

## ACTION FICHE

### 1. IDENTIFICATION

Title	Facility for the cross border cooperation programmes at the EU's external borders (INTERACT ENPI CBC) Phase II CRIS: ENPI/2010/22579		
Total cost	EU Contribution: €2.3 million		
Aid method / Management mode	Project approach – <i>centralised management</i>		
DAC-code	99820	Sector	Promotion of Development Awareness

### 2. RATIONALE

#### 2.1. Sector context

##### Cross border cooperation programmes at the EU's external borders:

Following the publication of the Commission Communication on the European Neighbourhood Policy [COM(2004) 373] on 12 May 2004, the Commission has taken a number of steps to improve and expand its support for cross-border and regional cooperation activity at the Union's external borders.

In 2003, the Commission introduced the concept of Neighbourhood Programmes. Building on existing experience with the INTERREG Community Initiative and the Tacis, MEDA and Phare CBC Programmes, these Neighbourhood Programmes have, for the first time, allowed for genuinely joint cooperation programmes and projects to be put in place on these borders. The Neighbourhood Programmes allowed for joint project preparation, joint applications, joint selection by the local partnership and joint implementation. The Neighbourhood Programmes 2004-2006 were the first phase in response to the Communication. While the programme funding ended in 2006, projects will continue until 2008.

On 24 October 2006, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a new Regulation (1638/2006) for the period 2007-2013, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), to provide assistance to the ENP partner countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and the Mediterranean region as well as to the Russian Federation". A specific element of this Instrument is to provide support for cross-border and regional cooperation along the EU's external borders. The instrument addresses the limitations of the Neighbourhood Programmes by providing a single instrument which will operate, applying a single set of rules on both sides of the border and allow for multi-annual cooperation programmes, developed jointly by the Member States and the partner countries in the programme area, to operate in the same way as cooperation takes place between Member States on internal borders.

The ENPI CBC Strategy Paper has identified 15 programmes with a total funding of €1,118,434 million for the 7 year period. The programme content is based on four key objectives: economic and social development, common challenges, ensuring efficient and secure borders, people-to-people cooperation. The funding allocated to ENPI CBC comes from the External Relations heading and the Structural Funds (namely the European Regional Development Fund ERDF) budget. ENPI CBC Implementing Rules have been adopted, drawing from the Neighbourhood Programmes experience and inspired by the decentralised management system of the EU Structural Funds. They are adapted to programme environments involving partner countries which are non-EU Member States and include important elements taken from external cooperation.

In addition to the funding for the programmes a small facility will be created to finance actions aimed at facilitating the exchange of experience and best practices among the programme partners, with a view to helping enhance the preparation, implementation and management of current and future CBC programmes. An indicative amount of €4.9 million (€2.6 million for the period 2007-10 and €2.3 million for the period 2011-13) is allocated from the ENPI budget to finance this facility.

#### The INTERACT Programme interface with ENPI CBC (INTERACT ENPI):

INTERACT (INTERREG Animation Cooperation and Transfer) is a EU Programme supported by ERDF, which facilitates the exchange of expertise, experience and good practice within the Community Initiative INTERREG and the European territorial cooperation. It has a wide geographic scope covering the 27 EU Member States and neighbouring countries. The first phase of the programme, INTERACT I, will run until the end of 2007 and will be followed by INTERACT II covering the new financial period as of January 2008.

INTERACT I has provided useful support to the Neighbourhood Programmes and to the elaboration of ENPI CBC. It has also organised discussions on the original ENPI-CBC concept paper and organised two seminars in 2006 where, for the first time, the elements of the ENPI CBC Strategy Paper and the Implementing Rules were presented to all the stakeholders. A second phase of INTERACT will start in 2008 and in order to ensure that their activities could cover also Eastern Europe, Caucasus and the Mediterranean region, the idea is to create an INTERACT ENPI that will be well placed to continue assisting in the CBC implementation and act as a bridge between cross border cooperation within the EU and at the external borders.

The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) provides support for cross border and regional cooperation along the EU's external borders. The Cross-Border Co-operation Strategy Paper and the Multiannual Indicative Programme for the period 2007/2010, foresees in point 6.8 the creation of a facility to enhance the preparation, implementation and management of CBC programmes with a total allocation of €4.9 million (€2.6 million for the period 2007-10 and €2.3 million for the period 2011-13). Known under the acronym INTERACT ENPI, a Commission Decision for the first phase of the facility was adopted in 2007<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> C(2007)6626 of 21.12.2007

This facility allows the ENPI cross border cooperation programmes to draw benefits from the INTERACT programme in the same manner as the internal cross border cooperation programmes funded by the EU's Regional Policy and will encourage exchanges of experience and good practice among all cooperation programmes supported by the EU in 2007-2013.

INTERACT ENPI is managed by EuropeAid, building partly on the INTERACT structure and delivering similar types of activities at the EU's external borders.

INTERACT ENPI phase II will continue to support stakeholders in the implementation of the 13 ongoing ENPI CBC Programmes, by facilitating and providing platforms for the exchange of expertise, experience and good practice between programmes and projects, thereby improving the quality of the cooperation between EU Member States and the partner countries.

All of the 13 ENPI CBC programmes have organised their first Joint Monitoring Committee meetings and the first call for proposals are being launched. All programmes have by now established programme structures (Joint Monitoring Committee, Joint Technical Secretariat, antennas, national contact points,) and all apart from one have launched their first calls for proposals. The next phase of implementation will focus on contract signature and project implementation. The Programme managing bodies need to be further supported on this implementation and the assistance provided by Interact ENPI phase II is particularly important at this moment in time in the CBC programmes implementation.

For this second phase of the Interact ENPI facility, an additional €2.3 million is allocated to objectives that are identical to those of the first phase of the project.

A new contract will be signed between the European Commission and the Bratislava Self-governing Region in Slovakia, as the INTERACT Managing Authority, following a negotiated procedure based on article 242, paragraph 2 (b) of the implementing rules of the Council regulation N°1605/2002 for a total value of €2.3 million and an indicative duration of 36 months.

## **2.2. Lessons learnt**

The experience of the previous INTERACT programme for CBC at the EU's external borders has proven very valuable.

ENPI, although building on the INTERREG experience, has a number of implementation features which are taken from the European Commission external assistance rules. Thus there will be differences in the way the Member States involved in both ENPI and ERDF programmes, will have to organise cross border cooperation at their external and internal borders.

This group of Member States expects INTERACT to continue its support for external border cooperation as INTERACT I has developed good experience in CBC at the external borders, having closely followed the elaboration of ENPI rules and procedures.

### **2.3. Complementary actions**

The activities outlined within this project will be linked to the following projects/programmes:

The Commission has recognised that cross border and regional cooperation is particularly challenging, especially for the non-Member States concerned, having little or no experience of such a programming approach. To address this problem, the Commission has set up a technical assistance project, the “Regional Capacity building Initiative” (RCBI I and II) with the objective of assisting the partner countries in preparing the ENPI CBC programme documents for Commission adoption and to strengthen their capacity to prepare and implement projects within the framework of these Programmes. The project runs until end of 2009.

The purpose of this project is as follows:

- The project shall seek to ensure the full, active and equal involvement of the ENPI partner countries in the preparation of the ENPI CBC Programmes.
- The project shall seek to strengthen the capacity of local and regional authorities in project development and management in the eligible regions of the partner countries.

Other international organisations such as UNDP, NGOs (World Wildlife Fund) and regional networks are very active in providing support to cross border cooperation actors at the EU’s external borders. These organisations are already organising a number of information seminars, trainings, and workshops in various regions eligible under the ENPI CBC programmes and on specific themes covered by the new Instrument.

### **2.4. Coordination**

The coordination between INTERACT ENPI and RCBI has required specific attention from the Commission. The two projects co-operate closely with the Commission, the relevant Joint Managing Authorities (JMA) and the Joint Technical Secretariats (JTS) and Branch Offices when existing. A coordination mechanism has been established between the two projects to ensure synergies and complementarities. With regard to ENPI CBC, INTERACT ENPI will have a horizontal added value, which will stimulate exchange of experience and encourage the creation of networks among various stakeholders dealing with territorial cooperation inside and outside the EU. The Joint Managing Authorities and the Commission ensure that other organisations involved in similar activities are aware of events organised in the framework of each individual ENPI CBC programme or for the whole ENPI CBC area (websites, ENPI CBC Information bulletin, Newsletters, Information seminars, regular coordination meetings etc.).

### **3. DESCRIPTION**

#### **3.1. Objectives**

The objective of INTERACT ENPI is to provide support to the stakeholders to implement the 13 ENPI CBC programmes more effectively and efficiently and thus improve the quality of the cooperation between the Member States and the Partner Countries.

The service provision under this project will continuously have to be examined against its added value over and above what is already done by the programmes themselves. The project will aim at:

- promoting and disseminating good practice and interesting approaches;
- encouraging target groups in taking own initiatives in developing new approaches, tools, instruments and standard procedures for the wider community of the ENPI CBC stakeholders;
- developing and delivering own services and products.

The project will also contribute to the development of a new ENPI regulation, implementing rules and programming guidelines by inter alia organising stakeholders' consultations and collecting lessons learned.

All INTERACT ENPI services provided to the target groups need to be developed in the following domains:

- relating all activities to the real needs of stakeholders in ENPI CBC programmes
- generating and sharing knowledge
- provide successful examples for procedures and tools at a high quality level - spreading methodologies and practice of good governance.

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

INTERACT ENPI has to work in close consultation and cooperation with the management structures of each ENPI CBC programme (JMA and JTS) and ensure that its activities complement the ones already carried out at the level of each programme. It also has to closely coordinate its activities with RCBI (phase III) and the European Commission.

INTERACT ENPI supports ENPI CBC Stakeholders at programme and project level with a view of achieving the following results:

- Stakeholders involved in ENPI CBC share experiences / best practices with stakeholders working on other ENPI CBC programmes and with actors involved in internal CBC and IPA CBC if relevant;
- The Commission and the programmes counterparts receive assistance to elaborate solutions to problems that may arise in the implementation of ENPI CBC;

- Studies and/or tools of general nature, which may be of use to the Commission and the ENPI CBC beneficiaries are carried out subject to available budget;
- Creation of a valuable network, useful both on substance and support, when the Commission in a few years time will start to prepare for the new programming period.

The main activities to be undertaken within this project are similar to the ones that will be implemented by INTERACT II in the European Union:

- 1) Information Resources: access to information and knowledge, as well as added value tools and reference materials, which will be made available to the ENPI CBC target groups. Preparing a resource involves an investment in terms of obtaining, collecting, organising, analysing and/or communicating information relevant to all stakeholders of ENPI CBC. The outputs include studies, surveys, handbooks, published training materials and conference reports as well as web resources such as e-fora or searchable databases.
- 2) Cooperation: Interactions between target groups and other stakeholders in ENPI CBC will be organised in many different ways, including conferences, trainings, events, supply of advisory services and the creation of networks.
- 3) Dissemination and Publicity: Activities to promote and to communicate about INTERACT ENPI and its services are essential to generating understanding of INTERACT ENPI as a programme, and to raise interest and commitment in its activities. The outputs are among others the website, disseminating documents generated as added-value tools and reference materials, and promotional activities such as press conferences, exhibitions etc.
- 4) Quality Management: Rigorous quality management ensures the coherence, usefulness and viability of all kind of services and products provided under INTERACT ENPI as well as of communication flows, the structural arrangements and the enabling processes. Quality Management has an internal and an external dimension. First it relates to all processes within and between units composing the INTERACT ENPI Managing System (internal quality management), secondly to the content, which means all products and services offered to the target groups and the “programme environment” (external quality management).

INTERACT ENPI in particular focuses on point 1) and 2). Activities will aim at a stronger localisation, demand-orientation, customisation and visibility. They aim at improving capacities for programme and project management.

### **3.3. Stakeholders**

The target groups of INTERACT ENPI are those institutions and bodies set up around cross border cooperation at the EU’s external borders: Joint Managing Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariats and branch offices, Joint Monitoring Committees, Joint Selection committees, National Contact Points, regional and local stakeholders, project beneficiaries.

### **3.4. Risks and assumptions**

#### Assumptions underlying the project intervention:

The continued interest of the local and regional authorities and other relevant actors on both sides of the external borders of the EU in INTERACT ENPI services offered in relation to cross border cooperation will be necessary for the success of the project.

#### Risks:

INTERACT ENPI has to build on the experience of the Member States and of the RCBI team already in place for the partner countries. A lack of coordination with the other stakeholders would endanger the added value of the project.

### **3.5. Cross-cutting Issues**

Activities within this programme will recognise the priority of gender equality, and include this in the general operating principles of all activities. Promoting good governance is the ultimate objective of the INTERACT ENPI Project.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

### **4.1. Implementation method**

The implementation is carried out under the direct centralised management scheme.

A service contract will be signed between the Commission and the INTERACT Managing Authority, i.e. the self governing region of Bratislava following a negotiated procedure based on articles 242 (b) and (f) of the Implementing Rules of Council Regulation No. 1605/2002 for a total value of €2.3 million.

Two decentralised ENPI Points will deliver the INTERACT ENPI support services as described above to the target groups. Therefore the ENPI Points will be endowed with their own annual budgets and be consistently staffed both in terms of number of employees and professional/academic profiles required. The ENPI Points shall be attributed to a Regional Network encompassing the cross-border programmes in a delimited geographical space, ENPI Point North and ENPI Point South. Given the nature of the ENPI CBC programmes the two ENPI Points will have a considerable amount of joint services.

ENPI Points will have close cooperation links to RCBI II technical assistance project operative until 2012. RCBI supporting the external programme and project development is a primary cooperation party and strong coordination between the two projects is a prerequisite for successful implementation of the INTERACT ENPI services.

Given the location of the ENPI programmes and on the basis of the positive previous experience with the Commission, it is suggested that the ENPI Point North, responsible for the CBC programmes in North-Eastern Europe will be placed in Finland, at the same location as the INTERACT Point. In addition, a second ENPI Point will be established in Italy to support the programmes of Eastern and Southern Europe.

#### **4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures**

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.

#### **4.3. Budget and calendar**

The ENPI-CBC Strategy Paper sets aside €2.3 million for the continuation of Interact ENPI I for the period 2010-2013. Activities will be implemented according to the needs, nevertheless respecting the structure established for the ENPI CBC (i.e. supporting two ENPI points in the North and the South of Europe).

The budget for this project will be committed in 2010. The contracts implementing this decision shall be signed by the 31.12.2010 at the latest. The contract with the INTERACT Managing Authority shall start on 01.01.2011 and the operational implementation period will indicatively take up to 36 months from the signature of the contract.

The indicative breakdown of overall amount is as follows:

Services	
1. INTERACT Managing Authority	€2,300,000
Total	€2,300,000

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

Performance monitoring of the programme implementation is carried out as a continuous on-going activity. Reports will be presented by the INTERACT Managing Authority to the Commission in compliance with the conditions established in the contract between the Commission and the INTERACT Managing Authority. This project may be subject to monitoring by Commission services through their independent monitoring experts.

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

The service contract foresees that expenditure verifications will have to be submitted before interim and final payments are done. The possibility of verification by the European Commission (including OLAF) and by the European Court of Auditors is included in the general conditions annexed to the service contracts. At the start of the project a number of indicators will be agreed between the INTERACT Managing Authority and the Commission services that may be subject to evaluation at the end of the project.

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

Communication and visibility activities are part of the main actions undertaken by the INTERACT ENPI.