

**ANNEX 9**

of the Commission Implementing Decision on ENPI East Regional Action Programme 2013  
Part II

**Action Fiche for the Implementation of the Eastern Partnership multilateral dimension  
and support to the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension**

**1. IDENTIFICATION**

Title/Number	Implementation of the Eastern Partnership multilateral dimension and support to the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension CRIS: ENPI/2013/ 024-905
Total cost	EUR 10 million

- involving all EU Member States and partner countries. This multilateral dimension is intended to strengthen and complement the bilateral track, and facilitate the development of common positions and joint activities.

The multilateral framework of the Eastern Partnership provides for cooperation activities and a forum to share information and experience on the partner countries' steps towards transition, reform and modernization and gives the EU an additional instrument to accompany these processes. It is aimed at fostering links among partner countries themselves. It is also a forum for discussion on the Eastern Partnership and provides the setting to support legislative and regulatory approximation of partner countries to the EU.

Four thematic platforms allow for target-oriented sessions on the main areas of cooperation:

- Democracy, good governance and stability (Platform 1)
- Economic integration and convergence with EU policies (Platform 2)
- Energy security (Platform 3)
- Contacts between people (Platform 4)

Meetings are held at least twice a year at the level of senior officials engaged in the reform work in the relevant policy areas. The platforms report to the annual meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Partnership countries. The work of the platforms may occasionally be promoted through sector-specific Ministerial meetings.

Each platform has a bi-annual work programme and can establish panels in order to support its work in specific areas. To date the following panels have been created in the framework of the respective Platforms:

*Platform 1:*

- Integrated border management
- Fight against corruption
- Public administration reform
- Asylum and migration
- Improved functioning of justice
- Cooperation in the area of CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy)

*Platform 2:*

- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Trade and trade related regulatory approximation
- Environment and climate change
- Agriculture and rural development
- Transport

*Platform 4:*

- Research and innovation

Panel meetings take place in between the Platform meetings and are of a more technical nature. The results of the discussions in the panels are presented in the Platform meetings.

The EU supports regional development in South-East Europe with its **Black Sea Synergy (BSS)**, which was created at the Black Sea Ministerial Conference in Kiev in 2008. By encouraging cooperation between the countries surrounding the Black Sea, the synergy offers a forum for tackling common problems while encouraging political and economic reform.

The Black Sea Environmental Partnership was launched in March 2010 and activities are already underway in the fields of transport, energy, environmental monitoring, civil society, research and information society. Additional initiatives may follow on higher education, public health and the fight against organized crime.

The **Northern Dimension (ND)** is a joint policy between EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland, in which Belarus participates in practical cooperation activities. Other actors such as International Financial Institutions, regional councils, universities and research centres also participate in the Northern Dimension. Canada and the United States participate as observers. The Northern Dimension policy was initiated in 1999 and renewed in 2006.

The policy aims at providing a framework to promote dialogue and concrete cooperation; strengthen stability, well-being and intensified economic cooperation and promote economic integration, competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe. To facilitate ND project implementation, four Partnerships have been established to deal with the following thematic issues: environment, public health and social well-being, transport and logistics, and culture.

To ensure the **involvement of civil society** in the Eastern Partnership initiative, the European Commission supports the 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 programme.

The Eastern Partnership **Civil Society Forum (CSF)** has 200 participants facilitated by a Steering Committee of 19 people. Working Groups have been set up and are functioning to discuss issues of the Eastern Partnership Platforms. The Working Groups of the CSF are working in parallel to the platforms and should contribute with their work to the progress of the platforms' work programmes. The Working Groups are as follows:

- *Working Group 1.* Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability
- *Working Group 2.* Economic integration and convergence with EU policies
- *Working Group 3.* Environment, climate change and energy security
- *Working Group 4.* Contacts between people
- *Working Group 5.* Social Dialogue

### **2.3. Lessons learnt**

Since its creation in 2009 the Eastern Partnership has proven to be a key policy initiative to foster policy dialogue and share experience between partner countries, EU Member States, and the relevant EU institutions. The participation of civil society and international financial institutions has further contributed to cooperation among interested parties.

The creation of panels within Platforms responds to the requests of participants for deeper cooperation on certain areas. In this regard, the increased number of panels and specialised seminars on specific topics shows that the policy dialogue at regional level between the EU and its Eastern partners is steadily advancing. Ministerial meetings on specific sectors and so-called informal dialogues also contribute to furthering political cooperation on issues of mutual interest.

The engagement of civil society in this dialogue is crucial, to ensure that their expertise can be taken into account and that the voice of society in both the EU and Eastern Partnership countries is heard. The participation of civil society in Platforms and panels and the creation of Civil Society Forum working groups mirroring the work of the platforms shows the importance that civil society attaches to their participation in the Eastern Partnership process.

To enable the various dialogue processes to successfully pursue their activities it is necessary to finance the organisation of events and ensure that participants have the resources to attend. 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 that may take place in the work programmes of the Eastern Partnership Platforms throughout the year.

The results achieved so far by the various Northern Dimension Partnerships, that have positively contributed both to strengthening policy dialogue and to implement concrete activities, show the importance of continuing assistance to dialogue processes and project funding. In this context it is worth mentioning that the Environmental Partnership policy has served as a model for other multi-donor partnerships and initiatives. The success of the Environmental Partnership in leveraging funds has inspired the setting up of the Partnership on Transport and Logistics Support Fund.

In the context of the Black Sea Synergy, further coordination in policies and legislation between the Black Sea countries proved to be a common interest to both the EU<sup>2</sup> and its partner countries in so far as it influences their own ability to implement EU legislation and policies, notably the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Consistently with the ENP orientation and with the conclusions of the 2008 BSS Foreign Ministers launching meeting, a coordinated harmonisation process is proving to be an enabling factor in the development of cooperation activities aiming at building the regional infrastructure for marine environmental monitoring. This aspect was reaffirmed at the Black Sea Environment Partnership Seminar held in Brussels (March 2010) when monitoring was one of the specific issues agreed as possible focus areas for the Environmental Partnership.

#### **2.4. Complementary actions**

This action is complementary to the technical assistance allocations existing in the frame of the bilateral Annual Action Programmes and to the activities under the Global Allocation.

The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) remains an important flagship in the Northern Dimension area. The Partnership's ability to foster and facilitate concrete investments across the North-West Russia and Western parts of Belarus have affected positively to the improvement of ecological health of the Baltic Sea and Barents regions. NDEP consists of the environmental window which focuses on water and wastewater projects, energy efficiency as well as municipal solid waste, and the nuclear window which deals with the legacy of the radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel in North-West Russia. At the end of 2012, the contributions to the NDEP Support Fund totalled 342 million euro with 177 million euro allocated to the environmental window and 165 million euro for nuclear window projects.

During the years that have elapsed since the 2010 Northern Dimension Ministerial meeting, the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) continued to run a wide array of concrete and pragmatic activities which ranged from high-level ministerial dialogue and policy shaping to project development and implementation. The Agreement on the Establishment of the NDPHS Secretariat has entered into force on 31 December 2012.

The Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL) Secretariat became operational in February 2011, as a result of the agreement on the secretariat signed between the Nordic Investment Bank and the Ministries of the participating countries. The NDPTL Regional Transport Network - which connects the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) with the

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<sup>2</sup> Bulgaria and Romania are also parties to the Black Sea Commission (BSC)

transport networks of the neighbouring territories, Russia, Norway and Belarus - was adopted in the NDPLT High Level Meeting in Oslo on 21 November 2012. In parallel to the work done to define the Regional Transport Network, the NDPTL Infrastructure Working Group reviewed the projects appraisal methodology. The constituting Assembly of Donors of the NDPTL Support Fund was held in Helsinki on 11 of December 2012. The EU, Norway and Finland announced their contributions and pledges, totalling 2.9 million euro.

The Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC) Secretariat was established in 2011 and is being hosted by the Nordic Council of Ministers until the end of year 2013. The Partnership has drafted an NDPC Strategy 2012- 2016 proceeding from the Northern Dimension countries' vision, to strengthen its coordination structure and to facilitate collaboration between partners. The NDPC facilitates access to financing. NDPC seeks actively funding from various sources, including national funding, EU financing programs and other available funding mechanisms.

In the Black Sea basin, activities implemented in the framework of the BSS Environmental Partnership (i.e.: the 2013-2014 "Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea" regional project - EMBLAS) are complemented in the non-EaP riparian countries by a mirror initiative whose objective is to contribute to the harmonisation of environmental monitoring policies across the region in countries not covered by the ENPI. MSFD Guiding Improvements in the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring System (MISIS) deals with the failures of national monitoring programmes in Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey to meet the requirements of an evidence-informed decision-making and the ecosystem-based environmental management with the objective to promote policy improvements in these fields.

## **2.5. 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.).

The multilateral nature of the Northern Dimension brings together not only the EU but also Russia, Norway and Iceland. EU Members States individually, the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Nordic Council of Ministers all participate in this policy. International financial institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) provide funding for activities.

## **3. DESCRIPTION**

### **3.1. Objectives**

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

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

As part of the operational structure of the **Eastern Partnership**, the Commission Communication on the Eastern Partnership establishes four thematic platforms and panels to support the work of the platforms in specific areas. In their work programmes, the platforms identify seminars, training programmes, studies or other small scale activities to be implemented

in order to advance the objectives of the Eastern Partnership. As a result of this structure, the following meetings can be expected per year (indicative figures):

- 3 Ministerial level meetings
- 8 Platform meetings
- 24 Panel meetings
- 30 seminars and meetings in the framework of panels
- 1 Civil Society Forum meeting
- 4 Civil Society Forum Steering Committee meetings
- 5 Civil Society Forum Working Groups meetings

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 and/or its successor.

In the context of Eastern Partnership Platform 4 ("Contacts between people"), the Commission proposed to extend the **eTwinning** action for schools to the Eastern Partnership countries. eTwinning promotes school collaboration and school networking through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). 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. The partial extension of eTwinning is being carried out on a two-year pilot basis, and if it proves to be successful, eTwinning may be entirely opened to Eastern Partnership schools at a later stage.

With the aim of strengthening the functioning of the Civil Society Forum, the **Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum** may be supported. The Secretariat serves as the Committee's information, coordination and expertise hub. The Secretariat will also ensure a greater visibility of the Forum, its National Platforms and Working Groups and an increased contribution of civil society actors to the reform processes in the EaP region. Last but not least, the Secretariat will contribute to the organisational and financial sustainability of the Forum and its bodies.

The implementation of the **Black Sea Synergy** and the **Northern Dimension** supposes 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 programme.

In addition, this support 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.

### 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

Crosscutting issues such as human rights and gender equality are taken into account in all activities. The e-Twinning school initiative, which is supported by this action, is linked to questions of gender equality and human rights as it promotes equal access to education and thus

contributes to social development in the partner countries and the respect of human rights. Support to environmental activities in the Northern Dimension and eastern Partnership frameworks contribute to environmental protection.

### **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 civil society organisations. The end beneficiaries are citizens of the partner countries overall.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

### **4.1. Financing agreement**

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country, referred to in Article 184(2) (b) of the Financial Regulation.

### **4.2. Indicative operational implementation period**

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in sections 3.2. and 4.3. will be carried out, is 48 months, subject to modifications to be agreed by the responsible authorising officer in the relevant agreements. For the extension of eTwinning to EaP countries (see section 4.3.4), the duration is 12 months.

### **4.3. Implementation components and modules**

#### **4.3.1. Grants: calls for proposal (direct centralised management)**

Under the present programme, it is expected to launch one or two calls for proposals.

- (a) Objectives of the grants, fields of intervention, priorities of the year and expected results

The calls for proposals modality will be used for implementing actions under the objective defined in section 3.1.

Activities and expected results of the calls for proposals will be in line with the expected results and activities defined in section 3.2.

- (b) Eligibility conditions

In accordance with eligibility conditions defined in Article 14 of ENPI regulation.

- (c) Essential selection and award criteria

The essential selection criteria are financial and operational capacity of the applicant.

The essential award criteria are relevance of the proposed action to the objectives of the call; design, effectiveness, feasibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the action.

- (d) Maximum rate of co-financing

The maximum possible rate of co-financing for grants under this call is 80%.

The maximum possible rate of co-financing may be up to 100 % in accordance with Articles 192 of the Financial Regulation and 109 of the Financial Regulation of the 10th EDF if full funding

is essential for the action to be carried out. The essentiality of full funding will be justified by the responsible authorising officer in the award decision, in respect of the principles of equal treatment and sound financial management.

(e) Indicative trimester to launch the call

During the course of 2014.

**4.3.2. Procurement (direct centralised management)**

Subject	Type	Indicative number of contracts	Indicative trimester of launch of the procedure
Technical assistance, activities and support aiming at facilitating the implementation of the multilateral dimension of EaP, BSS and ND	Services	Up to 20	From last quarter of 2013 until last quarter of 2014

**4.3.3. Indirect centralised management with an Executive Agency**

A part of this action with the objective of extending the European Union eTwinning programme to EaP countries, will be implemented in indirect centralised management with the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in accordance with Article 54(2)(c) of Financial Regulation 1605/2002. This implementation is justified because EACEA is already entrusted with the management of the eTwinning programme in the Member States.

The agency will award operating grants to the Partner Support Agencies in the partner countries (one in each country).

The change of method of implementation constitutes a substantial change except where the Commission "re-centralises" or reduces the level of budget-implementation tasks previously entrusted to the agency.

**4.3.4. Joint management with an international organisation**

A part of this action with the objective of supporting activities within the Northern Dimension will be implemented in joint management with the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB).

This implementation is justified because NIB is already actively involved in the Northern Dimension and its Partnerships, with the support of all participating countries. In particular it hosts the Secretariat of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transportation and Logistics (NDPTL); and as an International Financing Institution, it is also an active partner in the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP).

NIB is currently undergoing a review of the four-pillar assessment in accordance with Article 53d of the Financial Regulation No 1605/2002. In anticipation of the results of this review, the authorising officer deems that, based on a preliminary evaluation and on the long-standing and

problem-free cooperation with this organisation, it can be entrusted with budget-implementation tasks under joint management.

The change of method of implementation constitutes a substantial change except where the Commission "re-centralises" or reduces the level of budget-implementation tasks previously entrusted to the international organisation.

#### **4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement in direct centralised and decentralised management**

Subject to the following, the geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement procedures and in terms of origin of supplies and materials purchased as established in the basic act shall apply.

The responsible authorising officer may extend the geographical eligibility in accordance with Article 21(7) of the ENPI Regulation on the basis of the unavailability of products and services in the markets of the countries concerned, for reasons of extreme urgency, or if the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

#### **4.5. Indicative budget**

<b>Module</b>	<b>Amount in EUR</b>
4.3.1. Grants – calls for proposals	1,750,000
4.3.2. Procurement of services	6,250,000
4.3.3. Indirect centralised management with EACEA	600,000
4.3.4. Joint management with NIB	1,400,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10,000,000</b>

#### **4.6. Performance monitoring**

The monitoring of the implementation will be carried out in accordance with the respective contractual obligations on progress reporting. Furthermore, all contracts concluded under this action are subject to potential monitoring under the Result-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) contract.

#### **4.7. Evaluation and audit**

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.

#### **4.8. 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, and form part of all contracts concluded by the European Commission. All measures will be carried out in accordance the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions.