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Action Fiche for the Regional Capacity Building Initiative III

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Regional Capacity Building Initiative III		
Total cost	<i>EU Contribution: € 3 Million</i>		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Project approach – <i>centralised</i>		
DAC-code	43010	Sector	Multisector aid

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

The Commission has introduced a new instrument, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) to operate from 2007 onwards. A specific element of this Instrument is to provide support for the cross border and regional co-operation along the EU's external borders.

13 ENPI CBC were adopted by the Commission by the end of the year 2008.¹

All adopted programmes have organised their first Joint Monitoring Committee meetings and the first call for proposals are being launched. All programmes have by now established programme structures (Joint Monitoring Committee, Joint Technical Secretariat, antennas, national contact points,) and are actively working on the preparation of calls for proposals. The next phase of implementation will focus on contract signature and project implementation. The beneficiaries in Partner countries need to be supported on this implementation. This need is particularly acute in the southern partner countries, since no previous experience of cross border cooperation exist there.

The first two phases of the RCBI project have focused on the provision of support to Programmes managing authorities to assist them in the preparation and launch of their first calls for proposals.

The time has now come in the programme cycle, to concentrate on beneficiaries which will soon be identified through the calls for proposals. Due to delay in adoption of programmes, the project has never really come to the point where real support has been given to project implementation which was initially foreseen as one of the most important activities of the project.

¹ The Baltic Sea Region Programme (BSR) was adopted already end of 2007 and the two programmes Spain-Morocco and CBC Atlantic are still on hold.

2.2. Lessons learnt

The first two phases of the project have been monitored in 2007 (North) and 2009 (South). The results of the last ROM (focusing on the activities with the Southern partner countries) are about to be published.

However lessons learnt through exchanges with beneficiary countries show that the accent should be put on:

- (1) a strong and ongoing support to National Contact Points (NCP) in Partner countries;
- (2) a close coordination with Interact ENPI;
- (3) a deep exchange with NCPs and JMAs in order to better identify possible areas of enhanced support.

2.3. Complementary actions

A contract was signed with Interact ENPI in October 2008 for a budget of €2.6 Mio in order to provide assistance to the ENPI CBC programme authorities (at programme level).

2.4. Coordination

A coordination mechanism has already been put in place between the two Technical assistance projects, INTERACT ENPI on one hand and RCBI on the other. It implies a quarterly meeting with EuropeAid where the different activities of both projects are discussed. This was made necessary by the transfer of programme support activities from RCBI to INTERACT ENPI in the course of 2009.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

Overall objectives and purpose (specific objective) of the project as identical as for the previous phases:

3.1.1. Overall objective

The overall objective of the project, of which this contract will be a part, is to assist partner countries to finalise the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Cross Border Cooperation programmes (ENPI CBC) and to strengthen their capacity to prepare and implement projects within the framework of the ENPI CBC Programmes.

3.1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this contract is as follows:

- The project shall seek to ensure the full, active and equal involvement of the "Neighbourhood" beneficiary countries in the preparation of the ENPI CBC

Programmes. This should include the development of a genuine partnership between the Member State(s) and its neighbouring countries (horizontally across topics and vertically among levels of responsibility).

The project shall seek to build up the capacity of local and regional authorities in project development and management terms in the partner country eligible regions). The needs of support are particularly strong in the partner countries in the Mediterranean region, where no previous experience of cross border cooperation exist.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The RCBI III will continue to carry out the following activities:

The RCBI team will provide support to programme implementation in partner countries by putting in place a pipeline of cross-border development projects by assisting their final beneficiaries to prepare sound applications for support within the framework of the ENPI – CBC Programmes. The assistance will be given in the form of open workshops and consultation with experts at the request of potential beneficiaries and where considered necessary. This assistance shall not jeopardise the joint selection process of projects which will take place between the Member State(s) and the partner country(ies).

In implementing the RCBI Phase III project, the Consultant shall make all necessary efforts to develop the capacity of the national, regional and local authorities and other relevant actors in the preparation and the implementation of ENPI CBC programmes. With this regard, the consultant will have to work in close consultation and cooperation with the management structures of each ENPI CBC programme (JMA and JTS) and ensure that its activities complement the ones already carried out at the level of each programme.

The experts will support the ENPI partner countries with a view to achieving the following results:

- increased level of awareness of the possibilities of cross-border and regional cooperation in the beneficiary regions;
- increased capacity of partners in the beneficiary countries to identify and prepare good quality development projects;
- a sufficient number of good quality development projects prepared and approved for implementation.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Assumptions are as follows:

Assistance is to be provided on the basis of the existence of the necessary elements for the continuation of co-operation, in particular respect of democratic principles and human rights. Provision of assistance is conditioned to the endorsement and respect by the beneficiary governments of the terms and conditions of assistance, as set out in the Financing Agreement and its annexes and other relevant documents.

The continued interest of the local and regional authorities and other relevant actors on both sides of the external borders of the EU (post May 2004) in cross border cooperation will be necessary for the success of the project. Given the increase in funding available, an increase in interest will also be required if the available funding is to be successfully absorbed.

It is assumed that all ENPI CBC Programmes will be prepared and approved without long delays. Building on the experiences from the Neighbourhood Programme, it should be possible to quickly establish priorities and start the implementation of the programmes.

The risks are:

Preparation and implementation of Neighbourhood and Partnership Programmes with less experienced partners have in some cases proved to be problematic and less attractive. This may influence the capacity of some countries/programmes to develop a sufficient number of projects to use the funding which will be made available under the ENPI CBC.

The local and regional authorities in the beneficiary countries already face difficult funding situations which limit their ability to co-finance cross border projects and make it difficult for them to dedicate specific members of staff to be responsible for project development activities. For the ENPI CBC Programmes to be effective, the participation of the local and regional authorities in the eligible regions is essential. This relates not only to the submission of projects but also to the preparation and management of the Programmes. Therefore, a sufficient number of individuals willing to become involved will have to be identified. Failure to identify such individuals will reduce the effectiveness of the ENPI CBC Programmes.

3.4. Crosscutting Issues

Activities within this project will continue to recognise priority of gender equality and include this in the general operating principles of all activities.

3.5. Stakeholders

The target groups of the project are local, regional and national authorities as well as other socio-economic stakeholders in the eligible regions of the partner countries.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of implementation

The implementation will be carried out under the direct centralised management scheme.

An addendum to the current contracts (MED/2006/132-273 and TACIS/2006/132-718) will be signed between the European Commission and the consortium led by MWH, following a negotiated procedure based on article 242, paragraph 2 (b) of the implementing rules of the Council regulation N°1605/2002 for a total value of €3 million.

The addendum is indeed focusing on additional services consisting in the repetition of similar services entrusted to the contractor, as indicated in section 3.1. and 3.2 above, and the contract notice of the first contract foresees the possibility of new services. Furthermore the extension of the contract is a single one and for a value and duration not exceeding the value (€ 3 million/€ 4 Million) and duration (30 months/36 months) of the initial contract.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The budget foreseen is €3 Million to be spent for the organisation of information events and training for ENPI CBC grant beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries.

The addendum should be signed before 31 December 2009. It will start on 1st January 2010 and last 30 months until 30 June 2012.

4.4. Performance monitoring

Performance monitoring is carried out by analysis of reports, exchanges with ENPI CBC Stakeholders, and possibly ROM, if so decided by the relevant units of DG EuropeAid. .

4.5. Evaluation and audit

Verification possibility by EU bodies (including OLAF) and by the European Court of Auditors is included in the general conditions annexed to the service contracts.

4.6. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibilities are integrated in all activities (information events, partner forums, training seminars etc.) carried out by the contractor.