

Strategy for the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Objectives.....	2
3. Geographical eligibility.....	2
4. Priorities, operational objectives and indicative joint actions.....	3
5. Target groups	5
6. Financial framework.....	5
7. Programme management structures.....	6
7.1. Joint Operational Programmes (JOPs)	6
7.2. Joint Decision Making Committee (JDMC).....	6
7.3. Managing Authority (MA)	7
8. Timeline.....	7
9. Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Support Programme.....	7

1. INTRODUCTION

The Joint Communication 'A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood' of 25 May 2011¹ highlights cross border cooperation between the Eastern Partnership countries as one of the instruments to tackle economic disparities between regions and raise the quality of life across the area in a sustainable manner. Territorial cooperation between the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries complements pilot regional development programmes (PRDPs) as well as other EU-funded actions, which promote a strategy-based, inclusive approach to reduce economic and social regional disparities and realise regional (hence national) economic potential.² In the Joint Declaration of the Warsaw Eastern Partnership summit of 29-30 September 2011,³ the participants acknowledged multilateral cooperation and recalled that the Eastern Partnership could help develop closer ties between the partner countries themselves.

The ENPI Regional East Programme Strategy Paper 2010-2013 and Indicative Programme 2010-2013 identify territorial cooperation in partner countries as one of the sub-priorities of the Priority Area 2 "Economic Development". In this context, the European Commission has allocated EUR 12.5 million for bilateral territorial cooperation programmes between the EaP countries [Commission Implementing Decision C(2013) 8293 of 22.11.2013].

This Strategy for the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes, developed by the European Commission in consultation with the Partner countries, outlines priorities, eligible regions, target groups, financial framework and the management setup for the territorial cooperation Programmes between Ukraine and Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia and Georgia and Azerbaijan funded by the European Union.

The Strategy sets the framework for preparing and implementing territorial cooperation actions.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of each EaP Territorial Cooperation Programme is to promote sustainable territorial cooperation between the participating border regions (see Section 3) to support their social and economic development. The specific objective is to strengthen cross border contacts between local authorities, communities and civil society organisations to help develop joint solutions to common social and economic development challenges in the said regions.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL ELIGIBILITY

The EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes will cover the following eligible territorial units:

- **Ukraine-Belarus** Programme
Belarus: Brest and Gomel oblasts
Ukraine: Volyn, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Kyiv and Chernigiv oblasts
- **Moldova – Ukraine** Programme
Moldova: the whole country's territory
Ukraine: Chernivtsi, Vinnytsya and Odesa oblasts
- **Georgia – Armenia** Programme
Georgia: Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions
Armenia: Shirak, Lori and Tavush regions (marzes)

¹ COM(2011) 303 final, 25.5.2011

² SWD(2012) 109 final, 15.5.2012

³ Council of the European Union, 14983/11, 30.09.2011

- **Georgia- Azerbaijan** Programme
Georgia: Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions
Azerbaijan: Ganja-Gazakh and Sheki-Zaqatala economic regions

4. PRIORITIES, OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INDICATIVE JOINT ACTIONS

The EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes address local development needs that will be specified in the Joint Operational Programmes (JOPs) (see sub-section 7.1). Participating countries will define the programmes' priorities based on their specific geographical, economic, social, cultural and environmental situation. These priorities will be addressed by small-scale cross border projects between local partners that will be selected via calls for proposals.

An indicative and non-exhaustive list of operational objectives, priorities and joint actions is provided below. The EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes do not have to address all of them. They will indicate the selected priorities and actions that they intend to implement in the JOP.

I. Improving the living conditions of local communities in the border regions through joint projects supporting economic and social development

Examples of priorities that the programmes can address under operational objective I:

- Enhance the competitiveness of local economies by (i) improving business services such as access to regulatory information (taxes, customs, market entry and exit); (ii) establishing cross border business networks and (iii) providing training to local entrepreneurs;
- Develop joint touristic routes based on common natural resources as well as historic and cultural heritage;
- Develop common solutions to social issues in the border regions, notably youth unemployment and "brain drain," access to education, health care and social protection services at local level.

Examples of actions:

- Joint initiatives for SME/business/agriculture/rural development, including establishment of business links and entrepreneurial networks;
- Social projects to meet the needs of local communities in relation to education and social services;
- Identification and preparation of joint development and planning concepts;
- Feasibility studies and development of application packages in preparation of infrastructure projects provided the availability of funds for building the infrastructure can be demonstrated;
- Small-scale infrastructure contributing to better connectivity/accessibility of the border regions;
- Development of joint tourism routes and services and strategies.

II. Addressing common challenges in the fields of environment, employment, public and animal health and any other field of common interest having a cross border dimension

Examples of priorities that the programmes can address under operational objective II:

- Promote common management of protected areas and natural resources by exchanging information, coordinating protection measures and measures to reduce air and water pollution affecting the neighbouring region(s);

- Enhance cooperation between emergency services across the borders to address common challenges such as trans-boundary floods, forest fires, air and water pollution;
- Establish and develop direct contacts among local and regional organisations and professionals across the borders.

Examples of actions:

- Joint monitoring and management of natural resources (e.g. water) and protected areas;
- Establishment of systems for exchanging cross-border environmental data;
- Joint or coordinated actions to fight pollution and mitigate negative impacts of economic activity;
- Development of border small-scale environmental infrastructure;
- Joint actions in the fields of waste management, energy saving;
- Awareness raising public campaigns on environmental issues in the border regions;
- Joint strategies and actions for rehabilitating contaminated sites;
- Joint actions for promoting cooperation of local and regional environmental organisations;
- Enhancement of local and regional preparedness to manage natural and man-made disasters;
- Co-operation between emergency services including joint studies and joint training actions;
- Joint activities to mitigate the impact of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant catastrophe (specific to the Ukraine-Belarus programme);
- Joint actions to improve education, health and social services as well as co-operation between institutions and professionals providing these services;
- Joint strategies/pilot projects on social assistance to and adaptation of vulnerable and marginalised social groups; supporting the integration of vulnerable groups in cooperation activities;
- Co-operation in preventing, monitoring and treating communicable diseases.

III. Culture, education and sports

Examples of priorities that the programmes can address under operational objective III:

- Promote common cultural/sports events and meetings as means of bringing people from the border regions together;
- Increase cooperation and communication between organisations across the border;
- Promote cultural diversity.

Particular importance will be attached to people-to-people actions aimed at strengthening contacts at local level under the three aforesaid priorities.

Examples of actions:

- Enhancing cultural cooperation (e.g. cooperation between institutions, supporting cultural exchanges of young people, preserving cultural heritage);
- Development of traditional handicrafts;
- Increase information exchange (e.g. common information about the entire border area, cooperation networks between information professionals)

- Joint cultural and historical studies and research activities as well as establishing common databases/registers of cultural objects.
- Small-scale renovation of cultural and historical heritage objects;
- Promote educational cooperation (e.g. common educational programmes);
- Joint sport events and other actions to enhance recreational and leisure opportunities for youth;
- Enhance cooperation between institutions (e.g. basic communication and cooperation agreements).

5. TARGET GROUPS

Project beneficiaries can be:

- **State actors:** local and regional authorities and public service providers such as hospitals, educational, research and cultural institutions, communal service providers and associations.
- **Non-state actors:** civil society organisations (CSOs) in all their diversity such as independent political and research foundations, citizens' initiatives and unions, youth organisations and SME associations.

National decision makers interested in promoting territorial cooperation with the neighbouring countries also constitute a stakeholder group. This group comprises members of legislative and executive bodies in charge of economic, regional and, where appropriate, infrastructure development as well as environment. Representatives of this group will assist in defining the priorities and measures of the respective territorial cooperation programmes.

Each EaP Territorial Cooperation Programme shall include both state and non-state actors. Stakeholders must be able to prepare and successfully implement projects to receive support from the territorial cooperation programmes. Detailed eligibility and quality requirements will be defined in the JOPs as well as guidelines for applicants.

The EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes will only support non-profit activities.

6. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

The total budget for the four EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes amounts to EUR 9.3 million. An indicative allocation of funds, based on the population, economic and social development levels and absorption capacity of the eligible regions, is provided below:

Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programme	Budget allocation (million EUR)
Ukraine-Belarus	3.30
Moldova-Ukraine	3.30
Georgia-Armenia	1.35
Georgia-Azerbaijan	1.35
Total	9.30

The actual allocation of funds may deviate from the above depending on the number, quality and scope of the project applications submitted within each EaP Territorial Cooperation Programme. Deviations shall be approved by the European Commission based on a recommendation by the Managing Authority (MA) (see sub-section 7.3).

The European Union's contribution to the selected projects shall not exceed 90 per cent of the total project eligible costs. Project beneficiaries shall co-finance at least 10 per cent of the eligible costs.

7. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

7.1. Joint Operational Programmes (JOPs)

The participating countries will prepare a Joint Operational Programme (JOP) describing (i) the common challenges that they intend to jointly address in the eligible border regions, (ii) the objectives, priorities and actions, (iii) the indicative allocation of available funds among priorities, (iv) the eligibility criteria for applicants and projects and (v) the programme implementation modalities and monitoring provisions.⁴

The JOP will be approved by the Joint Decision Making Committee (JDMC) (see sub-section 7.2) and agreed with the European Commission.

The EaP Territorial Cooperation Support Programme (see section 9) may support the partner countries in preparing the JOP. The MA will be consulted throughout the process.

The European Commission will appoint the MA for the four EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes. The participating countries will establish a JDMC for each of them.

7.2. Joint Decision Making Committee (JDMC)

The JDMC will bring together representatives of the central government, local authorities and CSOs – including members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society national platform – of each participating country. Representatives of the European Union, the MA and the EaP Territorial Cooperation Support Programme can participate in the JDMC meetings as observers on their own initiative. The JDMC will ensure ownership of the programme by the participating regions.

The JDMC shall perform the following functions:

- Approve the JOP describing objectives and priorities of the territorial cooperation programme;
- Decide on the optimal allocation of the programme resources to the territorial cooperation priorities;
- Be consulted on any amendment of the programme proposed by the European Commission and/or GIZ as the MA appointed by the European Commission in the Delegation Agreement between the European Commission and GIZ of 16.12.2013;
- Be consulted, together with the European Commission, on the guidelines for applicants prepared by the MA;
- Take the final decision on the project evaluation results, which will have to be confirmed by the European Commission;
- Review the progress in the programme implementation;
- Review the reports submitted by the MA.

A JDMC may be established in the framework of bilateral inter-governmental commissions on economic cooperation between the participating countries or in any other form the participating countries may deem appropriate. It is important to ensure a balanced representation of national, regional and local authorities as well as CSOs in the JDMCs.

⁴ When appropriate, regional and/or local development planning documents should serve as a reference. The level of consistency between the joint operational programmes and the relevant national/local strategies should be described.

The JDMCs, assisted by the EaP Territorial Cooperation Support Programme, will consult stakeholders to define the priorities of each EaP Territorial Cooperation Programme to be included in the JOP. They will ensure a balanced participation of national regional and local authorities in the consultations. The ownership of the process by local and regional authorities as well as CSOs shall be ensured.

7.3. Managing Authority (MA)

The EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes will be implemented in indirect centralised management by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), which will be the MA.

The MA shall be responsible for the operational and financial implementation of the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

The MA can sign grant contracts with beneficiaries only after the European Commission has approved the final list of projects selected for funding.

The European Commission and the MA will act in an advisory capacity to the JDMCs.

8. TIMELINE

Indicative calendar for the preparation and launch of the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes:

Stakeholders' consultations to identify the programmes' priorities	September - October 2013
Setting up of the Joint Decision-Making Committees	November 2013
European Commission's Financing Decision	22 November 2013
Adoption of the Joint Operational Programmes	April/May 2014
Publication of the calls for proposals	June/July 2014

The indicative implementation period of the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes is 60 months, subject to modifications to be agreed by the European Commission and the MA. This period runs from the signature of the delegation agreement between the European Commission and GIZ to the closure of the programmes.

The maximum implantation period of the selected projects will be set in the guidelines for each call for proposals. Projects will be implemented within the abovementioned period and activities will have to be finalised prior to the closure of the programmes.

9. EASTERN PARTNERSHIP TERRITORIAL COOPERATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The European Commission launched the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Territorial Cooperation Support Programme in December 2012 to (a) create conducive environment to the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes, and to (b) strengthen the capacity of local and regional state and non-state actors to develop and implement territorial cooperation projects.

The EaP Territorial Cooperation Support Programme has carried out a detailed mapping study of the potential project beneficiaries described in Section 5 and produced their baseline capacity analysis. Besides, it has implemented a specific capacity building plan to prepare stakeholders for programme development and implementation. JDMC members may consult the EaP Territorial Cooperation Support Programme on any aspect related to the preparation and implementation of the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes. In addition to the capacity building role, the EaP Territorial Cooperation Support Programme has been tasked to conduct communication and visibility activities to raise public awareness of the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes in general as well as of opportunities for stakeholders to join activities.