

Annex 4: Action Fiche – Special Measure for Belarus 2013

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Special Measure: Support to the European Dialogue on Modernisation in Belarus (E-DoM) <i>(ENPI/2013/024-450)</i>		
Total cost	EU contribution: EUR 500,000 from the 2013 budget		
Aid method / Management mode	Project approach – direct centralised management		
DAC-code	15150	Sector	Democratic participation and civil society

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

The European Dialogue on Modernisation in Belarus (E-DoM) was launched by the European Commission on 29 March 2012 in Brussels at a meeting with representatives of Belarusian civil society and political opposition. Prior to that, the March 2012 Foreign Affairs Council welcomed the initiative as a sign of the EU's "firm commitment to strengthening its engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society and to supporting the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people"¹. E-DoM is open to participation of the Government of Belarus.

E-DoM consists of an exchange of views and ideas between the representatives of the Belarusian civil society and political opposition, as well as the EU. Discussions revolve around necessary reforms for the modernisation of Belarus, such as for example in the justice and the economic sectors, and on the related potential development of relations with the EU, as well as possible EU support in this regard. The agenda is set by the representatives of Belarusian society, thoughtful of the needs of the Belarusian citizens.

The EU has acquired considerable know-how in how to support and assist modernisation processes in third countries, including in its neighbourhood. Many of its Member States have themselves gone through difficult processes of transition to modern societies and have valuable experiences to share. The EU remains ready to share its knowledge and engage also with Belarus, but the lack of progress on issues such as human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles has so far made the development of bilateral relations impossible.

In this situation, E-DoM will stimulate discussion and help identifying key areas for reform, as well as possible future EU support for modernisation efforts. E-DoM will

¹ 3157th Council meeting, Brussels, 22 and 23 March 2012
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/EN/foraff/129252.pdf

also assist in updating the Joint Interim Plan as a modernisation roadmap for Belarus, which could be discussed with the Government of Belarus, when circumstances permit. The information and ideas gathered through E-DoM will provide an inventory of what Belarus can do already today to modernize the country, but also help the EU to stand fully ready for a future engagement with the authorities of Belarus on a concrete reform agenda, if and when the situation in the country so allows.

The E-DoM is inclusive and covers a broad representation of more than 50 different representatives of Belarusian civil society organisations and political opposition parties. Work is mainly organised in four thematic working groups in Minsk and is guided by a steering group. The working groups cover the following topics: 1) political dialogue and reform; 2) justice and home affairs, including mobility; people-to-people contacts; 3) economic, social reform and sector policy issues, including privatisation; 4) trade, market and regulatory reforms. The subject matters to be discussed are proposed by Belarusian experts. On the EU side, E-DoM involves the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Commission services and EU Member States. Work in Minsk is led by the EU Delegation and EU Member States' Embassies.

The meetings of the four working groups are held several times per year in Minsk. Starting with a stocktaking of all the areas that Belarus representatives deem relevant for discussions, working groups will to define work programmes on a number of priority topics.

Supporting thematic seminars and events on key modernisation related issues are organised by the EU Member States and the EEAS/European Commission services. Technical level participation by Belarusian authorities is welcome.

2.2. Lessons learnt

The existing thematic EU-funded programmes supporting democratic participation and civil society such as Non-State Actors and Local Authorities (NSA/LA) as well as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) show that there is great interest and unmet need in Belarus for empowerment and inclusion of civil society as well as for promotion of democratic participation. Numerous recent NSA/LA and EIDHR projects confirm the value of such opportunities for building consensus within the society as well as for the promotion of international understanding.

2.3. Complementary actions

EU Programmes

- Existing funding to support civil society under the EIDHR (local based calls, Brussels centralised calls for Objective 1 targeting countries where human rights are most at risk); and the NSA & LA (local based calls).
- Clearing House Project (EUR 0.2 million, managed by Office for Democratic Belarus): a new platform for interaction between donors and implementers NGOs.

- Civil Society Stability I and II for Belarus under the Instrument for Stability (EUR 1.69 million and EUR 4 million, managed by the Nordic Council of Ministers).

2.4. Donor coordination

The EU Delegation in Minsk organises on a regular basis donor coordination meetings with EU Member States, as well as with all other major donors active in Belarus, in order to coordinate actions in the priority areas of assistance. Such coordination is organised in compliance with principles of the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action and is aimed to ensure maximum aid effectiveness.

In addition, the European Commission and the European External Action Service organise regular implementers and donors meetings in Brussels (about twice a year). EU Member States, IFIs and other donors such as the United States, Canada and Norway take part.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The **overall objective** of the EU Support to the European Dialogue on Modernisation in Belarus (E-DoM) is to boost democratic participation and empower civil society and thereby contribute to the openness and democratization of the Belarusian society.

The **specific objectives** of the project are as follows:

- To improve capacity of E-DoM by provision of training and expertise to its members;
- To establish professional and personal contacts of participants of E-DoM with counterparts in the EU;
- To improve organisational quality of the E-DoM by providing necessary technical assistance and resources to coordinate and accompany the process and the involved participants, including possible future participation of public officials;
- To raise awareness regarding E-DoM among representatives of Belarusian society;
- To promote initiatives involving public discussions and academic research regarding necessary reforms for modernisation in Belarus through provision of sub-grants for such initiatives;
- To provide consolidated proposals of the participants of E-DoM to EEAS for updating the Joint Interim Plan as a modernisation roadmap for Belarus.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The project is expected to have the following results:

1. Enable E-DoM to conduct discussions and help identifying key areas for reform, as well as possible future EU support for modernisation efforts;
2. Coordinate the work between working groups, as well as between working groups, EU Member States and EU institutions in view of ensuring that E-DoM keeps in line with agreed priorities;
3. Enable the work of the working groups of E-DoM by providing training expertise, research and technical resources;
4. Ensure that the results of E-DoM have been widely disseminated within the Belarusian society.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

3.4.1. Risks

- The Belarusian authorities do not officially object to the European Dialogue on Modernisation in Belarus. However there is no participation of the Belarusian authorities since they have been instructed to abstain from taking part in any events under this initiative. The absence of the state authorities is recognised as a shortcoming for the process since the results of E-DoM could not be directly linked to the public administration and policy implementation in Belarus.
- The civil society members of E-DoM have faced prosecution and political harassment due to which in future the process of E-DoM could be distracted if pressure increases.

3.4.2. Assumptions

- Good co-operation within the civil society members of E-DoM.
- Appropriate involvement of the EU institutions and the authorities of the EU Member States.
- The political situation remains such that it is possible for the members of E-DoM to take part in it without excessive risks for their activities.

3.4. Crosscutting Issues

The project will contribute to the development of good governance, human rights and gender equality.

3.5. Stakeholders

The direct beneficiaries of the project are the members of E-DoM. The final beneficiary of the project is the Belarusian society as a whole.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of Implementation

Direct centralised management.

Direct award of a grant contract to an NGO involved in E-DoM and possessing relevant management capacity and working in partnership with Belarusian civil society organisations is envisaged, subject to obtaining prior approval from the relevant authorising officer.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

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. 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) of the ENPI Regulation.

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 95%. Up to 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.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The budget available to implement the action is detailed in the Appendix.

The action is expected to start in the first half of 2013 for an indicative duration of 24 months.

4.4. Performance monitoring

The project will be monitored according to standard procedures. Project monitoring and evaluation will be based on periodic assessments of progress on delivery of specified project results and towards the achievement of project objectives.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

Evaluations will be based primarily on the full annual report. Audits may also be conducted on the systems and procedures used if need be. Audit and evaluation contracts will be concluded by the Commission and will be funded from other budget source.

4.6. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility will be ensured by dissemination activities. A specific communication and visibility plan will be submitted by the grant beneficiary.

Communication and visibility activities will be carried out according to the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU external actions. They should also be fully in line with the developments in the overall EU/Belarus relations, given the particular politically sensitive context.