

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-  
ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II 2014- mid-2016)**

<b>Recommendations, Final report</b>	<b>Responses, DG NEAR: (i) accepted or not, ii) actions to be undertaken</b>	<b>Follow up</b>
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<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b></p> <p>Under sectoral requirements, there is an increasing need for a longer-term perspective in implementation. In certain sectors, actions programmed could be increasingly implemented over several years, irrespective of whether they are financed under annual or multi-annual programmes. Explore the potential for wider deployment of such approach. If this assessment proves positive, commence preparations for its increased use after 2020, in line with the next programming period.</p> <p>a) Assessment of pre-conditions for a longer-term perspective in implementation taking into account beneficiary-specific conditions. This assessment would include level of adherence to sector approach and programming and implementation capacities of all the key stakeholders involved in IPA II.</p> <p>b) Consider practical progress in delivery of MAP (e.g. piloting) and reflect on lessons learned from those sectors which have a track record of delivery. Good experience has been made with multi-annual programmes for Rural Development (managed by DG AGRI) and Sector Operational Programmes (along the lines of the previous IPA I Components III and IV) now managed by DG NEAR. Develop an action plan for roll-out where assessments indicate this would be feasible.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: Mid of 2018.</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that complex reforms, in particular on the 'enlargement fundamentals' require long term commitments to support beneficiaries. Already many actions have been taken, including extending the implementation periods of actions. In this context, DG NEAR takes note of the recommendation made and agrees to consider more carefully the conditions under which the possibility to use more widely multi-annual programming could be made, also taking into account the findings of the on-going evaluation on the sector approach. On the other hand, it should be taken into account that the timeframes for programming and implementation of IPA are in many cases not suitable, due to fast evolving situations relating to crises, political changes, technological and other market changes. Rapid programming and implementation with easier and clearer rules and procedures is more favourable in this regard,</p> <p>As far as CBC between Western Balkans is concerned, following the ex-post evaluation published in April 2017, there is an on-going reflection on different options to optimize their implementation and increase their impact (e.g. increase of financial envelope, increase of size of actions, changes to the geographical scope, management mode etc.)</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <p><b>- Update the programming guidelines, notably to stress the need for operational units to consider more carefully the duration of interventions based on a realistic analysis of the time required to get the expected results. Specificities of CBC programmes will be reflected as well.</b></p>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p>
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<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b></p> <p>DG NEAR should clarify the sector planning approach with all relevant parties. The overall quality of the (work) documents used for sector approach planning should be improved.</p> <p>a) DG NEAR to convene a meeting of all EUDs and NIPACs at HQ to clarify the purpose of the sector planning documents (work documents and annexes) and its deployment as part of IPA II programming.</p> <p>b) DG NEAR to codify the outputs of this meeting into a set of concise guidelines that will be circulated to all relevant parties. EUDs and NIPACs to disseminate findings and guidelines.</p> <p>c) All existing work documents used for sector approach planning should be reviewed for their quality. This should be based on an assessment of their fitness-for-purpose, using external TA where necessary.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: Immediately. No later than mid 2018 for completion.</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that the (unofficial) role of the SPDs is not properly understood and the quality is variable, which creates difficulties for beneficiaries.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <p><b>- Discuss findings of the ongoing evaluation on Sector Approach with NIPACs and other relevant internal services in order for DG NEAR to come up with updated Programming Guidelines (which might not be ready in time for the 2018 programming exercise).</b></p>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p>
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<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b></p> <p>Adequate capacity to mainstream horizontal issues should be put in place in DG NEAR. This should, <i>inter alia</i>, involve optimising the capacities of the Centres of Thematic Expertise and other thematic cells in line with IPA II programming needs. CoTEs and those staff providing thematic expertise linked to issues such as Roma and gender should then work with programmers as early in the programme development phase as possible.</p> <p>a) Based on the Workload assessment exercise and the review of the terms of reference of CoTEs which took place in the second half of 2016, identify all the horizontal thematic areas that need to be mainstreamed into the IPA II programming based on the IPA II regulation.</p> <p>b) Identify the capacities of the individual CoTEs and other units/ staff in DG NEAR dealing with horizontal issues and employ/ re-deploy staff resources accordingly</p> <p>c) Develop guidelines on how these horizontal themes should be integrated <b>early</b> in the programming of IPA II, the role of the CoTEs and relevant units in this process, as well as the roles of the EUD/Os and NIPAC/SLIs. This should complement the changes made to the quality review process that have been recently adopted by DG NEAR.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: For immediate action. To be completed by mid of 2018.</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR has already made a lot of efforts in allocating resources to CoTEs and other thematic cells. A recent review of terms of reference and staffing level by DG NEAR has concluded that the current set up was adequate given the constraints on the overall level of resources and that additional resources should be allocated first to emerging country priorities within the DG.</p> <p>The recently adopted guidelines for quality support of ENI and IPA II programmes already take into account the need to incorporate the horizontal themes early into programming, specify the role of CoTEs and other actors.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Present guidelines at next HoFo meeting</li> <li>- Disseminate new guidelines to NIPACs</li> <li>- Update programming guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow-up</li> <li>• Comments (by who and by when)</li> </ul>
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<b>Recommendation 4:</b>	<b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b>	<b>Follow-up</b>
<p>A strategic vision for those countries under IMBC needs to be created as a basis for strengthening the capacities of the institutions involved in its delivery. These capacities should then be brought to the level needed to implement IMBC effectively. Cost effectiveness of IMBC needs to be fully assessed.</p> <p>a) Review the state of play in terms of performance and capacity of the IMBC in IPA II beneficiaries.</p> <p>b) Take a strategic decision on the deployment of the different management modes until end of IPA II period.</p> <p>c) Where weaknesses are apparent and the future use of IMBC is envisaged, capacity support should be programmed and provided continuously.</p> <p>d) Conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of the IMBC in each country where it is applied and take appropriate actions (<i>inter alia</i>, more realistic budget allocations to IMBC; alternative implementation modalities).</p> <p>e) In those countries where IMBC has not yet been established, this cost-benefit analysis should be conducted prior to any decision being made on the system's introduction.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: For immediate action. Completion by mid of 2018.</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>It should be noted that preparing countries for managing EU funds is a lengthy and complicated process which should not be underestimated. Compared to IPA, where the introduction of Decentralised Management was one of the main aims, under IPA II, "<i>the transition from direct management of pre-accession funds to indirect management by the beneficiaries [...] progressive and in line with the respective capacities of the beneficiaries</i>".</p> <p>Therefore, under IPA II, IMBC is generally used selectively taking into account the relevance for the sector (i.e more relevant in sectors which are precursors of the structural funds) and the beneficiaries' capacities to implement in IMBC.</p> <p>The state of play in terms of performance and capacity of the IMBC in the IPA II beneficiaries is continuously being assessed both through system audits as well as by the EUD in the context of ex-ante and ex-post controls and regular missions from DG NEAR HQ. A cost-benefit analysis is not relevant as the purpose of introducing IMBC is to prepare the beneficiaries to manage EU funds correctly.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <p><b>Formulate a clear strategy, based on a proper assessment of the situation, on the use of different management modes and update the programming guidelines accordingly.</b></p> <p><b>In the relevant cases, support the beneficiaries in setting up and manage IMBC.</b></p>	<p>Comments (by who and by when)</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b></p> <p>Weaknesses in monitoring systems and indicators at sector level need to be addressed on a systematic basis.</p> <p>a) Draft comprehensive guidance on the establishment of sector monitoring systems and circulate this to all relevant parties. These should build on existing guidance available from DG NEAR and in-country where this exists.</p> <p>b) DG NEAR to continuously support the NIPACs, EUDs and SLIs in reviewing and improving the sector performance indicators to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: For immediate action and thereafter on a continuous basis.</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>The problem is well known. DG NEAR has prepared new Guidelines and organised trainings also addressing staff from the national administration.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>continue disseminating Guidelines on Linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation;</b></li> <li>- <b>provide further guidance on monitoring to NIPAC and EC services;</b></li> <li>- <b>further develop the section on sector monitoring in the Guidelines on Linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation</b></li> <li>- <b>engage in a discussion on monitoring issues at the M&amp;E network meeting involving the NIPACs in Autumn;</b></li> <li>- <b>Update operational (Level 2) indicators where relevant in the Annex of the above-mentioned Guidelines;</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p>
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<b>Recommendation 6:</b>	<b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b>	<b>Follow-up</b>
<p>Coordination of IPA with EIDHR and IcSP planning/ programming activities should be improved at both, EC HQ and EUD levels. The DCI CSO/LA programme should be re-established in the IPA II beneficiaries and coordinated with IPA Civil Society Facility (CSF) for CSOs.</p> <p>a) At HQ level: Development of closer communication/ cooperation of the involved DG NEAR Units and CoTEs with the responsible DEVCO and FPI Services which are managing the EIDHR and IcSP.</p> <p>b) At beneficiary level: EUD staff responsible for the programming of Human Rights/ Democracy and Stability/ Peace IPA II actions/ programmes should closely cooperate with the hub officers of the EIDHR and IcSP in the beneficiary, thus ensuring improved coordination, complementarity and synergies of all potentially concerned actions.</p> <p>The implementation of the second part of this recommendation would involve the following:</p> <p>c) DG NEAR should assess the conditions and terms for a re-establishment of the DCI CSO/LA programme in the Western Balkans and Turkey.</p> <p>d) DG DEVCO should assess whether the DCI budget for the current period could still finance some CSO/LA programmes in the Western Balkans and Turkey.</p> <p>e) DG NEAR and DG DEVCO should commonly decide on the re-establishment of the programme in the Western Balkans and Turkey and how it would be coordinated with IPA.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: For immediate action.</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>A good degree of coordination and complementarity between the different instruments exists already. The Civil Society facility put in place for the Enlargement also addresses local authorities.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR to request Delegations, in their annual management plans and EAMR to outline how the various EFIs will be mobilised.</b></li> <li>- <b>DG NEAR to further work with DEVCO and FPI on strengthening synergies between IPA and IcSP/EIDHR</b></li> <li>- <b>propose coverage of IPA region by DCI CSO/LA (or future equivalent instrument) for the next MFF</b></li> </ul>	<p>Comments (by who and by when)</p>

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<b>Recommendation 7:</b>	<b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b>	<b>Follow-up</b>
<p>In IPA II beneficiaries where the National Authority assigned to donor coordination is weak and effective coordination poor, specific actions should be prepared and implemented for improving the Authority’s capacity and performance.</p> <p>a) Analysis of the reasons for the Coordinator’s weaknesses (lack of technical means – e.g. IT systems, inadequate organisation, lack of experienced/ trained staff, lack of political power, communication/ cooperation weakness, etc.).</p> <p>b) Development and implementation of an action plan addressing the causes of the weaknesses.</p> <p>c) Periodic review of the effectiveness of the coordination function and definition of further actions as needed.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: For immediate action and thereafter on a continuous basis.</p>	<p>This recommendation is considered mostly relevant for the national authorities</p> <p>DG NEAR partly accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>Lack of capacities and the fact that some donors are phasing out doesn't make donor coordination easy in the region, though some good experience exists in the Western Balkans. The Commission has already invested resources in setting up donors' coordination structures and already monitors their performance in the EAMR reports.</p> <p>For Turkey, actions by the EU have been undertaken vis-à-vis the TK side to improve donor coordination. The donor community in Turkey is small and even if Government coordination responsibilities have been set out clearly there is room for improvement.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <p>- <b>Instructions to be sent to Delegations for performing a diagnostic of the coordinator's strengths and weaknesses, and proposals for remedial actions, in terms of support offered to the national authorities. Replies to be due by December 2017.</b></p> <p>- <b>Report on actions implemented both by the national authorities, in terms of implementation, and by the EUD/O in terms of support provided to strengthen the present level of donor coordination.</b></p>	<p>Comments (by who and by when)</p>



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<p><b>Recommendation 8 (specific for Turkey):</b></p> <p>Based on a thorough prior analysis, IPA II funds should be channelled towards those sectors with a proven track record of delivering results under IPA I and where the planned results for IPA II are most likely to be achieved given current constraints.</p> <p>a) IPA funds should be primarily targeted to those sectors which demonstrate progress in sector compliance and strong absorption.</p> <p>b) For other sectors where efficiency problems are hampering delivery of assistance, programming of IPA II funds should be postponed until the current backlog of IPA I and II assistance is cleared.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: For immediate action and thereafter on a continuous basis.</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>Tough the sector approach is applicable in principle to all IPA II beneficiaries, the pace and number of sectors to which it can be applied depends on country specificities. Application of this approach has proven to be much more difficult in Turkey than in any of the Western Balkan countries. It needs to be noted overall that the work on the sector approach remains "work in progress" and at an introductory phase in Turkey. General consensus prevailed that the approach was applicable to enlargement. Nevertheless, in light of the specificity of the country's situation, it should be implemented in Turkey to the extent possible and where relevant,, also considering the stage of the reform process in Turkey. All in all, the Commission considers the sector approach and the incentive of sectorial changes better than a more fragmented project approach.</p> <p>-Capacity limitations persist for the absorption of funds which result in a serious contracting backlog and by extension in high amount of funds at risk of decommitment. For annual programming 2017, the Commission minimised the scope of activities under indirect management by the Turkish authorities to allow the services to concentrate on absorbing the current backlog.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <p>- <b>The Commission is currently analysing the way forward and will reflect this in the mid-term review of the Indicative Strategy Paper for Turkey and programming beyond 2018</b></p>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p>
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<b>Recommendation 9:</b>	<b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b>	<b>Follow-up</b>
<p>The experience and lessons learned from IPA I components III, IV and V should be utilised. Within Turkey this would be between the Operating Structures and the SLIs. This should be extended to IPA countries that are just now starting their programmes in these areas. Where appropriate, this exercise could also be conducted in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as it has also experience of these IPA I components.</p> <p>a) DG NEAR in collaboration with DG AGRI, DG EMPL and DG REGIO to facilitate the exchange of experiences from Turkey to other IPA countries preparing/ implementing Rural Development, Education, Employment and Social Policy MAPs.</p> <p>b) IPARD agencies to consider use of TAIEX instrument to support further exchanges to strengthen the capacities of these new IPARD agencies in areas of programming, implementation and monitoring of IPARD II assistance.</p> <p>c) Within Turkey, NIPAC and EUD to collaborate with the Managing Authorities from IPA I components IV and V to put in place a mechanism to enable transfer of experience that will strengthen SLIs' capacities to programme and monitor at sectoral level.</p> <p>Timeline for implementation: For immediate action and thereafter on a continuous basis</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>In countries where the implementation of former components III, IV and V has taken place under IPA I, this is already the case, to a good extent.</p> <p>Turkey. Strengthening of SLI's in programming and monitoring is undertaken following systems audits findings. Manuals and Operational Agreements of IPA structures shall be updated in this regard and to be used in practise accordingly.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <p><b>- organise a workshop with DG AGRI, EMPL and REGIO specifically addressing the lessons learned from programming with IPA III, IV and V relevant for implementation of sector approaches and multi-annual programming.</b></p>	<p>Comments (by who and by when)</p>