



Management Plan 2024

DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement
Negotiations

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Introduction

In line with the political guidelines of President von der Leyen, the mission of the Directorate-General Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) is to take forward the EU's enlargement and neighbourhood policies. DG NEAR supports key political and economic reforms and democratic consolidation in partner countries, thus contributing to strengthening stability, peace and security around Europe, as well as contributing to greater prosperity in the EU enlargement and neighbourhood regions.

In the **enlargement** field, DG NEAR coordinates the EU's enlargement policy across the European Commission and assists those countries with the prospect of joining the EU in their efforts to meet the EU membership criteria, as defined by the Treaty on the European Union and by the European Council. The enlargement agenda now covers ten countries, including Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter Moldova), and Georgia, in addition to the Western Balkans and Türkiye. DG NEAR closely monitors progress, paying special attention to the area of fundamentals: reforms in the field of the rule of law, including judiciary, fight against corruption and organised crime, and human rights; economic governance; as well as democracy and public administration. DG NEAR supports the conduct of accession negotiations. It manages the bilateral relations of the EU with candidate countries and potential candidates, and, in the Western Balkans, it implements the EU's stabilisation and association policy, as defined by the European Council. DG NEAR annually presents an enlargement communication that assesses the progress made by the Western Balkans partners and Türkiye, and as of 2023 also by Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, and puts forward proposals for the way ahead. Aspiring EU Member States are assessed in individual country reports based on objective criteria and the principle of own merits. Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia will also be included, as of 2024, in the annual cycle on the state of the rule of law across Member States (European Rule of Law Mechanism).

In the **neighbourhood**, DG NEAR also coordinates the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and financial assistance delivered under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) and its predecessor, the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). DG NEAR further helps to promote EU values, policies, and interests, and contributes to developing the special relationship of the EU with its neighbouring countries.

This management plan details the concrete outputs that DG NEAR will deliver in 2024 in order to progress towards the targets set in DG NEAR's Strategic Plan 2020-2024⁽¹⁾, as well as measures taken in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and on European perspectives of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

In 2024, DG NEAR will continue to support Ukraine on its European path notably by combining work on the pre-accession process with recovery and reconstruction. In December 2023, the

⁽¹⁾ Strategic plan 2020-2024 – Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations | European Commission (europa.eu)

European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Ukraine. To this end, focus will be on preparing a negotiation framework for the accession negotiations, conducting the analytical examination of the EU *acquis*, and implementing the Ukraine Facility⁽²⁾ with its three pillars.

DG NEAR will continue to support Moldova and Georgia on their European path. In December 2023, the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Moldova and grant candidate status to Georgia on the understanding that a number of steps are undertaken. As with Ukraine, DG NEAR will prepare a negotiation framework for the accession negotiations with Moldova and conduct the analytical examination of the EU *acquis*. It will continue monitoring progress in all three countries and will report to the Council on Ukraine and Moldova's progress, once the relevant steps have been addressed.

In the Western Balkans, DG NEAR will continue to implement the revised enlargement methodology, and continue the work on accession negotiations with Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and North Macedonia. In December 2023, the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, once the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria is achieved and requested the Commission to report on progress to the Council by March 2024. DG NEAR will support Bosnia and Herzegovina in adopting reforms to fulfil the 14 key priorities from the Commission's Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union. DG NEAR will support Kosovo* in implementing its Stabilisation and Association Agreement⁽³⁾ and the European Reform Agenda. DG NEAR coordinates the financial assistance delivered under the Instrument for pre-accession (IPA III) and has also started preparing the implementation of the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, including the Reform and Growth Facility⁽⁴⁾, subject to its formal adoption, following its presentation in November 2023.

DG NEAR will continue pursuing all strands of cooperation and will continue engagement with Türkiye, within the political margins defined by the European Council. DG NEAR will coordinate financial assistance to Türkiye under the respective instruments.

In all its regions of competence, DG NEAR will significantly contribute, including through the implementation of the three Economic and Investment Plans (EIPs), to the external dimensions of the Commission's headline ambitions of the European Green Deal, a Europe fit for the digital age, an economy that works for people, and promoting our European way of life. The three EIPs constitute the regional legs of DG NEAR's implementation of the Global Gateway initiative adopted in December 2021. The European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) was launched in November 2021 with the objective of promoting

⁽²⁾ [Communication COM\(2023\) 338 final - Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the Ukraine Facility](#)

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁽³⁾ https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/stabilisation_and_association_agreement_eng_0.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ [Communication COM\(2023\) 692 final - Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans](#)

private sector investments in our partner countries and it will continue to be a key instrument to support the implementation of the various EIP flagship investment projects in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood regions and in the Western Balkans.

DG NEAR will continue the implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III). This will include the delivery of the Commission's EIP for the Western Balkans adopted in October 2020 and the mobilisation of significant funding to support investments in the green and digital transition, socio-economic convergence, jobs and growth in the region. DG NEAR will implement the new approach under IPA III, ensuring stronger alignment between financial assistance and relevant reform priorities identified in the Commission's annual enlargement package.

DG NEAR will also continue the implementation of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (Global Europe), notably the part which concerns neighbourhood. Together with Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), DG NEAR will continue the management of the global challenges component of this instrument. DG NEAR has embarked on preparing a new approach to facilitate multi-annual programming for the period 2025-2027, building on socio-economic assessments and reform needs and focusing on key strategic priorities in NEAR regions.

DG NEAR will work on implementing the Eastern Partnership (EaP) agenda in a more flexible, strategic and streamlined way that is fit for the fundamentally new geopolitical context resulting from the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) continues to be a central tool for delivering on the goals of the EaP, including boosting recovery, accelerating the green and digital transitions and improving connectivity. DG NEAR will implement the multilateral EaP framework with a strategic focus on cross-border challenges. To this end, joint events and ad hoc engagement with other regions may be explored when relevant. Activities under the EaP will also be designed in a way that complements and supports the enlargement paths of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. DG NEAR will continue to accompany the peace process in the South Caucasus. As for Belarus, the increased coordination of democratic forces operating outside of the country continues to make it possible to support also the people of Belarus.

In the Southern Neighbourhood, the Joint Communication 'Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A new agenda for the Mediterranean'⁽⁵⁾ and its Economic Investment Plan (EIP)⁽⁶⁾, adopted in February 2021, aim at supporting southern partners' efforts for a sustainable, inclusive, resilient, and just recovery. The objective for 2024 is to continue implementing the agenda for the Mediterranean, including the EIP, in a volatile geopolitical context. This requires continuing to address challenges triggered by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, responding to developments in the Middle East following the Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel on 7 October 2023 and the ensuing situation in

⁽⁵⁾ JOIN(2021) 2 final

⁽⁶⁾ SWD(2021) 23 final

Gaza, supporting regional integration, and working with partners to build fairer, more prosperous and inclusive economies and societies for the benefit of people.

DG NEAR will also continue to work towards the establishment of effective migration management with partner countries, in particular by following the priorities of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and its external dimension.

PART 1. Delivering on the Commission's priorities: main outputs for 2024

In 2024, DG NEAR will contribute to the Commission's objective of making Europe stronger in the world by taking forward the enlargement and neighbourhood policies, and addressing the unprecedented challenges posed by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

In the enlargement field, DG NEAR aims to bring the countries with a perspective of joining the EU closer to the EU, based on a credible, merit-based accession policy and a revised enlargement methodology (*specific objective 4.1*). It coordinates the EU's enlargement policy across the Commission and assists those countries with the prospect of joining the EU in their efforts to meet the EU membership criteria, as defined by the Treaty on the European Union and by the European Council. In the new geopolitical context, the EU's enlargement policy has gained considerable momentum.

DG NEAR will continue to work on accession negotiations with Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia. Following the granting of candidate status by the European Council in December 2022, it will support Bosnia and Herzegovina in adopting reforms to achieve the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria to open EU accession negotiations. The Commission will prepare the next steps in the accession process of Albania and North Macedonia, including with a view to opening the first negotiating cluster as soon as possible. DG NEAR will also support Kosovo in implementing its Stabilisation and Association Agreement⁽⁷⁾ and the European Reform Agenda.

Following the European Council of December 2023, DG NEAR will also prepare a negotiation framework for accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. In line with the Council conclusions on enlargement and association process, the Commission will conduct the analytical examination of the body of EU laws (*acquis*) as a first step of the accession negotiations process with Ukraine and Moldova and produce the respective screening reports. The timing of the opening of clusters will depend on progress with the previous steps. DG NEAR will report to the Council on progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina by March 2024 and on progress in Ukraine and Moldova once the relevant steps have been addressed.

Following President von der Leyen's announcement at the 2023 State of the Union address, in the first half of 2024 the Commission plans to present pre-enlargement policy reviews to assess how each policy area, including internal policies, may need to be adapted to a larger Union. DG NEAR will start work on its next enlargement package on the progress made by the 10 partners towards EU integration, envisaged to be adopted in autumn 2024.

Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) and Twinning will help enlargement countries address the recommendations set out in Commission's annual communications on EU Enlargement Policy and of the accession negotiations.

⁽⁷⁾ https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/stabilisation_and_association_agreement_eng_0.pdf

For the Western Balkans, DG NEAR aims to bring the region closer to the EU, and to strengthen their socio-economic development, including through the **Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance, the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)** and the **Growth Plan** (part of *specific objective 4.2*).

The EIP for the Western Balkans constitutes the blueprint for socio-economic development, recovery and cohesion of the region and its economies. It will also support regional integration in the years to come. Support to energy, transport and digital connectivity includes investments in infrastructure and related policy reforms. The development of human capital, in particular for youth, will remain in focus, including support to the roll-out of Youth Guarantees in the region. In 2024, DG NEAR will continue to implement the key priorities of the EIP, at the level of policy dialogue, technical assistance, and investments.

As from 2024, the EIP implementation will receive a further boost in four beneficiary countries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) through the launch of multi-annual operational programmes in key sectors such as energy, environment, transport, digital and social policies, and the mobilisation of more than EUR 700 million of grants from IPA III.

Furthermore, in 2023 the Commission put forward a proposal for a new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, aimed at advancing convergence of the Western Balkan economies with the EU ahead of accession, and at the same time accelerating the accession process provided that fundamental reforms take place. The four pillars of the plan aim to:

1. enhance economic integration with the European Union's single market,
2. boost economic integration within the Western Balkans through the Common Regional Market,
3. accelerate fundamental reforms,
4. increase financial assistance, through a new instrument: the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, worth EUR 6 billion in grants and loans (subject to approval by Member States).

In 2024, the focus will be on kick starting the Growth Plan, supporting the Western Balkan partners in developing Reform Agendas and disbursing the first payments. The Growth Plan will also provide an additional EUR 3 billion contribution towards EIP investment flagships in the field of transport, energy and digital transformation.

Improving regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans (*part of specific objective 4.2*) will continue to be a priority in 2024. The implementation of the Common Regional Market will go ahead as previously, supported by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and the Western Balkan Six Chamber Investment Forum.

DG NEAR will continue its regional support to strengthen civil society and the media, mainly through the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2021-2023. This will be complemented by targeted support for social inclusion of vulnerable groups with a strong focus on women and Roma.

DG NEAR will continue to support the organisation of EU-Western Balkans high-level meetings and summits, including under the Berlin Process ⁽⁸⁾. DG NEAR will further support the efforts of the EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák with regard to the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue.

DG NEAR will work towards **ensuring a sustainable basis for improved relations with Türkiye** (*specific objective 4.3*). This will be done by pursuing all strands of cooperation and continuing engagement, within the political margins defined by the European Council and in the framework of the Association Agreement, the Customs Union, the 2016 'EU-Turkey Statement' and other bilateral agreements, and the Joint Communication of November 2023. In line with the EU Leaders' guidance, DG NEAR will aim to improve relations with Türkiye in areas of joint interest. DG NEAR will continue implementing financial assistance under IPA III, ensuring strong alignment with the EU's key priorities in the relations with Türkiye. The TAIEX instrument will complement the IPA III in line with the new approach. Work will continue to ensure that Türkiye can benefit from the new financial instruments under the EFSD+ and accelerate the implementation of the projects under the Türkiye Investment Platform.

In the Eastern neighbourhood, DG NEAR will work towards **taking the Eastern Partnership (EaP) to the next level** (*specific objective 4.4.*), taking into account the fundamentally changed geopolitical context in the region as well as the EU membership perspectives for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Confirmation of the clear mandate from Member States and partner countries was provided at the EaP Ministerial meeting held on 11 December 2023. Based on this DG NEAR, in cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS), will continue to implement multilateral cooperation under the EaP in a more streamlined, flexible and targeted way in synergy with bilateral cooperation, while steering reflections on the longer-term future of the EaP. Joint events with the Western Balkans (on enlargement) and with Central Asian countries (on Economic and Investment Plan), as well as regional programmes, will continue to take place. Cooperation will also support the enlargement paths of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. The TAIEX and Twinning instruments, will continue to focus on tackling common challenges and strengthening **resilience** as an overriding policy objective.

DG NEAR will work together with EU Member States and European international financial institutions in a **Team Europe approach** toward the implementation of the five long-term policy objectives (economy with connectivity, accountable institutions, green and digital transitions, and inclusive societies). Cooperation under the EaP will complement strengthened bilateral relations with eastern partners, with a narrower focus on the most important areas of shared interest, such as connectivity, energy, cybersecurity, fighting disinformation, and promoting the green and digital transitions, among others. This cooperation will continue to be underpinned by the ambitious **Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)** with dedicated **flagship initiatives**. Of particular importance in the current geopolitical situation is to make continued progress on the three Black Sea connectivity flagship initiatives, comprising an

⁽⁸⁾ A process established in 2013 to foster regional economic integration in the Western Balkans. While not an EU process it brings together the Western Balkans, a number of member states with the support of the European Commission.

electricity cable, data cable and maritime ferry connection, improving links between the South Caucasus and the EU. The EIP will assist the socio-economic recovery from the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the energy crisis, and it will support fundamental economic and structural reform priorities to stimulate trade, jobs, economic growth, connectivity and accelerating green and digital transition in the region. Support to governance reforms on a wide range of issues related to democracy, rule of law, anti-corruption, human rights, gender equality, civil society, youth engagement and independent media will remain crucial for increasing the resilience of partners and for bringing them closer to the EU. These reforms will be particularly important for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia on their path towards EU membership. DG NEAR will also ensure conflict-sensitive programming⁽⁹⁾ based on the results of the conflict analysis screenings with those countries concerned.

The cooperation and policy dialogue with the partners in the Southern Neighbourhood aims at **reinforcing stability, resilience, sustainable and inclusive economic development, and regional integration in the Southern Neighbourhood** (*specific objective 4.5*). In 2024, DG NEAR will continue implementing the Joint Communication on the Southern Neighbourhood and its Economic and Investment Plan. It will translate the objectives of the Joint Communication into annual or multiannual programmes tailored to national and regional needs as guided by Partnership Priorities (or equivalent) and determined in the Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIP) or through Individual or Special Measures. Programmes will account for the review of MIPs and the outcome of the Multiannual Financial Framework review on NDICI-GE financial availability.

In 2024, the EU's efforts for stabilisation in the Middle East will be crucial. Against this background, DG NEAR will design its assistance to this region, also integrating the outcomes of its funding review of the Palestinian development portfolio. In this regard, DG NEAR will continue providing support to the Palestinian Authority both through its direct support as well as priority projects to stabilise the West Bank. At the same time, it will support the reconstruction of Gaza, in cooperation with Member States and other international stakeholders. DG NEAR will also continue to implement the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Tunisia. For most of the Southern Neighbourhood partners, programmes will chiefly address inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for youth and women, the green and digital transition, in particular regarding energy, as well as governance and rule of law. The NDICI-GE toolbox will provide the flexibility to use instruments based on assessment of needs. This includes support to reforms and capacity building as well as financial instruments under the EFSD+, such as blending. Team Europe initiatives will complement EU actions, leveraging EU and Member States' strengths on selected topics, including job creation, water, and migration.

⁽⁹⁾ Article 12.2. (b) of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) Regulation includes the requirement to conduct conflict analyses and ensure conflict-sensitive programming in fragile and conflict-affected states or areas.

DG NEAR will also continue to be active in international fora to promote regional integration (e.g. Union for the Mediterranean, Anna Lindt Foundation, Council of Europe). It will work with its partners to mitigate the effects of crises (Syria, Libya, Israel-Palestine*, Lebanon) and promote a positive agenda across the region. DG NEAR will also work towards ensuring conflict-sensitive programming based on the results of the conflict analysis screenings with those countries concerned. It will continue to monitor and mitigate potential effects on food security triggered by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. In parallel, DG NEAR will continue to engage with Southern Neighbourhood civil society organisations and the private sector both at local level (through the European Union Delegations), and at the regional level.

DG NEAR will continue to implement the **fundamentals first** principle in the enlargement process, which puts reforms in the areas of rule of law and fundamental rights, the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration, as well as the economy, at the heart of the process. DG NEAR will also continue to support the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Southern Neighbourhood in these key areas, including through the NDICI-GE thematic programmes on human rights and democracy, and on civil society organisations. DG NEAR will pay particular attention in partner countries to tackle corruption and organised crime, to reforms aimed at improving the functioning of the judiciary and at strengthening democratic institutions.

DG NEAR will continue to work on strengthening the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This will include supporting freedom of expression, gender equality, vulnerable groups and the rights of persons belonging to minorities, in particular Roma. DG NEAR will also support initiatives on non-discrimination and implementing the external dimensions of the equality agenda.

Moreover, DG NEAR will further support efforts to strengthen the security situation in partner countries, including with regard to hybrid threats and on improving cyber security. In this respect, DG NEAR will continue its cooperation with strategic partners, in particular the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

DG NEAR is a key actor in addressing the challenges caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. From early 2024 until the end of 2027, it is expected that all **bilateral assistance for Ukraine** (*specific objective 4.6*) will be funded through the EUR 50 billion multiannual financing instrument, the **Ukraine Facility**, and DG NEAR will lead work on its implementation.

A significant share of the support under the Facility will be for the implementation of the Ukraine Plan, to be proposed by the Government of Ukraine, assessed by the Commission and proposed to the Council of the European Union for endorsement. DG NEAR will lead the implementation of the plan in close coordination with other Commission departments. The Commission, represented by the Director-General of DG NEAR, will also continue, in 2024, to

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

co-chair, together with Ukraine and the United States, the Steering Committee of the multi-agency donor coordination platform for Ukraine, established in 2023, which focuses on Ukraine's financing needs and future economic recovery and reconstruction. DG NEAR will continue to host the Brussels office of the Platform's secretariat, while also ensuring information-sharing and coordination with EU Member States in a Team Europe approach to support for Ukraine.

In 2024, DG NEAR is expected to start implementing pillar 1 of the Ukraine Facility which entails a quarterly assessment of progress made by the Government of Ukraine in meeting the agreed conditionalities set out in the Ukraine Plan and making payments to the state budget in line with this progress. The support will encompass the urgent financial needs of the state to maintain macro-financial stability and to support reforms and investments to foster recovery, reconstruction, modernisation, and EU accession. Also in 2024, under pillar 2 of the Ukraine Facility, DG NEAR will establish a Ukraine Investment Framework. It will focus on creating a de-risking mechanism available to investors through international financial institutions aimed at scaling up public and private sector investment in Ukraine. Under Pillar 3 of the Ukraine Facility, DG NEAR will programme and deliver inter alia technical assistance related to EU acquis or structural reforms as well as support capacity building of the authorities at national, regional and local level. Civil society will also benefit from assistance under this pillar.

Finally, DG NEAR will coordinate the EU's input to the Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, prepared together with the World Bank and the Government of Ukraine and due to be published in the first quarter of 2024.

DG NEAR will **support the implementation of the external dimension of the European Green Deal in partner countries** (*specific objective 1*). Accelerating the green transition in our partner countries, as well as enhancing energy security and energy system resilience to future external shocks remain strategic priorities.

DG NEAR is committed to its 2030 climate and biodiversity financial targets. This will require continued engagement on climate financing and a sharp increase in developing actions and financing instruments contributing to the restoration of the environment and protecting the biodiversity in our neighbourhood regions. To this end, DG NEAR will further promote the mainstreaming of environment, circular economy and climate change measures in all its cooperation activities including the implementation of the three regional Economic and Investment Plans to ensure full alignment with the European Green Deal. This will also require a strengthened engagement with the private sector to leverage investments in all sectors, including sustainable critical raw materials and clean tech value chains.

DG NEAR will further engage with other DGs, partner countries and stakeholders to prepare for the entry into force of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism with a view to mitigate its impact on EU's trade.

DG NEAR will continue to support the implementation of the **Green Agenda for the Western Balkans** and the associated Action Plan and roadmaps. This will include continued

implementation of multi-country projects such as EU4Green, and sectoral interventions, including in particular support to just transition of the energy and industrial sectors.

DG NEAR will work towards strong environment, energy and climate partnerships with the Southern Neighbourhood and with the Eastern Partnership, including through new dedicated initiatives at regional level, such as regional climate resilience and environment programmes.

DG NEAR, in collaboration with other DGs, will put emphasis on ensuring that the reconstruction of Ukraine supports its green and digital transition promoting circular economy and building back better.

Under the Commission's priority on an economy that works for people, DG NEAR will **support inclusive and sustainable economic growth, better employment and increased connectivity in partner countries** (*specific objective 3*). DG NEAR will focus on the implementation of the three regional EIPs, and in particular of the flagship investment projects.

DG NEAR will update the analysis of key challenges in the enlargement and neighbourhood partner countries and support the implementation of priority socio-economic structural reforms to address these. It will also contribute to the assessment of Economic Reform Programmes and of the implementation of country-specific recommendations for enlargement countries. Particular attention will be paid to actions that contribute to the external dimension of the European Year of Skills 2023 and the implementation of the Youth Action Plan. DG NEAR will support further integration of education, skills and social protection as enabler of the green and digital transitions. The twin transition is a source of investments that can lead to sustainable socio-economic development, job creation and stability. This will also be supported through the implementation of comprehensive public administration and public financial management reform programmes and through an enhanced support to private sector development via programmes to improve the business environment, the access to finance and smart innovation. DG NEAR will also explore the scalability of social businesses and of impact funds, which are key for higher resilience and bigger socio-economic impact.

On connectivity, DG NEAR will further support the implementation of transport corridors, energy grids and digital links in third countries as well as interconnections with the EU, such as the extended TEN-T and TEN-E networks. In addition to strategic networks, initiatives will be taken to promote sustainable transport solutions, such as the development of Urban Mobility solutions, and the uptake of digital solutions in the three regions.

The EFSD+ with its sizeable External Action Guarantee (EAG), will be used to support investments, notably in areas of connectivity, including transport, energy and digital, the green and digital transition, sustainable cities, access to finance for MSMEs⁽¹⁰⁾, sustainable finance, agriculture, biodiversity and water, and human development. In the implementation of the EFSD+ guarantees, DG NEAR will reinforce policy dialogue with international financial institutions, to ensure better alignment with EU policy priorities.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

In line with Commission's priority on a Europe fit for the digital age, DG NEAR will work to **increase the take-up of digital opportunities** in partner countries (*specific objective 2*), by strengthening the institutional capacities in e-governance and data protection, supporting the development of digital skills and high-tech entrepreneurship, and promoting investment in digital infrastructure as well as promoting lower roaming fees. With support from the Knowledge Hub Digital facility, digital technologies will be mainstreamed in all sectors of cooperation. Cybersecurity will be a key element, ensuring the safety and security of digital systems and enhancing the overall resilience of partner countries. In 2024, dedicated interventions will be explored, in the Western Balkans, the Eastern and the Southern Neighbourhood. The Digital4Development will build on existing initiatives by EU Member States and the Commission, to coordinate EU digital efforts in the region, boosting joint investments, and fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing between the public sector, civil society, academia, and private sector actors. DG NEAR will support the work with Ukraine and Moldova to extend the 'roam like at home' area to these countries, based on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA). After Council Decision, DG NEAR will be ready to support Georgia in similar process, based on the EU-Georgia DCFTA.

DG NEAR will continue to intensify its engagement with partner countries to pursue **mutually beneficial cooperation in the area of migration** (*specific objective 5*), in line with the Commission proposal for the Pact on Migration and Asylum. In particular, DG NEAR is introducing a more strategic approach to partnerships in the region, particularly in North Africa. This initiative includes the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Tunisia in July 2023, which encompasses five key pillars, one of them being migration.

DG NEAR will continue conducting policy analyses to anticipate migration-related priority issues and challenges in NEAR regions and to contribute to the follow up strategies of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

In the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, DG NEAR will continue to monitor migratory flows and be ready to further support Ukrainian and third-party nationals fleeing the country, as well as partner countries hosting them. Under the Ukraine Facility, DG NEAR will engage in the development and implementation of the Migration Strategy for Ukraine. In the Southern Neighbourhood and Türkiye, DG NEAR will continue ongoing actions financed by the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the North Africa Window of the Emergency Trust Fund Africa, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, while developing new areas of cooperation and programming in the field of comprehensive migration management, notably on border management, returns and anti-smuggling.

For North Africa, the objective is to ensure that all North African countries are covered and that all the priority areas of the Pact on Migration and Asylum are addressed. Overall funding until 2027 will meet at least the same level of ambition as under the previous Multiannual Financial Framework, with a view to continue covering all aspects of migration management.

As for the support to the population inside Syria, as well as Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in the region, DG NEAR will continue to provide assistance as well as assist

in mobilising aid from the international community. For this, Brussels Conferences on Supporting the future of Syria and the Region are organised every year: the Brussels VIII Conference is confirmed to take place in 2024. Finally, DG NEAR will further support Western Balkan partners through new actions under the IPA III, with a focus on improving return management and expanding assisted voluntary and non-voluntary return programmes, as well as preventing and combating migrants smuggling and trafficking in human beings, with a view of reaching at least EUR 350 million for migration-related actions in the region under IPA III by 2024.

In 2023, DG NEAR has demonstrated its ability to swiftly provide support to Egypt in response to the Sudanese crisis. This assistance assumes an even greater significance given the resurgence of conflicts in the region, including the Hamas' terrorist attacks against Israel, which have the potential to affect migration patterns.

Communicating the objectives and achievements of the European Neighbourhood and Enlargement policies is a priority of DG NEAR, even more so given the continued use of hostile narratives and propaganda surrounding the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. **External communication** activities will focus on major events such as the Europe Day to communicate about the benefits of enlargements 20 years after the enlargement to the East, as well as in the context of the upcoming EU-elections. The focus will be likewise on other major initiatives for DG NEAR and the Commission (e.g. implementation of the Ukraine Facility, the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, the Economic and Investment Plans as part of the Global Gateway, and the annual Enlargement Package). Integrated and social media campaigns, including through the three regional communication programmes (EU Neighbours East, EU Neighbours South, WeBalkans.eu), will be the main tools and channels to inform about EU support, its achievements and benefits for citizens. These regional communication programmes complement the communication activities of the EU Delegations and will be essential to inform diverse target audiences in our partner countries about EU values, policies and programmes, and increase recognition among local audiences of the EU's role as the main political and economic partner and provider of financial assistance.

DG NEAR will continue its efforts to address and tackle disinformation as well as foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) as both are a growing and challenging phenomenon that undermine EU's efforts in our neighbouring regions (Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans in particular). Support to partner countries in media and digital literacy, mainly to independent media outlets will be continued through three Regional Communication Support Programmes to increase resilience against such foreign operations. DG NEAR will shape its communication activities in accordance with the findings of public opinion polls, conducted through our regional communication programmes. In line with its revised external communication strategy, DG NEAR will continue its close cooperation with the EU Delegations, Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM), Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) as well as the EEAS Strategic Communication Task Forces to further improve the strategic approach to communication and further increase EU visibility in our partner regions.

On corporate communication, DG NEAR will continue to support and contribute to the work of the Commission's Communication Network (CN), including on tackling information manipulation and disinformation, supporting independent media, and strengthening media literacy. DG NEAR will participate in the activities of the Network Against Disinformation; it will follow closely the work of Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology on the revision of the Code of Practice on Disinformation, Digital Service Act and European Media Freedom Act, and will contribute to corporate campaigns such as NextGenerationEU, the European Year of Skills, and Europe Day.

In 2024, DG NEAR **institution-building tools TAIEX and Twinning** will continue supporting the implementation of the Commission's priorities in partner countries and beyond. This will be undertaken through strategic requests and policy-driven events. The two instruments will focus on Commission priority areas, notably: the Green Deal, energy security, digital transition, boosting connectivity, education, disinformation and cybersecurity, as well as migration and the enlargement process. Beyond DG NEAR regions, the instruments will continue to be used in EU Member States and in partner countries/territories worldwide through existing service level agreements with Directorate-General for Environment, Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, FPI and DG INTPA. Technical assistance will be provided in person, online and in hybrid formats.

DG NEAR has carried out a thorough analysis of its EU legal instruments (IPA, NDICI-GE, INSC)⁽¹¹⁾. The only reporting obligations included in these legal instruments (concerning procurement, grants and indirect management contracts and agreements) are stemming from the strict application of the Financial Regulation for which DG NEAR is not in the lead. DG NEAR will continue to review how these obligations are implemented with a view to ensure they remain as targeted and simple as possible.

In line with the Commission 2023 work programme, the Commission made a proposal for **a mid-term review of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** on 20 June 2023. This exercise is an opportunity to reflect and address the new global situation and challenges. The mid-term review of the MFF should be informed to the extent possible by a single mid-term evaluation of external financing instruments, which in DG NEAR concerns IPA III and NDICI-GE regulations. DG NEAR, FPI and DG INTPA have jointly managed the exercise, which started in January 2023 and is scheduled to be finalised early 2024. The mid-term evaluation will also inform the mid-term review of NDICI-GE programming, running in parallel, which will serve to establish 2025-2027 allocations for the Neighbourhood. These mid-term processes may be accompanied, if appropriate, by legislative proposals setting out necessary amendments to the regulations.

⁽¹¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument; Regulation 2021/1529 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III); Council Regulation (Euratom) 2021/948 of 27 May 2021 establishing a European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation complementing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe on the basis of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, and repealing Regulation (Euratom) No 237/2014.

PART 2. Modernising the administration: main outputs for 2024

In 2024, DG NEAR will continue to be at the forefront of the EU's external policy priorities as laid out in PART 1. To support the delivery of outputs in line with its mandate, in a rapidly evolving environment, DG NEAR will focus on the allocation of the necessary human and financial resources in a flexible and efficient manner, and continue with the process of digital transformation and modernisation of its administration.

Through its actions in 2024, DG NEAR will contribute to the implementation of the relevant corporate policies and strategies, notably the European Commission's Human Resources Strategy, the Internal Control Framework, the Anti-Fraud Strategy, and the Digital Strategy and reflect them in its own local strategies where relevant.

In line with the target of the Commission to become climate neutral as an employer by 2030, DG NEAR will also continue to deliver a set of actions aiming at reducing its environmental impact.

The internal control framework⁽¹²⁾ supports sound management and decision-making. It notably ensures that risks to the achievement of objectives are taken into account and reduced to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls.

DG NEAR has established an internal control system tailored to its particular characteristics and circumstances. The effective functioning of DG NEAR's internal control system will be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the year and be subject to a specific annual assessment covering all internal control principles.

A. Human resource management

In 2024, DG NEAR will manage its human resources with a view to continue to ensure a competent and engaged workforce able to effectively deliver on the DG's objectives, in line with the political guidelines of President von der Leyen. In this endeavour, DG NEAR will also continue to contribute to gender equality at all levels of management, including to the target set by HR in appointing one additional female manager (1st appointment) before the end of 2024.

To help achieve these objectives, DG NEAR has adopted a local HR strategy in 2023 in support of the Corporate HR Strategy, which is to be implemented over the period between 2023 and 2025.

The four key priority areas identified in this strategy are as follows: (1) Working as one - Boosting leadership, coordination and collaboration, (2) A reinforced focus on working conditions in Delegations, (3) Enhanced and pro-active talent management, (4) An inclusive

⁽¹²⁾ [Communication C\(2017\)2373 - Revision of the Internal Control Framework](#)

workplace and focus on well-being. These focus areas are intended to allow DG NEAR's structure to remain flexible and adaptable to ensure staff can continue delivering high quality results and remain resilient in an increasingly complex environment.

- **Working as one - Leadership, coordination and collaboration:** To further boost collaboration and information flows in and across teams, DG NEAR will continue implementing a variety of meeting formats such as knowledge-sharing sessions on topical issues, townhall meetings with all staff and at Directorate level, and joint unit meetings.

DG NEAR will continue promoting inspiring, empowering and innovative leadership at all levels, based on trust, with the aim to achieve a manageable workload for all colleagues and a good work-life balance without undue stress. DG NEAR's Management Charter adopted in 2023 will support this process by demonstrating DG NEAR's strong commitment to exemplary behaviour, fairness and integrity which is intended to contribute to the psychological well-being of its staff.

- **A reinforced focus on working conditions in Delegations:** Concerning contract agents, DG NEAR aims at further reinforcing the links between Headquarters and Delegations by enhancing mobility opportunities for these colleagues, notably to return to headquarters during their career. Special attention will also be given to career development and working conditions of local agents in EU Delegations.
- **Enhanced and pro-active talent management:** To support colleagues in their career development, an annual talent management programme as well as a new learning and development plan will be developed in 2024. This will be supplemented by an in-depth screening exercise to examine the skills and profiles as well as future needs of staff both in Headquarters and Delegations.
- **An inclusive workplace and focus on well-being:** Finally, DG NEAR will develop a wellbeing programme and invest in wellbeing, work-life balance, inclusion and fairness and actions focusing both on mental and physical wellbeing.

An Action Plan has been developed to support the corporate and local HR strategies featuring **35 concrete actions** of which 77% are already in progress and will continue to be implemented in 2024. The Action Plan will be updated based on the results of the 2023 staff surveys.

The **internal communication** efforts on key policy priorities and on the various actions for implementing DG NEAR's HR action plan will be strengthened to ensure that colleagues are continuously up-to-date and benefit from the DG's and corporate efforts. Actions to inform and engage staff will include townhall meetings, interactive read-outs from Senior Management Meetings, lunchtime conferences and various other information and knowledge-sharing sessions with close involvement of EU-Delegations. Furthermore, DG NEAR will organise in 2024 its first stand-alone Cooperation Days involving EU Delegation staff from countries under the responsibility of DG NEAR.

B. Sound financial management

DG NEAR strives to achieve the highest standards of financial management to ensure the best use of the financial resources allocated to it. The DG adopted an internal control strategy which takes into account the risks to the achievement of objectives and the related mitigating measures. The strategy is regularly reassessed and adjusted to consider the evolution of the identified risks (e.g. related to the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as conflicts and tensions in other countries under the responsibility of DG NEAR).

To measure its progress in terms of sound financial management, and particularly in terms of legality and regularity, DG NEAR monitors the global **residual error rate (RER)**⁽¹³⁾, which is the base for the estimation of the risks at payment and at closure. DG NEAR's objective is to have **a residual error rate below 2%** for all DG NEAR relevant control systems, regardless of the method of implementation, and consequently to keep the overall estimated risks at payment and at closure below 2%.

Based on a continuous trend of an overall low level of errors in previous years, DG NEAR will also focus on achieving an adequate **balance between the benefits** (e.g. reducing/ avoiding the financial and reputational impact of errors) **and the costs of controls**. DG NEAR aims to keep the cost of controls under 5% of the total value of funds managed.

To mitigate the risks related to the ongoing and emerging tensions in its geographical area of responsibility, DG NEAR will enhance its efforts to mitigate the impact on the implementation of the control strategy in 2024. It will adopt measures to ensure an increased understanding of local context and of its evolution. For example, it will closely monitor the evolution of ongoing projects and ensure a timely reaction to the changes in unstable environments, including through reorientation or suspension of the implementation. These measures will allow DG NEAR to mitigate the risks and to ensure sound implementation to the extent possible taking into account operational, security and access constraints.

As regards the other indicators on the effectiveness and efficiency of controls, DG NEAR aims to safeguard and reinforce the results achieved in previous years, to continue providing adequate assurance on the functioning of the internal control system, notably in relation to the audit system, the budget execution and timely payments.

⁽¹³⁾ The RER study provides an estimation of the residual errors not detected by the internal control system, in order to conclude on its effectiveness. In particular, it is the level of error identified in the completed transactions once all possibilities for detection through ordinary controls have been exhausted; it is calculated as the ratio between the value of the undetected ineligible expenses and the total amount of payments for the contracts closed in a certain year. The RER takes into account the multiannual nature of DG NEAR's programmes, as the contracts closed in a certain year were implemented over a period of several and different years. Therefore, a RER below the materiality threshold of 2% is a strong indicator that the controls put in place at all levels of the DG are effective. The RER study is an agreed upon procedure, which reports on factual findings. The RER study is not an audit providing an audit opinion. However, the DG reaches its own conclusions based on the auditor's report of factual findings.

C. Fraud risk management

In 2024, DG NEAR will continue contributing to the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy and the **revised Action plan**, as well as implementing its own anti-fraud strategy (AFS), with the aim of ensuring high vigilance against the risk of fraud, corruption and other intentional irregularities and tailoring controls to developments in its (anti-)fraud landscape.

In this respect, DG NEAR aims to further enhance its comprehensive anti-fraud capacity and closely monitor the developments of new fraud risks by adopting a new anti-fraud strategy in 2024. In addition, DG NEAR will closely follow up the European Anti-Fraud Office's (OLAF) and European Public Prosecutor's (EPPO) investigations, and continue reporting to the Commissioner and to senior management on ongoing cases. It will also ensure continued cooperation with OLAF, the EPPO, services in the external action family and other Commission services.

D. Digital transformation and information management

In 2024, DG NEAR will continue to contribute to the implementation of the European Commission's Digital Strategy⁽¹⁴⁾. In alignment with the main objectives of this strategy, DG NEAR's action in 2024 will foster a digital culture, empower business-driven digital transformation, help to move towards a seamless digital landscape and sustain a green, secure and resilient infrastructure. DG NEAR will also continue to actively promote information and knowledge management activities and data protection.

Digital transformation

In support of the Commission's objective towards **business-driven digital transformation and moving towards a seamless digital landscape**, DG NEAR will continue focusing on the progressive roll of the external relations family's operational system, OPSYS, with the purpose of facilitating and modernising the delivery of financial assistance of DG NEAR in partner countries⁽¹⁵⁾. It integrates key principles from the Commission Digital Strategy, such as digital by default and interoperability. It supports electronic signatures, automatic creation of files and electronic exchange of information with third parties.

A particular focus of OPSYS developments in 2024 will be to prepare for its interoperability with SUMMA⁽¹⁶⁾, the Commission's new corporate financial IT system that is scheduled to replace ABAC⁽¹⁷⁾, the current Commission's central budgetary and accounting IT system, as from 1 January 2025. The integration of the OPSYS ecosystem with SUMMA is expected to

⁽¹⁴⁾ C(2022) 4388 final of 30.06. 2022.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Some OPSYS modules became corporate and are now used beyond the RELEX family services, namely, the multi-annual planning and programming tool (MAPP) and eProcurement tool (contract management)

⁽¹⁶⁾ Under the lead of DG INTPA, the system owner of OPSYS.

⁽¹⁷⁾ ABAC stands for Accrual Based Accounting

be completed and fully tested by mid-2024. This process will be accompanied by gradually intensifying change management activities towards the end of 2024.

DG NEAR does not plan to develop new Information Systems in 2024 but we will continue enhancing existing local systems such as IESAq (Information Exchange System on the EU Acquis) and IPA-APP (Pre-accession application), in light of their possible use in new candidate countries. At the same time DG NEAR will continue developing the E-platform on track record on organised crime and corruption whose use will be extended to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

Beyond the actions related to the modernisation of the operational and financial IT systems above, and in recognition of the **increasing importance of fostering a digital culture** for delivering on the DG's mission, DG NEAR will continue to put effort in developing the needed skills (i.e. data analytics, working with digital devices and applications, artificial intelligence) among staff in 2024. DG NEAR's 2024 learning and development plan recognises digital skills, data analytics, cybersecurity as important areas to be developed and as such DG NEAR will promote relevant training courses based on the training opportunities provided by DG HR and continuously monitor their uptake. In particular, DG NEAR will raise awareness around digital-ready policymaking by promoting the related training courses.

DG NEAR will also promote the use of modern collaboration tools. It will ensure active participation to communities of practice such as DSF (Digital Stakeholder Forum), Cybersecurity Policy Implementation Community and IT Portfolio Managers.

Information and IT security rules

To help **securing a green, resilient and secure infrastructure**, DG NEAR will continue developing the IT security of its local applications in line with corporate requirements and will foster a cyber-security culture among the IT staff, encouraging training courses in the field, performing regular vulnerability assessments of all information systems, drafting and revising security plans, monitoring risk and compliance via the dedicated corporate GRC (Governance, Risk and Compliance) platform, following up on the security alerts and possible threats highlighted by DG DIGIT via the local information security officer.

DG NEAR will assess the compliance status of all the controls on a regular basis via the GRC platform and implement necessary changes or requesting necessary exceptions to ensure all the controls are compliant. All local IT Systems have been attested in the GRC tool which helps to automate and aggregate the compliance checks and the reporting of IT-related residual risks.

On an administrative level, DG NEAR will continue to use the features of My Workplace provided by DG DIGIT. Using electronic signatures for administrative and contractual actions will be further stimulated and monitored.

DG NEAR follows closely corporate good practices and guidelines. All external service providers are requested to follow cybersecurity training courses. In addition, DG NEAR limits the access to local data by external service providers to those who strictly need it (for support

services or database management). Lastly, companies working in outsourcing mode have no direct access to local information systems and data.

In 2024 DG NEAR will focus on the following initiatives:

- Further promote corporate cybersecurity awareness initiatives among general staff monitoring their outcomes in the regular reports provided by DG DIGIT.
- Review the IT portfolio in GovIS2 to improve data quality, ensuring accurate and up-to-date information for informed decision-making and operational efficiency.
- Reach 100% migration of the DG staff to Welcome until the end of 2024.

Data, information and knowledge management

DG NEAR will continue to use primarily the data services provided by DG INTPA – through their data warehouse – and its governance structures (INTPA Data Governance Board). In addition, DG NEAR will continue to participate in the corporate local data correspondents network (LDC).

DG NEAR will keep updating the metadata from its own key data assets, in line with the phased approach in the DataStrategy@EC action plan and the availability of corporate tools (such as the new EC data catalogue).

DG NEAR will also continue to facilitate the exchange of information within the Commission, through actions which will stimulate wider visibility of the DG's files.

Data protection

With regard to the implementation of data protection rules, DG NEAR will continue the actions put in place in accordance with the Commission's Data Protection Action Plan (C(2018) 7432 final) as reviewed in 2020 (C(2020) 7625 final). The timely and proper informing of data subjects regarding the processing of their personal data by DG NEAR remains a priority.

The main engagements that will be carried on are the reinforcement of the accountability and ownership of the management by demonstrating compliance with data protection rules for the processing operations of personal data under their responsibility as well as embedding the respect of the data protection rules in the daily activities of all staff.

While the general level of knowledge on data protection amongst DG NEAR staff has improved in the last years and staff was equipped with specific guidance for the processing of personal data in the context of DG NEAR's activities through a dedicated intranet page, participation of staff in data protection training courses was below the foreseen targets and therefore should be increased to reach the 100% of staff trained by the end of 2024.

By the end of 2023, 63% of DG NEAR staff has already participated in data protection awareness activities. The DG has instructed senior managers to ensure that (1) their staff

members acquaint themselves with the practical guidance provided by NEAR DPC on NEAR data protection intranet page, (2) that each newcomer to DG NEAR is systematically attending the data protection e-learning training course and (3) that they provide statistics on the participation of their staff in data protection awareness activities followed in their current job (or in their previous jobs within the Commission as from the entering into force of the Regulation (EU) 2018/1725).

The Data Protection Coordinator (DPC) of DG NEAR will continue assisting management and staff to ensure that data protection rules are respected. To this end, the DPC will keep them informed about the rules, procedures and practical guidance from the central services through the dedicated intranet page, ensure direct communication with the responsible staff and inform about the available training courses and awareness raising activities on data protection; also the DPC will continue to monitor and take actions if needed to safeguard that the percentage of staff participating in data protection awareness activities will constantly increase, to reach the objective of 100% by the end of the year.

E. Sound environmental management

The Communication on Greening the Commission stipulates that the Commission, as an institution and employer, aims to be climate neutral by 2030. DG NEAR follows and implements on a local level, the Commission's corporate environmental and EMAS actions, actively promoting measures to reduce the environmental day-to-day impact of the administration. DG NEAR will continue to actively contribute to achieving corporate targets by implementing dedicated actions in 2024, for example, by encouraging the reduction of office paper use and bolstering paperless working methods to progressively go paperless (e.g. digital signature). DG NEAR has also joined the EC Services' Travel Pledge to reduce the emissions from travel. In 2024, it will engage in the regular promotion of public transport and soft mobility to commute to work.

In 2024, DG NEAR will align with and strengthen the corporate awareness raising communication on environmental issues. NEAR's local EMAS team will strive to continue the cycle of communication and activities around the key actions supporting the Commission's corporate action plan for 2024, focusing largely on communication actions structured around energy consumption, water use, office paper consumption, emissions to air and carbon footprint and waste management. The communication actions planned under each of these key actions should raise the collective awareness of NEAR staff about what needs to be done in order for NEAR to become a greener DG.

F. Initiatives to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities

A new approach to programming of financial assistance in the European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Countries

In the delivery of financial assistance to its partner countries DG NEAR currently plans the assignment of majority of funds on a yearly basis at a country and regional level in a variety of sectors. DG NEAR has recently started to review this approach to bring greater efficiency and effectiveness into the delivery of its financial assistance as of 2025. This approach will be further developed in the course of 2024 with the reflections based on three main principles: policy first, integrated programming and results-based financing, with the aim to develop multiannual programming to ensure the necessary flexibility in budgetary execution.

The intention is also to work more with result-based financing tools: under this financing modus the achievement of an agreed set of results (e.g. implementation of reforms) will trigger the release of funds to partner and beneficiary countries. The Ukraine Facility and the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans are examples of initiatives, which, once adopted and in force, would be implemented along this principle.

Measures to ensure efficient allocation of human resources

The dynamic quota management system introduced in DG NEAR in 2023 plays a crucial role in maximising the number of posts and decreasing the vacancy rate within the DG. Through the implementation of this system DG NEAR's first good results have been achieved by bringing down the overall vacancy rate of 11% (October 2022) to 5.3% (October 2023) and is expected to sustain this trend in 2024. By dynamically adjusting quotas in response to real-time data and demand, this system ensures that positions are filled promptly. It allows for a more agile and streamlined hiring process, enabling the DG to adapt to changing workforce needs. In doing so, it helps minimise the time-to-fill for open positions, reducing the negative impact of vacancies and overall operations.

Furthermore, by optimising workforce allocation, the dynamic quota management system leads to cost savings, improved employee retention, and enhanced resource utilisation, ultimately contributing to greater organisational effectiveness and efficiency.

ANNEX: Performance tables - main outputs for 2024

Part 1 - Delivering on the Commission's priorities

General objective 4: A stronger Europe in the World		
Specific Objective 4.1: The Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are brought closer to the EU based on a credible, merit-based accession perspective and application of the revised enlargement methodology⁽¹⁸⁾		
<i>Related to spending programme(s): IPA II, IPA III</i>		
Main outputs in 2024:		
Evaluations⁽¹⁹⁾ and fitness checks		
Output	Indicator	Target
External country evaluation North Macedonia	Evaluation completed	Q1 ⁽²⁰⁾
External evaluation of Budget Support in Albania	Evaluation completed	Q1
External country evaluation Kosovo	Evaluation started	Q1
Evaluation of EU cooperation on migration in the Western Balkans	Evaluation started	Q1
Evaluation of IPA Roma inclusion projects	Evaluation started	Q1
EU's support on public administration reform with a focus on public financial management	Evaluation started	Q1

⁽¹⁸⁾ In DG NEAR Strategic Plan 2020-2024, this objective reads: 'The Western Balkans are brought closer to the EU and their economic development is strengthened, based on a credible, merit-based accession perspective and application of the revised enlargement methodology'. The title has been changed to take account of the European perspectives of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

⁽¹⁹⁾ These evaluations are part of the DG NEAR multi-annual strategic evaluations plan. While guided by Better Regulation, it is not an evaluation in the Better Regulation sense.

⁽²⁰⁾ The evaluation was originally foreseen to be finalised in 2022. The quality of the final evaluation report is being revised before being able to soundly finalise the evaluation exercise.

External communication actions

Output	Indicator	Target
EU regional communication programme: campaigns, online portal WeBalkans.eu and public diplomacy (Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) Network)	Social media (dedicated)	
	Reach	≥ 5 million (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
	Number of followers	≥35,000 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
	Website (dedicated)	
	Number of page views	≥230,000
	Integrated campaigns	
	Reach (de-duplicated)	≥6,000,000
	Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) Network	
	Number of YEAs	≥180
	Number of participants in YEA events	≥35,000
Social media campaigns ⁽²¹⁾ at central NEAR level to improve awareness in DG NEAR's partner countries and communicate about the support provided by the EU in the framework of the EU's Enlargement policy.	Numbers for all NEAR regions combined:	Numbers for all NEAR regions combined:
	Amount of followers on NEAR Twitter	Over 160,000
	Reach on NEAR Facebook page and amount of followers on NEAR Facebook	Over 17 million and over 710,000 respectively
	Number of NEAR Instagram profile visits and amount of followers on NEAR Instagram	Over 110,000 and over 45,000 respectively
News and content on the EU's activities in the Western Balkans, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are being promoted on NEAR's central website.	Central NEAR Website: (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/index_en)	
	Number of visits	Over 150,000
	Number of visitors	Over 250,000
	Number of page views	Over 750,000
	Bounce Rate	10%

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Accession negotiations process with Albania and North Macedonia advanced	1) Completing the analytical examination of the EU acquis (screening process), by finalising and presenting to the Council the remaining screening reports	Q4

⁽²¹⁾ These indicators and targets refer to NEAR central channels covering all three regions.

Output	Indicator	Target
	<p>2) Preparations for the opening of the Fundamentals Cluster get advanced, including, where possible, with submission of Opening Benchmark Assessment Reports to the Council</p> <p>3) Report to the Council on the state of play under the fundamentals' cluster, in particular chapters "Judiciary and fundamental rights" and "Justice, freedom and security". once the cluster is opened.</p>	<p>Q4</p> <p>Q4</p>
Accession negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro progressed	1) Serbia/Montenegro: Draft Common Positions (DCP) and Benchmark assessment reports prepared and submitted to the Council's Enlargement Working Party (COELA) on chapters where the necessary conditions have been fulfilled (NB not possible to close any chapter/cluster before the Rule of Law interim benchmarks are met)	Q4
	2) Benchmark assessment report on interim benchmarks (once met) and the DCP with the closing benchmarks for chapter 23 and 24 are prepared	Q2 and Q4
	3) Report to Member States on rule of law progress in Montenegro and Serbia	Two reports in 2024
Accession negotiation process with BiH launched and progressing, once the necessary criteria are met	Report to Council on progress	Q1
The accession preparations and reforms in the enlargement countries are monitored and reported on	Publication of the next enlargement package (communication and individual reports - staff working documents)	Q4

Output	Indicator	Target
The Stabilisation and association agreements (SAA) and the implementation of structural reforms in the Western Balkans (WB) are monitored	SA Council and Committee, SA Sub-committees / Special Groups meetings held with the Western Balkans partners as planned. Each Western Balkans partner: - 1 SA Council - 1 SA Committee - 7 subcommittees +1 PAR Special Group + Normalisation Special Group for Kosovo*	Q4
Accession negotiation process with Ukraine and Moldova launched and progressing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparing the negotiating framework 2. Conducting the analytical examination of the EU acquis (“screening”) and producing screening reports and Draft Common Positions for the clusters 	<p>Q1</p> <p>Q4</p>
Progress on the enlargement path of Georgia in line with the 2023 Enlargement Package	Follow up with Georgia on the implementation of the recommendations from the Enlargement Package	Q4
Continued implementation of Association Agreements/DCFTA with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova	1 Association Council, 1 Association Committee and 6 Sub committees, held with each Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova	Q4
TAIEX and Twinning activities in support of the enlargement methodology	Number of activities implemented (online or physical)	80 activities

General objective 4: A stronger Europe in the World

Specific Objective 4.2: Economic development in the Western Balkans is strengthened and regional cooperation and neighbourly relations are improved ⁽²²⁾

Related to spending programme(s): IPA II, IPA III

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Implementation of IPA III bilateral action programmes	Number of Commission Decisions / Financing Proposals / amount of financial assistance committed and disbursed	2024 bilateral decisions adopted Number of annual bilateral Financing Decisions: 6 Total value: EUR 339 million Energy Support Package: 100% disbursed 2024-2027 Four Multi-annual Financing Decisions adopted (total value EUR 709.5 million)
Implementation of Economic and Investment Plan flagship investment projects advanced together with additional Public Sector Blending provided by the WBIF, deployment of WBIF Private Sector Blending operations and deployment of the EFSD+ Guarantees	Call for investments Projects pipeline for blending and guarantees Number of Public Sector Infrastructure projects supported Number of new Contribution Agreements for Private Sector Blending operations signed Amount IPA support provided Progress in approval of new advanced projects Number of new EFSD+ Guarantee Agreements signed Number of EFSD+ Carry-forward Guarantee Agreements signed	Endorsed by Operational Board by Q2 and (if needed) Q4 Regularly screened for endorsement by the Operational Boards 10 4 Contribution Agreements signed EUR 50 million IPA support provided Endorsed by Operational Board by Q2 and (if needed) Q4 6+ new EFSD+ guarantee agreements signed by Q4 3 remaining EFSD+ carry-forward guarantee agreements signed by Q4
Implementation of Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and preparation of investment pipeline for the Recovery and Growth Facility	Reform Agendas agreed Identify pipeline for new investment proposals in transport, energy and digital sectors	6 Reform Agendas agreed Draft pipeline submitted to the WBIF Call by Q3

⁽²²⁾ In DG NEAR Strategic Plan 2020-2024, this objective reads: ‘Regional cooperation and neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans are improved’. Economic development in the Western Balkans has been integrated in this specific objective together with regional cooperation and neighbourly relations as they form an integral package in the context of the Western Balkans’ European path.

Output	Indicator	Target
Implementation of the Common Regional Market 2021-2024 for the Western Balkans supported	At least three Mobility Agreements enter into force and the fourth one fully ratified	Q4
	Adoption of the regional agreement on Freedom of Movement and Stay for third party citizens	Q4
	Adoption and implementation of nine new CEFTA decisions in the areas of e-commerce, parcel delivery, authorised economic officers, geo-blocking, veterinary working group, intellectual property rights, work permits, medicine import authorizations, risk management, and trade-related statistics	Q4
	Three new regional EU-funded programmes signed in support to trade and private sector development in Western Balkans	Q1
Support to the Western Balkans' efforts to strengthen the Rule of Law through regional cooperation and cooperation with the EU:		
a) Progress with trial monitoring project for cases of high-level corruption and organised crime	a) Updated analytical report on systemic issues identified in the administration of justice in cases of organised crime and corruption in five Western Balkans developed by OSCE	Q3
b) Assessment of performance of Western Balkans justice systems	b.1) Relevant results of justice performance action implemented by the Efficiency of Justice of the Council of Europe (CEPEJ) included in Enlargement package	Q2
	b.2) The first round of Justice surveys on judicial performance is delivered by the World Bank.	Q4

Output	Indicator	Target
c) Deeper links and understanding of EU security tools and networks promoted in the region	c.1) Meetings of the Regional Network of Counter-Terrorism and P/CVE Coordinators sharing latest state of play in terrorism threats and challenges c.2) Achievements of the targets under the regional programmes of Europol, CEPOL and Eurojust c.3) Intensified participation of the region in EMPACT: operational law enforcement cooperation on priority crime areas with focus on organised trans-border crime	2 meetings At least 80% of the targets At least 350 cases of participation in EMPACT operational actions
d) Re-designing the methodology for the collection of data on countering organised crime and corruption (i.e. track record) in the Western Balkans: Guidance elements on the track record recalibration provided	d) Capacity building and training will be organised by DG NEAR and JRC, as to empower partner countries to report through the new e-platform.	Q2
Support to democratic governance and Civil society in enlargement countries:		
a) Links among civil societies of the Western Balkans and Türkiye deepened	Number of regional Civil Society Organisation networks that receive new action grants from the EU	More than 15
b) Strategic engagement and policy dialogue with civil society and media: Publication of the 2023 assessment against the DG NEAR guidelines on EU support for civil society in the enlargement region 2021-27	Publication of 2023 Assessment	Q3
c) Support provided to enhance the quality of democratic governance in the Western Balkans	At least 50% of electoral recommendations in the thematic areas covered by the regional action implemented by ODIHR are implemented	Q3
TAIEX activities strengthening regional cooperation implemented	Number of activities implemented (online or physical)	35 activities

General objective 4: A stronger Europe in the World

Specific Objective 4.3: A sustainable basis for improved relations with Türkiye is ensured

Related to spending programme(s): IPA II, IPA III

Main outputs in 2024:

Evaluations⁽²³⁾ and fitness checks

Output	Indicator	Target
Evaluation of the EU cooperation with Türkiye	Evaluation started	Q3

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Continuation of the engagement with Türkiye, in line with the European Council conclusions	Number of high-level meetings, if political situation allows	4 meetings
Continuous implementation of the EU-Turkey Association Agreement	Number of meetings held in 2024	5 meetings
Follow-up on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union	Number of meetings of the Customs Union Joint Committee held	1 meeting in Q4
	Finalised assessments of Turkish draft legislation relevant for the removal of technical barriers to trade (as a percentage of Turkish requests submitted in 2023)	80%
	Continuation of regular EU-Türkiye technical meetings in various areas including those with relevance for the Customs Union	2 technical meetings
Support Directorate-General for Trade (DG TRADE) in following discussions by Member States on the mandate and on initiating negotiations on the modernisation of the Customs Union, when political conditions are ripe	Mandate approved by Council	Q4

⁽²³⁾ These evaluations are part of the DG NEAR multi-annual strategic evaluations plan. While guided by Better Regulation, it is not an evaluation in the Better Regulation sense.

Output	Indicator	Target
Support for refugees and host communities in Türkiye	Number of meetings of the Steering Committee of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, monitoring the implementation of the Facility Progress in Facility implementation (funds under NEAR responsibility) as measured by the Facility Monitoring Reports Finalisation of programming of additional refugee support: EUR 1 billion for 2024 Adoption of relevant Commission decisions under IPA III and NDICI	1 meeting in Q2 All Facility projects progressing as per their implementation schedule Q2 EUR 1 billion Q2
Continuous monitoring of developments and providing policy recommendation on democracy, rule of law, judiciary, security as well as fundamental rights and freedoms	Adoption of the 2024 country report on Türkiye (staff working document as part of Enlargement package)	Q4
Support political priorities through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III and the EFSD+ in Türkiye	Adoption of the 2024 Annual Action Programme Number of meetings of the Turkey Investment Platform (TIP) Operational Board	Q3 1 meeting in Q2
TAIEX and Twinning activities, contributing to improved EU-Türkiye relations	Number of activities implemented (online or physical)	15 activities

General objective 4: A stronger Europe in the World

Specific Objective 4.4: Take the Eastern Partnership to the next level

Related to spending programme(s): ENI, NDICI

Main outputs in 2024:

Evaluations⁽²⁴⁾ and fitness checks

Output	Indicator	Target
EU's support on public administration reform with a focus on public financial management	Evaluation started	Q1

⁽²⁴⁾ These evaluations are part of the DG NEAR multi-annual strategic evaluations plan. While guided by Better Regulation, it is not an evaluation in the Better Regulation sense.

External communication actions

Output	Indicator	Target
Regional Communication Programme: Campaigns, events and communication activities aimed at improving perception of the EU and EU support in the EaP region The fight against disinformation that might undermine EU's efforts is strengthened	Social media Number of impressions Followers' growth rate Number of posts Number of engagements Number of #hashtag mentions	More than 42,350,000 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) 173,000 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn) Over 2,400 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) 3% Over 20,000
	Website (dedicated) Number of visits Number of visitors Number of page views Conversion rate Bounce Rate	800,000 650,000 1,200,000 2% 70%
	Integrated Communication Campaigns Reach Number of Young people acting as Young European Ambassadors	More than 25,000,000 More than 1000 (and 2200 who benefitted from the mandate between 2016-2023)
	Events Number of engagements Number of attendees (online) Indirect audience reach (online)	1000 public engagements (online and offline) More than 50,000 Over 2,500,000
	Social media campaigns at central NEAR level to improve awareness in DG NEAR's partner countries and communicate about the support provided by the EU in the framework of the EU's Neighbourhood policy, including on the Eastern Partnership	Numbers for all NEAR regions combined: Amount of followers on NEAR Twitter Reach on NEAR Facebook page and amount of followers on NEAR Facebook Number of NEAR Instagram profile visits and amount of followers on NEAR Instagram
News and content on the EU's activities in the Eastern Partnership are being promoted on NEAR's central website	Central NEAR Website (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/index_en) Number of visits Number of visitors Number of page views Bounce Rate	Over 150,000 Over 250,000 Over 750,000 10%

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Progress achieved in the implementation of the Civil Society Facility and EU4 Dialogue programmes	Number of contracts signed under the Civil Society Facility Establishment and implementation of the new Framework Partners Agreement Number of confidence building measures (CBMs) related activities implemented in the South-Caucasus Region	15 new contracts 10 framework partnerships concluded 10
Support provided to Armenia following the developments in Nagorno-Karabakh	Disbursement of a EUR 15 million Budget Support Programme	Q4
Reinforced international cooperation to fight organised crime and corruption in the Eastern Partnership	At least 500 law enforcement personnel trained. Open Government Partnership Action Plans adopted and implemented	Q4 Q4
TAIEX activities strengthening regional cooperation in the Eastern Partnership implemented	Number of activities implemented (online or physical)	25 activities
Progress achieved in the implementation of the EIP for the EaP	Number of SMEs supported	70,000 SMEs are supported through the EU4business initiative
	Financing plan for the digital and electricity cables in the Black Sea and of the maritime Black Sea connection	Feasibility study for the electricity cable is finalised in 2024. Financing for the Black Sea digital cable is structured
Bilateral and regional assistance under Annual Action Plan (AAP) programmed and implementation started	Bilateral action documents 2024 and Regional Action Programme adopted by the Commission	4 Annual Action Programmes; 1 Special Measure; 1 Regional Action Programme (East); 1 Neighbourhood Investment Platform decision
Assist Moldova through the Moldova Support Platform	Continue chairing the financial assistance and economic recovery and resilience working group to mobilise assistance from both the EU and other donors	3 meetings

General objective 4: A stronger Europe in the World

Specific Objective 4.5: Stability, resilience, economic development and regional integration are reinforced through our cooperation and policy dialogue in the Southern Neighbourhood

Related to spending programme(s): ENI, NDICI

Main outputs in 2024:

Evaluations ⁽²⁵⁾ and fitness checks

Output	Indicator	Target
External Evaluation of EU cooperation with Palestine*	Evaluation finalised	Q1 ⁽²⁶⁾
EU's support on public administration reform with a focus on public financial management	Evaluation started	Q1

External communication actions

Output	Indicator	Target
Regional Communication Programme: Campaigns, events and communication activities aimed at improving perception of the EU and EU support in the Southern Neighbourhood. The fight against disinformation that might undermine EU's efforts, should be strengthened.	Social media	
	Number of impressions	20,000,000 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn)
	Followers' growth rate	420,000 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube; LinkedIn)
	Number of posts	Over 1,500 Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn)
	Number of engagements	1,500,000 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn)
	Number of #hashtag mentions	300,000
	Website (dedicated)	
	Number of visits	300,000
	Number of visitors	200,000
	Number of page views	400,000
Conversion rate	50%	
Integrated communication campaigns		
Reach	5,000,000	

⁽²⁵⁾ These evaluations are part of the DG NEAR multi-annual strategic evaluations plan. While guided by Better Regulation, it is not an evaluation in the Better Regulation sense.

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

⁽²⁶⁾ The evaluation is currently in its final stage but due to the war and to the limitations faced, it will be delayed.

Output	Indicator	Target
	Number of young people acting as EU Jeel Connectors & EU Goodwill Ambassadors	More than 200
	Events Number of attendees (presence & online)	Over 100,000
	Indirect audience reach (online)	Over 1,000,000
Social media campaigns at central NEAR level to improve awareness in DG NEAR's partner countries and communicate about the support provided by the EU in the framework of the EU's Neighbourhood policy, including on the Southern Neighbourhood	Number for all NEAR regions combined: Amount of followers on NEAR Twitter Reach on NEAR Facebook page and amount of followers on NEAR Facebook Number of NEAR Instagram profile visits and amount of followers on NEAR Instagram	Number for all NEAR regions combined: Over 160,000 Over 17,000,000 and over 710,000 respectively Over 110,000 and over 45,000 respectively
News and content on the EU's activities in the Southern Neighbourhood are being promoted on NEAR's central website.	Central NEAR Website (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/index_en) Number of visits Number of visitors Number of page views Bounce Rate	Over 150,000 Over 250,000 Over 750,000 10%

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
2024 NDICI annual programmes are adopted	Adoption of the NDICI/Global Europe annual programmes	Q4
Endeavour to organise a Brussels VIII Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region or alternative fora, including a regular civil society consultation mechanism	Number of ministerial conferences, including consultation with Syrian civil society held	One Ministerial conference and one Day of Dialogue with the Syrian civil society
Assistance to the countries affected by the Syrian Crisis provided, building inter alia on lessons learned of EU Trust Fund for Syria		
Project pipeline developed in 2024	Number of countries for whom actions are adopted in 2024	Four (Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria)
The Libya's transition process is supported	The technical assistance programme provided by the Commission is up and running	Q4

Output	Indicator	Target
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) regional cooperation and sector policy dialogue with partner countries supported	Number of UfM meetings	2 Ministerial conferences (Higher Education and Trade); 3 to 4 Senior Official meetings; Ad hoc Working Group on the UfM reform
Institutional support to the UfM provided a) The secretariat of the UfM is financed through the EU grant. b) The secretariat implements the annual work programme adopted by Senior Officials	a) Signature of the operating grants b) Progress towards results mentioned in the annual work programme	a) Q1 for the operating grant 2024 b) over 80% of the forecasted results are achieved
Strengthened security cooperation in line with the Global Strategy and the European Neighbourhood Policy security dimension: Technical expertise on fighting organised crime provided by key partners such as Interpol and EU Agencies CEPOL, EUROPOL, EUROJUST ⁽²⁷⁾ , FRONTEX/EBCGA ⁽²⁸⁾ , ECDC ⁽²⁹⁾ and EMCDDA ⁽³⁰⁾ , to justice and law enforcement entities in the partner countries	a) Achievement of the targets (%) mentioned in the logical frameworks of the ongoing programmes with EU Agencies CEPOL, EUROPOL, EUROJUST, ECDC and FRONTEX/EBCGA and with Council of Europe b) Number of new contracts signed for AAP 2023 Security package	a) At least 70% of the targets mentioned in the individual logical frameworks is realised b) 2 new contracts
Strategic engagement and policy dialogue with civil society continued	Number of regular coordination meetings with strategic partners and a regional meeting of Civil Society Forum Neighbourhood South	One Civil Society Forum Four coordination meetings Start of implementation of the Civil Society Facility
TAIEX activities in support of cooperation in the Southern Neighbourhood	Number of activities implemented (online or physical)	50 activities

⁽²⁷⁾ European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation

⁽²⁸⁾ European Border and Coast Guard Agency

⁽²⁹⁾ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

⁽³⁰⁾ European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

General objective 4: A stronger Europe in the World**Specific Objective 4.6: Ukraine's short-term recovery, and medium-term reconstruction and modernization are supported ⁽³¹⁾***Related to spending programme(s): Ukraine Facility***Main outputs in 2024:****Other important outputs**

Output	Indicator	Target
Framework, Financing and Loan Agreement with Ukraine on Ukraine Facility	Agreements concluded and entered into force	Q1
Implementation of Ukraine Facility bilateral action programmes (Pillar III)	Commission Decision (Annual Action Programme); Financing Proposal for pillar 3	Q4
Establishment of the Ukraine Investment Framework (Pillar II)	Design of Governance completed and adoption of the Rules of Procedure adopted by the Ukraine Investment Framework Board	Q1/Q2
Implementation of the increase in amount of existing guarantee agreements provided under EFSD+	Signature of amended Guarantee Agreements or addendum to Guarantee Agreements.	Q2/Q3
Implementation of Ukraine Plan	Finalising the Ukraine Plan, the Commission's assessment of the Plan and proposal for a Council Implementing Decision	Q1/Q2
Regular payments of Pillar I of Ukraine Facility	Budget support provided as per Pillar 1 of Ukraine Facility and following the adoption of the reform and investment measures as reflected in the CID following submission by Ukraine of the Ukraine Plan	As per schedule in the CID (Q2, Q3, Q4)
Establishment of the Audit Board	Audit Board Operational	Q1/Q2
TAIEX and Twinning activities in support of recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine	Number of activities implemented (online or physical)	20 activities

⁽³¹⁾ A new special objective 4.6 has been introduced to better reflect the substantial financial and other assistance given to Ukraine for recovery and reforms on its European path.

General objective 1: A European Green Deal

Specific Objective 1: The implementation of the external dimension of the European Green Deal is supported in partner countries

Related to spending programme(s): IPA II, IPA III, ENI, NDICI

Main outputs in 2024:

Evaluations⁽³²⁾ and fitness checks

Output	Indicator	Target
The external evaluation on EU support to waste management and circular economy sectors in the Western Balkans	Evaluation finalised	Q3 ⁽³³⁾
External evaluation of EU support to Connectivity in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood Regions	Evaluations finalised	Q3 ⁽³⁴⁾

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
DG NEAR actions are screened for environmental and climate mainstreaming	Share of EU funded actions screened by the Green Facility	At least 85% of all actions are screened (Baseline 2022 50%)
Increase business opportunities in the green transition and green economy	Business engagement opportunities between EU and Neighbourhood private sector with a focus on green transition (business forums, circular economy mission, GG forum, etc.)	At least 4 events in 2024
Green investments under the Economic and Investment Plan are facilitated	Number of meetings related to green finance with international finance Institutions, private sector investors, potential beneficiaries	4-5 meetings
	New financing guarantees supporting environment and biodiversity objectives endorsed	At least 3
	Number of assessed projects submitted for National Initiative Program (NIP) funding	At least 2-3 projects

⁽³²⁾ These evaluations are part of the DG NEAR multi-annual strategic evaluations plan. While guided by Better Regulation, it is not an evaluation in the Better Regulation sense.

⁽³³⁾ The evaluation is currently in its interim phase.

⁽³⁴⁾ The evaluation is currently in its interim phase.

Output	Indicator	Target
Clean energy and robust climate action is promoted in Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan	<p>Implementation of the ongoing regional projects (% of foreseen deliverables achieved):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU4Climate; EU4Energy Phase II and EU4Energy Phase II+⁽³⁵⁾; EU4 Green Growth <p>The implementation of the new decarbonisation, climate resilience and energy security programme</p> <p>Implementation and adjustment of ongoing technical assistance projects</p> <p>Number of meetings with IFIs on coordination and targeted use of supporting financial instruments in dedicated areas (including feasibility studies):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Robust climate architecture. - Support for coal regions in transition under the EU Initiative for Western Balkans. - Energy Efficiency - Infrastructure development for renewable energy sources, hydrogen and renewable gases 	<p>At least 90% of the envisaged deliverables for 2024 of EU4Climate achieved and project concluded</p> <p>At least 90% of the deliverables for 2024 of Phase II (including Phase II+) of EU4Energy are achieved</p> <p>Implementation by Q4</p> <p>Implementation by Q4</p> <p>At least 1 meeting per domain</p>
Priority actions on Environment policies including Circular economy, pollution reduction, biodiversity and resource and water efficient use: strengthened dialogue and regional actions are promoted in Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan	<p>Number of programmed new actions supporting nature and biodiversity</p> <p>Policy dialogue and technical support to the partner countries authorities</p> <p>Successful implementation of EU4Green, EU4Environment Green Economy, EU4Environment Water and Data Programme</p>	<p>At least one new Action Document adopted in Q3 or Q4</p> <p>10-12 events</p> <p>At least 90% of the envisaged deliverables for 2024 of each programme is achieved</p>
Priority actions on Energy transition and Climate Change implemented in countries and at regional level in the Southern Neighbourhood	Strengthened dialogue with UfM partners	At least one meeting for UfM energy platform and the UfM Climate change expert group.

⁽³⁵⁾ EU4Energy Phase II+ is an extension of the EU4Energy programme, which will assist Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to deal with the changed energy security landscape.

Output	Indicator	Target
	Regional projects supporting the clean energy transition, adaptation, and climate action and environment awareness in the Southern Neighbourhood are implemented, in support of the UfM Energy Platforms	At least 90% of the envisaged deliverables for 2024 of each programme is achieved
Regional actions for the Southern Neighbourhood contribute to improving regulatory frameworks in the beneficiary countries on circular, resource-efficient economy, reduction of pollution, protection of biodiversity or efficient use of water in the Neighbourhood South	Various regional programmes aiming at biodiversity, protection/restoration of protected areas, and Marine and Coastal Protected Areas supporting the green and circular economy are contracted and implemented.	At least 90% of the envisaged deliverables for 2024 of each programme is achieved
Support Türkiye's actions aiming to align with the European Green Deal, in particular as regards its impact on the Customs Union	Number of dedicated technical meetings coordinated by DG NEAR Approved IPA actions on green deal related actions are implemented	At least 2 meetings At least 90% of the envisaged deliverables for 2024 of each programme is achieved

General objective 3: An Economy that Works for People

Specific Objective 3: Inclusive and sustainable economic growth, better employment and increased connectivity are supported in partner countries

Related to spending programme(s): IPA II, IPA III, ENI, NDICI

Main outputs in 2024:

Evaluations⁽³⁶⁾ and fitness checks

Output	Indicator	Target
External evaluation of EU support to private sector development in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions	Evaluation completed	Q3 ⁽³⁷⁾
External evaluation of EU support to youth in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions	Evaluation completed	Q1 ⁽³⁸⁾

⁽³⁶⁾ This evaluation is part of the DG NEAR multi-annual strategic evaluations plan. While guided by Better Regulation, it is not an evaluation in the Better Regulation sense.

⁽³⁷⁾ The evaluation is currently in its interim phase.

⁽³⁸⁾ The evaluation is currently in its interim phase.

Output	Indicator	Target
External evaluation of the implementation of EU Blending in the EU Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans regions in 2015-2021	Evaluation completed	Q1 ⁽³⁹⁾

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Structural socio-economic reforms are accelerated in DG NEAR countries	<p>Analysis of key socio-economic reforms completed for at least 20 NEAR countries</p> <p>Continued policy dialogue, guidance and support for implementation of public administration reform (PAR) and public financial management reform (PFM)</p>	<p>Targeted policy/programming discussions on the basis of the assessments done with 15 countries and coordinated with IFIs.</p> <p>Number of countries participating in PAR Special Groups/PAR and PFM policy dialogue (1 action in each WB country; 4 actions in at least 3 EaP countries; 3 actions in at least 2 South Neighbourhood countries)</p>
Enhanced engagement with Private Sector to inform the structural reform agenda and support the implementation of Global Gateway/EIPs	<p>The new assessment cycle for the Competitiveness Outlook (CO) Assessment for the WB and SME Policy Index for EaP are supported through OECD</p> <p>Number of high level meetings (DG-CEOs)</p>	<p>Publication of the Competitiveness Outlook for the WB in Q2 and SME Policy index for EaP in Q1</p> <p>At least 3 meetings</p>
Enhanced use of Global facilities available to DG NEAR to support policy dialogue and programming	<p>The following facilities available to NEAR HQ and EUD delegations support policy dialogue and programming:</p> <p>PEOPLE Window (Knowledge Hub on Human development: Lot 2- Social inclusion and inequalities, and Lot 3-Youth)</p> <p>PLANET (Green Facility, B4Life, NDC facility, Circular economy and Water facility, Farm to Fork, Energy, Sustainable mobility)</p> <p>PROSPERITY (Global Gateway Support Mechanism; Socieux+⁽⁴⁰⁾; EU Sustainable Finance Hub; Digital Knowledge Hub)</p>	<p>At least 30 in-country actions to support NEAR partner countries delivered and completed by Q4</p> <p>Analysis on Social Protection and Health priorities completed to feed policy dialogue and programming in the Western Balkans by Q4</p> <p>Three thematic seminars on Health, Social protection (Q4), on Youth (Q2) and on Environment and climate change (Q3) for EUDs organised and delivered.</p> <p>An online Education Resource Package made available for all NEAR staff</p> <p>A Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism country analysis is conducted in at least 15 NEAR countries</p>

⁽³⁹⁾ The evaluation will end in Q4 (access to data from financial institutions faced some limitations).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Social Protection and Employment EU Member States TA Facility.

Output	Indicator	Target
		Revised guidelines for environmental and climate mainstreaming launched in 2024. Digital training module developed and implemented in at least 3 delegations in 2024.
Partner countries are supported in building more resilient, efficient and sustainable education systems based on evidence-based diagnosis	Policy dialogues on education with partner countries based on evidence-based diagnosis (reform needs and challenges: governance, financing, quality and resilience aspects) New in-depth diagnosis of education systems carried out in additional NEAR countries	Presentation of the results of diagnosis in North Macedonia and Albania done to the authorities as a basis for policy dialogue on education A regional programme to support evidence-based diagnosis in the Eastern Partnership conducted in 2024
Partner countries are supported by regional and national programmes in Youth related actions in line with the pillars of the EU Youth Strategy and the Youth Action plan for the external action: to engage, to empower and to connect.	Support provided to the implementation of Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans in the Western Balkans	Adoption of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans in all Western Balkans by Q2 At least 2 WB countries start piloting the YG scheme by Q4
	For the EU's neighbourhood South region support through a Technical Assistance Facility in order to develop initiatives to reengage NEET youth.	New contract with ILO is signed, and implementation starts in Q1
	Support the implementation of the Young Mediterranean Voices phase II (YMV II), in order to actively engage youth from the Mediterranean as drivers of social and democratic change	Contract with Anna Lindh Foundation is signed, and implementation starts in 2024
	Support provided on youth entrepreneurship and youth employment in the EaP	At least 9 grants, 15 scholarships and 3 policy labs provided
Trade, Investment, Job Creation and Innovation are supported in Southern Neighbourhood	Regional Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on "Job creation through trade and investment" advanced	3 actions are designed jointly with Member States under the TEI, notably on Green, Digital and Social Economy and start implementation
	Support on innovation and cluster cooperation in the Neighbourhood South	Two regional projects supporting the start-up ecosystems and promoting industrial cluster cooperation jointly with the European Cluster Cooperation Platform launched in Q4
EFSD+ in place and supporting the implementation of the Economic Investment Plans	Number of guarantee agreements signed under the EFSD+ Open Architecture	8 EFSD+ guarantee agreements (including carry-overs) to be signed by Q1

Output	Indicator	Target
		Remaining guarantee agreements approved under the first call for proposals to be concluded by Q4.
Support delivered to business integrity in the EaP countries	EaP countries anti-corruption policy includes business integrity measures Private sector participates in anti-corruption policies development	At least 3 countries prioritize Business Integrity in their anti-corruption policy, by Q2 At least in three countries by Q2
Continued EU support to SMEs across the Eastern Partnership	The EU4business programme phase III is fully operational	First annual report on EU4Business is published during 2024

General objective 2: A Europe fit for the digital age

Specific Objective 2: Increased take-up of digital opportunities in partner countries

Related to spending programme(s): IPA II, IPA III, ENI, NDICI

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Partner countries are supported in the digitalisation of their economy in the Southern Neighbourhood	EU support towards digital skills and cybersecurity in the Southern Neighbourhood is increased	Q4
EU supports digital trade and e-commerce in the Southern Neighbourhood.	A new regional programme is contracted and starts implementation jointly with EU Member States agencies under the Regional Team Europe Initiative on Jobs through Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood.	At least 90% of the envisaged programme deliverables for 2024 is achieved

Output	Indicator	Target
Progress achieved in reducing roaming tariffs among Eastern Partnership countries and with the EU	<p>Progress on the implementation of roaming arrangement for integration into the EU roaming area of Ukraine and Moldova and implementation of the voluntary agreement between operators</p> <p>Initiate the steps for the EU-Georgia roaming arrangement for integration into the EU roaming area based on the EU-GE DCFTA and subject to validation by Council of the EU</p> <p>Continue dialogue on EaP reduction in roaming tariffs</p>	<p>Continued reduction of roaming tariffs in Ukraine</p> <p>First reduction of roaming tariffs between the EU and Moldova</p> <p>Amendment of the telecommunications Annex of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement with the latest EU acquis, subject to validation by Council of the EU.</p> <p>Signature of the Regional Roaming Agreement, which will reduce roaming tariffs among EaP partners by up to 87% once fully applied.</p>
Progress achieved in the development of a new approach to strengthen cybersecurity capacities in the Western Balkans	<p>Regional cybersecurity conference</p> <p>Number of projects to strengthen cybersecurity capacities in the Western Balkans adopted</p>	<p>Q2/Q3</p> <p>At least one</p>
Support to the implementation of the Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans provided	<p>3rd Regulatory Dialogue with the WB6 organised</p> <p>Development of digital actions and investments as part of the Growth Plan Facility</p>	<p>Q4</p> <p>Q4</p>
Progress achieved in developing the cyber-resilience of the EaP countries	<p>Launch of the new regional programme and development of a work programme to support progress towards alignment with the EU NIS 2 Directive (cyber-security)</p> <p>EaP countries have signed the Second Additional Protocol of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.</p> <p>Number of EU-Ukraine Cyber Dialogue, co-organised with EEAS</p>	<p>Q3</p> <p>Q4</p> <p>At least one EU-Ukraine dialogue on cybersecurity</p>
Eastern Partnership countries are supported in implementing the EU digital acquis and in facilitating investment in digital connectivity under the EIP	<p>A new regional programme in support of innovation and digital ecosystems for start-ups is signed and implementation started.</p>	<p>Kick off meetings and inception reports finalised by Q4</p>
EU delegations supported through the Digital Knowledge Hub and digital trainings	<p>Development of training modules for delegation</p> <p>Number of EU delegations benefitting from the training module</p>	<p>Q1</p> <p>3-5 countries</p>

General objective 5: Promoting European Way of Life

Specific Objective 5: Effective migration management with partner countries is in place

Related to spending programme(s): IPA II, IPA III, ENI, NDICI

Main outputs in 2024:

Evaluations⁽⁴¹⁾ and fitness checks

Output	Indicator	Target
Evaluation of EU cooperation on migration in the Western Balkans	Evaluation started	Q1

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa - North Africa is implemented and the implementation is monitored	Reporting from the EUTF NOA MLS (Monitoring and Learning System)	Publication of the annual report in Q4
The funds under NEAR responsibility of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey and additional refugee funding in Türkiye following the June 2021 European Council conclusions are implemented	All the projects under the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey and additional funding are signed and the implementation continues ⁽⁴²⁾	Q4
The implementation of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey is monitored	Number of meetings of the Facility Steering Committee	One meeting by Q2
EU regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis (MADAD) is implemented	Local infrastructure (across all sectors of intervention): number of local infrastructures built or rehabilitated	12,600
	Access to education services: number of Syrian refugees (children and youth) enrolled in all level of education	696,000
	Number of Job opportunities created	70,800
	Number of EUTF Madad projects monitored for results (ROM)	80

⁽⁴¹⁾ This evaluation is part of the DG NEAR multi-annual strategic evaluations plan. While guided by Better Regulation, it is not an evaluation in the Better Regulation sense.

⁽⁴²⁾ For a list of the relevant reports please see at this link: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status/turkey/eu-facility-refugees-turkey_en

Output	Indicator	Target
Southern Neighbourhood Multi-Country migration programme Individual Measures and AAP for 2021 and 2022 implemented	All actions under Individual Measure and AAPs 2021 and 2022 signed and implementation continues	Q4
Southern Neighbourhood Multi-Country migration programme Action Document 2023 adopted in 2023 implemented	All contracts related to the Action under AAP 2023 signed and implementation started	Q4
Adoption of 2024 AAPs under the Southern Neighbourhood Multi-Country migration programme	Multi-country and regional actions under the Southern Neighbourhood Multi-Country migration programme adopted	Q4
Financing for Syrian refugees and host communities in Türkiye, Jordan, Lebanon, and other parts of the region continued	Migration and forced displacement individual measures adopted in 2023 are signed and implementation started	Q4
IPA III actions in the area of migration management in the Western Balkans are adopted	Actions adopted Implementation started	Q1 Q4
Bilateral and regional actions implementing the EaP Beyond 2020 strategy in the area of migration and forced displacement adopted	Implementation of bilateral actions for Ukraine: projects EU4IBM ⁽⁴³⁾ and Resilience, and EU4IBM and Solidarity Lanes)	Development of at least one pilot activity to support trade and more effective through-put of cargoes by Q2 Delivery and installation of minimum one cargo scanner by Q3 Provision of necessary trainings and capacity building by Q4
	Attend meetings organised by the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) to ensure effective management of the Moldovan and Ukrainian borders	4 meetings

⁽⁴³⁾ EU Support to Strengthening Integrated Border Management in Ukraine

Part 2 – Modernising the administration

A. Human resource management

Objective: DG NEAR employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to effectively deliver on the Commission's priorities and core business.		
Main outputs in 2024:		
Output	Indicator	Target
Recruitment on vacant posts	Vacancy rate	Below 5%
Implementation of the NEAR Action Plan (HR strategy)	% of the 35 actions started or completed	100%
Implementation of the results of the Workload Assessment in Delegations: Posts cut, moved and created in Delegations	% of 38 post moves finalised	100%
Increased number of women appointed to first time middle management functions ⁽⁴⁴⁾	Number of new first female appointments to middle management positions	1 new first female appointment by end of 2024

B. Sound financial management

Objective: The authorising officer by delegation has reasonable assurance that resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and that cost-effective controls are in place which give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.		
Main outputs in 2024:		
Output	Indicator	Target
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Estimated risk at payment	Remains < 2 % of relevant expenditure
	Estimated risk at closure	Remains < 2 % of relevant expenditure

⁽⁴⁴⁾ The target 2024 is 50% of middle management posts occupied by female managers.

Output	Indicator	Target
Effective controls:	Effectiveness of the audit system ⁽⁴⁵⁾ :	Effectiveness of the audit system:
	- % contracted of the Annual Control Plan: Year N,	- Remains > 70%
	- % implementation of the Annual Audit Plan: Years N-1 and N-2 ⁽⁴⁶⁾	- Remains > 60%
	- % reduction of old unclosed audits ⁽⁴⁷⁾	- Remains > 50%
Efficient controls	Budget execution	Remains >90% of payment appropriations
	Timely payments	Remains >90% of payments (in value) made on time
Economy of controls	Overall estimated cost of controls	Remains < 5% of funds managed

C. Fraud risk management

Objective: The risk of fraud is minimised through the application of effective anti-fraud measures and the implementation of the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) ⁽⁴⁸⁾ aimed at the prevention, detection and correction ⁽⁴⁹⁾ of fraud.

Main outputs in 2024:

Output	Indicator	Target
Adoption of a new DG NEAR anti-fraud strategy	Adoption of a new AFS	Adoption by the end of 2024
Implementation of the DG NEAR anti-fraud strategy	Implementation of the 2024 annual AFS action plan: percentage of actions completed within the applicable deadlines	At least 75%

⁽⁴⁵⁾ These indicators are part of the KPI dashboard agreed with DG INTPA. While their substance remain stable over the years, their specific definition and targets may be subject to change following a review coordinated by DG INTPA after the Annual Management Plan is adopted.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ An audit is considered implemented when the final audit report has been received.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ This is an indicator (agreed with DG INTPA) which covers the entire multiannual audit life cycle; it aims at achieving the timely closure (subsequent to all follow-up actions and their recording in the Audit Module) of all audits under old Audit Plans (those equal and prior to N-3). Even if this target is lower than the others related to the audit system, it is equally challenging, since the implementation of the recommended actions depends on several factors and usually takes several months.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Communication from the Commission 'Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy: enhanced action to protect the EU budget', COM(2019) 196 of 29 April 2019 – 'the CAFS Communication' – and the accompanying action plan, SWD(2019) 170 – 'the CAFS Action Plan'.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Correction of fraud is an umbrella term, which notably refers to the recovery of amounts unduly spent and to administrative sanctions.

Output	Indicator	Target
Implementation of the recommendations included in the OLAF reports	Timely completion of the assessment on the implementation of the OLAF recommendations	75% of OLAF recommendations are assessed for the implementation by the competent AOSDs within 3 months
	Reinforced monitoring on the implementation of the recommendations	Reminders are sent to action owners for outstanding recommendations at least every 6 months
Regular reporting to Commissioner and Senior Management on the implementation of the anti-fraud strategies and on the OLAF cases	Report to the Commissioner and Senior Management	2 per year (at least)

D. Digital transformation and information management

Objective: DG NEAR is using innovative, trusted digital solutions for better policy-shaping, information management and administrative processes to forge a truly digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Commission.

Main outputs in 2024:

Output	Indicator	Target
Improved IT security of local NEAR applications	Implement recommendations from DIGIT vulnerability assessments performed in 2023 for DG NEAR information systems	70%
Protection of IT systems and maturity	Bi-annual Revision of the DG NEAR I.S. Security Plans	100%
IT security compliance	Percentage of IT priority controls implemented for local information systems	100%
Improved digital way of working	Number of closed QSIGN-tasks in Ares ⁽⁵⁰⁾	250
Progressive elimination of residual paper-based procedures by the full adoption of the qualified electronic signature in replacement of hand-	Decreasing % of docs signed in Ares with parallel paper ⁽⁵¹⁾	2%

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Focusing on the use of QES: the extrapolated number of closed QSIGN-tasks in Ares for 2022 is 200. For 2024, a 20% increase is targeted.

⁽⁵¹⁾ In 2020 out of all documents signed in ARES the share of documents signed with parallel paper was 7.9%.

written signatures when they are legally required		
Information sharing increased	% of NEAR files available for reading in ARES to all Commission ⁽⁵²⁾	10%
Digital culture fostered	% of statutory staff that followed at least one IT training in 2024	15% ⁽⁵³⁾
Data protection compliance improved	% of staff attending awareness raising activities	100%

E. Sound environmental management

Objective: DG NEAR takes account of its environmental impact in their actions and actively promotes measures to reduce the related day-to-day impact of the administration and its work, with the support their respective EMAS Correspondents/EMAS Site Coordinators.

Main outputs in 2024:

I. More efficient use of resources (energy, water, paper):

Output	Indicator	Target
Paperless working methods at DG level and staff awareness actions to reduce office paper use	Number of actions	2 actions (on paperless and electronic signature)

⁽⁵²⁾ Baseline 2020: 0%

⁽⁵³⁾ This target is based on the EC average (12%) as of 16/10 2023 as extracted from the Digital Commission Dashboard and extrapolated to the end of the year. On 16/10/23 the DG NEAR's % was 6%. The aim is set for DG NEAR to achieve a training rate of at least 15% of DG NEAR statutory staff in 2024.