

## ANNEX 1 - ACTION FICHE UKRAINE AAP 2011

### 1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Support to Ukraine's Regional Development Policy CRIS: ENPI/2011/022-825		
Total cost	EU contribution: EUR 20 million		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Direct centralised management		
DAC-code	15110	Sector	Economic and development policy/Planning

### 2. RATIONALE

#### 2.1. Sector context

It is of major importance for the European Union and its Member States to work in the area of Regional and Local Development with its partners of the Eastern partnership and, more particularly, with Ukraine, in order to support, as underlined by the recent Joint Communication "*A new response to a changing Neighbourhood*", an inclusive economic development, reducing social and regional inequalities and creating higher standards of living for its people. This is particularly true in the case of Ukraine, an extremely rich and diversified partner country in economic, social, cultural and political terms, a diversity that needs to be acknowledged in order to promote its development in a sustainable way and to guarantee, at the same time, that this diversity is compatible with the necessary social and regional cohesion that any country legitimately requires and demands.

The deepening of EU-Ukraine relations in the context of the Eastern Partnership will include significant economic integration of Ukraine with the EU. In order for Ukraine's economy to fully benefit from the opportunities of a future Association Agreement with a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area as an integral part, efforts of modernisation will continue to be undertaken. This is likely to involve certain restructuring, which will affect the regional level and regional development efforts. In this context, the European Union adopted very recently its Guidelines on Pilot Regional Development Programmes (PRDP), shared with its Eastern European Partners, where a comprehensive number of general principles are drawn up in order to implement actions in the area of regional development. This action is a first response to the PRDP principle under the Eastern Partnership.

During the last ten years before the break out of the international financial crisis, Ukraine has experienced an important phase of economic growth. Nevertheless, the living conditions of the population have not equally improved. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy and Labour, in January-September 2010 26.4% of Ukrainians (or 12.5 million people) were living under the poverty line. In addition, 9.5 million people lived on income below the living wage. Ukraine is ranked 69th out of 169 countries in the 2010 UN Human Development Report.

Increasing social and regional disparities create risks of social discontentment in a country with notorious cultural and political regional and local cleavages. Worth noting is that not only interregional disparities are growing, but also disparities between urban and rural areas and, within urban areas, between the wealthy and prosperous districts (generally located in the centres of big cities) and the outskirts (sleeping towns, etc.). These developments will have important political effects in the short and medium term.

Despite growing socio-economic intra- and inter-territorial disparities, Ukraine has not implemented successfully, until now, any substantial regional development policy in order to address those important challenges. The Ukrainian Regional Development system can be characterized as rather fragmented and ineffective, and mainly based on the efforts of the international cooperation.

The process of decentralisation of powers and competences is rather limited, *de jure* and *de facto*. Regional decentralised authorities (Regional Councils) have almost no significant competences, while, at the level of regions (Oblasts), Governors (nominated by the President) and its Oblast Administration play a major role in establishing the regional development economic plans and in the choice of major investments (like infrastructures). The Oblast Administration is almost unavoidable for any kind of ambitious development plan for the region. On the other hand, City Administrations and Municipal Authorities enjoy a limited but effective level of decentralisation, even if their budgets are insufficient to cope with all challenges local authorities are deemed to address. Nevertheless, despite the limited level of decentralisation, for identical levels of formal powers and competences, the situation in Ukraine is not uniform, and some municipal authorities are able to push the limits of their self-government to unexpected levels, mainly based on the possibilities offered by the international cooperation or their own institutional efforts. The situation, in this regards, differs a lot from region to region (especially between the East and the West of the country, with a special situation for the Autonomous republic of Crimea), due to historical and cultural reasons, but also due to current political developments (a more cooperative dialogue between Governors and Majors of big cities can have very positive effects, for example).

With few exceptions, regional and local authorities lack the institutional (and sometimes even technical) capabilities and budgets to implement their own policies and are heavily dependant on decisions and transfers from the central level (from Governmental departments). Consequently, there are on all levels low capacities for the management of regional and local development. A major challenge is not only the design of new policies and of a financial instrument, but especially the identification and implementation of projects. In this regard, the necessity for capacity building in project management and needs assessment is especially evident at the level of municipalities which is closest to the citizens and their problems, and at the level of regions (especially oblasts), where most of the planning processes are originated and where national resources are collected.

At the national level, Government changes and administrative reforms in the last years have led to institutional instabilities and changing distributions of competences among different Ministries. In December 2010, a new reshuffle has been taking place and, for the time being (May 2011), it has not been officially decided which governmental body will take the responsibility for regional development in the future (either the Ministry of Regional Development or the Ministry of Economy). On 1.06.2011 the President of Ukraine dismissed Viktor Tykhonov as Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Regional Development, Construction, Housing and Municipal Economy who was appointed in December 2010.

The Ukrainian side has repeatedly stressed the wish to align its Regional Development System with EU best practices. In a recent meeting with the Council of Regions, President Yanukovich expressed the intention to create a state fund for regional development and to adopt a new law on State Regional Policy. This political declaration explicitly mentioned the need to reform the "management of regional development" and stressed that the fund should follow EU best practices. The Ministry of Regional Development, Construction and Municipal Economy has been requested to elaborate a concept for the fund and suggested that the EU model of IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) may be followed.

At the institutional level, important actors and stakeholders agree on the importance of regional development for the country. Nevertheless, there are consistent disagreements about the institutional responsibilities and the operational implementation of a regional development policy. This lack of coordination and interaction between different regional development stakeholders prevents a consensus on the issues and has been a major obstacle to reforms in the past. Therefore, future commitments with the EU should help to achieve a sustainable consensus among key stakeholders. In this sense, the Government has repeatedly expressed a strong interest for the budget support instrument to regional development.

EU's contribution will take into account economic areas and regions where there will be restructuring processes linked to Ukraine's economic integration with the EU, and the challenges and opportunities that this will entail. Regional and local development plans financed by the EU should, therefore, support some of the following areas of intervention directly linked to the communal and regional competences:

- The housing sector (essentially the renovation of multi-apartment buildings), in order to ameliorate the living conditions of citizens.
- The social services connected to the health care system, today in a dramatic situation in most of the country.
- The solid waste treatment, a major environmental problem at communal level.
- The social services of proximity, some primary social care services delivered at local level.
- The protection of local and regional cultural heritage.
- The promotion of sustainable and inclusive regional and local economic plans.
- The enforcement of programmes to ameliorate local governance and the relations with citizens at communal and regional level.

## **2.2. Lessons learnt**

The project draws on past experience, on-going projects and, on the feedback provided by the beneficiaries. None of three dimensions of regional policy (social, economic, territorial) have been totally absent from our cooperation with Ukraine. Nevertheless, until very recently, those issues have never been a priority (the recent Global Evaluation of our assistance underlines this aspect) and not been addressed in a comprehensive way. The reasons for that situation are various and complex: the so-called "historical" legacy of soviet times that promoted the opinion that social and regional issues would not be a priority in times of "liberalisation" and economic reform, the priorities fixed by the EU Assistance, the lack of priority given by successive Governments of the country, etc. But 20 years after the Declaration of Independence and the collapse of the Soviet Union, those issues have become major challenges. Further, those problems have proved to be persistent and affect the economic and political development of the country, the successive governments having reacted mainly in a fragmented way.

Specific regional and local development projects financed in the past, have had, by nature, only a limited capacity to disseminate experiences and best practices to all regions and municipalities of the country. There is, therefore, a need to implement a systematic step-by-step approach related to deepening the capacities in all regions and for all local authorities, and to balance the efforts by favouring, in a second phase, those who have never had the possibility of being confronted to the proper management of their own development.

Capacity building measures have mostly concentrated on short-term trainings and were offered to institutions and organisations instead of offering them to individuals to help their personal career development to ensure a long-term build up of knowledge, expertise and skills. Giving the high level of staff turnover in the Ukrainian administration (especially the local and regional) the prevailing approach to training prevents a sustainable capacity building for regional development.

The prevailing regional development planning methodology in Ukraine does not establish a link between limited resources and development needs. Very often Regional Development strategies and regional programs are elaborated based on academic expertise "ex cathedra", but without involvement of stakeholders and concrete implementation plans and budgets. The promotion of a dialogue, in order to promote realistic development strategies will be a key element of the new project. Further, the new project will support implementation and monitoring of strategies, based on a learning by doing method.

In spite of the general observation that institutional and absorption capacities in the regions are generally very low, there are on the local level good practices and experiences in understanding main mechanisms for development of specific areas. These lessons have to be taken into account.

A lack of coordination and interaction between different regional development stakeholders has been a major obstacle to reforms in the past. Therefore, future project should promote cooperation, networking and exchange between all major stakeholders and increase horizontal and vertical linkages. The final goal is to achieve consensus.

Projects combining "soft" (capacity building/ technical assistance) with "hard activities (funding of projects) have proved be effective, since they gave the possibility to implement what was "learnt" and/or supported "learning-by doing".

### **2.3. Complementary actions**

The EU has supported Ukrainian authorities in the past five years through different types of projects.

The EU has already financed a long term Technical Assistance Project to support Regional Development Policy in order to develop an EU-compatible approach and a financial instrument for regional development. This project initially focused on the provision of TA support at central level. Later, it was very active in supporting, for example, the elaboration of the Support Programme of the Joint Cooperation Initiative for Crimea (JCIC), our first comprehensive approach to regional development in the country. In addition, almost all the other regions of the country have already benefited from this TA support in order to ameliorate their institutional capacities in planning, but few have already drafted and approved a regional development plan. This proposed new programme should therefore be a continuation of the above mentioned TA project, and should base its work on the activities already implemented. In addition, this new programme should also help in enforcing the operational concept "learning by doing", as established in the above mentioned Guidelines for PRDP.

The EU also supports and finances development programmes in the area of local rural development, based on a participatory/community based approach. It owns a large experience in the so-called decentralised cooperation, in which several projects are financed through relevant programmes like CIUDAD, Cross Border Cooperation or the Non State Actors and Local Authorities programmes. Generally speaking, those EU Programmes follow bottom-up approaches and promote the concept and principles of self-government or autonomy of local authorities.

Some of the main complementary actions are summarized below:

- *A Memorandum of Understanding for the Establishment of a Dialogue on Regional Policy and Development of Regional Cooperation* has been signed between the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of Ukraine and the Directorate Regional Policy of the European Commission. The Memorandum is (theoretically) implemented by an annual work plan.
- The *Community Based Approach project* mobilises local communities around their development priorities. A second phase of CBA II (AAP 2011, EUR 17 million) has been signed on the 31/05/2011.
- 5 CIUDAD projects with Ukrainian partners have been selected. The aim of CIUDAD Programme is to modernise and strengthen local and regional governments in order to enhance democratic governance and sustainable development through partnerships between local authorities in the EU and in the ENPI region.
- *Neighbourhood investment facility: Technical Assistance Support for Ukrainian municipalities (ENPI 2008, contribution agreement of EUR 5 million):* The project provides technical assistance for EBRD investment in selected municipalities in the water, district heating, and urban transport sub-sectors.

- *Support to Sustainable Regional Development (SSRD)* (2006 National Action Programme starting in July 2008) adopting a comprehensive approach at strategy, instrumental and implementation levels.
- The *Joint Cooperation Initiative in Crimea* consists of a core package of technical assistance focusing on capacity/institutional building for regional development funded by the European Commission, plus sector-based support/investment projects by EU Member States. The European Commission and a group of interested Member States are working together in Crimea on a wide range of issues in a co-ordinated and harmonised way.
- *ENPI Cross-Boarder-Cooperation programme 2007-2013*: Ukrainian regions are eligible for three CBC programmes (Black Sea Basin, Poland-Belarus-Ukraine, Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova)

The overwhelming majority of donors active in Regional Development finances projects targeted at the local level (e.g. USAID, CIDA, SIDA, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, GIZ Ukraine Office).

## **2.4. Donor coordination**

During the period 2006-2010, with the support of the EU, an active working group for donor coordination on Regional Development was established. The Government of Ukraine is now finalising the mechanism of donor coordination, in particular by defining political and technical levels of such coordination. If this process is finalised, donor coordination activities will be re-launched under the auspices of the relevant Minister. Otherwise, the EU Delegation will activate this process in cooperation with other donors interested in this policy in order to ensure a good coordination between donors.

The previous EU Support to Sustainable Regional Development project carried out a thorough donor mapping study. The study clearly shows that no other donor undertakes a systematic sector-wide approach to regional development in Ukraine. This makes the role and the leadership of the EU in this field even more important.

The proposed action is fully compliant with key principles of the Paris and Accra Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and EU commitments on development. Consultations with all main donors have been held in the formulation stage of the project.

## **3. DESCRIPTION**

### **3.1. Objectives**

#### **Overall objective:**

To contribute to the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the country.

#### **Specific objective:**

To strengthen the capacity of Ukrainian authorities and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective regional development policies.

### **3.2. Expected results and main activities**

This project has to be understood in the framework of a long term strategy to support Regional Development. It is the second project of a series of actions that will assist Ukraine to develop and finance a comprehensive regional policy. It will take into account the context of its economic integration with the EU.

The action will be divided into two components. The first component will be carried out by a technical assistance project which will provide institutional support and capacity building. This project will work nationwide. The second component provides a budget to support the financing of regional policy of Ukraine and, most specifically, regional and local development programmes in the country, in regions and municipalities duly identified in accordance with relevant criteria pertaining to the best standards of a regional development policy. Both components will be closely linked to facilitate a learning-by-doing approach. The technical assistance project (first component) will also support the implementation of the regional development programmes and the disbursement of funds.

Therefore, this new programme is building on the results of work already done in regard to regional policy recommendations for Ukraine; however it will carry the EU support in this field further towards implementation of concrete regional development projects. For that purpose, the foreseen budget of EUR 20 million provides both: a technical assistance component (EUR 6 million) and a financial support component (EUR 14 million), which will be used as direct co-financing for a new financing mechanism for regional development projects in Ukraine. Technical Assistance will be provided to support coordination, participation and consensus building at the national and regional levels in regard to regional development policies, measures and managements structures as well as to help introduce a new inclusive and more effective approach for capacity building in this area.

### **Expected results**

- i) A National Policy on Regional Development elaborated by the Government, including the legal and administrative instruments necessary to operate it (Regional Development Fund or other options).
- ii) An Action Plan on Regional Development elaborated and approved.
- iii) Pilot Regional Development projects implemented.

### **Indicative list of main activities**

#### Component 1: Institutional support and capacity/Technical Assistance (EUR 6 million)

- § Mobilization of task forces (with participation of Ukrainian decision makers, local and international experts and donor representatives) to help build consensus among key stakeholders in the area of regional and local development and facilitate "consultancy tailored upon demand";
- § Support to the updating and implementation of well coordinated national and regional development strategies (operational plans, budgeting), enabling identification/formulation, implementation/financing, monitoring/evaluation of projects;
- § Support to local and regional promoters of projects along the whole cycle;
- § Support to the management and disbursement of funds, including the national, regional and local level, with special attention to the EU rules, regulations and systems;
- § Improving the capacity building system for stakeholders using networking and following a long-term and personalized approach (coaching, training, updating curricula, training of trainers, certification of trainers, development of a compulsory training module for staff of regional and local administrations in Ukraine, project cycle management, etc.
- § Support the systematization and institutionalization of trainings.
- § Communication activities regarding funding activities (component 2).

## Component 2: Financial support (EUR 14 million):

- § The second component supports through Calls for proposals the financing of regional and local development plans, unless the conditions allowing the setting-up of a budget support are fulfilled by the Ukrainian authorities. (see below)
- § The principle of co-financing by Ukrainian national or local authorities of regional plans or specific local and regional actions will be promoted.

### **3.3. Risks and assumptions**

#### **Assumptions:**

Ukrainian authorities (at national and local level) will remain committed for delivering improved regional development policies. Promotion of regional and local development and of an administrative-territorial reform will remain a national priority and the Government ensures a stable institutional environment for its implementation.

National/Regional/Local stakeholders are open for full cooperation within the programme. Local and regional authorities will be granted with greater financial autonomy, as well as greater financial visibility and capacity in the mid-term.

#### **Risks:**

Uncertainties about entities and personnel in charge of Regional Development, at the national level, have hampered the formulation of the project (medium). Nevertheless, at regional and municipal level, several consulted authorities are active and ready to implement regional development plans and activities **Risk Mitigation:** If the government shows commitment and the regional fund is created as promised, the financial support could be provided in the form of a budget support to a sector wide approach. Ways of channelling the funds to the local and regional authorities, from the national budget, do exist and are normally used by national authorities. However, in case the main pre-conditions of a budget support are not fulfilled, the EU would then finance pilot regional development projects in several regions and cities, through calls for proposals. Pilot regions would be selected according to defined criteria, using a competitive approach.

The Government or Parliament will not approve any major reform on the Regional Development until the program will start (Medium). **Risk Mitigation:** In case the regional development system will not change, the project will have to concentrate on capacity building and implementation activities at the local and regional level. Regional and local authorities can achieve the implementation of self development programmes without legislative changes.

Political instability may continue in the country leading to less than full cooperation from the elected/government authorities on national, regional, local level (Medium). **Risk mitigation:** The objective of the programme is to have a wide impact at all levels of development. A step-by-step strategy approach, using a mix of cooperation and competition, has proved to be successful in previous projects to convince stakeholders to cooperate.

The continuation of the economic crisis provokes weaknesses in providing a transparent and comprehensive financial framework for the regions and the municipalities in the short and medium term (medium). **Risk mitigation:** Continuous dialogue with the authorities and strengthening of coordination processes should lead to a better assumption of financial responsibilities within state authorities toward regions and cities.

### **3.4. Crosscutting Issues**

Putting in place policies and framework for Regional Development will per se tackle the issue of good governance. The project's activities should lead to an increased involvement of civil society into the

regional and local planning process. Cooperation, coordination and networking will be promoted by the project. Participation of local and regional actors (bottom-up) into policy making on the national level will be strengthened. Participatory platforms and capacity building networks will be explored and supported within the scope of the project as well as other direct modalities of participation when possible.

The stakeholders are not only administrative authorities, but the civil society as well. The civil society organisations will be invited to participate in coordination and consensus building measures, as well in capacity building networks. Through the financing of regional and local development projects, various crosscutting issues are likely to be tackled (e.g. environment/climate change through energy efficiency projects, gender issues in the framework of the amelioration of living conditions of the citizens, etc...).

### **3.5. Stakeholders**

Regional and local development is a multi-dimensional issue covering a number of policy areas. Stakeholders included are:

§ *Central government:* Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Regional Development, Construction Housing and Municipal Economy, Cabinet of Ministers, Ministry of Finances, Presidential Administration, etc.

§ *Local authorities* at Oblast, rayon and municipal level.

§ *Other national & local stakeholders:* Institutes, business and other associations, NGOs, education institutions, etc.

§ *Donors and international organisations:* USAID, GIZ, WB, UNDP, CIDA, Swiss cooperation, EU, EBRD, etc.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

### **4.1. Method of implementation**

Component 1: Direct centralised management for the technical assistance component.

Component 2: The EU should, for this second component of the programme, enforce a financial mechanism allowing the financing of actions and development plans in the regions and municipalities, to be managed by the relevant local authorities. Taking into account the principles underlined in the *Guidelines for the preparation of Pilot regional Development programmes under the Eastern Partnership*, the first option for implementing this component will be the direct financing of projects through Calls for Proposals and the signature of Grant Contracts. Although the EU Delegation is responsible for the financial support (Component 2), the Technical Assistance (Component 1) and the Ukrainian Ministry in charge of Regional Development will need to assist in every aspect of the management of the fund, including the preparation for call for proposals, evaluation and selection. As a budget support is foreseen for AAP 2012, the project should pave the way towards its smooth implementation.

Nevertheless, it could be also an option to expedite the start of the budget support in case the negotiations will progress fast and be backed by a solid policy dialogue with the relevant Ukrainian Ministerial Department<sup>1</sup>. In that case, general conditions for sector budget support will apply and the following minimum specific conditions: i) the adoption, by Law, of the National Regional Development Fund; ii) the adoption, by secondary or administrative legislation, of the rules governing the financial and operational management of that Fund (incomes and expenditures); iii) the adoption of a Comprehensive Policy on Regional Development by Ukraine, aligned to EU standards (with criteria

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<sup>1</sup> The Ukrainian side has indicated that the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade will be the leading entity for the budget support on Regional Development. The negotiations on budget support including the elaboration of conditions and indicators will start in September 2011.

for selection of beneficiary regions, definition of types of Institutional Beneficiaries, etc...); iv) the adoption of an Operational Plan to be implemented the first years of the policy (years covered by the EU support programmes); v) the adoption of basic Regulations or pieces of Legislation in order to promote the level of decentralisation, or the implementation of existing ones, in line with the efforts made by other donors (i.e., the Swedish Cooperation).

## **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. 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) 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 European Union 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.

## **4.3. Budget and calendar**

The overall amount is set at EUR 20 million. The indicative breakdown of the budget would include: a Technical Assistance Component of EUR 6 million and a financial support of EUR 14 million (in principle, through Calls for proposals, unless the conditions allowing the setting-up of a budget support are fulfilled by the Ukrainian authorities).

In several selected regions calls for proposal will be published. Projects selected and financed should respond to national and regional development priorities as defined in the national and regional development strategies. Regions will be encouraged to implement regional strategies with regional operational programmes according to EU common practice. The individual grants awarded to the beneficiaries through Calls for proposals imply co-financing. The modalities of the co-financing will be defined once the financial schemes will be fixed. Nevertheless, the expected sources of co-financing are the municipal or regional budgets.

If the alternative option of a sector budget support is implemented, the Ukrainian National Budget, as well as local budgets, will co-finance the programme.

It is foreseen that the indicative operational duration of the technical assistance component will be 36 months, following the signature of the contracts. The indicative operational duration of the second component of the programme will be 48 months following the signature of the grant contracts (if the second component is implemented through calls for proposals) or will be 36 months following the

signature of the Financing Agreement (if the second component is implemented through sector budget support).

The overall duration of the operational phase of this programme will not exceed 60 months from the date of signature of the Financing Agreement.

#### **4.4. Performance monitoring**

Objectively verifiable indicators (OVI), both qualitative and quantitative, will have to be part of the methodologies included in the technical proposals for each project component. Given the demand-driven character of the project, the OVIs must be designed properly and should be further revised at regular stages of operations to make sure that they are ambitious and realistic. The monitoring of the day to day implementation will be carried out by the European Commission under its standard procedures, based on benchmarks to be agreed with the project beneficiaries. It includes periodic assessment of progress and delivery of specified project results towards achievement of project objectives.

#### **4.5. Evaluation and audit**

The project may be subject to evaluation/audit following European Commission's standard procedures. Evaluation of the results achieved may be entrusted to independent consultants as well as external audits. Mid-term and final evaluation of the project implementation may be commissioned by the European Commission to assess project performance, achievements and impact.

Evaluation and audit will be funded from the present budget or from another Financing Decision.

#### **4.6. Communication and visibility**

Communication activities may include initiatives such as media coverage, press conferences, press releases and website. The communication activities should follow the visibility guidelines of the Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Actions. They cover the written and visual identity of the EU and are to be used in briefings, newsletters, publications, press conferences, presentations, invitations, signs, commemorative plaque and all other items used to highlight EU participation. The communication and visibility manual is available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/visibility/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/visibility/index_en.htm).