (M), Low (L)</b>	<b>Mitigation measure</b>
Political risks, including the risk of de facto authorities trying to control activities or exert pressure	M	<p>The implementing partners will act as neutral brokers between different stakeholders, using silent diplomacy to ensure activities can be implemented.</p> <p>The implementing partners will work with experienced and established partners, that have, in part, already received informal clearance by de facto authorities and have demonstrated capacity to continue their operations.</p>
Limited or difficult movement and access to communities in areas potentially controlled by armed groups.	M	Implementing partners will rely on local partners embedded in selected communities and will conduct advocacy initiatives when needed.
The economy collapses leading to cash shortages and increased insecurity.	H	The political and economic developments in Afghanistan will be closely monitored with implementing partners on the ground. Contingency plans will be developed as needed and activities may be suspended.
Journalists in Afghanistan face threats and online harassment or physical harassment.	M	The implementing partners will work with local partners to ensure that content focuses on relatively ‘safe’ topics that put journalists at minimal risk. Local partners will have strong procedures in place to deal with physical and digital harassment. The implementing partners can leverage organisational resources through close connections with the rapid response community to raise threats internationally.
Financial issues related to money transfer into Afghanistan.	M	The implementing partner anticipates that the risk of transferring money to sub grantees offshore bank accounts is extremely low risk. There are risks associated with sub grantees transferring

<b>Risk</b>	<b>High (H), medium (M), Low (L)</b>	<b>Mitigation measure</b>
		<p>salaries to journalists inside Afghanistan: staff are not able to access money from the banks, the banking system collapses, liquidity problems impact formal and informal banking systems through currency shortage.</p> <p>The implementing partner will monitor the situation and coordinate with other international stakeholders facing similar issues. The salary transfers that sub grantees make to journalists in Afghanistan will be on an individual basis, meaning the transactions will be relatively small and the risks spread out and minimised as much as is possible.</p>
De facto authorities block internet.	L-M	The implementing partner will conduct remote internet connectivity monitoring via open data plus partnership in Afghanistan. To date the de facto authorities have not attempted shutdowns. Partial shutdown of specific sites is more likely and implementing partners have experience with the localisation of anti-censorship tools.
Content-support activities misused to produce unprofessional, biased, conflict-insensitive contents, if not disinformation or hate speech.	L	The implementing partner will carry out pre-support delivery assessment of potential beneficiaries' editorial policy and professional capacity; will closely monitor the deliverables by the beneficiaries; will provide training on conflict-sensitive reporting; will coordinate and exchange information with International Organisations and other stakeholders involved in the independent monitoring of harmful content, including hate speech.
Support misused with regard to job security, with a special focus on women journalists/media workers.	L	The implementing partner will request detailed list of reporters and media workers supported/involved/hired for the implementation of the partnerships/contracts; will request

<b>Risk</b>	<b>High (H), medium (M), Low (L)</b>	<b>Mitigation measure</b>
		accurate and measurable progress reports and possibly suspend payment of instalments.
Physical attacks against journalists.	H	The implementing partner will provide training on safety of journalists, including digital safety, with particular focus on threats to women journalists; will provide support to specialised entities that can provide on-site support to media workers facing danger or threats as a direct result of their profession - such support may include resources and logistic support e.g. for relocation, shelter, evacuation; will monitor attacks against journalists; will raise awareness and engage in diplomatic action to foster safety of journalists.
Closing down of media.	L	The implementing partner will support partners with specific trainings on risk management and request to create a risk-register and contingency plans; will provide support to build viability/business models; will engage with relevant stakeholders for advocacy/dialogue.

#### 4. OBJECTIVES

##### 4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the action is to promote peacebuilding, social accountability and inclusive dialogue and to support media inside and outside Afghanistan.

##### 4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- 1) To support peacebuilding and promote opportunities for dialogue, inclusive governance, accountability and respect for human rights in Afghanistan.
- 2) To support media resilience inside Afghanistan.
- 3) To improve access to quality and trustworthy public information and minimise the impact of misinformation.

## 5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

**The main expected results/outcomes include:**

**Expected Outcome (1):** Afghans, especially women and vulnerable groups, have been empowered to claim space for human rights and accountability and the risk of further conflict and suffering has been mitigated by supporting political processes for inclusive governance, conflict-prevention, and a more peaceful and socially cohesive society.

Activities (indicative):

- 1.1 Identify new, and build on previous, strategic partnerships and provide grant support to relevant actors to create platforms, and undertake dialogues and advocacy efforts;
- 1.2 Identify strategic partnerships and provide grant support to relevant actors to undertake conflict-prevention and peacebuilding initiatives including regional and international partners and initiatives;
- 1.3 Provide technical, thematic and logistical support to peacebuilding initiatives and political processes.

**Expected Outcome (2):** Afghan civil society has been strengthened in its capability to promote a more peaceful and inclusive Afghan Society with respect for human rights, especially women's rights, and regional and international stakeholders are supported to constructively impact Afghan stakeholders towards peace including on inclusive governance and respect of human rights.

Activities (indicative):

- 2.1 Identify new, and build on previous, strategic partnerships and provide grant support to relevant civil society organisations and actors to undertake regional initiatives;
- 2.2 Explore new, and build on previous, strategic partnerships with profit actors, like media organisations;
- 2.3 Provide technical, thematic and logistical support to civil society actors and regional initiatives.

**Expected Outcome (3):** Afghan media outlets continue or reinstate their operations within Afghanistan.

Activities (indicative):

- 3.1 Support public interest media outlets in content production with attention to ensure the resilience of the maximum number of media outlets;
- 3.2 Build journalists' capacity on conflict-sensitive reporting as well as humanitarian reporting at national, provincial and community levels;
- 3.3 Build the capacity of media outlets to manage risk and of Afghan media managers to enhance the viability of their outlets business models.

**Expected Outcome (4):** Safety of journalists, media workers and freedom of expression defenders, in particular women, inside Afghanistan is reinforced.

Activities (indicative):

- 4.1 Build the capacity of media working inside Afghanistan on safety;
- 4.2 Support specialised non-governmental organisations in providing emergency support on the ground to journalists and media in distress;

- 4.3 Support organisations monitoring attacks against media workers and freedom of expression's defenders, and ensure coordination, consolidation, analysis and dissemination of such monitoring findings;
- 4.4 Raise awareness and engage in diplomatic action to foster safety of journalists.

**Expected Outcome (5):** Media outlets produce and disseminate quality and trustworthy public interest media content, and the impact of misinformation is minimised.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1 Support the production of public interest content that is relevant, timely, accurate and useful for Afghan citizens;
- 5.2 Provide remote digital security mentoring and tailored technical assistance to media partners;
- 5.3 Conduct awareness raising and remote training to build the capacity of staff of the selected online media partners in fact-checking and verification skills.

## **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 measures<sup>2</sup>.

#### **6.1.1 Grant: direct award (direct management)**

##### (a) Purpose of the grant

The grant will contribute to achieving the Expected Outcome 5 described in section (5), and related Specific Objective 3 described in section (4).

##### (b) Type of applicants targeted

The type of applicant targeted for this direct award are a Non-Governmental Organisations.

##### (c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because the action entails crisis management aid as referred to in Article 195(a) and as defined in Article 2(21) of the Financial Regulation at the date of the Financing Decision.

#### **6.1.2 Indirect management with a Member State Organisation**

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: due to the nature of the action, priority will be given to an implementing partner having a solid presence in the field, with a strong operational capacity in terms of grant management, technical competences and an established institutional network with local civil society organisations, previous experience in

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<sup>2</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.

the country and expertise in peace issues; a Member State organisation will be selected to ensure that the mechanism is presented and perceived as a European Union initiative. The implementation by such entity entails creating opportunities for dialogue between Afghan civil society actors and the de facto authorities with the aim to promote inclusive dialogue among Afghans as well as with regional and international actors (Specific Objective 1 and Expected Outcomes 1 and 2). Indirect management through a Member State organisation will enable the measure to respond to the diverse and unplanned needs arising during the peace process and provide a robust contractual and programmatic framework for EU support in Afghanistan.

### **6.1.3 Indirect management with a pillar assessed entity**

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity which will be selected by the Commission’s services using the following criteria: a solid presence in the field, with a strong financial and operational capacity in terms of grant management, technical competences and an established institutional network on the ground, previous experience in the country and demonstrated capacity to deliver work in a conflict sensitive manner. The implementation by such entity entails providing an emergency short- and medium-term response to avoid the media desertification inside Afghanistan following the August 2021 changes, by supporting the economic viability and the safety of the committed group of journalists staying in the country (Specific Objective 2 and Expected Outcome 3 and 4).

## **6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET**

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 10 000 000**. A breakdown among components is provided hereunder, and is indicative.

### **Indicative budget breakdown**

<b>Components</b>	<b>EU contribution (amount in EUR)</b>	<b>Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified</b>
Component 1: Afghanistan Inclusive Dialogue Initiative – Promoting peacebuilding, social accountability and inclusive dialogue in Afghanistan		
6.1.2. – Indirect management with a Member State Organisation	6 000 000	N.A
Component 2: Support to Afghan media resilience to foster peace and security		
6.1.3 – Indirect management with a pillar assessed entity	2 500 000	N.A.
Component 3: Improving access to quality and trustworthy information in Afghanistan		
6.1.1 – Direct grant (direct management)	1 500 000	N.A.
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 000 000</b>	<b>N.A</b>



### **6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The action shall be implemented under indirect management for objectives 1 and 2 and direct management for objective 3. It will be devolved and sub-delegated to the **European Union Delegation in Afghanistan**, 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, an 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.

Acknowledging that activities financed under this action will be politically sensitive and/or may constitute a security risk for the implementing partner/beneficiaries, the communication and visibility plan for this measure should develop a differentiated approach to satisfy the requirements from the legal obligations to which EU external funding is bound to without putting at risk the actions supported by this measure.

## **7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

There are currently a number of initiatives, either being launched or under development, in support for the Afghan civil society, human rights and peaceful developments in Afghanistan. To ensure that the Action will have an added value, generate synergies, and avoid duplication, it will be highly important to coordinate with these initiatives during both the preparation and implementation of the Action.

This action is consistent with the Union strategic policy framework for Afghanistan and aims to complement ongoing or planned interventions in the country. In particular, the action will build upon the experience, achievements and lessons learnt and complement the efforts under the EU Afghanistan Peace Support Mechanism (APSM) I and II, which worked to ensure an inclusive engagement of all Afghans, including minority groups, women and children most affected by the conflict. It will respond to the new political situation on the ground and comply with the five benchmarks of the Council Conclusions of September 2021.

Coordination will be ensured with other relevant ongoing or upcoming initiatives in support of Afghan civil society and peace institutions carried out by the EU, its Member States and other like-minded countries.