



Addressing PFD recommendations for the EU's Asia-Pacific Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027:

Programming overview in the areas of green and just transition, social protection for migrants, and digital access¹

Directorate-General for International Partnerships
Directorate for "Middle East, Asia and the Pacific"

January 2023

In May 2021, a consultation meeting was held between the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) and members of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD). During the meeting, a series of recommendations was provided by PFD to DG INTPA concerning the Asia-Pacific Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme ("Asia-Pacific regional programme", "regional programme", or RMIP).

The regional programme establishes a set of strategic priorities to be pursued during the financial period of 7 years. It operates its own regional budget for the Asia-Pacific region, in complementarity with the EU's thematic and bilateral programmes covering partner countries in the region.

A few months after the meeting with PFD, in November 2021, the Commission adopted the current Asia-Pacific regional programme 2021-2027², funded by the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE)³.

¹ This note is not intended for publication and does not constitute an official document of the European Commission. Its purpose is to provide information directly to members of the Policy Forum on Development working in the Asia-Pacific region, through the Technical Facility under the contract number CSO-LA/2021/424-088.

² C(2021) 9251 final, 15.12.2021.

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe.

Several of the recommendations from PFD are reflected in content of the RMIP, the Actions⁴ adopted so far, and the Actions to be adopted in the coming years.

This document aims to provide feedback to PFD on how three of the key recommendations from PFD have been taken into consideration in the programming of the RMIP, to date:

- 1. Prioritise green and just transition;**
- 2. Ensure social protection and social safety nets, access to service and decent work for migrants and displaced populations;**
- 3. Address the digital gender divide, digital access and affordability.**

This document focusses on the Actions adopted to date⁵, while it also mentions some of the most relevant upcoming Actions linked to these recommendations. It provides an overview across multiple RMIP components. More details can be found in the Commission Decisions and Action documents⁶, for which the references in footnotes can be used (available on the Register of Commission Documents⁷).

DG INTPA and PFD are also organising a (virtual) consultation on the Asia-Pacific regional programme in March 2023 (tbc), which will offer a platform for further discussions on the policy priorities pursued by the RMIP and the ways to engage civil society, local authorities and other social partners in their implementation.

The RMIP's objectives are aligned with the EU's priorities for external Action as well as the Indo-Pacific Strategy⁸ and the Global Gateway⁹, also adopted in 2021.

PRIORITISE GREEN AND JUST TRANSITION

The “Green Deal” is one of the key “broad areas” in which the RMIP aims to support regional priorities and EU interests. This includes:

“... support to the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, socially fair, clean and just transition towards climate neutrality in all its aspects (gas, coal phase out, renewable energy sources including hydrogen, energy efficiency, energy security), climate resilience and circular economy including sustainable connectivity, energy transition, the Farm-to-fork Strategy

⁴ An “Action” can include one or more projects.

⁵ The formal adoption of an Action takes place when the Commission Decision containing this Action is adopted. After that, the contracting and actual implementation follow different timelines, depending on the location and the activities.

⁶ Action documents can be found as annexes to Commission Decisions.

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/>

⁸ JOIN(2021) 24 final, 16.9.2021.

⁹ JOIN(2021) 30 final, 1.12.2021.

and its Chemicals strategy for sustainability, sustainable and accessible urbanisation, decent green jobs creation and relevant skills development, sustainable financing (by helping accelerate financial flows towards green, inclusive and resilient transitions), preservation of biodiversity, including through strengthening global and regional governance and sustainable management of natural resources, on land and in the ocean.”¹⁰

Programming overview:

In December 2021, the EU adopted an Action ensuring its support for a new phase of the SWITCH programme (Policy component)¹¹, as part of the **Pan-Asia** component of the Asia-Pacific regional programme. The programme is dedicated to promoting sustainable production and consumption in partner countries across Asia. In 2022, the Commission concluded a Service Contract in the framework of the programme which, through technical assistance, will support dialogues between national governments and local / EU stakeholders (notably with the private sector, but also with civil society organisations whenever relevant) engaging in discussions related to sustainable consumption and production and circular economy. Ad-hoc technical assistances will be designed throughout the implementation of the contract (2023-2026).

The SWITCH programme will also continue funding collaborative projects (through regular calls for proposals) to support the green transition of the private sector by testing and adopting resource efficiency practices and low-carbon technologies. The programme will work closely with European and financial institutions to ensure the replication and scale-up of these practices to private sector organisations in the region.

The **EU-ASEAN** Summit of 14 December 2022 formally endorsed the Green ASEAN/EU Team Europe Initiative in the Joint Leaders Statement, marking the progress reached in 2022 on the implementation of the initiative launched by Commissioner Urpilainen and ASEAN Secretary General in November 2021. A EUR 30-million programme¹² supports the objectives and related results of the regional programme, in particular establishing and supporting the external dimensions of the EU Green Deal with ASEAN/South-East Asia and promoting a green and inclusive growth model, in line with the 2030 Agenda, and promoting a coherent regional transition towards a circular, climate resilient, energy efficient economy. Five projects were signed under this programme in 2022 (including

¹⁰ RMIP, page 2.

¹¹ Annex VII to C(2021) 9580 final, 16.12.2021.

¹² Annex IV to C(2021) 9580 final, 16.12.2021.

two grants with CSOs), linked to the overall Team Europe Initiative (TEI)¹³ priorities, including energy transition, climate change, environment, sustainable landscapes and food systems, youth, and digital tools.

In 2021, the Action “Climate, Energy, Trade and Innovation Support in India” was adopted¹⁴, including a component of support to the **Clean Energy and Climate Partnership (CECP)**. The CECP implements the formal 2016 EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership. India will be the most important actor in facilitating progress towards achieving not only the SDGs but also the Paris Agreement, because of its economic growth and energy demands and the need for speedier renewable energy adoption. Focus will therefore be on reinforcing cooperation on an affordable, clean and secure energy transition and implementation of India’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). So far, the CECP project has strengthened policy dialogue with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Ministry of Power and Bureau of Energy Efficiency by supporting the deployment of solar and offshore wind, smart grid applications, energy storage, energy recovery from waste, sustainable financing of clean energy, power market design, energy efficiency of buildings and climate Action.

In 2022, the Action “Global Gateway: India”¹⁵ was adopted with a total EU contribution of EUR 22,5 million. It contains several projects contributing to green and just transition:

- **Just energy transition (JET):** Co-financing the bilateral component for India in the programme ‘Innovation Regions for a Just Energy Transition’, from the German Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). It will complement and support BMWK’s plans in India (in a “Team Europe” approach), namely the development of specific Just Transition plans and their implementation in two coal regions in the state of Jharkhand (Hazaribagh and Ramgarh) with solutions for facilitating the socio-economic transformation away from coal, thereby addressing one of the key drivers of greenhouse gas emissions in India. Indicative activities include technical assistance for the repurposing of legacy mine sites/ closed mine sites towards renewable energy and other sustainable economic activities with a **strong focus on social aspects** of mine closure at local and regional level.
- **Urbanisation**, aiming for 1) improved sustainable urbanisation planning and governance; 2) linkages are supported between state, cities, towns by strengthening national and state governance and planning 3) increased access to sustainable basic services including water and wastewater; 4) reduced adverse impact of cities on the planet; 5) access to increased green and public spaces; 6)

¹³ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/team-europe-initiatives_en

¹⁴ C(2021) 9971 final, 22.12.2021.

¹⁵ Annex I to C(2022) 9252 final, 6.12.2022.

increased number of cities adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards urban resilience and urban climate Action.

- **Water Partnership**, aiming to increase the sustainable management of water resources, particularly concerning challenges posed by 1) water management in the context of growing population and competing water demands 2) water pollution 3) water management in the context of climate change; 4) water cooperation in transboundary basin areas (and watersheds).
- **Circular economy**, supporting:
 - Further government engagement on the development of RE/CE policies, including at sub-national level, strengthening the role of states, policy control boards and eco-industrial waste-parks in supporting the RE-Cell, feeding localised lessons from the most advanced Indian RE/CE sectoral policies (on plastics, on e-waste) back to less advanced ones (metal, cement, fashion/textile, bio-based and underground resources);
 - Further dialogue between EU and Indian businesses regarding the socio-economic benefits of RE/CE business models from a competitiveness/inclusiveness point of view (i.e. illustrating through pilots the benefits of a greener, smarter industrial transition, leap-frogging outdated, less efficient business models, also addressing barriers to trade, investments and technology transfers);
 - India as a regional and global champion on RE/CE, notably as regards transboundary impacts (marine litter, pollution), adoption of global and EU standards, or cleaner, more transparent supply chains, notably following-up on UNEA5 Resolution to End Plastic Pollution and the initiatives taken by India in the context of its G20 presidency.

For the wider **South Asia** region, in the framework of an upcoming EU-supported South Asia Regional Energy Programme, DG INTPA's energy expert facility is currently conducting a comprehensive assessment of the energy and transmission challenges in South Asia, focusing on Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

Also in 2022, the Asia-Pacific regional programme ensured continuity¹⁶ to support EU exchanges with China to advance the clean energy transition in line with the external dimension of the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement targets, as well as open and transparent energy markets and governance and business cooperation. Planned activities include workshops and conferences with key stakeholders as well as studies and briefings to provide policy recommendations and assess key technical issues. Working with China on energy issues supports sustainable growth and jobs through a

¹⁶ Annex III to C(2022) 9252 final, 6.12.2022.

more balanced economic relationship based on reciprocity and a fair and level playing field. It is also in line with the EU's energy diplomacy, which promotes a global clean energy transition, open and transparent energy markets and a global response to climate change.

For the **Pacific** region, an Action was adopted ensuring continuity to the EU's support to the Kiwa Initiative¹⁷, a facility aiming at supporting the Pacific countries to attract climate finance to protect their biodiversity against the impact of climate change through nature-based solutions, has seen its first two regional projects deploying their first activities during 2022: "Pacific Organic Learning Farms Network (POLFN) project" led by the Pacific Community (SPC), and "Strengthening Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change in the Pacific (PEBACC+) project", led by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The EU's contribution to the Kiwa initiative is linked to the wider "Green-Blue Alliance" TEI described in the RMIP.

Additionally, several new upcoming projects in the Pacific have been selected and the first call for proposals for smaller projects submitted by civil society organisations and Local Authorities was completed with more than 10 projects to be funded. All this was made possible by a rapid increase in donors' pledges. EU has already committed EUR 19.9 million in total (mobilising a top-up of EUR 6 million in 2022), France has already mobilised EUR 26 million and will soon add EUR 14 million to reach a total of EUR 40 million. Canada, Australia and New Zealand have already brought close to EUR 9 million altogether and have announced additional pledges, still to be confirmed.

Also in the Pacific, the project "Pacific Solutions: Integrated Ocean Management" was adopted¹⁸ (contracting process upcoming). Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) are increasingly recognising the need for a comprehensive perspective on the management of the marine environment and are turning to the development of National Ocean Policies (NOPs) to address these challenges.

This three-year intervention aims at establishing a larger 10-year programme "Pacific Solutions for a healthy Blue Pacific Continent: Integrated ocean management to sustain livelihoods today and into the future" which has been endorsed as a UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development Programme. The project also intends to contribute to "Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability" of the Pacific chapter of the Asia-Pacific regional programme.

¹⁷ Annex I to C(2022) 6134 final, 23.8.2022.

¹⁸ Annex II to C(2022) 6134 final, 23.8.2022.

The Action is expected to contribute to achieving the following results:

- Increased capacity (including research capacity and use of digital tools) for anticipation of, adaptation and resilience to the impacts of global warming; including severe climate-related risks and events;
- Increased capacity to deliver on international climate commitments and to implement multilateral environmental agreements legislation while ensuring just transition;
- Increased capacity and readiness to ensure the conservation sustainable management use and restoration of marine and terrestrial natural/biodiversity resources, e.g. through digital tools and spatial planning;
- Expanded use of nature-based solutions providing environmental and resilience benefits as well as creation of new income opportunities for men and women;
- Enhanced capacities in partner countries to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) and threats to maritime security.

Moreover, a regional Action was adopted to provide support to the “**Pacific NDC Hub**”¹⁹ (EUR 3 million). The Hub will help PICs to finance and implement their countries’ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), driving sustainable and resilient development and transition to a low-carbon development pathway, while considering gender-sensitive aspects. Activities will include:

- Training and continuing education and capacity development on NDC financing and implementation, including in-person and/or virtual training for representatives from governments of Pacific Island Countries, including NDC Hub focal points, civil society, media representatives, private sector and other relevant stakeholders. Focus on topics relevant to NDC financing and implementation including but not limited to: NDC roadmaps, investment plans, feasibility studies, green recovery.
- Use and further development of (digital) formats and approaches for knowledge exchange and communication of climate contributions / NDCs. National events fostering exchanges between stakeholders on climate change, finance, and implementation. Audience includes government officials, including Regional Pacific NDC Hub focal points, civil society, media representatives and private sector, within the Pacific and internationally.
- Processing and showcasing of successful experiences from country, regional and international cooperation on various existing platforms²⁰ to disseminate best

¹⁹ Annex III to C(2022) 6134 final, 23.8.2022.

²⁰ For example, the regional Climate Weeks of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, exchange platforms of the NDC Partnership, NDC Partnership Knowledge Portal, National

practices on NDC financing and implementation with particular attention to gender and human rights sensitivity. Whereas the first activity focuses on country exchange (mainly) within the Pacific, the third activity mainly focuses on international peer learning, mostly through digital events (in-person events if required). External communication activities will play a central role in this regard, to broadly showcase best practices on NDC implementation.

As part of the regional programme's component dedicated to "Support to investments under the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+)", the **Asia Pacific Investment Facility (APIF)**²¹ was established in 2021 (and amended in 2022). To date, EUR 175 million from RMIP funds have been assigned to the APIF.

The EU contribution will be used strategically in blending operations to mobilise financing from partner financial institutions and other public and private investors, with the overall objective to enhance the development impact of investment projects and/or promote SDG-relevant investments that without the grant contribution would be difficult to fund due to market failure.

Based on a solid pipeline of projects, discussed with IFIs, the selection and implementation of blending operations is in progress covering most countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Investments can contribute directly and indirectly to better regulatory frameworks, **market creation and expansion (in particular for renewable energy), more sustainable connectivity** and enhanced regional integration. The Facility will provide contributions in form of investment grants, technical assistance, interest rate subsidies or risk capital operations to promote SDG relevant investments.

The APIF is also committed to promoting the fulfilment of economic and social rights, and gender equality, in line with regions' and partner countries' international human rights commitments. In that sense, the APIF aims to two thematic areas of the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III: "promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women" and "addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation".

Adaptation Plan (NAP) Global Network, climate negotiations, conferences, existing platforms of the Regional Pacific NDC Hub and other regional platforms.

²¹ Annex VI to C(2021) 9580 final, 16.12.2021. Amended by C(2022) 9253 final, 6.12.2022.

Under the component of the regional programme dedicated to cooperation with **High Income Countries** in the Asia-Pacific region (managed by the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments - FPI), Actions contributing to green transition were adopted in 2022, namely in the areas of Responsible Business Conduct for green, digital and resilient supply chains in Asia²²; Cooperation on Green Transition with the Gulf Cooperation Council²³; and facilitating the operationalisation of the EU's green partnership with the Republic of Korea²⁴ (in negotiation).

Coming soon²⁵: Several Actions contributing to the area of green and just transition are tentatively planned for adoption in 2023, including: Sustainable Connectivity and Green priorities with ASEAN; SWITCH Asia - Grants component; Water, energy and climate TEI with Central Asia; Energy, environment and Disaster Risk Reduction with South Asia; Led by the FPI: Urban and regional cooperation, support to the EU-Japan Green Alliance (in negotiation).

ENSURE SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SAFETY NETS, ACCESS TO SERVICE AND DECENT WORK FOR MIGRANTS AND DISPLACED POPULATIONS

“Migration, forced displacement and mobility” are among the key “broad areas” in which the RMIP aims to support regional priorities and EU interests. According to the programme document:

“Some Asian countries are major areas of origin, transit and/or destination for people on the move, including migrants, refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Three of the major forced displacement situations are in the Asia region, namely the Afghan displacement situation, the displacement situation in Iraq and the displacement of Myanmar populations, including the Rohingya refugee crisis. Conflict, instability, insecurity, climate change and environmental degradation, poverty and inequalities contribute significantly to migration and forced displacement, including international, inter-regional and long-term internal displacement, and impacts on issues

²² Annex X to C(2022) 6134 final, 23.8.2022.

²³ Annex XI to C(2022) 6134 final, 23.8.2022.

²⁴ C(2022) 5846 final, 8.8.2022.

²⁵ The reference to programmes that are yet to be adopted is indicative and can be altered in parts or in full in the course of programming.

of statelessness and citizenship rights. Migrant workers are at high risk of labour rights' violations. Enhancing cooperation on all aspects of migration, mobility and forced displacement, is a key priority to be addressed for the operationalisation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. Meanwhile, well orderedly, safe, regular and responsible migration and human mobility offers considerable development opportunities".²⁶

Programming overview:

Under the **Special Measures 2021 on Afghan regional displacement**²⁷ (EUR 79 million of EU contribution), three Actions were adopted to address the needs of Afghan refugees and host communities. All three of them contribute to the Regional TEI on the Afghan Displacement situation, proposed in the Asia-Pacific regional programme.

1. **Support to Afghan refugees and displaced people in Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan** (EUR 50 million funded by the regional programme) to support Afghan refugees in the countries neighbouring Afghanistan (notably in Iran and Pakistan, and if required in Central Asian countries) and for returnees, internally displaced persons and other persons of concern in Afghanistan insofar as the situation in Afghanistan allows.
2. **Children on the move** (EUR 15 million funded by bilateral programmes, but contributing to the regional TEI) to enhance the resilience and self-reliance of forcibly displaced youth and unaccompanied minors, including their families and vulnerable host communities, in a way that they live together peacefully, have access to social services and develop economic ties to build sustainable livelihoods and thus foster social cohesion and stability.
3. **Enhanced Access to Rights, Essential Services, and Livelihoods for Vulnerable Afghans and Host Communities in Iran in the context of COVID-19 recovery** (EUR 14 million funded by bilateral programmes, but contributing to the regional TEI) to enhance resilience and self-reliance of vulnerable Afghans and their host communities in Iran.

In response of the **Myanmar displacement crisis**, one new Action has been adopted and one amended in 2021:

3. **Towards Durable Solutions for displaced Myanmar populations along the Thai-Myanmar border**²⁸ (EUR 8 million) supporting the people in the Southeast

²⁶ RMIP, page 2.

²⁷ C(2021) 9312 final, 16.12.2021.

²⁸ Amendment via Decision reference C(2021) 9177 final, 15.12.2021.

of Myanmar, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), host communities and new arrivals from other parts of Myanmar seeking refuge providing basic needs, protection, social services and livelihood opportunities. Additionally, given the expected increase in number of people leaving Myanmar across the border into Thailand, the Action will provide assistance to those reaching Thailand in the aftermath of the coup d'état and provide support in their endeavor to return to Myanmar if and when conditions allow.

2. **Support to encamped Myanmar refugees in Thailand**²⁹ (EUR 12 million) will address the protracted crisis of Myanmar refugees living in nine camps in Thailand along the Thai-Myanmar border. The Action will build on former and existing EU initiatives to support Myanmar refugees under the Aid to Uprooted People (AUP) programme. As the voluntary return of Myanmar refugees may not happen in the short-term due to political situation in Myanmar, the Action will focus on basic services provision, livelihood skills development, as well as health protection of refugees in the camps in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This Action will increase resilience of Myanmar refugees encamped in Thailand at the border with Myanmar and of the host communities in the areas by meeting their needs and rights, and providing them with empowerment and opportunities for self-reliance in view of their eventual return.

In 2022, two Actions were adopted to promote decent work for **migrants**, one in support of **Rohingya refugees** in Bangladesh and one in support to Syrian refugees, IDPs and returning migrants in Iraq:

1. **Remittances, Investment and Migrants' Entrepreneurship in Central Asia (REMIT)**³⁰ (EUR 6 million) will aim at diversifying remittance corridors and maximise the impact of remittance for economic and social resilience in the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Action will also support the socio-economic reintegration of returning migrants, whose numbers have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian war against Ukraine.
4. **Improving Migration Management and Migrant Protection in selected Silk Route countries (PROTECT)**³¹ (EUR 9 million) aims to provide support to informed decisions on legal migration as well as further support governments in their efforts to regulate labour migration, returns, fight against irregular migration

²⁹ Annex III to C(2021) 9580 final, 16.12.2021.

³⁰ Annex V to C(2022) 9252 final, 6.12.2022.

³¹ Annex VI to C(2022) 9252 final, 6.12.2022.

and trafficking in human beings. It will continue selected activities in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Tajikistan while expanding also to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan.

5. **PROTTASHA II: Sustainable reintegration of Bangladeshi returnees and improved migration governance**³² (EUR 35 million) will provide social, psychosocial and economic reintegration assistance to Bangladeshi returnees, including from the EU, transit countries and other third countries. It will enhance awareness on safe and legal migration and return, the perils of irregular migration and migrant smuggling. At the same time, it will foster ownership of the Bangladeshi authorities by strengthening their capacity and contributing to better coordination between national and local authorities on sustainable reintegration. It will build on the established structures, procedures and lessons learnt of the first phase of Prottasha with a focus on persons in vulnerable situations and on strengthening the referral mechanism. PROTTASHA II will assist all returnees, to be identified on a case-by-case approach, therefore enlarging the scope of the programme compared to its first phase where only returnees from the EU and selected transit countries were eligible for assistance. This will help to reach more returnees and will ensure increased human rights protection.
4. **Sustainable Social and Economic Reintegration, and improved migration governance in Iraq**³³ (EUR 20 million) aims at supporting the social and economic reintegration of displaced populations (refugees, IDPs) and returnees (including from Europe and elsewhere) in Iraq, while strengthening the overall national migration governance and migration management capacities, and addressing the root causes of fragility, irregular migration and forced displacement.

Coming soon³⁴: Several Actions are tentatively planned for adoption in 2023 in the area of “migration and forced displacement” in the Asia region. The Asia-Pacific regional programme will (indicatively) provide approximately EUR 100 million for these new programmes.

³² Annex V to C(2022) 6134 final, 23.8.2022.

³³ Annex IV to C(2022) 9252 final, 6.12.2022.

³⁴ The reference to programmes that are yet to be adopted is indicative and can be altered in parts or in full in the course of programming.

ADDRESS THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE, DIGITAL ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

The “Digital agenda” is one of the key “broad areas” in which the RMIP aims to support regional priorities and EU interests. This includes:

“...important avenues for partnership exist in the region, especially concerning the digital economy in line with the EU’s human-centric model for digital transformation and connectivity (including cyber security, digital global governance and recent initiatives such as the Digital Compass Communication and the Global Gateway Communication), information and communication technology, interoperability and standardisation as well as fostering digital skills, digitalisation of businesses, digitalisation of the public services and quality digital infrastructure. Bridging the digital gap is also an important priority for social inclusion, the adaptation of education systems to the digital age, as well as economic growth and diversification. Promotion of a global consensus on a human-centric approach to Artificial Intelligence and the promotion of European values and norms are also key issues”.³⁵

Programming overview:

In June 2022, a regional programme called “Dialogue and Action for Resourceful Youth in **Central Asia**”³⁶ (DARYA) started its activities. This EUR 10-million programme, implemented by the European Training Foundation, supports inclusive skills development and prepares young Central Asian women and men for the labour market. The programme aims at fostering the quality and inclusiveness of education, training and employment systems in Central Asia as well as participatory and inclusive dialogue and cooperation mechanisms at national and regional levels. That entail working with Central Asian states to promote regional cooperation to improve vocational training policies for youth, including on digital skills and literacy.

A regional Action was adopted in 2021 dedicated to “Strengthening Public Finance Management (PFM), Oversight and Accountability in the **Pacific Region**’ to Public Financial Management³⁷. This Action includes the continuation of the EU’s support to the

³⁵ RMIP, page 2.

³⁶ Annex II to C(2021) 9580 final, 16.12.2021.

³⁷ Annex V to C(2021) 9580 final, 16.12.2021.

Vaka Pasifika project, implemented across 15 countries. In 2022, Vaka Pasifika helped promote digital access through the following activities:

- “...158 Pacific developers and aspiring developers took part in the first ever Pacific-wide hackathon to amplify Pacific voices on accountability. Working with our partner the Pacific Internet Society (PICISOC), the ahava project, which supports homeless youth in Fiji, facilitated the participation of 20 of their members to the event exposing them to coding, social entrepreneur challenges and Competitions”. (source: UNDP, [Vaka Pasifika Project: 2022 in Review](#))
- “The Vaka Pasifika public finance learning course was launched for all after being tested by more than 300 participants across parliaments, supreme audit institutions, civil society and artist illustrators. It was adopted by the Fiji Public Service Commission as a foundation course for all civil servants in Fiji and incorporates modules on climate change, gendered analysis of the budget and budget advocacy for [civil society organisations]”. (source: UNDP, [Vaka Pasifika Project: 2022 in Review](#))

Also in the Pacific region, the project “Pacific Solutions: Integrated Ocean Management”³⁸ (previously mentioned on pages 6-7) responds not only to the green-blue transition priority nexus, but also contains elements linked to digitalisation – namely, two of the project’s expected results:

- Increased capacity (including research capacity and use of digital tools) for anticipation of, adaptation and resilience to the impacts of global warming; including severe climate-related risks and events;
- Increased capacity and readiness to ensure the conservation sustainable management use and restoration of marine and terrestrial natural/biodiversity resources, e.g. through digital tools and spatial planning.

Additionally, under the Sector 2: “Trade, Energy and Digital Connectivity” of the South Asia window of the RMIP, one of the expected results is to develop digital technology promoting market access, entrepreneurship and social outcomes and reduce rural-urban and gender digital divides. This would be further elaborated during the formulation of EU potential support.

³⁸ Annex II to C(2022) 6134 final, 23.8.2022.

Coming soon³⁹: Several Actions contributing to “digital” priorities are tentatively planned for adoption in 2023, including a Regional Digital programme with Central Asia and Sustainable Connectivity with ASEAN. Led by the FPI: support to digital partnerships with Japan, Korea and Singapore.

³⁹ The reference to programmes that are yet to be adopted is indicative and can be altered in parts or in full in the course of programming.