

Annex 4 - ENPI East Regional Action Programme 2012 Part 2

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Support for regional programmes (multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy and Northern Dimension) CRIS: ENPI/2012/23882		
Total cost	EUR 10 million		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Project approach: - Direct centralised management - Joint management with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - Indirect centralised management with the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency		
DAC-code	43010	Sector	Multisector aid

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

The support for the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy and Northern Dimension is a flexible mechanism giving the European Commission the possibility to decide on the financing of small-scale actions in line with the objectives of the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) as well as its operational and policy priorities. As in previous years, the proposed action for 2012 has also taken into account the Eastern Partnership initiative launched by the European Union to deepen cooperation with its Eastern neighbours.

Based on the ENPI Regulation¹, the ENPI-East Support for regional programmes (the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy and Northern Dimension) provides funding directly necessary for the implementation of the ENPI Regulation and for the achievement of its objectives.

This action to be financed in the present Action Programme will support the operation of the Eastern Partnership multilateral dimension, the Black Sea Synergy, and in particular its Environmental Partnership, and the Northern Dimension, e.g. support activities primarily related to the functioning of the Eastern Partnership platforms and in support of the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension.

2.2. Lessons learnt

Experience of the Eastern Partnership multilateral dimension has shown so far that maintaining a certain level of flexibility as regards the original planning of activities is necessary to take account of developments of the work programmes of the Eastern Partnership Platforms throughout the year.

¹ ENPI Regulation 1638/2006 of 24/10/2006

When it comes to concrete activities in the field, meetings held in the framework of the Black Sea Environment Partnership identified monitoring as one of areas of focus for the Environmental Partnership. Despite a number of monitoring activities, some gaps continue to exist, and additional activities could address those issues.

2.3. Complementary actions

This action can be considered as complementary to the Technical Assistance allocations existing in the frame of the bilateral Annual Action Programmes.

2.4. Donor coordination

The multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership entails by its own nature close coordination with EU Member States and partner countries in the framework of the Platforms and related panels. Other donors/entities are also represented in the Platforms (e.g. Council of Europe, OSCE, Committee of the Regions, etc).

In the framework of the Black Sea Synergy donor coordination is ensured through bilateral regular exchange of information among implementing agencies (especially UNDP, UNECE, and ENVSEC) about ongoing activities which results in a division of labour aiming at creating synergies between different interventions. Regional actors such as the Black Sea Commission are also involved as facilitators in activities aiming at improving the environmental status of the Black Sea and advocate for a strong involvement of all riparian countries and the use of similar shared methodologies to address existing problems.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The objective of this action is to advance the implementation of the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership and of the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

This action covers activities organised mainly in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, as well as of the Black Sea Synergy, in particular the Environmental Partnership, and the Northern Dimension.

As part of the operational structure of the **Eastern Partnership**, the Commission Communication on the Eastern Partnership sets out the establishment of four thematic platforms, according to the main areas of cooperation, and of panels to support the work of the platforms in specific areas.² In their work programmes, the platforms may also identify further seminars, training programmes or studies to be implemented in order to advance the objectives of the Eastern Partnership. Capacity building activities may also be implemented in support to the Flagship initiatives launched under the Eastern Partnership. Furthermore, additional activities may be carried out in order to support the implementation of the Eastern Partnership roadmap (for example, policy reviews or technical assistance, in cooperation with FAO, in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development).

² The following panels have so far been established in the framework of the Eastern Partnership: Fight against Corruption; Integrated Border Management; Environment and Climate Change; Trade and Trade Related Regulatory Cooperation linked to deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA); Transport; Migration and Asylum; Improved Functioning of Justice; Public Administration Reform.

Priority actions such as the ones outlined in the Commission Communication on the "EU and its neighbouring regions: A renewed approach to transport cooperation" from 7 July 2011 and the Communication on "Cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs within the Eastern Partnership" issued on 26 September 2011 may also be supported in the framework of the multilateral dimension of the EaP.

In the context of Eastern Partnership Platform 4 ("Contacts between people"), the Commission proposed to extend **eTwinning** programme to the Eastern Partnership countries. eTwinning allows teachers from all participating countries to use the eTwinning online tools to find partner schools, meet virtually and exchange ideas and best practices. In this phase, the programme will only partially be extended to the Eastern Partnership schools, i.e. teachers from partner countries will only be able to join existing projects, will not be able to initiate projects themselves and will be able to contact only those EU teachers who have clearly expressed their interest in cooperating. The partial extension will be carried out on a pilot basis and if it proves to be successful, eTwinning may entirely open to Eastern Partnership schools at a later stage .

To ensure involvement of civil society in the Eastern Partnership initiative, the European Commission provided also for the establishment of an Eastern Partnership **Civil Society Forum**, "to promote contacts among civil society organisation and facilitate their dialogue with public authorities". Meetings of the Civil Society Forum will also benefit from funding under this component.

The implementation of the **Black Sea Synergy** and the **Northern Dimension** suppose the establishment of partnerships in different areas. Activities to take place in the context of these partnerships, such as meetings, studies or technical assistance, will also rely on support from this component.

In addition, this component will cover the organisation costs of **ad hoc meetings** related to one or several countries to gain practical knowledge and experiences as regards transition and modernisation process in the context of the Eastern Partnership.

The indicative budget for this component is **EUR 10 million**.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Given the nature of the action, no major risks are identified. Main assumption is related to the expected developments of the Eastern Partnership initiative towards closer integration with partner countries.

3.4. Crosscutting Issues

Not applicable

3.5. Stakeholders

Main stakeholders are authorities and administrations of EU Member States and Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy and Northern Dimension countries as well as NGOs and organised civil society. The end beneficiaries are citizens of the partner countries as a whole.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of implementation

Direct centralised management

The programme will be implemented under direct centralised management by means of service and grant contracts.

Joint management

The Black Sea Synergy component will be implemented under joint management through the signature of a standard contribution agreement with the United Nations in accordance with Article 53d of the Financial Regulation. The most appropriate UN Agency for implementing the proposed activities appears to be the UNDP. UNDP complies with the criteria provided for in the applicable Financial Regulation and is covered by a framework agreement concluded with the Commission. UNDP is proposed because of its wide network for development assistance and advocacy to governments in developing countries. An additional asset is its long-term experience in regional cooperation in the Black Sea, in particular the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea (Bucharest Convention) and its monitoring related aspects. The experience and presence of this international organisation in the region could be instrumental for attaining the expected results. The amount allocated to this activity is EUR 1,500,000 indicatively. UNDP is expected to co-finance the project but the amount of this contribution is not known yet.

Indirect centralised management

Extension of the eTwinning programme to Eastern Partnership countries will be implemented under indirect centralised management in accordance with Article 54(2)(c) of the Financial Regulation. The implementing body is the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)³, which already manages the eTwinning programme with the EU Member States. This is subject to the extension of the mandate of the Agency, allowing it to manage eTwinning contributions and contracts to be financed by the Union's external aid instruments.

Implementation of the partial extension of eTwinning requires the set-up of Partner Support Agencies (PSA) in each of the partner countries involved in the programme. The PSAs will be assigned by the competent national authorities (usually the Ministry of Education) in the partner countries and will be responsible for promoting eTwinning in each country, providing pedagogical and technical support to participating schools, rewarding teachers for their successful participation in eTwinning projects, organising specific training sessions for teachers and ensuring that eTwinning evolves in a way which meets the particular needs of local schools. PSAs will submit a work programme based on which they will receive an operating grant from the EACEA. The operating grants will have a duration of 15 months. The amount allocated to the operating grants is EUR 600,000 indicatively.

The change of management mode constitutes a substantial change except where the Commission "re-centralises" or reduces the level of tasks previously delegated to the

³ The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is a public body created by the Decision 2005/56/EC of the European Commission adopted on 14 January 2005. The Agency's mission is to implement a number of strands of more than 15 Community funded programmes and actions in the fields of education and training, active citizenship, youth, audiovisual and culture.

beneficiary country, international organisation or delegated body under, respectively, decentralised, joint or indirect centralised management.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

Direct centralised management

1) Contracts

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.

Participation in the award of contracts for the present action shall be open to all natural and legal persons covered by the ENPI Regulation. Further extensions of this participation to other natural or legal persons by the concerned authorising officer shall be subject to the conditions provided for in Article 21(7) ENPI.

2) Specific rules for grants

The essential selection and award criteria for the award of grants are laid down in the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU external actions. They are established in accordance with the principles set out in Title VI 'Grants' of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget. When derogations to these principles are applied, they shall be justified, in particular in the following cases:

- Financing in full (derogation to the principle of co-financing): the maximum possible rate of co-financing for grants is 80%. Full financing may only be applied in the cases provided for in Article 253 of the Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of the Financial Regulation applicable to the General Budget.
- Derogation to the principle of non-retroactivity: a grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only if the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant is awarded, in accordance with Article 112 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the General Budget.

Joint management

All contracts implementing the action are awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the international organisations concerned.

Indirect centralised management

The EACEA is responsible for the management of all actions for the extension of eTwinning to the Eastern Partnership countries under the supervision of the Commission (Directorate-General for Development and Co-operation - EuropeAid).

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the rules set out in Part Two, Title IV, "External Relations" of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the EU, completed by rules of Part One, Titles V and VI when so provided by Part Two, Title IV.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The total budget for this action is **EUR 10 million**.

Contracts can be financed under this action as soon as the relevant Commission Decision is adopted, until 31 December 2013 in accordance with the N+1 rule.

Except for the eTwinning activity that has an indicative duration of 15 months from the signature of the contracts, the operational duration of the programme is indicatively of **48 months** from the signature of the contracts/agreements.

A provisional breakdown by type of expenditure is provided below:

- Direct centralised management (procurement and grants) through services contracts and framework contracts: indicatively EUR 7.9 million. Indicatively, 2-3 services contracts are expected to be signed. The number of framework contracts will depend on the needs of Headquarters and the Delegation in Moscow (implementing Northern Dimension related activities). The services contracts will likely be signed before November 2013. - Joint management with UNDP: EUR 1.5 million

- Indirect centralised management with EACEA: indicatively EUR 600,000. The amount per grant is expected to be between 80,000 EUR and 160,000 EUR for a duration of 15 months. The amounts are indicative at this stage, depending on the work programme submitted by the Partner Support Agencies to the European Commission and EACEA. The Partner Support Agencies are assigned by the competent national authorities (usually the Ministry of Education) in the partner countries. The European Commission has already received information from partner countries regarding the bodies to be designated as PSAs. In summer 2012 PSAs will be asked submit a work programme. Based on the work programme, they will each receive an operating grant, expected to be signed before the end of 2012.

4.4. Performance monitoring

The monitoring of the implementation will be carried out, including periodic assessment of progress and delivery of the project results.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

Certifications of expenditure will have to be submitted as part of the contracts implementing this Decision. Evaluations of the results achieved by some of the projects financed under this decision may be done by external experts hired by the European Commission as well as external audits at the initiative of the Commission, if necessary. These evaluations and audits will be funded from other sources because of the "N+1" rule applying to the contracting-out period of this Decision. In case of joint management, and where applicable, the provisions in the relevant framework agreement signed with the international organisation will apply.

4.6. Communication and visibility

Communication and information activities are an integral part of the action, aiming at enhanced visibility and better understanding of EU-funded activities in the eastern neighbourhood. The Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions will be respected and followed to ensure the visibility coherence. In case of joint

management, and where applicable, the provisions in the relevant framework agreement(s) with the international organisation(s) will apply.