

ANNEX 4

of the Commission Implementing Decision on ENI East Regional Action Programme 2014
Part 2

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

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Implementation of the Eastern Partnership multilateral dimension and support to the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension CRIS: ENI/2014/037-355		
Total cost	Total estimated cost: EUR 5.75 million Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 5.5 million Estimated co-financing by potential grant beneficiaries: EUR 0.25 million		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Project approach: - Direct management (grants – calls for proposal; procurement of services)		
DAC-code	43010	Sector	Multisector aid

2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

2.1. Summary of the action and its objectives

The present action provides funding for activities directly necessary for the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and for the achievement of its objectives. It provides a flexible mechanism giving the European Commission the possibility to finance small-scale actions in line with the objectives of the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy as well as its operational and policy priorities, by supporting the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension.

2.2. Context

The **Eastern Partnership (EaP)** was launched in 2009 at a summit held in Prague, in an effort by the EU and its Eastern European partners to help promote political and economic reforms and assist the countries of the region move closer to the EU. At its basis lies a shared commitment to international law and fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to market economy, sustainable development and good governance.

Though each country has an individual relationship with the EU, under the Eastern Partnership umbrella the EU and its partners have committed to further developing a multilateral dimension - involving all EU Member States and partner countries. This multilateral dimension is intended to strengthen and complement the bilateral track, and facilitate the development of common positions and joint activities. The commitment of Eastern European Partners and EU Member

States to this dimension was reaffirmed in the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit held in November 2013 in Vilnius, which calls for further strengthening of the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership.

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

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

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

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

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

Platform 1:

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

Platform 2:

- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Trade and trade related regulatory approximation
- Environment and climate change
- Agriculture and rural development
- Transport
- Statistics¹

Platform 2 also has Work Areas (taxation and public financing, labour market and social policies, macroeconomic and financial stability, information society and media) in addition to the Panels.

Platform 4:

- Research and innovation

Panel meetings take place in between the Platform meetings and are of a more technical nature. The results of the discussions in the panels are presented in the Platform meetings, which in the last round of meetings in autumn 2013 approved work programmes for 2014-2017.

¹ Panel to be created in autumn 2014.

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

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

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

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

2.3. Lessons learnt

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

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

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

To enable the various dialogue processes to successfully pursue their activities it is necessary to finance the organisation of events and ensure that participants have the resources to attend. Experience of the Eastern Partnership multilateral dimension has shown so far that maintaining a certain level of flexibility as regards the original planning of activities is necessary to take account of developments that may take place in the work programmes of the Eastern Partnership Platforms throughout the year.

In the context of the Black Sea Synergy, further coordination in policies and legislation between the Black Sea countries proved to be a common interest to both the EU² and its partner countries. An example of this is the harmonisation process in cooperation activities aiming at building the regional infrastructure for marine environmental monitoring.

² Bulgaria and Romania are also parties to the Black Sea Commission (BSC).

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

2.4. Complementary actions

This action is complementary to the technical assistance allocations existing in the framework of the bilateral and regional Annual Action Programmes in favour of the Eastern Partnership countries. It also complements the activities under the Global Allocation.

In the Black Sea basin, activities implemented in the framework of the Black Sea Synergy Environmental Partnership (i.e. the 2013-2014 “Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea” regional project - EMBLAS) are complemented in the non-EaP riparian countries by a mirror initiative (“Marine Strategy Framework Directive Guiding Improvements in the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring System - MISIS”) whose objective is to contribute to the harmonisation of environmental monitoring policies across the region in countries not covered by the ENPI/ENI.

Activities implemented in the framework of the Northern Dimension complement actions carried out under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea, which is a macro-regional strategy aiming to save the Baltic Sea, connect the region and increase prosperity in the region. Russia has a *Strategy for the implementation of socio-economic development of the North-West Federal District for the period until 2020* which sets out the priorities for the Russian region where activities of the Northern Dimension take place.

2.5. Donor coordination

The multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership entails by its own nature close coordination with EU Member States and partner countries in the framework of the Platforms and related panels. Other donors/entities are also represented in the Platforms and panels (e.g. European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Economic and Social Committee, Council of Europe).

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

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

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

3.2. Expected results and main activities

As part of the operational structure of the **Eastern Partnership**, the Commission Communication on the Eastern Partnership establishes four thematic platforms and panels to support the work of the platforms in specific areas. In their work programmes, the platforms identify seminars, training programmes, studies or other small scale activities to be implemented in order to advance the objectives of the Eastern Partnership. As a result of this structure, the following meetings can be expected per year (indicative figures):

- 5 Ministerial level meetings
- 8 Platform meetings
- 24 panel meetings
- 30 seminars and meetings in the framework of panels

Capacity building activities may also be implemented in support to the Flagship initiatives launched under the Eastern Partnership. Furthermore, additional activities may be carried out in order to support the implementation of the Eastern Partnership roadmap and/or its successor.

The implementation of the **Black Sea Synergy** and the **Northern Dimension** supposes the establishment of partnerships in different areas. Activities to take place in the context of these partnerships, such as meetings, studies or technical assistance, will also rely on support from this programme.

In addition, this support will cover the organisation costs of **ad hoc meetings** related to one or several countries to gain practical knowledge and experiences as regards transition and modernisation process in the context of the Eastern Partnership.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Given the nature of the action, no major risks are identified in the Eastern Partnership countries.

However, developments in the EU-Russia relationship arising from Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and support to the destabilisation of Ukraine may affect activities that can be implemented in the framework of the Northern Dimension and the Black Sea Synergy. Cooperation with Russia under these programmes will be kept under review.

3.4. Crosscutting Issues

Crosscutting issues such as human rights and gender equality are taken into account in all activities. Support to environmental activities in the Northern Dimension, Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership frameworks contribute to environmental protection climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

3.5. Stakeholders

Main stakeholders are authorities and administrations of EU Member States and Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy and Northern Dimension countries as well as civil society organisations. The end beneficiaries are citizens of the partner countries overall. The review of cooperation with Russia due to developments in the EU-Russia relationship may affect the type of Russian stakeholders that may benefit from Black Sea Synergy and Northern Dimension activities.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Financing agreement

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

4.2. Indicative operational implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in sections 3.2. and 4.3. will be carried out, is 60 months (maximum indicative duration of projects is 48 months) from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement or, where none is concluded, from the adoption of this Action Document, subject to modifications to be agreed by the responsible authorising officer in the relevant agreements. The European Parliament and the relevant Committee shall be informed of the extension of the operational implementation period within one month of that extension being granted.

4.3. Implementation components and modules

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

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

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

The calls for proposals modality will be used for implementing actions under the objective defined in section 3.1, in support of the thematic work programmes of the Eastern Partnership Platforms and possible capacity building activities supporting Flagship Initiatives. Black Sea Synergy and Northern Dimension Partnerships may also be supported.

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

- (b) Eligibility conditions

In accordance with eligibility conditions defined in Articles 8 and 9 of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014, notably, but not only, legal persons such as international organisations and civil society organisations.

- (c) Essential selection and award criteria

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

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

- (d) Maximum rate of co-financing

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

The maximum possible rate of co-financing may be up to 100 % in accordance with Articles 192 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 if full funding is essential for the action to be carried out. The essentiality of full funding will be justified by the responsible authorising officer in the award decision, in respect of the principles of equal treatment and sound financial management.

(e) Indicative trimester to launch the call

March-April 2015.

4.3.2. Procurement (direct management)

Subject	Type	Indicative number of contracts	Indicative trimester of launch of the procedure
Technical assistance, activities and support aiming at facilitating the implementation of the multilateral dimension of EaP, BSS and ND	Services	Up to 10	From last quarter of 2014 until last quarter of 2015

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

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act shall apply.

The responsible authorising officer may extend the geographical eligibility in accordance with Article 9(2)(b) of Regulation (EU) No. 232/2014 on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of products and services in the markets of the countries concerned, or other duly substantiated cases where the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

4.5. Indicative budget

Module	Amount in EUR	Third party contribution in EUR (indicative)
4.3.1. Calls for proposals (direct management)	1.5 million	0.25 million
4.3.2. Procurement (direct management)	4 million	N.A.
Totals	5.5 million	0.25 million

4.6. Performance monitoring

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

4.7. Evaluation and audit

Evaluations of the results achieved by some of the projects financed under this decision may be done by external experts hired by the European Commission as well as external audits at the

initiative of the Commission, if necessary. These evaluations and audits will be funded from other sources.

4.8. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

Communication, visibility and information activities are an integral part of this action, aiming at enhanced visibility and better understanding of EU-funded activities in the eastern neighbourhood and will form part of all contracts concluded under this action.

Communication and visibility measures shall be implemented either (a) by the Commission, and/or (b) by contractors, grant beneficiaries and entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.