

THIRD INTERIM EVALUATION OF IPA ASSISTANCE (Ref. Contract No 2013/330448)
FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS, RELEVANT TO FUTURE IPA INSTRUMENT

Recommendations, Final report	Responses, DG ELARG: (i) accepted or not; ii) actions to be undertaken	Follow up
Efficiency		
<p>1a: The Commission Services should prioritise the establishment and ongoing support of nationally centralised civil servant training institutions and infrastructures as a national repository of training materials and competence so that new recruits to the public administration can be trained – thereby mitigating the effects of staff turnover.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC).</p> <p>The recommendation is partially accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>High staff turnover is not only due to lack of continuous training, but depends on a number of other factors such as poor career perspectives due to politicisation at the management level, generally lower salaries in public sector, etc. The issue therefore has to be addressed more holistically, in line with the new enlargement policy on PAR. Also, the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), which the Commission supports, can have a positive impact and complement the training provided at the national level.</p> <p>The Commission already aims at mitigating the risks related to staff turn-over through identifying appropriate measures, which address PAR more holistically in line with the new approach on PAR since the 2014-15 enlargement strategy, and where appropriate, by introducing conditionalities. Attention is also paid to this in the context of PAR sector, SBS and related policy dialogue.</p>	<p>Concerning staff turnover,, the recommendation will be followed up in the context of SIGMA baseline assessments and annual programming where relevant.</p>
<p>1b: Financial commitment by the IPA should be made conditional on evidence of capacity in absorbing funds.</p> <p>For IPA I, the Commission Services should critically review for each country whether the remaining funds can be absorbed in an effective manner or – as a one off event - whether excess funds should be possibly deleted or reallocated to other priority areas where absorption capacity is adequate for the respective remaining timeframe.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC).</p> <p>The recommendation is partially accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>Absorption capacity is one of the selection criteria for sectors to be supported under IPA II, and capacity for absorption of funds is continuously assessed to ensure most efficient use of funds.</p> <p>Attention to absorption capacities is already foreseen in the present programming guidelines at the moment of programming..</p> <p>Reallocation of IPA funds can already take place depending on the performance of the beneficiaries.</p> <p>The introduction of the performance reward is also aiming at providing incentives to the well performing institutions/countries</p>	<p>No additional measures are foreseen</p>

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<p>1c: The ROM system assesses the performance of projects from when they begin and does not systematically consider the consequences of delayed start. The ROM reporting template should specifically consider the impact of delays in the pre-contract phase to both project relevance and the likely achievement of results..</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC). The recommendation is accepted by DG NEAR. The ROM methodology has been revised meanwhile.</p>	<p>Depending on actual performance of new ROM, further measures might be envisaged.</p>
<p>1d: Programming allocates set periods for preparation of procurement documentation based on long experience but without taking into consideration the national capacity context. Future programming of IPA II action documents should use more realistic timeframes needed in the specific beneficiary country for the production of suitable quality documents and for the tendering process to be completed.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC). The recommendation is mainly accepted by DG NEAR. In the context of annual programming emphasis needs to be paid to ensuring realistic timelines for all aspects of project implementation. The Quality Review process of DG NEAR has already improved.</p>	<p>The recommendation will be followed up through the implementation of the Action programmes (annual or multi-annual) and monitoring through future ROM and evaluations. Country units DG NEAR Directorate D in consultation with A4 will implement the recommendation in the context of the programming exercise. Deadline for implementation: Annually for IPA II action programmes</p>
<p>1e: Although comprehensive assessments of administrative capacity are made by both the Commission Services and the national authorities for the process of accreditation for indirect management, where potential beneficiaries are particularly weak the Commission should consider maintaining operational control within its Delegations for specific projects or sectors to ensure the timely delivery of assistance.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC). The recommendation is mainly accepted by DG NEAR. A new approach on ex-ante controls for indirect management has been developed. The move towards decentralised management won't take place necessarily, more care having to be put on the actual preparedness of beneficiary institutions. At the same time, the ex-ante control will be gradually removed, depending on capacities, on the the level or risk of files, but also on the need to responsabilise the beneficiary administrations. Moreover, certain legal and budgetary restrictions need to be taken into account - delegation of budget implementation tasks, insufficient available resources for the EUDs due to budgetary constraints that do not allow supporting the DIS structures after the conferral of management in a long term perspective.</p>	<p>The new approach will be monitored in the framework of the IPA Monitoring Committees and relevant supervision missions and audits.</p>

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<p>1f: Under IPA II where there is a longer term sector development perspective, the Commission Services should consider using extensions to existing contracts that fit within the financing procedures but reduce the number of tenders. Alternatively, the Commission Services could create a contingency fund within a programme to finance the extension successful projects.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC). The recommendation is partially accepted by DG NEAR. The Commission recognises that in many areas in order to introduce change and have impact a long term approach is needed. Changes introduced under IPA II facilitate the programming and implementation of programmes with a longer term perspective, in some cases up to seven years. These changes will also influence the length of contracts.</p>	<p>The recommendation will be followed through the implementation of the Country/Multi-Country Strategy Papers (CSP and MSCP) and Action programmes (annual or multi-annual). Country units DG NEAR Directorate D, and in consultation with A4, will implement the recommendation in the context of the programming exercise. Deadline for implementation: Annually for IPA II action programmes</p>
<p>Effectiveness</p>		
<p>2a: The Commission Services has introduced the concept of ‘global price contracts’ that focus on the delivery of outputs and in some instances results. Objective, independently verifiable indicators of standards for outputs (for example, peer reviewed reports, tender ready procurement documents, training output standards) should be developed by the Commission Services to ensure the quality of deliverables from contractors.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC). The recommendation is partially accepted by DG NEAR. Role of indicators is improved in the framework of IPA II programming. At the same time, the possibility of results based contracts has been made possible.</p>	<p>To be followed up by means of ROM, evaluations and audits.</p>
<p>2b: Some progress has been made with the identification of indicators at the country programming level although for some areas this will remain challenging. Contracting Authorities should ensure that to the extent possible all projects have indicators which are SMART and have baselines and realistic targets prior to endorsement of procurement documents, consulting with soon to be established thematic specialists in DG NEAR if necessary.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is accepted by DG NEAR. Under IPA II indicators have been introduced on all levels (strategic, programme and project/action).</p>	<p>The recommendation will be implemented in the context of the preparation of annual action programmes. Delegations and country units in DG NEAR Directorate D in consultation with A4 will implement the recommendation in the context of the annual programming exercise. Training in the use of indicators is foreseen to be organised for beneficiaries both in country and in</p>

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FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS, RELEVANT TO FUTURE IPA INSTRUMENT

		<p>EC HQ.</p> <p>A3 is responsible for organising the training.</p> <p>Deadline for implementation: Annually for IPA II action programmes</p> <p>Training workshops will be organised during 2016.</p>
<p>2c: Within the remaining output based contracts under IPA I, Contracting Authorities should make greater use of penalty clauses for under or non performing contractors.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is generally accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>The use of penalty clauses is foreseen in the FR and PRAG. However, before using them a thorough analysis of the situation and the advantages and disadvantages of using these clauses needs to be carefully weighed.</p>	<p>No additional measures are foreseen</p>
<p>3: For IPA II, action documents involving the use of twinning should undertake administrative capacity assessments, including where possible an appreciation of the scale of ongoing administrative capacity (staffing, institutional reform, funding etc) needed to implement the envisaged sector change to which the twinning contract refers. The experience of Montenegro in the use of grant contracts only open to Member States as a way of providing Member State competence without the administrative burden of the twinning process should be shared with other Delegations.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>In general, DG NEAR accepts the suggestions on scaling assistance based on the capacity and the needs assessment of the beneficiaries. Certain steps in this direction have been taken. The CSPs are based on a needs assessment and are adapted to the each country context.</p> <p>Twinning projects are jointly programmed by the beneficiaries and the EU, mainly through the EUD. EUD will be instructed to pay extra attention to the administrative capacity of the beneficiary administration before including Twinning projects in action documents. DG NEAR is in any case re-casting Twinning rules and procedures, to simplify the implementation of projects.</p>	<p>The recommendation will be implemented in the context of the preparation of annual action programmes.</p> <p>A new Twinning Manual will be issued by DG NEAR by mid-2016</p>
<p>4a: Regulatory impact assessments should be used for all assistance involving legislation transposition to enable beneficiaries to develop a clear understanding of the scale and scope of future sector change.</p>	<p>The recommendations 4a and 4b are closely linked. They are mainly addressed to the Commission (EC) and partly to the beneficiary countries. They are accepted by DG NEAR.</p>	<p>At the request of authorities, funding of RIAs can take place.</p>
<p>4b: Although most countries lack a Medium Term Financial Perspective (a requirement for the introduction of the sector wide approach), national authorities responsible for the quality of sector</p>	<p>DG NEAR agrees that any legislative proposal should be accompanied by an impact assessment which should also include full costing of the reform .</p>	<p>The recommendation will be implemented in the context of the preparation of annual action</p>

THIRD INTERIM EVALUATION OF IPA ASSISTANCE (Ref. Contract No 2013/330448)

FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS, RELEVANT TO FUTURE IPA INSTRUMENT

<p>strategies underpinning IPA II should ensure costs of implementing the sector change envisaged are included.</p>	<p>The sectoral approach under IPA II requires sector planning documents outlining the strategic background within the sector and the financial resources the beneficiary will put into the implementation of the said strategies. This in combination with the sector approach roadmap form the centrepiece for the programming exercise.</p>	<p>programmes.</p>
<p>4c: Until clear progress is made on the implementation of sector budget support, sector programming under IPA II should improve the coherence of EU funds available by systematically programming existing financial support mechanisms (MBP, TAIEX, SIGMA, EUD operational budgets) over the medium term to maintain the momentum of change and targeting of specific issues in a sector when IPA projects are not under implementation.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>The sectoral approach under IPA II has made this easier to take the existing financial support mechanisms into account to multiply the effects and impact of the assistance provided under IPA II.</p>	<p>No additional measures are foreseen</p>
<p>4d: All training components in action documents for projects under IPA II should be critically reviewed by the NIPAC for absorption capacity of the potential beneficiary. All training should be orientated around either a sector human resource management structure or a centralised civil servant training institution (this was a recommendation in the previous evaluation).</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC).</p> <p>This recommendation is not accepted by the Commission.</p> <p>While the reinforced role of the NIPAC has been clarified in the context of IPA II, it is not considered opportune to centralise the approval of all trainings concerning all sectors and often many public organisations to the NIPAC.</p> <p>Concerning the latter part of the recommendation, this is commented under recommendation 1a.</p>	<p>No additional measures are foreseen</p>
<p>5a: All IPA II beneficiaries under indirect management should establish within centre of government institutions (eg. General Secretariat) result monitoring and measurement structures that are able to objectively measure result indicators at both project and sector level. This is also a requirement of the sector wide approach and the ability to provide verifiable, objective measurement critical for sector budget support.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is generally accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>The IPA II legal framework foresees that Sectoral Monitoring Committees will be reinforced to ensure effectiveness, coherence and coordination of the implementation of IPA assistance at sector level under indirect management with beneficiary countries. The legal framework envisages also that sectoral monitoring committees may be set up on an ad hoc basis under other implementation methods, when appropriate.</p>	<p>Guidelines will be issued by DG NEAR on monitoring and evaluation, also addressing national authorities. Deadline: 2016</p> <p>Authorities will be encouraged to setting up national systems for monitoring and evaluations of policies and programmes.</p>

THIRD INTERIM EVALUATION OF IPA ASSISTANCE (Ref. Contract No 2013/330448)

FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS, RELEVANT TO FUTURE IPA INSTRUMENT

<p>5b: Until national level result measuring mechanisms are established and functional, Delegations should engage in post project monitoring to ensure that results are achieved or recommend corrective actions to ensure that they are. The likely achievement of results should be included within ongoing monitoring processes that usually focus on process and the delivery of outputs</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>As part of the new external ROM contract the possibility to undertake end of project results reporting by the ROM contractor has been introduced to provide support to Delegations in identifying and checking the most relevant results to report on</p>	<p>The recommendation will be followed up in the context of carrying out "end of project results reporting" missions managed by A3 on a pilot basis in 2016 in consultation with Delegations.</p>
<p>5c: All twinning projects (unless directly followed by subsequent assistance) should have a brief follow up mission funded by Delegation management budgets 6 or twelve months after completion to report on the achievement of results.</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is accepted by the Commission.</p> <p>Twinning Review Missions (TRM) are foreseen in the Twinning Manual to be carried out 6 or 12 months after the end of a twinning project, and financed by TAIEX. The original RTA is one of the experts mobilised in order to follow-up on the progress made.</p>	<p>The recommendation will be followed up in the context of carrying out TRM missions in consultation with Delegations, by C3.</p>
<p>5d: Project level monitoring and evaluation information should be made publically available through Contracting Authorities both for transparency and to enable the ready gathering of information for monitoring or evaluation reports. Monitoring Information Systems such as have been developed by the Ministry of Labour in Turkey provide a good example that could be replicated elsewhere.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is generally accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>Actions to ensure exchange of best practices between beneficiary countries and delegations in relation to MIS systems will be facilitated.</p>	<p>Upcoming Guidelines on M&E will also contain instructions for the publication of evaluation results. Deadline: mid 2016 by A3</p>
<p>6: In order to close the gap between poor and rich communities in accessing grant funding, it is recommended that the Contracting Authorities consider alternative options in the design of future grant schemes that enable access to more needy but less competent beneficiaries, ensuring that these remain within the boundaries of the Financing Regulation. The specific approach will vary depending on the scale and purpose of assistance and the potential target groups and target service providers.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is generally accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>The present financial Regulation foresees sub-granting as an option and rules for grants less than 10 000 EUR have been greatly eased. In addition on country level targeted calls for proposals specifically addressing specific beneficiaries can be and are organised.</p>	<p>The extent to which local NGOs will be access to grants will be monitored by Delegations and central services</p>
<p>7: IPA II will to some extent concentrate assistance into a smaller number of sectors but additionally individual action documents should contain sufficient scale of assistance to be able to effect</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is generally accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>Concentration was one of the guiding principles of IPA II. This</p>	<p>No additional actions are envisaged to be undertaken following the approval of Country Strategy Papers</p>

THIRD INTERIM EVALUATION OF IPA ASSISTANCE (Ref. Contract No 2013/330448)

FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS, RELEVANT TO FUTURE IPA INSTRUMENT

measurable sector reform.	also means that funding per sector should be enough to ensure impact.	specifying the IPA priorities in 2014.
Impact		
<p>8: Impact evaluation for IPA needs to become more rigorous which will take both time and resources. After the creation of clear OVIs, all programmes funded under IPA II should determine now information needs for subsequent counterfactual evaluations in the future and make provision for gathering performance data.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is generally accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>Under IPA II indicators have been introduced on all levels (strategic, programme and project/action). At the same time as indicators are identified also the information needs and sources are identified.</p>	<p>The recommendation will be implemented in the context of the preparation of annual action programmes.</p> <p>Delegations and country units in DG NEAR Directorate D in consultation with A3 and A4 will implement the recommendation in the context of the annual programming exercise.</p> <p>Training in the use of indicators is foreseen to be organised for beneficiaries both in country and in EC HQ.</p> <p>A3 is responsible for organising the training.</p> <p>Deadline for implementation: Annually for IPA II action programmes</p> <p>Training workshops will be organised during 2016.</p>
<p>9a: The Commission Services should develop ongoing professional training in monitoring and evaluation for all Delegation task managers with similar courses for counterparts in the national authorities undertaken under the auspices of NIPAC but if necessary funded by the EC.</p>	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is accepted by DG NEAR.</p>	<p>DG NEAR Guidelines for monitoring and evaluation are being finalised. Training concerning evaluation and monitoring is foreseen to be organised for beneficiaries both in country and in EC HQ.</p> <p>A3 is responsible for finalising the guidelines and for organising the training.</p>

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FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS, RELEVANT TO FUTURE IPA INSTRUMENT

		Deadline for implementation: Guidelines and training will be finalised/organised by the end of 2016.
9b: Specific budgets should be provided at a national level for data gathering and data quality control to be able to measure programme performance objectively. Budget should also be provided under country IPA programmes for sector specific and thematic evaluations and a mechanism for distributing findings between countries established by Delegations.	<p>The recommendation is addressed to the Commission (EC) and it is generally accepted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>Capacity building to improve national statistical services and other data gathering and quality control is foreseen for several IPA countries under different IPA projects (EU Approximation Facility, EU Integration Facility etc) where relevant. Funds for evaluations on country level is foreseen under the IPA evaluation budget.</p> <p>DG NEAR is improving its Intranet page concerning evaluations in order to facilitate exchange of findings of evaluations between services, delegation and countries.</p>	<p>A3 is responsible for the redesign of DG NEAR Intranet site concerning evaluation.</p> <p>Deadline for implementation: By the end of 2016</p>
9c: A specific assessment of programming documents for evaluability should be included in the ex-ante control or internal quality control review process.	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the Commission and is generally accepted.</p> <p>The quality review process has been reviewed following the establishment of DG NEAR.</p>	No further action is envisaged.
Sustainability		
10a: IPA programming should only include assistance which is in line with formally approved national strategic planning documents	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the Commission and is generally accepted.</p> <p>The importance to align EC actions to national strategies is emphasised in the context of sector approach and SBS which are both promoted under IPA II.</p>	No specific follow up is envisaged. However, the recommendation will be followed up in the context of annual programming where relevant.
10b: IPA II action documents should include clear sustainability indicators and means of measurement along with targets, including interim targets that can be measured whilst the project is ongoing. This could also include precursors or preconditions for sustainability which can be measured whilst assistance is ongoing. Greater emphasis should be placed on the monitoring of progress towards achieving these sustainability indicators by SMCs.	This recommendation is addressed to the Commission and is generally accepted.	These aspects will be assessed in the context of ROM missions.

THIRD INTERIM EVALUATION OF IPA ASSISTANCE (Ref. Contract No 2013/330448)

FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS, RELEVANT TO FUTURE IPA INSTRUMENT

<p>11: Individual IPA beneficiary countries should develop a standard approach to the preparation of sector strategies including content, scope and time period (with indicative budget and action plan), consultation process and quality control to provide a coherent and comprehensive perspective of national priorities that can be used as a basis for IPA programming.</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the Commission and is generally accepted.</p> <p>Under IPA II the beneficiary is asked to provide Sector Planning Documents which aim at a) assessing the degree of readiness in relation to the sector approach (by considering also the existence of a sector strategy and a Mid-Term Budgetary Perspective) as well as b) planning and sequencing IPA II activities. This is drafted under the coordination of the NIPAC, who should verify the information and normalise the process, in order to provide a standard approach.</p>	<p>No specific follow up is envisaged. However, the recommendation will be followed up in the context of annual programming where relevant.</p>
<p align="center">Horizontal issues</p>		
<p>12: There should be a clearer distinction between the IPA financing peer organisations or international bodies to continue their normal operations under indirect management agreements and where these bodies are recruited to implement an IPA project. In the case of the latter they should fulfil the same operational and reporting requirements as normal twinning or technical assistance contractors.</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the Commission and is accepted.</p> <p>The Commission is committed to the building of national and regional capacities. The Commission also recognises the difference between policy and "sector lead" work of IOs and "pure" project implementation by these same organisations. However, in the present context the use of International Organisations for project implementation is often the only practical option.</p>	<p>No specific action is envisaged.</p>