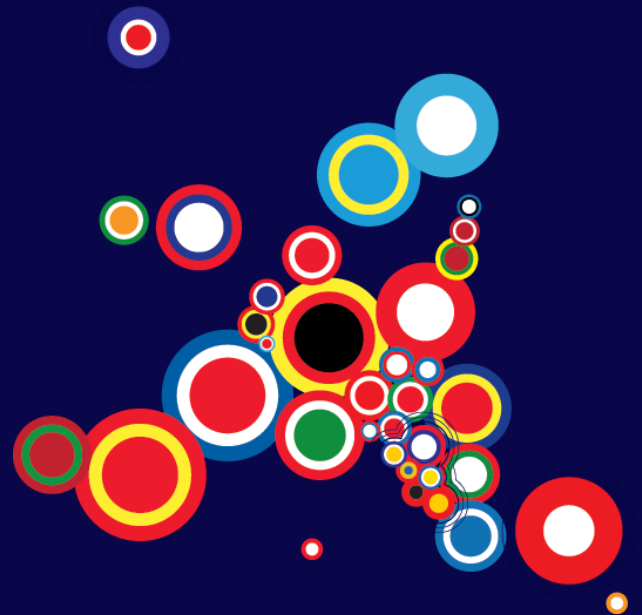




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

MULTI-COUNTRY

Joint Assistance to Support
Projects in European
Regions - JASPERS



Action summary

The Action will provide technical assistance to prepare successful, high quality major infrastructure projects identified by the beneficiaries' National Investment Committees. It will contribute to bring these priority investments projects to maturity by offering support to develop, manage and review the quality of the projects, making them eligible for EU funds.

JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) is a technical assistance facility created to support the new Member States which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 to access EU Structural Funds. Since 2013, JASPERS has expanded its services to three pre-accession countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. In view of the positive experience in these countries, it was decided to extend the opportunity of JASPERS' support to all IPA II beneficiaries.

Action Identification	
Action Programme Title	IPA II Annual Multi-country Action Programme 2015
Action Title	Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions - JASPERS
Action ID	IPA 2015/031-609.13/MC/JASPERS
Sector Information	
IPA II Sector(s)	9. Regional cooperation and territorial cooperation
DAC Sector	43010
Budget	
Total cost	EUR 4 million
EU contribution	EUR 4 million
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Direct management
Implementation responsibilities	DG NEAR/D.5
Location	
Zone benefiting from the Action	Western Balkans & Turkey
Specific implementation area(s)	Western Balkans & Turkey
Timeline	
Deadline for conclusion of the Financing Agreement	N/A
Contracting deadline	31/12/2016
End of operational implementation period	31/12/2020

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Regional cooperation in the infrastructure sector is essential for successfully tackling trans-boundary issues and key common challenges in the Western Balkans such as connectivity, climate change, energy shortages or floods.

However, a large gap still exists between the infrastructure available and what is needed to ensure a sustainable development. Insufficient maintenance and development in the past, interruption of investments and slow reform linked to some serious social implications compound the problem.

Amongst the many challenges faced by the beneficiaries the mains ones are:

- insufficient and even deteriorating financing opportunities for the development of infrastructure caused by the economic and financial crises,
- insufficient public support to infrastructure reform and development,
- delays in implementation of EU infrastructure norms and ensuring the enforcement of relevant legal acts,
- preparing feasible and attractive projects for funding,
- slow and lengthy administrative procedures, for example for construction permits,
- a lack of fair, transparent and diligent public tendering procedures,
- tariffs for infrastructure products and services that are not affordable or do not reflect the real costs of the investment,
- insufficient mechanisms in attracting private sector participation in financing infrastructure development.

If there is an undeniable need for technical assistance when preparing and implementing projects as offered by the WBIF, it is also key to provide technical assistance to beneficiaries when **developing and managing projects** and when **reviewing the quality of the preparation documents**.

In this context, the Action will offer this specific technical assistance through JASPERS' services, contributing to bring to maturity priority infrastructure projects identified by the beneficiaries' National Investment Committees (NICs).

JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) is a technical assistance facility specifically created to support the new Member States to prepare high quality projects in order to qualify for EU Structural Funds. JASPERS, which provides advice to the 13 countries that joined the European Union in 2004, 2007 and 2013 as well as to Greece, has expanded its services since 2013 to three pre-accession countries: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. In view of the positive experience in these countries, it was decided to extend the opportunity of JASPERS' contribution to all IPA II beneficiaries.

The technical assistance to be provided under this Action will help preparing infrastructure projects making them eligible for IPA II financing. Specific results will include assistance on project prioritisation, assistance in preparing cost benefit methodologies, preparation of draft terms of reference for project preparation documents, detail design or tender dossiers, etc. It will also comprise the transfer of know-how in project management and project development¹.

If this technical assistance services will be made available to the beneficiaries for all major projects in the single project pipelines, the funds mobilised under this action will be first targeted to projects with a regional and connectivity dimension.

In addition, the action will offer assistance to the beneficiaries for the preparation of their sector strategies and projects pipelines for IPA II financing, to improve programming and subsequently the timing and quality of the projects.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II MULTI-COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020 (hereinafter referred to as Strategy paper) sets socio-economic and regional development as one of its main objectives and clearly underlines the importance to

¹ The transfer of know-how within the context of JASPERS will be defined to be complementary with WBIF technical assistance services to avoid any overlap of activities.

support investments in infrastructure in the Western Balkans where cross-border networks are underdeveloped.

Technical assistance will be provided in line with the priorities identified in the Strategy paper but also in line with relevant EU policies and EU macro-regional strategies such as the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) endorsed by in April 2011 and the future EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) launched in November 2014.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In a context of immense investments needs and restricted budgets, projects prioritisation is essential in order to ensure that the projects that are most relevant for growth, stability and accession are prepared to the highest standards and successfully implemented. The development of single pipeline of projects by the NICs will play a key role in identifying these priority projects and will be offering to JASPERS a first selection of projects to support.

Since 2013, JASPERS has been active in Montenegro, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Serbia, under an Agreement with DG REGIO of EUR 2.17 million (with a EUR 2 million contribution from the European Commission and EUR 176,500 from the EIB).

With a total of 46 projects/actions, activities focused on transport (railways mostly, but also roads) and environment (water supply, wastewater treatment and solid waste management), with activities completed for nine of them. The pace of activities has been accelerating progressively, in particular due to a mutual understanding of the principles of JASPERS support and the specific issues in each country has been reached.

The activities involved:

- supporting the development of key projects under preparation, to ensure compliance with the relevant regulations and requirements and improve the quality of the interventions prepared
- assisting in the preparation of sector strategies and projects pipelines for IPA II financing
- transferring relevant know-how (such as Cost Benefit Analysis, Environment Impact Assessment, FIDIC conditions, etc.)

The feedback is generally very positive, with both guidance on project documentation and training sessions considered as offering great added value. One point for improvement would be to involve JASPERS at the earliest stage, not only to avoid the use of different methodologies but also to maximise JASPERS' impact.

An extension to energy projects is foreseen with two projects in Serbia.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
Support the socio-economic growth of the Western Balkans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector investment GDP growth Human development index Total value of all investment projects (private and public) made in the region 	National/Central Banks reports National Statistical Offices Eurostat	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Improved number of quality of priority infrastructure investment projects ready for implementation and successfully implemented</p> <p>Absorption of EU funds</p> <p>Exchange of skills and knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of projects supported by JASPERS which secured EU financing Number of projects supported by JASPERS which reached implementation Number of projects supported by JASPERS which reached completion 	JASPERS progress reports Government budgets	<p>Capacity to borrow from Beneficiaries remains</p> <p>Recovery from the crisis allows further development and creates further loans demand</p> <p>Political stability in the region</p>
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Support the development, management and review of major infrastructure investment projects identified by the National Investments Committees in their Single Pipelines of Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of projects supported by JASPERS which have been fully completed Total value of the projects supported by JASPERS 	JASPERS progress reports	NICs present major projects for preparation
ACTIVITIES	MEANS	OVERALL COST	ASSUMPTIONS
Technical assistance for infrastructure investment projects for project management, preparation and review	Direct Management through a Grant Agreement with the EIB	EUR 4 million	

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The eligible beneficiaries for JASPERS' technical assistance services are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

- **DG NEAR, headquarters and EU delegations (EUDs)**

The contract between the European Commission and JASPERS will be managed by DG NEAR Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes Unit, which will coordinate JASPERS action for all IPA II beneficiaries.

The Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes Unit will work closely with the different geographical desks in DG NEAR headquarters but also with the EUDs which will follow directly with the national authorities the implementation of JASPERS' services.

- **JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions)**

JASPERS is a joint initiative of the European Commission, the EIB and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

- **National Investments Committees**

The NICs, set in each beneficiary, will identify, with the support of JASPERS' experts, single pipelines of projects with major priority investments projects.

Projects implemented by JASPERS will be selected from these pipelines of projects.

- **JASPERS Western Balkans and Turkey Steering Committee**

A Steering Committee gathering the European Commission, the EIB and the EBRD will offer the occasion to discuss the implementation modalities of JASPERS' technical assistance services as well as the action plans for each beneficiary.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD(S) AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING

JASPERS' technical assistance services will be contracted and managed directly by DG NEAR Headquarters through a Grant Agreement with the EIB.

In accordance with Article 125 (4) (7), the grants for actions of technical assistance may be awarded to the EIB without a call for proposals.

The Grant Agreements will blend EU funds from the Multi-country Programme with funds from National Programmes.

The EUR 4 million of this action thus include EUR 1 million from the Turkey 2015 national allocation which will be specifically used to support projects in Turkey.

* 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.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The Framework Partnership Agreement signed between DG NEAR and JASPERS will use as a reference the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement signed between the European Commission and the EIB and will as a result guarantee monitoring and reporting standards.

The day-to-day monitoring of the Action will be carried out by the Task Manager in DG NEAR. In the perspective of this exercise, s/he will use the reports produced by the implementing body, the EIB. S/he will also have regular contacts with geographical desks in DG NEAR headquarters but also with EUDs and, when relevant, with national authorities in order to monitor the action as closely as possible to its implementation.

JASPERS annual Steering Committees will offer the opportunity to appreciate regularly the progress of the Action and address any issues.

The European Commission may additionally carry out a mid-term and/or final evaluation for this action or its components via independent consultants or through a joint mission. The European Commission may also, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by the DG NEAR guidelines for evaluations.

The Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mechanism will thus be used to support the monitoring of the Action.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Baseline (year) (2)	Milestone 2017(3)	Target 2020 (4)	Source of information
Number of projects supported by JASPERS which have been fully completed	Not available	20	30*	JASPERS' progress reports
Number of projects supported by JASPERS which secured EU financing	Not available	10**	20**	JASPERS' progress reports
Number of projects supported by JASPERS which reached implementation	Not available	5**	15**	JASPERS' progress reports
Number of projects supported by JASPERS which reached completion	Not available	0**	5**	JASPERS' progress reports
Total value of the projects supported by JASPERS**	Not available	EUR 500 million***	EUR 750 million***	JASPERS' progress reports

(1) This is the related indicator as included in the Indicative Strategy Paper (for reference only)

(2) The agreed baseline year is 2010 (to be inserted in brackets in the top row). If for the chosen indicator, there are no available data for 2010, it is advisable to refer to the following years – 2011, 2012. The year of reference may not be the same either for all indicators selected due to a lack of data availability; in this case, the year should then be inserted in each cell in brackets. The baseline value may be "0" (i.e. no reference values are available as the Action represents a novelty for the beneficiary) but cannot be left empty or include references such as "N/A" or "will be determined later".

(3) The milestone year CANNOT be modified: it refers to the mid-term review of IPA II.

(4) The target year CANNOT be modified.

(5) This will be a useful reference to continue measuring the outcome of IPA II support beyond the 2014-2020 multi-annual financial period. If the Action is completed before 2020 (year for the performance reward), this value and that in the 2020 target column must be the same.

* On the assumption of EUR 130 000 as an average support for a project, the Action will finance 30 projects.

** Taking into consideration the average preparation and implementation period for infrastructure projects.

*** On the assumption of EUR 25 million as an average total investment costs for a project.

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Besides being a sector of JASPERS' activities, environment will be considered throughout the preparation and design of major infrastructure projects, as will be climate change and disaster resilience.

A mechanism will also allow tracking the contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation of each infrastructure project supported by JASPERS.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER NON-STATE STAKEHOLDERS)

The preparation of investment projects is always accompanied by the consultation of stakeholders, including representatives of civil society organisations.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Major infrastructure projects benefit the whole population. The Action will encourage and promote equal opportunities and gender equality which will be mainstreamed in all relevant activities.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Investment projects provide benefits to the groups of population without distinction, including people belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure the sustainability of infrastructure investments projects, the beneficiaries must not only thoroughly prepare their projects with the realisation of feasibility studies, cost benefit analysis, financing plans or environmental impact assessment, they should also develop their capacity to develop and manage such investment projects and to review their quality.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action. All necessary measures will be taken to make public the fact that the Action is financed by the EU in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions. Additional Visibility Guidelines developed by the European Commission (DG NEAR) will have to be followed.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process. Actions shall be undertaken to strengthen general public awareness and promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

Communication and visibility activities will be the responsibility of the implementing body, the EIB. These activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action and the European Commission shall be fully informed of their planning and implementation.