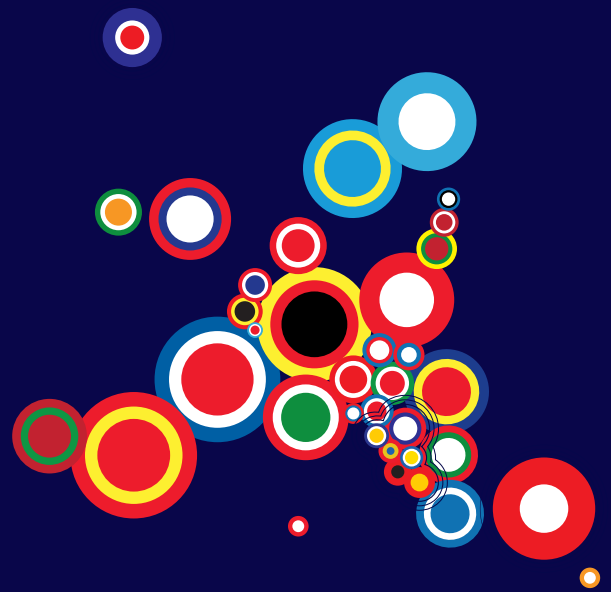




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

MULTI-COUNTRY

Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX)



Action Summary

The overall aim of the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX) is to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance and capacity building in order to support IPA II beneficiaries in the approximation with, and implementation of the EU *acquis*.

TAIEX supports short term, demand-driven and swiftly-mobilised assistance and is complementary to, and works alongside other instruments and programmes to help candidate countries and potential candidates move towards their goal of EU accession.

The assistance is provided by EU public sector experts sharing their knowledge and experience through workshops, expert missions and study visits. TAIEX has a longstanding and successful track record.

Action Identification	
Programme Title	IPA II Multi-country action programme 2014
Action Title	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX)
Action Reference	IPA 2014/031-603.01/MC/TAIEX
Sector Information	
ELARG Sectors	Democracy and governance
DAC Sector	15110
Budget	
Total cost	EUR 12.20 million, of which possibly EUR 0.1 million VAT ¹
EU contribution	EUR 12.20 million
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Direct management
<i>Direct management:</i> ELARG unit in charge	Unit D.2 - Institution Building, TAIEX, Twinning, and Unit D.3 – Regional Cooperation and Programmes
Implementation responsibilities	Daniel Hachez, Head of Unit ELARG.D.2; Morten Jung, Head of Unit ELARG.D.3
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	IPA II beneficiaries
Specific implementation area(s)	Activities organised in all IPA beneficiaries and EU Member States
Timeline	
Deadline for conclusion of the Financing Agreement	N/A
Contracting deadline	31 December 2015
End of operational implementation period	31 December 2018

¹ As multi-beneficiary action TAIEX does not benefit VAT exemption in all beneficiary countries; also, not all services procured in the context of study visits to EU Member States are fully exempted from VAT. Given the demand driven character of TAIEX only an estimate of possible, future VAT due can be given here.

1. RATIONALE

TAIEX, the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument, supports IPA II beneficiaries by providing short-term, peer-to-peer capacity building with regard to the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation as well as advice about EU best practices.

The instrument is largely demand-driven and facilitates the delivery of appropriate tailor-made public sector expertise to address issues at short notice. Technical assistance through the TAIEX instrument comes in different formats and across a wide range of areas.

Partner administrations can benefit from TAIEX's flexibility to help meet wider training needs in EU legislation through the organisation of workshops and seminars which can reach a significant number of officials. Narrower, more specialised needs can be met through the expert mission format. Study visits to EU Member States are a complementary institution building tool which allows IPA II beneficiaries to see first-hand best-practice models of EU *acquis* implementation.

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The enlargement process for each IPA II beneficiary is unique and progresses according to individual needs, and on a sector by sector basis. TAIEX assistance helps the IPA II beneficiaries' public sector institutions to identify and analyse the gaps with the EU *acquis*, and supports them as they reform. Assistance is mainly demand driven – in other words, beneficiaries identify their priority needs and accordingly request specific and targeted assistance. Assistance may also be deployed upon request of Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS) as they see it fit, but the success of TAIEX events ultimately depends on the beneficiary will to undertake all the necessary reforms to archive their objectives of EU accession.

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

TAIEX is a well-established instrument designed to support IPA II beneficiaries' efforts to take on the obligations of membership. It complements national IPA II programmes and other institution building instruments.

TAIEX provides assistance across all chapters of the EU *acquis* and therefore supports the main priorities laid down in the Multi Country Strategy Paper 2014-2020² (MCSP) - rule of law, economic governance, democracy and fundamental rights - and the priorities outlined in the Indicative Strategy Papers (Strategy Papers)³ and in the European Commission's annual Progress Reports. As such TAIEX events also support beneficiaries in their aim of meeting agreed targets established in the South East Europe 2020 Strategy.

Attention is given to the assessment of each incoming requests for assistance in terms of purpose and fit with national strategies and priorities in ongoing policy and technical cooperation.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

² C(2014) 4293, 30.06.2014

³ C(2014) 5770, 18.08.2014-Albania; C(2014) 9495-Bosnia and Herzegovina,15.12.2014; C(2014) 5861, 19.08.2014-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; C(2014) 5771, 18.08.2014-Montenegro; C(2014) 5772, 20.08.2014-Kosovo; C(2014) 5872, 19.08.2014-Serbia; and C(2014) 5998, 26.08.2014-Turkey

TAIEX was set up in 1996 as a follow-up to the Commission's White Paper on the preparation of the associated countries for integration into the internal market. Its mission has since been broadened to provide short and medium term institution building assistance in all areas of the EU *acquis*, to support the transposition, application, and enforcement of the *acquis*. Moreover, since 2006 the TAIEX instrument is available to the European Neighbourhood partner countries. Complementary financing of this assistance is provided through the Instrument for the European Neighbourhood (ENI). The recently approved Instrument for Development and Cooperation for the period 2014-2020⁴ explicitly mentions TAIEX as a possible instrument to be used for technical assistance for Central Asia and Latin America.

The TAIEX instrument is well received and perceived in the IPA II beneficiaries as past evaluations⁵ and the feed-back by the participants⁶ following the organisation of TAIEX events have shown. At the same time, continuous efforts are made to adapt and improve the way TAIEX assistance is rolled out an implemented. Furthermore, the IPA Multi Beneficiary Programmes' evaluation⁷, carried out from December 2012 to May 2013, mentions TAIEX as institution building instrument.

Improvement in the medium term shall include, but not be limited to, adopting a greener approach to TAIEX assistance, wherever appropriate⁸, and improved knowledge management.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

TAIEX supports regional integration and territorial cooperation involving IPA II beneficiaries, Member States and, where appropriate, third countries within the scope of Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance II.

The specific objective of the action is to support IPA II beneficiaries in the approximation with, and implementation of the EU *acquis*.

As result of TAIEX interventions IPA II beneficiaries shall reach progressive alignment with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards, as monitored and verified by the European Commission in country-specific screening and / or annual progress reports, as well as through peer review missions.

TAIEX activities include seminars, workshops, expert mobilisations, including peer-based assessment missions, and study visits. These activities target national administrations, the judiciary, parliaments, regional and local administrations, public and semi-public entities as well as representatives of trade

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020 – OJ L 77, 15/03/2014, p. 44–76.

⁵ E.g. external evaluations by Ramboll Management "Evaluation of the TAIEX instrument and development of an evaluation tool" (December 2009/January 2010) and by SACO Consortium "Evaluation of EU support for *acquis* alignment and preparation implemented and funded through the TAIEX instrument for the benefit of the Turkish Cypriot community" (from September 2013 to March 2014) as well as an internal evaluation of the sound management of the instrument in 2010.

⁶ See Section 4 on performance measurement for further details.

⁷ "Interim evaluation and meta-evaluation of IPA assistance", implemented by Ecorys and funded by the European Commission, DG Enlargement, unit A3. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2013/23914_rep_mbp.pdf

⁸ The mobilisation of experts from different EU Member States to beneficiary countries – the instrument's core task - has a notable carbon foot print, particularly if the travel is by air.

unions and employers' associations and civil society organisations in case they play a role in the transposition, implementation and enforcement of specific EU legislation.

In addition, provisions are made to organise regular meetings of IPA II beneficiaries, in particular of National IPA Coordinators, to discuss regional and horizontal programming matters.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Unit in charge of TAIEX within DG Enlargement is responsible for both the analysis and assessment of requests and for the content of TAIEX short and medium term assistance, including the identification of experts from EU Member States' public administrations willing to engage in this type of peer to peer assistance. Throughout the implementation of TAIEX assistance excellent cooperation and coordination with all actors involved is key to the success of the instrument.

Requests for TAIEX actions are primarily generated by beneficiaries. Incoming requests are reviewed on a continuous basis and decided upon following consultation with relevant European Commission and EEAS services, including EU Delegations, in order to ensure complementarity with national programmes and other technical assistance instruments and to safeguard that TAIEX measures are in line with the priorities set in the MCSP, respective Strategy Papers and country-specific annual Progress Reports.

For the provision of the logistical means needed for TAIEX events, the European Commission concluded a contract with an external service provider. This service provider organises all logistical arrangements - including travel, accommodation, conference and meeting organisation – and also related payment services that are required for the implementation of the programme. This implementation approach has proved to be efficient and effective. In particular, it allows for a swift and effective response to incoming requests and evolving needs, whilst ensuring financial transparency, accountability and efficient management.

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

DIRECT MANAGEMENT:

This programme shall be implemented by direct management by the Commission in accordance with article 58(1)(a) of the Financial Regulation and the corresponding provisions of its Rules of Application.

Procurement shall follow the provisions of Part Two, Title IV Chapter 3 of the Financial Regulation No 966/2012 and Part Two, Title II, Chapter 3 of its Rules of Application.

Parts One and Three of the Financial Regulation and its Rules of Application shall apply to external actions except as otherwise provided in Part Two, Title IV.

The Commission may also use services under its Framework Contracts concluded following Part One of the Financial Regulation.

An existing Service contract shall be extended by negotiated procedure, in line with articles 266(1)(c) and 266(2)(b) of the Rules of Application of the Financial Regulation. An indicative number of five specific IT contracts shall be launched under a new Framework Contract. Indicatively three additional specific contracts under a Framework Contract for the organisation of regular coordination meetings with beneficiaries on programming matters will be launched in the first quarter of 2015. All these contracts could be as well procured through a competitive negotiated procedure.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

After each event an evaluation questionnaire is sent to the participants and to the experts in order for them to assess the assistance provided, particularly in terms of content and of logistics.

Feedback received from beneficiaries in 2013 showed that the quality of the expertise provided through TAIEX is excellent for 54% of the respondents, good for 26%, satisfactory for 7% and poor for only 1%.

In addition to the questionnaire sent after the event, TAIEX implemented in 2013 the impact evaluation system, collecting data on the effective follow-up to TAIEX events 6-month after their conclusion. Despite its recent implementation it can already be considered as a relevant tool, both in terms of data content and coverage. The latest figures show that following TAIEX assistance, 75% of the respondents have improved their internal working procedures, 50 % have drafted a new law or modified an existing one and 27 % have proceeded to organisational changes in their institution.

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The Commission may undertake any actions it deems necessary to monitor the programmes concerned. In the specific case of TAIEX, monitoring is understood as permanently ongoing process by way of receiving direct feedback from participants and experts:

Following each event participants and experts receive an automatic feedback questionnaire in order to assess their overall impression of the assistance provided and of the logistics of the event. Furthermore, following expert missions EU Member State officials are requested to submit short mission reports summarising the objective of their intervention and express recommendations.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Description	Baseline (year) 2013	Last (year) 2013	Milestone 2017	Target 2020	Source of information
<i>IPA II beneficiaries' overall satisfaction with TAIEX workshops, expert missions and study visits</i>	<i>1. Western Balkans</i>	<i>Fully/partially satisfactory: 73/22%</i>	<i>Fully/partially satisfactory: 73/22%</i>	<i>Σ (fully, partially satisfactory): 95%</i>	<i>Σ (fully, partially satisfactory): 95%</i>	<i>Replies to feedback questionnaires automatically sent to TAIEX participants following event conclusion, as gathered in TMS, the TAIEX Management System</i>
	<i>2. Iceland</i>	<i>Fully/partially satisfactory: 70/23%</i>	<i>Fully/partially satisfactory: 70/23%</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	
	<i>3. Turkey</i>	<i>Fully/partially satisfactory: 61/31%</i>	<i>Fully/partially satisfactory: 61/31%</i>	<i>Σ (fully, partially satisfactory): 95%</i>	<i>Σ (fully, partially satisfactory): 95%</i>	

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Environment and climate change, equal opportunities and gender-mainstreaming, support to minority and vulnerable groups are all subjects that are directly or indirectly part of the EU *acquis* for which TAIEX is supporting implementation and enforcement. Those subjects are also directly addressed in specific TAIEX seminars.

Furthermore, TAIEX ensures that civil society organisations with a role to play in the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation are represented, should the topic or the issues addressed be relevant.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

In providing support to the process of transposition, implementation and enforcement of the EU *acquis* in IPA II beneficiaries, TAIEX assistance aims to improve beneficiary officials' capacity and EU technical knowledge. Through the mobilisation of EU sectoral experts from the Member States, TAIEX gives the beneficiary's public officials the possibility to learn from their peers, many of which will have been through the EU accession process themselves, and then apply the acquired knowledge and expertise in their particular contexts. Sustainability and ownership are at the heart of the TAIEX assistance model. The fact that TAIEX is demand-driven means that the assistance is requested at the right timing for the IPA II beneficiaries in their path toward the enlargement process. The instrument's flexibility also means assistance can be adapted and tailored to a beneficiary's specific needs – whether they require one-off expertise on a very precise area of the *acquis*, or a series of assistance events in order to support them to achieve a broader goal (e.g. drafting a piece of EU-*acquis* compliant legislation). TAIEX thus contributes to improved capacity of IPA II beneficiaries' public administrations, which should be seen in the overall context of moving closer to the EU as part of the accession process.

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 has received funding from the EU in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions.

The implementation of the communication activities shall be the responsibility of the service providers, and shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action.

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.

The Commission shall be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

The implementation of the TAIEX instrument is accompanied by a communication strategy with a view to increasing the visibility and availability of the instrument to all stakeholders. In addition to TAIEX-branded and information material distributed during each event, new tools have been introduced over recent years to improve the communication and the dissemination of information.

- **TAIEX website:** The site is not only key to promoting the instrument and to compiling all relevant information on past, present and future activities (through its library), thereby giving food for thought to potential beneficiaries on what assistance could be sought in future. TAIEX is now also present on social media through the DG Enlargement accounts where the key events and the success stories are mentioned (#EUTaiox).

- **TAIEX activity report:** Every year, an activity report is prepared, in which an overview of TAIEX activities, sector-specific information and success stories, together with key statistics and indicators are presented. Furthermore, the introduction in 2014 of the bimonthly e-mail presenting all forthcoming TAIEX events allows EU Member States, National Contact Points and EU Delegations to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on forthcoming events.
- **Institution Building Days:** Annually a meeting on the EU's main institution building instruments is organised bringing together National Contact Points (NCPs) for the Twinning and TAIEX instruments from beneficiary partners and EU Member States. This meeting also provides the opportunity to develop and facilitate networks and to share best practices between stakeholders involved in the implementation of the TAIEX instrument.