

PROJECT FICHE

Title	Border management in NIS countries		
Total cost	€22.5 million		
Aid Method	Centralised management		
DAC-code	99810	Sector	Border management

1. RATIONALE

1.1. Strategic framework

Enhancing integrated border management is one of the key priorities of the Tacis Regional Strategy Paper and Indicative Programme 2004-2006. In section 6.3, covering the area of Justice and Home Affairs, emphasis is put on supporting the creation of integrated border management systems in Belarus and Moldova, as well as in Central Asia. The aim is to improve the capacities for controlling the borders while at the same time facilitating the legal cross-border flows.

In addition, a European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) was set-up by 1 December 2005 by a Memorandum of Understanding between the European Commission, Moldova and Ukraine and will run (initially) for 24 months up to end of 2007. EUBAM is aimed at contributing to the solution of the Transnistria conflict and to improve border and customs management at the Ukrainian-Moldovan state border. EUBAM enjoys utmost political priority by the EU, Moldova and Ukraine which was reaffirmed at the 1st Advisory Board Meeting which took place on 15 February 2006 in Odessa.

Facilitated cross-border movements of persons and goods, reinforced fight against terrorism, organised crime and irregular migration as well as the settlement of the Transnistria conflict are amongst the key priorities in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Equally, the EU cooperation with the countries of Central Asia, as stated in the Central Asia Regional Strategy Paper, put a strong emphasis on the cooperation in the area of border management.

1.2. Lessons learnt

Over the last few years, the Tacis programme has supported assistance programmes dealing with border management and fight against cross-border crime across the CIS countries. In the Central Asia countries, the Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) project has been operational since 2002. BOMCA experience derives a number of lessons learnt, a majority of which are generally applicable and have been taken into account in the design of the proposed programme. BOMCA's lessons learnt include:

- A coherent regional approach allows for the development of harmonized methodologies in all beneficiary countries.
- The ownership of the programmes at national level should be increased as much as possible through ongoing and active involvement of the national authorities during the entire project cycle.
- Long-term planning and approach have also proved to be key for the impact of border management assistance programmes.
- Overarching assistance programmes, addressing not only the immediate needs at the borders, but also the institution building perspective allow for gradual adoption of integrated border management and have bigger impact.
- Long-term programmes are more appropriate to achieve sustainability and to maintain the reform momentum. However, the achievement of quick concrete results is particularly important in terms of building trust and credibility with beneficiary authorities.

- Adoption of an approach oriented towards demonstration projects contributes to the efficient use of limited resources and allows for a phased introduction of new processes and tools.

The observations of the recent Tacis Evaluation Report in general confirm the lessons learnt from the BOMCA projects. The report also emphasises the need to create conditions for a maximal impact of the assistance, through close donor co-operation and co-ordination of their policies. A programme evaluation and recommendations of the Central Asia Programme was launched in December 2005, and the results should be available by April 2006. The results of the evaluation will be an essential precondition to developing the programme further in the region.

A monitoring mission for the BOMCA programme took place in 2005. The monitoring report recognized the relevance of the BOMCA approach. It also included a number of remarks regarding the management of the programme, which derive important lessons learnt for the future. The report observed that BOMCA's implementing capacity needed to be reinforced. To date, BOMCA projects have been implemented by the UNDP. UNDP experienced some management difficulties and delays in implementation. However, these shortcomings have now been corrected, with UNDP establishing a new managerial set-up for the project. The report also highlights the need to reinforce the monitoring activities undertaken by UNDP. The issue of continuous monitoring will therefore receive special attention during the implementation of the proposed new phase of BOMCA.

1.3. Complementary actions

The proposed regional programme has been developed to complement or reinforce the border management related activities undertaken under the past regional or national programmes. It also takes into account the interventions in this area planned for the near future at national level.

EUBAM has been initially funded with € 4 million under the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) for the period up to May 2006 followed by the Tacis 2004 programme which made available another € 4 million. The remaining time frame up to end of 2007 will be funded with up to € 10 million under this programme.

In Moldova and Belarus, the EC has been engaged in the delivery of assistance in the area of border management since 2001. This assistance has amounted to over €36 million and has focused on construction of key border crossings, border demarcation, supply of border control and border surveillance equipment as well as training and capacity building.

In Belarus, BOMBEL I (€4.5 million) and BOMBEL II (€8.8 million) aimed at supplying the most urgent technical border control and surveillance equipment and training; this has also been the case in Moldova, under BOMMOL I (€0.9 million) and BOMMOL II (€1.85 million). In addition, support to the reform of the human resource management system in Moldova is planned under the regional Action Programme 2005. Extensive assistance is also planned to be provided under the Tacis Cross-Border Co-operation programme. The subsequent programmes, including the proposed one, may therefore focus on sophisticated infrastructure and equipment, to complement the undertaken and planned interventions.

In terms of other donors, Moldova's border guard service reform is bilaterally supported by Hungary, Finland and Lithuania, mainly with provision of expertise. Moldova also received some equipment from the USA.

Although the initial BOMCA activities in Central Asia were undertaken in 2002-2003, when the first three phases were implemented, the programme started larger-scale implementation only in 2004. To date, the Tacis programmes have committed some €20 million to support the BOMCA. Moreover, the programme has also received co-financing from UNDP, amounting to some €1.2 million. BOMCA has been also co-financed bilaterally by the United Kingdom with €2 million. The programme has been implemented in phases, with its fourth phase to be completed in September 2006. The fifth phase of BOMCA is about to commence and the sixth is under preparation.

Some activities of the BOMCA programme have been complemented by the Central Asian Drug Action programme (CADAP). The objective of CADAP is to encourage the gradual adoption by Central Asia states of EU good practices on drug policy. Both programmes have a joint management, and some of the projects are implemented in close co-ordination. Together, these two programmes create the core of the donor initiatives in the area of border management and fight against organised crime, with a cumulative joint BOMCA-CADAP funding of €38 million.

In Central Asia, there are no other donors with assistance programmes specifically aiming at the reforms of the border management. However, several other donors are active in sub sectors of border control (USA, IOM, UNHCR, etc). Projects are now focusing on the eastern part of the southern border of Tajikistan, with the US working on the western side of this border.

1.4. Donor coordination

EUBAM is 100% Commission funded and will continue being implemented by UNDP. The OSCE is a member of the quarterly Advisory Board Meeting and also invited to participate in the monthly Coordination Meetings with all parties. IOM has been associated as an observer to EUBAM. There is no similar action ongoing in the region. Regarding EUBAM's capacity building task, activities are closely coordinated with the U.S. who runs a large-scale programme focussed on preventing proliferation of WMD and nuclear material at the Ukrainian-Moldovan state border.

Donor coordination efforts within the BOMCA programme have been limited to a few events so far. In Tajikistan, however, BOMCA has been able to put in place a donor coordination mechanism. BOMCA's donor coordination policy in Tajikistan as well as the attempt to mobilise support of donors from the Afghan side of the Tajik-Afghan border have been appreciated by most of the stakeholders of the programme.

Co-ordination activities between EU member States have been continued through the "Central Asian Border Security Initiative" (CABSI) mechanism. CABSI is a Consortium of some Member States¹ with Austria as a lead member and active participation by the United Kingdom. The Consortium also includes a permanent representation of the United States. CABSI meetings aim to foster co-operation and reinforce partnerships, and they bring together representatives of the Consortium, EU Member States, European Commission, international donors and international organisations. It must be added however that since the main interest of the member states and of the US concern drug transit, this 'coordination' has endangered the coherence of the BOMCA programme by strong recommendations to shift from the project planning. A lesson here is that the EC is the guardian of the concept of improved border management as a motor for development and trade, and that EC experience of improving permeability and organisation of frontiers is very extensive.

¹ Members of CABSI: Austria, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Croatia as a candidate country.

There are not many donors active in the area of border management in Moldova. Therefore the main co-ordination efforts focussed on the US, who supported Moldovan border guards and customs service with equipment. Efforts have been made on the part of both donors to ensure complementarity of the activities. In Belarus, the assistance programmes dominated by the EC, and no other donor intervention in the security/border management area has been identified.

2. REGIONAL CONTEXT

2.1. Cooperation related policy of beneficiary countries

Since 1995, Moldova and Transnistria, assisted by the OSCE, Russia and Ukraine as international mediators. In September 2005, the EU and the U.S. became observers to the five-sided mediation process ("5+2"). A window of opportunity to advance on the resolution of the 'frozen' Transnistrian conflict appeared following the arrival in power in neighbouring Ukraine of the reformist-minded administration of President Yushchenko. Ukraine also launched its own settlement plan in early May 2005. On 2 June 2005, the Presidents of Moldova and Ukraine addressed a joint letter to President Barroso and High Representative Solana, calling for additional EU support in overall capacity building for border management, including customs, on the whole Moldova – Ukraine border. The letter specifically requested EU assistance in the creation of an 'international customs control arrangement and an effective border monitoring mechanism on the Transnistrian segment of the Moldova-Ukraine State border'. Subsequently, a 'Memorandum of Understanding' on an EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) between the Commission, Moldova and Ukraine was signed on 7 October 2005. EUBAM is operational since 1 December 2005, its mandate runs until end of 2007; the mission enjoys highest political support from all parties involved.

The New Independent States inherited an old conception of border management based on military closure and heavy fortification of their borders. Crossing the border between these countries was a long and difficult process. The main objective of the Community policy in the field of the EU external borders is to create an integrated border management, which would ensure a high and uniform level of control and surveillance while at the same time facilitating the legal transit of trade and persons. A number of countries do share this objective with the EU and some of them have already embarked on the process of policy and institutional reform. However, in most of the countries the reforms are still in a very early stage.

Both Moldova and Belarus have developed a coherent policy towards border management improvement. Belarus is following state programmes covering a period up to 2010 as regards the development of high-speed communication infrastructure across the country and up to 2015 as concerns border management. Both state programmes go hand in hand, since IT and communication technology are an important aspect in improving both fight against cross-border crime and facilitating cross-border trade. In Moldova, a reform of the military-structured Border Guard Department into a law enforcement-type Border Guard Service has been initiated in early 2005 and laid down a reform strategy until 2007. This strategy sets very ambitious goals which will most likely not be achieved by the deadline set by the Government. Therefore, a follow-up strategy can be expected.

Border management improvement is also determined as one of the priorities of the EU-Moldova European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan (ENP AP)². The ENP AP has character of a legal document in Moldova, and therefore all relevant

² See points 49 and 50 of the EU-Moldova ENP AP.

services are highly committed to its implementation. Moldova's ambitious objectives have also to be seen in the context of the Government's national policy towards European integration.

Both target countries face serious problems to dispose adequate state budget to finance border management improvement. Approximately 90-95% of the budget allocated for border and customs authorities has been used for covering personnel costs. Moreover, in both countries medium and/or long term budgetary perspectives have not been commonly established which makes forecast beyond the current work year impossible. In case of insufficient state revenues, even the allocation formally established in an approved state budget is de facto not fully available. This implies that donors' assistance will remain an element of capital importance for improving integrated border management. Belarus and Moldova should however be able to ensure maintenance of established structures.

Central Asia and the EU have a common interest in stepping up their co-operation in the fight against common scourges, including terrorism and organised crime. In general, the international community recognized the need to reinforce the borders in Central Asia and sizable assistance has been provided especially for the borders with Afghanistan. Most of this assistance aims at stopping the perceived flow of illicit drugs from Afghanistan. The assistance mostly focuses on provision of training and equipment and this assistance is not always integrated into a larger institution building approach.

On the part of the beneficiary countries, Central Asian states start to recognise the need to move further than the mere provision of border equipment and to start a process of border reforms. This evolution of beneficiaries' perception has been reported at several occasions. Yet, the situation differs from country to country and the subject is in general very sensitive and should be dealt with carefully.

At the time of writing, none of the five central Asian countries has a comprehensive border management strategy (although some of the border services have individual strategies). Assistance with the development of border management strategies is foreseen under BOMCA 4. In terms of organization, the border services of all five Central Asian countries still have a military structure. Moreover, in several countries the border services are still under the national security service (former "KGB").

2.2. Sector context

The emergence of five new states from the break up of the former USSR has created thousands of kilometres of new international borders. These borders need to be controlled, while at the same time made more open for travel and trade.

Moldova and Belarus as well as the Ukrainian-Moldovan state border and in particular its section with the self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria are frequently used as a transit corridor for both east-west trade flows and criminal activities. The last enlargement brought both countries at the EU external border. Therefore, facilitation of the legal flows and control of the crime at the borders of these countries is of an outmost importance for the EU. There are particular allegations of sizeable illicit flows across the Ukrainian-Moldovan border (including the Transnistrian section), including smuggling and customs fraud, and trafficking in weapons, drugs, or human beings, or illegal crossings. However, the current level of interceptions/seizures remains relatively low on both sides of the border.

However, both countries lack financial resources to improve the border management capabilities with infrastructure, networks and equipment. The

inadequate state funding does not allow them to move forward in the process of compliance with the EU and international standards. Regarding the latter, the countries will soon need to prepare and invest in the establishment of border controls based on biometric verifier, which will impose an additional burden to the budget. Such financial situation is forcing Moldova and Belarus to continue using old border control infrastructure and equipment, in some cases originating from the Soviet period. Insufficient technical capacity and resources (in particular non-existing IT and data transfer networks) make Belarus and Moldova preferred transit countries for trafficking and smuggling activities as well as irregular migration towards the EU. The situation in Transnistria with its large weapons and ammunition storages originating from the 14th Soviet army, as well as its arms manufacturing companies in Bendery and Rybnitsa, also give reason for concern. It is in the EU's vital interest to reduce such security threats in its near neighbourhood.

The financial context is not very different in Central Asia. Insufficient financing, along with the slow demarcation of borders and the new migration flows, are often outlined as persistent problems that the border guards and other border authorities face in managing their borders. Until recently, the situation with financing was not much improved by the donor community, due to insufficient co-ordination and piecemeal approach. In parallel with these specific issues, at a general level it is felt that the border control capacity in the region has weakened, in particular following the withdrawal of Russian border troops (specifically from the Tajik/Afghan border). Such an environment, in combination with an old conception of border management based on military closure of the border, contributes to the decline of efficiency and effectiveness of the border management concept in Central Asia. Although initiatives for reforms exist in some countries, much remains yet to be done.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

Overall objective: To support integrated border management systems in order to facilitate the legal cross-border flow and to help fight cross-border criminal activities in Central Asia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova and to approximate their standards to those of the EU. To contribute to a peaceful resolution of the Transnistria conflict.

Specific objectives:

The proposed programme focuses on three different geographical areas. Although the countries addressed by this programme shared similar history and structures until some 15 years ago, the current local conditions and practices in border management significantly vary from country to country. In order to accommodate the specific needs of all beneficiary countries, three separate components have been designed. Each component has been tailored to encompass the specifics of the relevant local environment, while paying particular attention to the current level of development of the border management practices.

Component 1: Ukrainian-Moldovan state border (EUBAM)

- 1.1. To strengthen the effectiveness of border and customs controls by Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities along their common border, with a particular focus on the Transnistrian section.
- 1.2. To increase customs revenues and decreasing cross-border customs fraud and criminal flows (including weapons and drugs).
- 1.3. To decrease human smuggling and illegal migration across this border.

1.4. To facilitate legitimate flows of goods and persons across this border.

Component 2: Moldova-Belarus

- 2.1. To improve the capacities for prevention and combating cross-border criminal activities such as trafficking in human beings, facilitating irregular migration, trafficking of drugs, arms and components of dual use, smuggling of high-taxed and counterfeit goods.
- 2.2. To facilitate cross-border movement of persons and goods through the establishment of modern border and customs control standards (e-passport controls, e-customs clearance).
- 2.3. To promote legitimate trade flows and to reduce costs of carriage through the development of modern IT/data networks as well as control equipment.

Component 3: Central Asia

- 3.1. To reinforce border control capacities in several pilot regions in the Central Asian Countries, through border control measures and confidence building measures.
- 3.2. Expected results and main activities

Component 1: European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine

Activities

The main activities which the Border Assistance Mission is expected to implement include:

- Deliver on-the-job training and coaching in a live work environment to operational-level customs and border guard officials at the most relevant locations along the Moldova-Ukraine state border, as well as at key transit points and inland customs houses. Such training and coaching may include training in the use of specific techniques (profiling, use of sniffer dogs, weighing and checking of cargoes, etc.) or other aspects of the operation of services (treatment of seized goods, judicial follow-up, etc). This may include review of and advice on currently applicable standard operating procedures or practices of counterpart services, or the development of new ones.
- Perform visits and inspections to relevant locations including along the green border by joining border surveillance activities. Inspections along the green border should in most cases be accompanied by counterpart services for security reasons, however on an unannounced basis.
- Build risk analysis capacity at central level and help improve exchanges of risk assessments between local and central levels. This will be undertaken by risk analysis advisors of the mission, respectively placed with the headquarters of customs and of border guards in both capitals.
- Advise on border-related standards and best practices by analogy to EU standards; produce a handbook of EU common standards and good / best practices of EU Member States transposable to the work of counterpart services. The handbook will be produced by the Mission's "standards and training" co-ordinators, taking into account the countries' applicable legislation and observation by the field teams. These co-ordinators will also strive to harmonise the training delivered by field staff. Certain specific aspects can be covered by studies produced by / training delivered by short-term experts.
- Advise on integrating work of customs and border guards towards an integrated approach to border management. A useful reference

document in this context will be the "Guidelines for Integrated Border Management" elaborated by the Commission for the Western Balkans region, but many elements of which are transposable also to the Neighbourhood region.

- Advise on further improving cross-border co-operation between Moldovan and Ukrainian services at the operational level, including through the exchange of information. This activity will take as starting point the currently agreed arrangements for bilateral co-operation, and advice will be provided on concrete ways of operationalising or usefully enhancing these arrangements.

Results

- Enhanced professional capacity of Ukrainian and Moldovan customs officials and border guards at the operational level at relevant locations (at border crossing points, inland customs houses, and main transit points).
- Improved risk analysis capacity and use of risk assessment techniques by beneficiary services at operational and central level, in terms of gathering, analysing, and disseminating information and intelligence.
- Improved knowledge of EU standards and good/best practices and their practical application by beneficiary services.
- Increased cooperation and complementarity between customs and border guards, and with other law enforcement agencies, towards an integrated approach to border management.
- Improved cooperation between Moldovan and Ukrainian services, including at joint border crossing points.

Component 2: Provision of border and customs control equipment for Moldova and Belarus

Activities

This component will aim to address the need of Moldovan and Belarusian for modern border management equipment. The component will complement the intervention planned under the Tacis Cross-Border Co-operation Programme 2006, which will entail construction of fibre-optic cables to border crossing points at the EU external border in both countries. It will also supply necessary border and customs control equipment. The proposed component will therefore mainly focus on non-EU borders. In particular, in Moldova it will also aim to reinforce the activities related to the EU Border Assistance Mission.

In order to ensure ownership and support from the authorities from both countries, this component has been developed in very close co-operation with the Border Guard and Customs Services of Moldova and Belarus.

The project activities will entail provision of border and customs control equipment (mainly related to e-border and customs controls) to both countries. The necessary training related to the operation and maintenance of the procured equipment will also be provided.

Results

- Fibre-optic network establishment continued at the Belarusian-Ukrainian and at the Moldovan-Ukrainian state border.
- Border control and surveillance equipment supplied and installed, in particular biometric verifier equipment, thermo vision equipment etc.
- Equipment related training carried out.

Component 3: BOMCA 7

Activities

The third component of the programme will focus on the five pilot regions in each of the Central Asia states (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan). The exact location of the pilot regions will be identified by the beneficiary border services in cooperation with the EC Delegation in Central Asia. The component represents extension of the activities of the previous BOMCA projects and therefore will work in close collaboration with BOMCA 6 and CADAP. In general, two types of measures will be implemented: border control measures and confidence building measures. These measures will entail a number of different activities in the following areas:

- The programme will conduct an assessment of the existing border control capacity in the pilot regions, in order to evaluate feasibility of the construction and/or renovation of border crossing points. If the outcome of the assessment is positive, the identified border crossing points will be constructed/refurbished, and supplied with equipment. Also, the staff of these border crossing points will receive training on IBM and modern risk assessment methodologies, in particular with a view to the prevention and detection of illicit trafficking in drugs, arms and human beings, and strengthening of hazardous substances and animal products control.
- BOMCA 7 will work with the local authorities and will encourage them to adapt the legislative framework to the needs of an integrated and modern management of their borders, including encouraging demilitarisation and the progressive disengagement of border guards. The programme will also develop cross-border co-operation within pilot border zones by organising joint training for customs and borders police officers from each country of the pilot border zone.
- As last of the border control measures, this component of the programme will create mobile units to monitor the green border, and organise adequate training for them. In parallel, equipment and telecommunications networks will be purchased and delivered, and border staff will be trained on their use. To further support the mobile units, a local canine centre will be established/reinforced in each pilot region. For this purpose, dogs will be purchased and trained, and the necessary equipment will be supplied. The dogs will be used for both patrolling the green border (border dogs) and for detection of illicit goods at the border crossing points (scenting dogs).
- BOMCA 7 will also undertake confidence building measures, with an aim to ensure that the new border management system is accepted and supported by local population. These measures will seek the integration of the border posts into local life by creating links and dialogue between border control authorities and local border populations. The activities - ranging from water, sanitation, demining to community policing - will be defined in cooperation with the beneficiary population.
- Finally, BOMCA 7 will continue to offer a platform for co-ordination and information sharing among donors.

Results

- Several border crossing points in the pilot region constructed/renovated and equipped
- Staff of these border crossing points trained on integrated border management techniques.
- An operational telecommunications networks in place.
- Mobile control of the green border in the pilot region established.
- Local border dog capacity established in the pilot regions.
- Local population in the pilot region benefited from poverty alleviation and confidence building measures.

- Improved donor coordination.
- Several international donors integrated new border assistance into the BOMCA framework.

3.3. Stakeholders

In all the three components, the main stakeholders and project partners will be the national agencies and institutions involved in border management and customs administration. On a wider level, the local population, as well as the people transiting the borders of the countries targeted by this programme, will also benefit from improved border management.

In Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, the main stakeholder and partner for the implementation of the programme will be the State Border Guard Services and the State Custom Services of both countries.

In Central Asia, the key stakeholders of the project will be the representatives from the border guards, as well as inter-agency working groups in Central Asia countries and, to a lesser degree, local communities and NGOs active in the pilot regions.

3.4. Risks and assumptions

For the component related to Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, the design of the programme assumed that countries' border and customs authorities will remain committed to further approximate to EU standards and will continue to participate in international and regional cooperation forums. Regarding Ukraine and Moldova, risks are highly related to the situation in Transnistria. If Transnistria remains an uncontrolled area, the achievement of the results will be put in danger. The EU Border Assistance Mission, together with Ukrainian border and customs services, has therefore an important role to play in preventing criminal activities and smuggling at this border segment. Regarding Belarus, the consequences of the political outlook in the country might impact the implementation of the programme.

The continued commitment of the authorities in the Central Asian countries to implement reforms of the management of their borders is an underlying assumption of this programme. The role of the EC Delegation in Almaty is therefore important in advocating the importance of adopting border reforms and of introduction of EU best practises.

3.5. Conditionality

The national authorities in all eight countries that will benefit from these projects will have to demonstrate commitment to initiate/continue with the reform of their border management policies and practices. They will also need to ensure financial viability of the undertaken infrastructure measures and equipment supplied.

3.6. Crosscutting issues

The programme will complement the action of the EC and the international partners in the areas of conflict prevention, poverty alleviation, customs, migration management and fight against organised crime. Moreover, investment in modern border control will not only facilitate combating cross-border criminal activities but also foster bilateral and regional cross-border trade and thus strengthen the national economies. Am not sure all these are cross-cutting issues as labelled by the Commission...

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Implementation method Centralised management

4.2. Budget and calendar

The overall indicative budget for the programme will be around €22.5 million. This funding will be distributed between the beneficiary regions. The indicative amounts are projected as follows: €10 million for EUBAM, €6.5 million for Belarus and Moldova and €6 million for Central Asia. The foreseen duration of the programme is between 12 and 36 months.

The modalities of implementation of the technical assistance components of the programme might include engagement of individual Member States, or consortium of Member States, via grant contract(s) and/or twinning arrangement(s), and/or contribution agreement(s) with international organisation(s), as appropriate. The closer definition of the implementation modalities will follow in the early preparatory stage of the programme implementation, adequate to the needs and specifics for each of the three regions. In addition, supply and work contracts will be used wherever necessary.

4.3. Procurement and award of grants procedures

All contracts implementing the financing agreement 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.

All programme estimates must respect the procedures and standard documents laid down by the Commission, in force at the time of the adoption of the programme estimates in question.

4.4. Performance monitoring

The responsible EC Delegations (Kiev for the component on Belarus/Moldova and Ukraine/Moldova and Almaty for the component on Central Asia) will be the first level of regular monitoring and quality control. The Tacis Monitoring Team will also regularly assess the progress of the project implementation and submit its report to the relevant EC Delegations and Europe Aid.

In case of use of the twinning mechanism, any twinning project will be the subject of quarterly monitoring on the basis of reports submitted by the Twinning Project Leaders, according to the provisions of the Twinning Manual.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

Operations financed under this programme may be evaluated at the interim, final or ex-post stages under the supervision of relevant Commission services and the Court of Auditors. Evaluation of any twinning projects will be based upon the progress in achieving the benchmarks and mandatory results laid out in the work-plans for the twinning projects. The accounts and records of expenditure may be checked at regular intervals by an external auditor contracted by the Commission, without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Commission, including OLAF and the Court of Auditors.