



Cross Border Institution Building – CBIB+2
The IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme



This is a project
funded by the European Union

22 February 2018

Starting up Technical Working Group no. 4 Post 2020 IPA CBC

1. Introduction and background

At the 5th CBC Regional Consultative Forum held in Struga (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) on 17-18 October 2017, there was a session in which DG NEAR representatives discussed different options affecting the strategic orientation of the 2021-2027 CBC programmes between IPA beneficiary countries. In the proceedings, it was emphasised that the upcoming generation of CBC programmes should be better prepared by taking on board the lessons learned and was suggested that their preparation should be carried out through a debate among beneficiary countries and the European Commission.

This note aims to serve as introduction and incentive for the establishment of a technical working group facilitated by the CBIB+2 project team to discuss the foregoing options of the post-2020 IPA CBC programmes.

Further down, we will first recall what the purpose, characteristics and functions of such a technical group would be, the names of those who have volunteered or been appointed to participate in the discussions of the group and the way in which these discussions should lead to an agreement that could be carried out in all of the CBC programmes involving bilaterally the following Beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Kosovo*.

Further to a long process of consultations and comments on the text, the CBIB+ project team submitted to discussion the final draft of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) during the 2nd Forum held in Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina) on 11-12 September 2014, when all Beneficiaries acknowledged the benefit of regional coordination and harmonisation of practices in the implementation of CBC programmes and accepted to participate in the proceedings of the Forum, and, where required, in the technical/thematic working groups (TWGs) that would be created under its umbrella.

2. Purpose of the TWG

As it is stated in the latest version of the RoP, “the purpose of the TWG lays on the professional exchange of best practices and the identification of bottlenecks. The

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

issuance of guidelines, the endorsement of templates and the adoption of decisions with programme implementation consequences are the prerogative of the EC”.

Within the present TWG, the participants aspire to

1. examine the pros and cons of the following four strategic options for the post-2020 IPA CBC programmes:
 - **Option 1a:** the current set-up of the IPA II CBC programmes is maintained (i.e. bilateral CBC programmes) and the financial allocation of the programme is increased to fund more sizeable projects;
 - **Option 1b:** The current set-up of the IPA II CBC programmes is maintained but with a revised geographical and programmatic coverage (i.e. trilateral or quadrilateral programmes), as well as an increased financial allocation that would allow funding more sizeable projects;
 - **Option 2:** The management of the programmes is centralised by one single management or contracting authority at regional level, while the financial allocation of the programme is increased to fund more sizeable projects;
 - **Option 3:** The CBC programmes are integrated into national sector programmes or in multi-country programmes and their financial allocation is increased for more sizeable projects;
2. compile their observations and, if appropriate, **formulate additional viable options or specific variants of any of them**;
3. agree on some suggestions or recommendations for the implementation of the preferred option or options; and
4. put forward a plan for the preparation of future IPA CBC programmes.

The TWG will start scrutinizing the ‘benefits’ and ‘disadvantages/risks’ associated with each of the options as DG NEAR has already done, to wit:

☐ **Option 1a:**

- Value of the project grant (small scale grants vs larger ones) and (optimum) programme budget;
- Institutional simplification and streamlining;
- Introducing strategic projects (e.g. through a dedicated call);
- Possibilities for increasing co-financing (i.e. by up to 5%);
- Possible reduction in the costs for technical assistance.

☐ **Option 1b:**

- Geographical delineation of CBC areas and number/type (bilateral, trilateral, multilateral, etc.) of programmes;
- Value of the project grant (small scale grants vs larger ones) and (optimum) programme budget;
- Introducing strategic projects (e.g. through a dedicated call);
- Institutional simplification and streamlining;
- Possible reduction in the costs for technical assistance.

❑ **Option 2:**

- Ways of ensuring the cross-border (as against a transnational or inter-regional) character of the supported actions.
- Scope for maintaining a degree of ownership and learning/capacity building for the IPA countries.

❑ **Option 3:**

- Ways of ensuring the cross-border character of the supported actions.

The depth in which the practical issues should be considered under each option, should take stock of the preference indicated by DG NEAR that:

- IPA-IPA CBC programmes should continue “as a distinct element of pre-accession assistance in the next financial perspective”; and
- in order to simplify the complex institutional set-up and maximise effectiveness and value for money, there should be a move towards more standardisation and streamlining of programme management and that this would be facilitated by the application of a “multi-border” approach.

For the discussion of the pros and cons of the different options to be effective, participants will have to keep in mind the general goals of the CBC programmes under IPA II and the recommendations of the 2007-2013 evaluation of the programmes that DG NEAR has summarised as the following six criteria:

- political dialogue / better neighbourly relations;
- development of cross-border areas;
- administrative simplification / efficiency;
- improved use of the EU funds;
- increased programme visibility;
- more focus for better and clear programme impact.

Please note that all these criteria could be extended, redefined or prioritised.

Finally, the TWG would need to take into account some major factors which are going to become clearer in the course of 2018: (1) the extent to which key recommendations of the 2007-2013 evaluation – notably those concerning the establishment of an effective performance framework – are adopted in the current programming period; and (2) the future financial envelope for IPA and by implication the CBC programmes in the context of the multi-annual financial framework (MFF)

for the post 2020 period. Initial indications are expected to emerge with the proposals of the Commission which are due in May 2018.

3. Characteristics and functions of the TWGs

The characteristics and functions of the TWGs are as follows:

- They have no official seat.
- The means of work and communication is the on-line e-forums at the CBIB+ website¹, and occasionally simple electronic correspondence or a video conference. If the participants opt for holding an exceptional meeting, these will be organised in each of the territories of the participating Beneficiaries on a rotating basis.
- English will be the official language for the proceedings.
- Depending on the theme and the availability of staff, the management structures of the beneficiaries or the contracting authorities (CAs) may appoint one or two members each.
- Minutes, conclusions or outputs will be circulated to the OSs, CAs and the Commission by the administrative secretariat, that is, the CBIB+2 project team, who will prepare the agenda, distribute documents for discussion and draft minutes or any follow-up strategy, in coordination with the chairperson or moderator of the TWG.
- A chairperson or moderator on a voluntary basis may discharge this duty for six months, or shorter if an agreement has been reached by the TWG members before the end of his or her term. In the event that the discussion is channeled through the CBIB+ forum, the chairperson or moderator is supposed to steer and follow up the discussions, keep them focused, help to reach consensus when serious discrepancies appear and draft conclusions, with the assistance of the secretariat.

4. Names of those who have volunteered to participate in the discussions of the group

The members of the TWG should be high ranking civil servants (one per beneficiary), capable to provide inputs, comments and contribute to decisions and/or agreements corresponding to their responsibility (i.e. during an event). To date, the following individuals have manifested their willingness to participate in the discussion of the TWG:

¹ Please note that you have to log-in first at <http://www.cbibplus.eu/user>, where you will have to type in your username and password. Afterwards, you will have to select <http://www.cbibplus.eu/forums/general-discussion> and then click at that webpage on the link titled *performance management – impact assessment methodology (IPA II)*.

Subject of the TWG	Names of the participants
1. Fourth TWG: the post-2020 IPA CBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Gentian Xhaxhiu, Head of Unit, Department for EU Funds, Territorial Cooperation Unit, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Albania • Mr Tarik Džajić, Programme Manager, Directorate for European Integration, Bosnia-Herzegovina • Ms Mjellma Mehmeti-Pertersen, Head of the Operating Structure, Ministry of Local Self-government, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia • Ms Vjosa Shehu, CBC Coordinator, Ministry of Local Government Administration, Kosovo • Mr Miodrag Račeta, Director, Directorate for European Territorial Cooperation, Ministry for European Affairs, Montenegro • Ms Nina Dakić, Programme Manager, Directorate for European Territorial Cooperation, Ministry for European Affairs, Montenegro • Ms Snežana Novković, Programme Manager, Ministry of European Integration, Serbia • Mr Branimir Mitrović, Advisor at the HOS support unit, Ministry of European Integration, Serbia

5. Planned steps

1. Registration of the participants at the CBIB+ website and e-forums.

Target date: **16 February 2018**.

Please find enclosed the CBIB+ e-forum instructions for your reference.

2. Exchange of opinions on a background note on the options for the post-2020 generation of CBC programmes, using for reference the minutes of the CBC Regional Consultative Forum held in Struga in October 2017. The note will be circulated after the registration deadline.

Target date **23 March 2018**.

3. A regional workshop under the auspices of DG NEAR and DG REGIO, with contributions from Interact and CBIB+2.

Target date **April-May 2018**.

4. Draft final conclusions and possible agreement on the preferred option, which is elaborated in detail: Target date **22 June 2018**.

5. Presentation of these conclusions and agreements: at the next Regional Consultative Forum to be held tentatively in **late September/October 2018 (to be confirmed)**.

6. Final conclusions and agreement: **end September or first half of October 2018, based on the next Regional event.**
7. Circulation of any output: **end of October 2018.**

Encl Note for file on the options for the post-2020 generation of CBC programmes
 CBIB+ user instructions for the e-forums