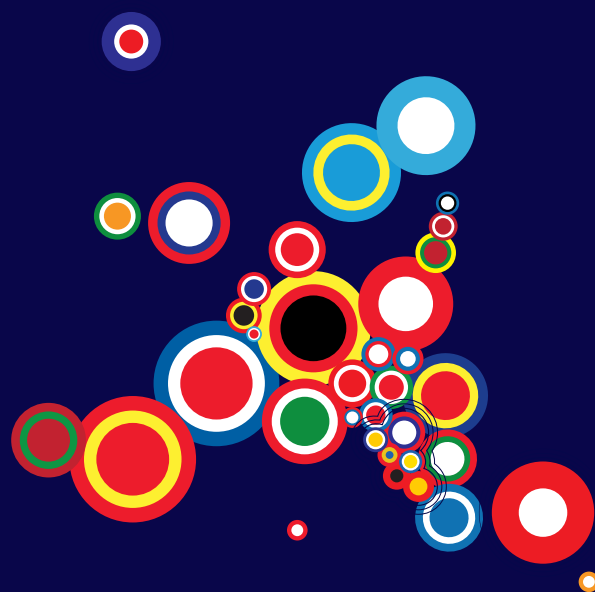




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

MULTI-COUNTRY

Cross-Border Institution Building (CBIB+ Phase 2)



Action Summary

The action will continue to provide technical and expert support to the National Authorities in charge of implementing cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders with a view to enhance regional coordination and harmonisation of approaches and mechanisms in line with EU frameworks and guidelines in the area of territorial cooperation.

The expected outcome is an effective and efficient implementation of the existing (IPA I) and future (IPA II) programmes thereby ensuring that envisaged results and outputs are achieved as well as cater for a smooth transition from the first generation of programmes under IPA I to the second generation of programmes under IPA II.

The main benefit for the IPA II beneficiaries is socio-economic development of rural cross-border areas resulting in an increased quality of life of citizens living in those areas.

The main benefit for the European Union lies in further reconciliation and good neighbourly relations between the accession countries at the outside borders of the Union that were in conflict only 20 years ago thereby ensuring peace and stability in a wider Europe.

Action Identification	
Programme Title	IPA II Multi-country action programme 2014
Action Title	Cross-Border Institution Building (CBIB+) – Phase II
Action Reference	IPA 2014/031-603.17/MC/CBIB+
Sector Information	
ELARG Sectors	Regional and territorial cooperation
DAC Sector	43010 – Multisector aid
Budget	
Total cost (VAT excluded) ¹	EUR 2 million
EU contribution	EUR 2 million
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Direct management
<i>Direct management:</i> ELARG unit in charge	ELARG D.3 – Regional Cooperation and Programmes
Implementation responsibilities	
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans
Specific implementation area(s)	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia
Timeline	
Deadline for conclusion of the Financing Agreement	N/A
Contracting deadline	31 December 2015
End of operational implementation period	31 December 2018

¹ The total action cost should be net of VAT and/or of other taxes. Should this not be the case, clearly indicate the amount of VAT and the reasons why it is considered eligible.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

1. RATIONALE

Cross-border cooperation (CBC) at intra-Western Balkan borders was initiated in 2007 under IPA I. The first generation of this type of CBC included the following 11 programmes between IPA beneficiaries:

- Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Croatia and Serbia
- Croatia and Montenegro
- Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Serbia and Montenegro
- Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro
- Albania and Montenegro
- the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania
- Albania and Kosovo
- the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo and
- Montenegro and Kosovo

With the accession of Croatia to the European Union on 1 July 2013, the second generation of CBC at intra-Western Balkan borders under IPA II for the period 2014-2020 will cover the following 8 programmes:

- Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Serbia and Montenegro
- Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro
- Montenegro and Albania
- the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania
- Albania and Kosovo
- Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Montenegro and Kosovo²

Under IPA II it is also envisaged to develop territorial cooperation between IPA II beneficiaries where this does not yet exist namely:

- Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Serbia and Kosovo

Technical assistance (TA) has been provided since 2006 in order to sustain efficient programming and management of cross-border co-operation in the Western Balkans:

A first phase of cross-border institution building ("CBIB I"), implemented from 2006 to 2008, aimed at increasing the capacities of the national authorities directly involved in the preparation of the CBC programming documents and the implementation of the programmes. During that period bilateral cross-border programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders were prepared and approved, joint management structures responsible for the implementation of the programmes (Joint Monitoring Committees (JMC) and Joint Technical Secretariats (JTS)) were established and preliminary support was provided to prepare Guidelines for Applicants and the Application Package for the first Calls for Proposals.

² The first IPA II Beneficiary referred to in the programme is the one in which the Contracting Authority is located, either under direct or indirect management.

A second phase of cross-border institution building ("CBIB II"), implemented from the end of 2008 to the end of 2011, aimed to strengthen the support both to national authorities in the implementation of Calls for Proposals as well as to potential applicants in building up their capacity for successful project preparation whilst placing a greater emphasis on programme and project implementation and initiating the coordination of approaches and methods at regional level.

A third phase of cross-border institution building ("CBIB+") started in January 2013 and runs tentatively until the third quarter of 2015 (including a no-cost extension). It focuses on further enhancing regional coordination and harmonisation of approaches and mechanisms in the field of cross-border cooperation at intra-Western Balkan borders in line with EU frameworks and guidelines in the area of territorial cooperation. Unlike with CBIB I and CBIB II a less hands-on approach has been favoured and more emphasis was put on regional coordination and harmonisation in the context of pre-accession as well as exchange and transfer of good practice.

This Action concerns an extension to CBIB+ for an additional three years.

The Contracting Authority consulted with both the Delegations of the European Union to the IPA II beneficiaries concerned as well as with the project beneficiaries and there is consensus on the need for continued assistance to the national authorities.

The feedback collected suggests that the focus during this extension should be very much on:

- the harmonisation of procedures in different programmes/countries
- coordination between programmes and exchange of best practices
- study visits to member states of the European Union including to countries with recent decentralisation/accession experience and participation in European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) seminars
- organisation of regional events/fora
- comparative analysis of national legislation versus the procedures laid down in the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU external actions (PRAG) and recommendations for further harmonisation
- the development of a template for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between countries that will operate under indirect management (IM) and/or Financing Agreements (FA) and training
- the organisation of visibility/promotional events and public opinion polls so as to measure impact/perception of CBC programmes
- support to small scale pilot initiatives to prepare the ground for future territorial cooperation programmes between Serbia and Kosovo and between Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- expert support and technical advice to the new Contracting Authorities that will operate under indirect management (IM).
- expert support and technical advice to potential new CBC programmes
- general support to CBC programme management structures (expert/technical advice on Call for proposals, organisation of specific trainings not envisaged under any national TA projects, training on evaluation, training for grant beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries)

This second phase of CBIB+ will increasingly align its core activities to the role and mandate of INTERACT so as to generate and share knowledge among stakeholders contributing to the continuous improvement of procedures and tools to achieve a high level of quality and timely programme implementation and spreading good governance approaches to interested target groups.³

³ INTERACT (INTERREG Animation Cooperation and Transfer) is an EU-wide technical assistance programme promoting and supporting good governance of programmes. It is funded from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and assists cross-border as well as transnational and interregional cooperation activities under the European Territorial

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The second generation of CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders under IPA II for the period 2014-2020 will undergo a number of substantial changes in the management and implementation methods and mechanisms compared to IPA I. Most notably the programmes will be managed by a single Contracting Authority (CA) funded by a single financial envelope for the entire programme without budgetary split between the countries and by means of a single grant contract to implement the project on both sides of the border.

In addition it is envisaged that, following re-accreditation of the national CBC structures, some of the programmes will be managed by the national authorities under the indirect management implementation method instead of by the Delegation of the European Union (EUD) under the direct management implementation method. The first countries likely to be affected are Serbia and Montenegro where the responsibility for the management of the CBC programmes will be shifted from the EUD to the national authorities.

The above changes are of a nature that warrants a continuation of technical assistance to assist the authorities with the smooth transition and adoption of the working arrangements which existed under IPA I to those that will exist under IPA II.

The action will provide assistance and advice to the following key structures involved in the management and implementation of CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders (non-exhaustive list) in their respective areas of responsibilities:

- National IPA Co-ordinators (NIPAC)
- Operating Structure (OS)
- Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC)
- Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS)

Due to recent changes in the governments following national and local elections in several of the IPA II Beneficiaries some of the above structures have undergone substantial structural changes resulting in change of staff. This adds to the need for continued technical assistance especially to those structures where the majority of the staff is new and inexperienced.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II MULTI-COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

This Action is to be seen in the context of the fourth specific objective of financial assistance under IPA II namely "strengthening regional integration and territorial cooperation" and the fifth policy area stated in the IPA II Regulation "regional and territorial cooperation".

The Multi-Country Strategy Paper (MCSP) 2014-2020⁴ explicitly foresees the need for horizontal support and capacity building for cross-border cooperation.

The EU Enlargement Strategy 2013-2014 confirms that good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are essential elements of the Stabilisation and Association Process and that regional cooperation needs to be further strengthened, to be inclusive and regionally-owned. It further explicitly states in the part on "Conclusions and recommendations" that IPA II will support regional and cross-border cooperation.

Cooperation (ETC) objective of the Structural Funds. Since 2000 the INTERACT programme has provided the necessary coordination and support to all stakeholders (national authorities, grant beneficiaries etc) involved in cross-border and other types of territorial cooperation in the European Union.

⁴ C(2014) 4293, 30.06.2014

The cross-border programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders are also referred to in the Indicative Strategy Papers⁵.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Lessons learned

Although cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation in the context of the Structural Funds has been in existence since 1990 (INTERREG I), there has always been a need for coordination and support at EU level on what remains a highly complex and multi-faceted form of development and governance. This is all the more crucial in the Western Balkan context, where empirical experience has shown that cross-border cooperation would not be possible without some form of technical assistance providing coordination, harmonisation of approaches as well as regional drive.

As demonstrated by the gap of inactivity between CBIB II and CBIB+ (November 2011-January 2013) when regional coordination collapsed, the Commission needs a transmission belt for collecting information, providing guidance and promoting harmonisation of approaches across all CBC programmes between the IPA beneficiaries. This will be particularly relevant at the start of IPA II given the changes to the programme management and implementation systems in comparison with IPA I. There will be a need for technical and logistical support to a wide network of stakeholders to act in a coordinated, consistent and harmonised way. The network includes the geographical units in DG ELARG, the unit in DG ELARG dealing with multi-beneficiary programmes, the Operating Structures and Delegations of the European Union in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, the new Contracting Authorities (Central Finance and Contract Units) in Montenegro and Serbia as well as the Joint Technical Secretariats (JTS) of all programmes

Regional CBC forums and technical working group meetings were regularly held from October 2006 until October 2011 and then again from January 2013 until November 2014 (CBIB+). The interest in keeping this regular practice shows that there is an obvious need for such regional platforms, which facilitate exchange of information, transfer of know-how and cross-fertilisation of experience and good practice as well as sharing of lessons learned thus helping to solve issues of common concern and formulating guidance for further improvement of CBC programme management.

Given the wide fluctuation of staff in key positions within the management structures of the programme and even the set-up of new structures over the last two years, experience shows that without a regional TA facility it would be very hard to capitalise on the lessons learnt from the 2007-2013 financial cycle and keep on fostering a CBC learning community on good practice examples both from the Western Balkans Region and within the EU Member States. The availability of a source of regional capacity building remains instrumental for ensuring an effective CBC programme formulation and management, as proved, for instance, during the critical programming phases of the financial cycles 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.

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Regional TA will continue to be the hub for the collection and sharing of information to and from a wide network of stakeholders, the identification of any potential problem in the organisation and implementation of the last round of calls for proposals under the financial perspective 2007-2013 and

⁵ C(2014) 5770, 18.08.2014-Albania; C(2014) 9495-Bosnia and Herzegovina, 15.12.2014; C(2014) 5861, 19.08.2014-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; C(2014) 5771, 18.08.2014-Montenegro; C(2014) 5772, 20.08.2014-Kosovo; and C(2014) 5872, 19.08.2014-Serbia

the first round under the 2014-2020 period. It has also served to explore whether certain technical solutions for handling programme data under a single management information system were valuable and acceptable; and tested the readiness and maturity of some stakeholders to launch new CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkans borders.

The popularity and oversubscription at local level of the CBC programmes between IPA Beneficiaries have to be maintained by information, dissemination, capacity building and visibility actions sustained under a similar regional approach. This has to be complemented by a series of measures in order to shorten the evaluation process in future CBC calls for proposals.

If the EU has recognised the importance of having, under the European Territorial Cooperation type of programmes, a permanent EU-wide assistance programme named INTERACT promoting and supporting the good governance of programmes, the IPA I & II Beneficiaries are not different and would also require this continuing type assistance.

Key lessons learned about territorial cooperation were also identified in two interim evaluations in 2010 and 2011 on respectively the Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) governance structures and performance of the assistance and will be taken on board under IPA II. The new elements include next to the above-mentioned different implementation mechanisms (single Contracting Authority, single financial envelope, single grant contract) a selection of fewer thematic priorities and a reduced geographical scope to ensure greater focus and increase potential impact.

Some of the recommendations from the interim evaluations will be specifically addressed including:

In relation to grant beneficiaries:

- more targeted and tailored capacity development of applicants by adapting training to the type of applicants
- more targeted and hands-on training for applicants focused on what is a CBC project and what is the added value of CBC using examples from existing projects

In relation to rules and procedures (preparation of Calls for Proposals, evaluation and selection):

- reduce the time needed for preparing calls and shorten the evaluation and selection process
- build the capacity of those involved in the evaluation of project proposals
- provide training to (potential) applicants to avoid having to process many clarifications

In addition there continues to be a *need for experience sharing and learning from each other* both amongst grant beneficiaries as well as JTSs that have a key role in "providing the framework/venue" for this kind of sharing of experiences.

In relation to support for the contracting and implementation process:

- for secondary procurement, agree whether PRAG or national rules apply and choose the less cumbersome
- ensure that grant beneficiaries jointly implementing a project are trained together in implementation and avoid training to grant beneficiaries "at a national level" without involving the partner from the other side
- support the grant beneficiaries by organising experience sharing opportunities

In relation to monitoring:

- resolve outstanding issues regarding the MIS with regard to licences, service security, continuation and confidentiality
- train JTS/antenna office in monitoring of CBC projects
- Develop/further improve common reporting formats (both for projects and for programmes) and risk assessment procedures

In relation to securing impact:

- more focus on cross-border cooperation in application forms, forcing applicants to consider both how to cooperate and how the project can have an impact on the cross border region
- more focus on the development of logframes and indicators in future calls in order to improve the quality of the applications and thereby the output and results (and thereby programme impact)
- increase the understanding and capacity of future applicants to secure the sustainability of projects through more focused training and more elaborate explanation in the programme guidelines and manuals (especially important for tourism, economic development and environmental projects)

Link to previous financial assistance

In the past a number of donors have supported institution building activities in relation to cross border co-operation and other forms of territorial cooperation in the Western Balkans, including the OSCE, DFID, the Spanish Agency for Regional Cooperation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the UNDP.

The following capacity-building activities (non-exhaustive list) funded by the EU or other donors have been recently or are being implemented in the region:

At regional level: Cross-border institution building (CBIB) has been available through several phases/projects since 2006 (CBIB I and CBIB II) and will be completed by November 2014 when CBIB+, which started in December 2012, has come to an end.

Albania: assistance was made available via CARDS Regional 2005/6 (completed in August 2009)

Bosnia and Herzegovina: from 2007 to 2011 a national technical assistance project, "EU CORIN" (implemented in two phases), provided support the national authorities in CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders (programmes between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia), with Member States (IPA CBC Adriatic) and participation in the ERDF transnational cooperation programmes South-East Europe (SEE) and Mediterranean (MED) in order to strengthen the capacity of the Operating Structure (the Directorate for European Integration) to ensure sustainable programme management and increased momentum in the implementation of CBC programmes, especially with regard to the required management and DIS structures). In addition technical assistance was provided to building the capacity for First Level Control (FLC) of the Central Finance and Contracting Unit (CFCU) in relation to programmes with Member States and transnational cooperation programmes was implemented between October 2011 and August 2012.

Kosovo: the CARDS 2005 TA project "Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Kosovo" started in August 2008 and was completed in February 2012 and assisted the Kosovo authorities in preparing for CBC programmes with neighbouring countries. In addition IPA 2012 CBC TA II started in January 2013 and runs until January 2015. The purpose of this project is to support the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) in the implementation of joint CBC initiatives with Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, build the capacity of the joint CBC programme implementation structures, support the launch of calls for proposals and support the identification, preparation and submission of a projects pipeline and support the monitoring process of implementation of CBC programmes.

the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: has received assistance provided by Bulgaria and Greece under CBC programmes with these EU Member States. In addition, regular national TA projects to the Ministry of Local self-Government (MLSG) under the CBC programmes with Kosovo and Albania are ongoing. Under the national TA project for the implementation of the programme with CBC Greece an external expert has been hired to train the newcomers in the Ministry.

Montenegro: there has been no national TA but a project entitled "Support to the implementation of cross-border programmes in the framework of IPA component II in Montenegro" financed from the

regional CARDS 2005/2006 was awarded to the national authority (Secretariat for European Integration) in order to establish structures necessary for the implementation of CBC programmes and strengthening their capacities.

Serbia: from October 2004 a national TA project provided support and advice to the Ministry of Finance on the establishment of a Programme Coordination and Management Unit (PCMU), whilst ensuring that the CBC programmes 2004–2006 with Member States and subsequent IPA-IPA CBC programmes lead to successful projects. The second phase of this project began in April 2008 and lasted until July 2010. Starting from 2010 further support was provided to the Serbian Authorities. A two year direct grant agreement contributed to the establishment of the First Level Control structure for the IPA I Cross-Border Cooperation programmes under shared and centralised management, while a technical assistance service contract ensured additional assistance for the proper implementation of IPA Component II until late 2012. A new technical assistance project for the management of pre-accession assistance started in March 2014 and will last for two years, accompanying the Serbian Authorities in their shift to direct management of budget implementation tasks and the adaptation to the new legal system under IPA II.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
To enhance good neighbourly relations and prosperity in the Western Balkans through improved cooperation between border regions	Number of CBC programmes		
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
To enhance regional coordination and harmonisation of approaches and mechanisms in the field of cross-border cooperation at intra-Western Balkan borders in line with EU frameworks and guidelines in the area of territorial cooperation and ensure a smooth transition from IPA I to IPA II.	IPA II CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders commitment / execution (disbursement) rates	Annual Programme Implementation Reports Reports and statistics produced by the Joint Technical Secretariats (JTS) Reports and statistics produced by the Contracting Authorities	High interest and absorption capacity of CBC structures to enhance capacities Efficient and effective coordination between stakeholders Regional and local authorities perceive the IPA CBC support as an additional resource for the implementation of activities foreseen in their development strategy CBC programmes are considered as beneficial instruments to strengthen the collaboration and exchanges with neighbours
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Result 1: Regional coordination and interaction between CBC stakeholders and target groups in the Western Balkans is consolidated groundwork for new territorial cooperation initiatives to be developed between IPA II beneficiaries where these do not yet exist (Serbia and Kosovo and Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) is carried out</p> <p>Result 2: Best practice culture and sharing of experience is promoted (incl. study visits / exchanges to EU Member States including to countries with recent experience in the process of entrustment of budget implementation tasks/accession and participation in European Territorial Cooperation seminars)</p>	<p>Number of territorial cooperation programmes between IPA II beneficiaries operational or being developed</p> <p>Percentage of staff involved in CBC programme management taking part in / trained within study visits or exchanges to EU Member States</p>	<p>Result 1 Project reports JTS reports</p> <p>Annual Programme Implementation Reports JTS reports Project reports</p>	<p>Staff employed in the CBC structures is interested in skills improvement All IPA II beneficiaries of the Western Balkans have signed the Rules of Procedures of the Regional CBC Consultative Forum; participate in its meetings and contribute with their national budgets to its organisation High level of motivation of the national authorities to implement CBC programmes and ensure that envisaged results and impact is achieved</p>

<p>Result 3: Capacity of national authorities in charge of programming, implementing, managing and monitoring CBC IPA II programmes and projects is fully developed in a sustainable manner with special attention to those that will move to indirect management</p> <p>Result 4: Visibility and promotion of CBC at intra-Western Balkan borders is enhanced</p>	<p>Number of IPA II beneficiaries entrusted with budget implementation tasks</p> <p>4Percentage of the population in each border region covered by a CBC programme aware of the programme</p>	<p>Annual Programme Implementation Reports</p> <p>JTS reports</p> <p>Project reports</p> <p>Commission audit reports on entrusting budget implementation tasks</p> <p>Public media surveys</p> <p>Euro barometer type of surveys in the Western Balkan countries</p>	<p>Eligible partners in the border regions of the IPA II beneficiaries remain interested in the CBC and are able to submit high quality project proposals</p> <p>Relations between the Western Balkan IPA II beneficiaries are further normalised</p>
ACTIVITIES	MEANS	OVERALL COST	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Activities to achieve Result 1: Organisation of and technical and expert support to regular regional events/fora Organisation of regular technical and thematic working groups/workshops in particular with regard to the new legal framework for the period 2014-2020 (IPA II) in areas such as procurement, transition from direct to indirect management, management of technical assistance of the CBC programmes Support to pilot small scale initiatives in areas where territorial cooperation programmes do not yet exist</p> <p>Activities to achieve Result 2: Facilitate peer-to-peer learning processes at regional level Provide assistance to national authorities with the organisation of stakeholder events/thematic seminars and project fairs to facilitate project partner identification and develop skills for the preparation of project proposals to potential applicants</p> <p>Activities to Result 3: Organisation of training and workshops for CBC structures in areas such as programme/project management, financial management, communication, policy development, monitoring and evaluation... Organisation of training and workshops for potential applicants/grant beneficiaries in areas such as project management and the logframe approach, financial management, reporting... Preparation/updating (align where needed with the provisions of IPA II) of guidelines for improved programme and project development and management</p>	<p>Service contract</p>	<p>EUR 2 million</p>	<p>IPA II CBC structures work effectively and efficiently There is a minimum of continuity in the staffing of the CBC structures Staff/experts of the CBC structures are interested and motivated to improve their skills and enhance their capacity to manage the CBC programmes in an effective, efficient and timely manner.</p>

Activities to Result 4:

Organise and deliver training to staff of the CBC structures on techniques and methods for reaching out to the media (written press, television, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube etc.)

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

The overall expected result is that the national authorities and various CBC structures established within the administration of each IPA II beneficiary such as the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), the Operating Structure (OS)/Contracting Authority (CA) and the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS)/Antenna Office are capable of autonomously and without a need for further technical assistance programming, managing, implementing and monitoring of CBC programmes and projects.

The action will ensure that efforts are proportionally divided between those IPA II beneficiaries where CBC knowledge and capacity has been already developed and those where such capacity is lagging behind and needs substantial efforts to bring up to the same level.

Delays in the implementation of CBC programmes caused by inter alia a lengthy evaluation and selection process might cause frustration and disappointment among final beneficiaries thereby negatively affecting their appetite to participate in the programmes. The action will provide support to ensure that delays in the evaluation and selection process are kept to a minimum.

Different local interests and political directions may reduce the efficiency of identification and preparation of relevant projects or may even block the whole process.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A Steering Committee (SC), chaired by DG ELARG and consisting of representatives of the Delegations / Office of the European Union to the participating IPA II beneficiaries and Operating Structures of these IPA II beneficiaries will ensure the proper coordination and oversee the timely and proper implementation of the action.

The SC will meet at least two times per year.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD(S) AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING

A restricted tender procedure for an indicative amount of EUR 2 million will be launched in quarter 4, 2014. The action will be implemented by means of a fee-based service contract with an anticipated duration of two calendar years.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The Action will be monitored and evaluated at different levels:

- Review of progress by the Steering Committee (once every 6 months)
- Reporting on progress to the Contracting Authority (once every 6 months)
- From the Contracting Authority's side, generally, contract execution is monitored through regular reports (interim, yearly and final narrative and financial reports), regular meetings with the service provider by the task manager and participation in Project Steering Committee meetings
- For payments, the Contracting Authority has established checklists to identify key factors to ensure that project deliverables are adequately verified for the purpose of the visa "certified correct". The invoices for interim and final payments are scrutinised by an independent external auditor who carries out an expenditure verification to ensure that costs have been

incurred for the purposes of the action and are substantiated by supporting documents before the invoices are presented to the Contracting Authority.

- The action may also become subject to result-oriented monitoring (ROM) and / or evaluation carried out by an external service provider.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Description	Baseline (year)	Last (year)	Milestone 2017	Target 2020	Source of information
<i>Action outcome indicator 1 (linked to overall objective)</i>	<i>Number of CBC programmes</i>	<i>8 (2014)</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	
<i>Action outcome indicator2 (linked to Specific Objective)</i>	<i>IPA CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders commitment / execution (disbursement) rates</i>	<i>??</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>95 % / 65 %</i>	<i>95% / 80 %</i>	<i>Annual Programme Implementation Reports Reports and statistics produced by the Joint Technical Secretariats</i>
<i>Action output indicator 1 (linked to Result 1)</i>	<i>Number of peer-to-peer exchanges between CBC structures in the region to share knowledge and experience, exchange information and best practice working methods</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Minutes of Meetings of regional events / forums / thematic working groups</i>
<i>Action output indicator 2 (linked to Result 2)</i>	<i>Percentage of staff involved in CBC programme management taking part in / trained within study visits or exchanges to EU Member States</i>	<i>??</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Annual Programme Implementation Reports JTS reports Project reports</i>

Indicator	Description	Baseline (year)	Last (year)	Milestone 2017	Target 2020	Source of information
<i>Action output indicator 3 (linked to Result 3)</i>	<i>Number of IPA II beneficiaries⁶ entrusted with budget implementation tasks</i>	<i>2 (2014)</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Commission audit reports on entrusting budget implementation tasks</i>
<i>Action output indicator 4 (linked to Result 4)</i>	<i>Percentage of the population in each border region covered by a CBC programme aware of the programme</i>	<i>??</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>??</i>	<i>??</i>	<i>Public media surveys Euro barometer type of surveys in the Western Balkan countries</i>

⁶ IPA II beneficiaries are listed in Annex I of the IPA II Regulation. This Action only concerns the following six countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

The European Union has a long-standing commitment to address environmental concerns in its assistance programme as part of a wider commitment to sustainable development. As part of this action, beneficiaries will be encouraged to guarantee that the protection of the environment receives more attention and is considered as a priority to be covered under their joint programmes. As a matter of fact the 7-year programme documents for the eight CBC at intra-Western Balkan borders programmes all have protection of the environment as a thematic priority to be addressed.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER NON-STATE STAKEHOLDERS)

The seven year strategies for the CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders which will be funded under IPA II were drafted by the countries in close consultation with the European Commission during the period July 2013 – May 2014. This Action will provide technical assistance and expert advice to the authorities involved in the management and implementation of these programmes as well as those that are ongoing under IPA I.

During the design phase of the new programmes an extensive survey was undertaken in the programme area to identify challenges and expectations. This survey was inter alia targeted at public institutions, municipalities, relevant ministries and civil society organisations from the two countries participating in each bilateral programme. In addition clarification interviews were held with municipalities, regional development agencies, chambers, ministries and civil society organisations.

Public consultation meetings were considered as essential during the programming exercise. These were attended by representatives from inter alia municipalities and civil society organisations.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The projects implemented under the CBC programmes will encourage and integrate gender mainstreaming in its aims and activities, specifically in subject matters and areas where the presence and participation of women in the economy has been traditionally low.

The participation of women in social and economic life is still smaller than that of men. The implementation of the measures according to the specific needs of women and men will be based on the EU and national regulations aiming at equal opportunities.

An equal status of men and women will be observed and discrimination of persons based on sex, race, origin, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation will be prevented. The observance of the principle of equal opportunities for both sexes will be ensured during various stages of the implementation of the action and the CBC programmes. The principle will also be observed in the phase of defining the criteria for the selection of projects. The policy aimed at the promotion of equality of sex and prevention of discrimination will be screened throughout all stages of the programme and the realisation of the action.

Equal gender opportunities are not a separate topic, in fact, this is one of the basic principles for each single activity. By including equal opportunities in all the concepts and activities, balance and fairness for men and women should be achieved. It should not be oriented only on specific activities for women, since equal opportunities are necessary for the entire society.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The rights of minorities and vulnerable groups including ethnic minorities, children, people with disabilities etc. should be guaranteed in every step of implementation. As a matter of concern in the region, the action should promote further attention to the protection of minorities and inclusion of vulnerable groups into society by means of training to potential applicants and during the evaluation of projects submitted to Calls for Proposals.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

It is expected that following completion of the action the governments of the IPA II beneficiaries will provide financing for the organisation of regular regional events/fora and thematic working groups/workshops. These will have to be organised on a rotational basis.

Training should be organised as much as possible with a view of ensuring the retention of specialist knowledge and expertise in the various CBC structures even when regular staff turnover negatively affects this so that upon completion of the action the need for continued external technical assistance will be reduced.

It is envisaged that during the implementation of this action several national authorities, once entrusted with budget implementation tasks, will be in charge of implementing the CBC programmes under indirect management. This will contribute to strengthening the local ownership and commitment of the IPA II beneficiaries and further enhance the capacities of the structures.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action. All necessary measures will be taken to make public the fact that the Action has received funding from the EU in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions.

The implementation of the communication activities shall be the responsibility of the contractor, and shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process. Actions shall be undertaken to strengthen general public awareness and promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

The Commission shall be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

The contractor will keep its project website updated and ensure the publication of six-monthly newsletters.

It also updates social media (e.g. Facebook page) if and when required or deemed appropriate and provides assistance to the national authorities with the branding of the CBC programmes.

The action might also consider the organisation of a one-day national event in each IPA II beneficiary to promote the CBC programmes on the territory of that beneficiary.

It is also envisaged to organise a dedicated regional conference targeting the entire CBC community to capitalise on the (preliminary) results of IPA I support provided during the period 2007-2013.

At least one public opinion poll will be organised in an attempt to measure the opinion of the stakeholders and wider public on the design, implementation and impact of the programmes.