**Strategic orientation for the post – 2020 generation of CBC programmes**

**QUESTIONNAIRES ANALYSIS**

**Multiple stakeholders:**

**grant beneficiaries, operating structures, Delegations of the European Union, joint technical secretariats, members of the joint monitoring committees**

# Introduction

In order to discuss the strategic orientation for the post-2020 generation of CBC programmes, the CBIB+ Phase II project team designed a questionnaire to serve as research tool. The questionnaire was circulated among the staff of joint technical secretariats (JTSs), members of the joint monitoring committees (JMCs), representatives of grant beneficiaries (GBs), programme managers at Delegations of European Union (DEUs) and officials of the operating structures (OSs) in order to collect, analyze and present their views. The questions sounded the opinion of the respondents on many aspects including programme focus (thematic priorities, specific objectives, possible impact, strategic project calls), programme funding (increase of financial allocations, grant size ranges, increase of applicants’ co-financing percentage) and ended enquiring about the best option for the post-2020 generation of CBC programmes.

The project team with assistance from JTSs and OSs managed to collect 76 questionnaires filled out by JMC members, 34 by JTS staff, 67 by GBs and 29 by staff of the OSs and representatives of the DEUs, in total 206 questionnaires.

This document features the analysis of the opinions expressed by all the above mentioned stakeholders and presents conclusions, summaries and some additional and very valuable individual inputs on specific questions and options for the future programmes.

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# QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENTS

The questionnaires contained 9 questions which are regrouped by theme for analytical purposes as follows:

**Questions** **targeting programme focus**

* Q.1 – Do you think that the thematic priorities of future calls should have a more restricted scope?
* Q.2 – Do you think that the specific objectives of the first call under your programme were focused enough?
* Q.3 – Taking into account the thematic priorities and the specific objectives of the first call, do you think that the CBC programme will be able to have a tangible impact on the population of the eligible area?
* Q.4 – Would it help to establish partnerships and plan the preparation of a project proposal if the contracting authority of the CBC programme would publish in advance a work plan including the launch of all calls with their thematic priorities and specific objectives?
* Q.5 – Would you also consider strategic project calls as a possibility? If yes, please check below what could be appropriate for you

**Questions** **regarding programme funding**

* Q.6 – Do you think that the availability of more EU funding per CBC call for proposals will increase the impact of the programme?
* Q.7 – Which of the following EU grant size ranges you would consider optimal for most of the partnerships under your programme?
* Q.8 – Currently the maximum percentage of co-financing that the EU can offer under the CBC programmes is 85 % of the total eligible costs of the operation. If this percentage were 80 %, would you deem this a major obstacle for applicants?

**Question regarding the best opinion for the post-2020 programmes**

* Q.9 – Which of the following options for the post-2020 generation of CBC programmes do you think that has more pros than cons and would be your first choice?

# OPINIONS ON TARGETING PROGRAMME FOCUS

## **Q.1 – Do you think that the thematic priorities of future calls should have a more restricted scope?**

## **Q.2 – Do you think that the specific objectives of the first call under your programme were focused enough?**

The opinion of the JMC, JTS, GB, OS and DEU staffers regarding the focus of programmes, namely their thematic priorities and objectives for future calls, is presented in the infographic below.

Only 18% of them found that the future calls should have a more restricted scope (chart no. 1) and when it comes to evaluating the first call under the programme, 94% believed that the specific objectives were focused enough. It can be therefore concluded that the opinion of these stakeholders is that the thematic priorities of the future calls should not have a more restricted scope and the method for defining specific objectives should not be altered.

*Chart no.1. Thematic priorities of future calls should have a more restricted scope?*

Chart no.2. Specific objectives of the first call under our programme were focused enough?

Out of 36 respondents to the question No. 1 who positively replied to the question, meaning they agreed that thematic priorities should have a more restricted scope in the future, 29 gave further explanations on their opinion. Some of their comments are presented below:

* *“In our opinion the thematic priorities are set too wide. A more restricted scope would lead to better results and facilitate the achievement of objectives.”*
* *“Because of the large number of 'soft projects' that do not deliver results, it is important to make impact in the programme area.”*
* *“Because there are plenty of other national and supranational instruments that overlap with the priorities”*
* *“One call, one or two priorities.”*
* *“The future calls should be more focused and foster tangible results. The list of activities within the thematic priority should be narrowed and thematic priority within CfP found”*
* *“Only way to produce results on a programme level.”*
* *“To be focused on some sectors i.e. food production, improving local tourism offer, small scale infrastructure in tourism.”*
* *“The main priority should be increase of employment and vocational training “*
* *“Thematic priorities/specific objectives should be defined taking into account the amount of funding available.”*

Comments on question 2, from those respondents who stated that the specific objectives of the 1st call under the programme were focused enough (94%), are as follows:

* *“The thematic priorities from the first call are the same as the programme priorities. The mentioned priorities and specific objectives are focused enough for the first call, but we need to be more restricted in strategic orientation. Better targeting of specific objectives and priorities would lead to better results in future. “*
* *“1. Dual education 2. Working limited time in other state over border”*
* *“Better to have more focused when funding is available to increase impact.”*

A few respondents out of the 6% who found the specific objectives of the first call not to have been focused enough, gave further explanations as follows:

* *“Too much capacity building actions”*
* *“Planning in the future should take into account a decreasing scope of specific objectives of the calls, aiming at results production.”*
* *“There were so many issues to tackle so it was expectable that the programmes are not going to be focused enough.”*

## **Q.3 – Taking into account the thematic priorities and the specific objectives of the first call, do you think that the CBC programme will be able to have a tangible impact on the population of the eligible area?**

When evaluating the impact of the first call regarding the thematic priorities and specific objectives, 92% believe that the CBC programme will be able to have a tangible impact on the population of the eligible area, as it is shown in the chart no. 3.

*Chart No. 3.**Taking into account the thematic priorities and the specific objectives of the first call, do you think that the CBC programme will be able to have a tangible impact on the population of the eligible area?*

Comments of the respondents who believed that the CBC programme would have a tangible impact on the population of the eligible area are as follows:

* *“Taking into account first call, the CBC programme will be able to have a tangible impact, but (…) the strategic orientation for the next calls needs to be more focused and restricted in defining priorities and specific objectives.”*
* *“It is expected that the CBC programme will produce a tangible impact on the population of the eligible area; however, more precise assumption in this regard will be possible after results of the 1st CfP are known.”*
* *“To a certain extent, as the large impact of CBC assets cannot be expected.”*
* *“Absolutely yes! Results and Recommendations of the project on the framework of IPA-I Program has been useful with a positive impact of the eligible areas (…)”*

Comments of the respondents who expressed their doubts regarding the impact are as follows:

* *“The answer 'No' refers to 1st TP (and SO) in the area of employment issues.”*
* *“Difficult to establish on the basis of thematic priorities (TP) and strategic objectives (SO) - this rather depends on the type, number and QUALITY of awarded projects.”*
* *“I don't think the outputs of the selected projects will affect the population but only certain groups.”*
* *“Such prediction is not reliable prior to the insight into the project.”*
* *“The focus is on procedures, bureaucracy and not on results production.”*
* *“Thematic priorities and the specific objectives are clear enough; however, the selected projects are very soft and weak.”*
* *“So far we are not seeing or hearing any impact, hopefully within the next years”*
* *“Not in the way it has been conceptualized now”*

## **Q.4 –** **Would it help to establish partnerships and plan the preparation of a project proposal if the contracting authority of the CBC programme would publish in advance a work plan including the launch of all calls with their thematic priorities and specific objectives?**

*Chart No. 4. Would it help to establish partnerships and plan the preparation of a project proposal if the contracting authority of the CBC programme would publish in advance a work plan including the launch of all calls with their thematic priorities and specific objectives?*

From the chart no. 4 it can be concluded that publishing a work plan in advance which includes the launch of all calls with their thematic priorities and specific objectives, would help establishing partnerships and planning the preparation of project proposal, as it was stated by 96% of the respondents of the questionnaires.

This question was not additionally commented by the respondents.

## **Q.5 –** **Would you also consider strategic project calls as a possibility? If yes, please check below what could be appropriate for you**

Charts no. 5 and 5.1 show the opinion on the strategic project calls where 77% would consider them as a possibility. When asked what would be appropriate for them, the majority of respondents (128) stated they would prefer a combination of usual calls but for small scale projects with call/s for strategic projects, less respondents (27) stated it should refer only to calls for strategic projects while only three (3) respondents had another suggestion.

*Chart no. 5.1. Would you also consider strategic project calls as a possibility?*

*Chart no. 5.2. What could be appropriate for you regarding strategic calls?*

Comments given by the respondents to the question regarding the strategic projects calls are as follows:

* *“Only to be left in the OP as a possibility, not a major tool and not dominant over the ordinary projects. JMC monitors programme implementation and can take the decision on this when it is the right course of action.”*
* *“Good for reaching thematic priorities which can't be reached; serve as a reserve but are already defined in the programme document.”*

# OPINION REGARDING PROGRAMME FUNDING

## **Q.6 –** **Do you think that the availability of more EU funding per CBC call for proposals will increase the impact of the programme?**

As presented in chart no. 6, the vast majority of respondents stated that they think that the availability of more EU funding per CBC call for proposals would increase the impact of the programme.

Out of 199 replies to this question, 193 were positive while only 6 were negative. At the same time, this question had the greatest number of comments (102) when compared to all other questions from the questionnaire.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| More EU funds will increase project impact | Responses | Comments which refer to responses Yes/No |
| Yes | 193 (97%) | 99 |
| No | 6 (3%) | 3 |

These 102 comments were divided into those which referred to ‘Yes’ as an answer to the question (99) and only 3 which referred to ‘No’. In order to get better understanding of the respondents’ opinion, their comments were analysed and some were selected to better illustrate their responses.

Most of the 99 positive comments could be summarized by the words of one of the respondents as “more money = more music”. Some of the comments were only stating that the more funds are invested, the more projects there will be, but this also refers to other aspects which would be gained. How more funding would contribute to higher impact and what could be achieved was conveyed by the following respondents’ comments:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| More EU funds = | *“more activities; more targets; more awarded projects; more complex projects and wider target groups; larger number of stakeholders; opportunities for more infrastructure projects; involving a bigger number of beneficiaries; more sustainable results; more benefit; more investment projects; more promotion, more transparency and more public activities; higher project visibility; strengthening of the beneficiaries’ capacities; projects quality increased due to more applications”, “realization of main regional development priorities”*, etc. |

Besides these comments, there were some which referred to ‘*multiple benefits’* which would be gained with more funding, others regarding *the possibility to have sufficient funds for more projects which obtain high scores on evaluations, and which previously did not reach implementation due to insufficient funds* and other comments which referred to the *harmonization of the funding opportunities with other EU Interreg programmes*.

Some respondents stated that there would be multiple benefits from the increase of funding, and therefore more impact of the CBC programme. The comments were as follows:

* “*Increased funding for CBC will provide opportunity for more projects to be financed thus better achievement of the expected results. Moreover, it will be encouraging for beneficiaries to participate in more calls for proposals and to obtain significant project management experience as a practical preparation mechanism for future effective utilization of EU Cohesion Funds. Since CBC programmes are available to local level institutions with rather limited knowledge and skills in EU funding, it will significantly boost administrative capacities on local and regional level of governance and other local institutions/organizations.”*
* *“Regular funding builds local capacities, with the information that if their performance has continuous impact, the funds will increase, the local actors will continue to work on their local strategies and people will stay in the country.”*
* *“(…) more funds at disposal can bring to a stronger exchange of good practices and strengthen the EU influence in the area.”*
* *“Availability of more EU funds will give the possibility to support projects that are of great importance for improving the life of citizens but are very costly/expensive (improving water supply/efficiency, energy efficiency, infrastructure, etc.)”*

Some respondents selected ‘Yes’ as an answer but also expressed their doubts and gave valuable recommendations as follows:

* *“Only in the following areas: social inclusion, gender/age discrimination, employment.”*
* *“Yes and no. If the CBC focus is well defined, then the interest to apply as well as the impact on the problem will eventually stay the same or increase.”*
* *“There will be more investment projects, so needed in some border areas (…). Till now a lot of soft projects have been implemented that now they started to overlap and repeat.”*
* *“My opinion according the EU and country regional developed in Albania is: the Bilateral project s of Albania with Greece, Montenegro, Macedonia, Slovenia, Austria, Turkey and Kosovo on the framework of different EU programs like, PECO, INTERREG, IPA / IPA Adriatic and projects founded from the Ministries responsible for the science, research and technologies are more effective for the WBC; at the same time the outputs of such kind of projects are very important for the EU project idea…”*
* *“Always when there is funding, there is positive development, but with the condition that the funding go where and as planned and strictly audited. So, if this condition is met, we think that the availability of more EU funding would surely increase the impact of the programme.”*

Three respondents who stated that the availability of more EU funding per CBC call for proposals would not increase the impact of the programme, gave the following comments:

* *“More that the fund availability, the increase of the programme's impact has to come from a well-studied analysis of the programme area needs.”*
* *“Although we have limited funds, the project pipeline is poor.”*
* *“The following issues must be taken into consideration: Many interlinked competencies of various state, local and regional institutions, regulations and competencies. Lack of planning and technical documentation on both sides of the border. Insufficiently developed civil sector. Temporary long procedures for providing technical and planning documentation in national institutions.”*

## **Q.7 – Which of the following EU grant size ranges you would consider optimal for most of the partnerships under your programme?**

When it comes to grant size, the respondents expressed their opinion as presented in the chart no. 7, where the optimal grant ranges for most partnerships under their programme were ‘between € 100 000 and € 200 000’ and ‘between € 250 000 and € 500 000’. This was followed by the range ‘between € 500 000 and € 1 million’ preferred by 32 respondents while other ranges had less supporters.

*Chart No. 7. Selected EU grant size ranges*

Respondents gave some further comments to the ranges selected as follows:

* *“The range entailing more than € 1 million should be available for strategic projects.”*
* *“Over €* *250 000, while the maximum grant size should depend on the priority.”*
* *“Different sizes of grants for different type of projects (and duration of projects). Also, introduction of preparation facility!”*
* *“Between € 100 000 and € 250 000 - for soft projects; between 250 000-500 000 and 500 000-1mil – for investment projects”*
* *“The most of the above listed points are good amounts for partnerships, if there is no any annual turnover barrier, which is often set up to avoid medium organizations and favouring only for the big ones”*

## **Q.8 –** **Currently the maximum percentage of co-financing that the EU can offer under the CBC programmes is 85 %** **of the total eligible costs of the operation. If this percentage were 80 %, would you deem this a major obstacle for applicants?**

The current maximum percentage of co-financing that the EU can offer under the CBC programmes is 85 % of the total eligible costs of the operation. The respondents were asked to express their opinion on the possibility that this percentage could be 80 % and whether it would be a major obstacle for applicants. The distribution of responses is presented in chart no. 8. The majority of respondents (68 %) stated that this would represent a major obstacle for applicants, while 32 % stated it would not.

*Chart no.8. Would decrease of EU co-financing to 80% be a major obstacle for applicants?*

In order to better understand the attitude of the respondents towards the co-financing percentage issue, further analysis of comments was performed.

There were 77 comments from the respondents who selected “YES” as an answer. The explanations of the respondents may be grouped and come down to the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| There will be less applications | 19 % |
| Financing of 15 % is already an obstacle | 29 % |
| no sufficient finances | 24 % |
| other | 28 % |

*Chart No. 8.1. YES, decrease of EU co-financing to 80% would be a major obstacle for the applicants*

Examples of comments grouped under ‘there will be less applications’ (19 %):

* *“Potential applicants would refrain more from participation”*
* *“Increase of co-financing would discourage potential applicant and it could be the main reason for non-participation in the tender.”*
* *“It would probably exclude many.”*
* *“It will limit organizations to apply, thus it’s not a fair approach for CSOs”*

Examples of comments grouped under ’financing of 15 % is already an obstacle’ (29 %):

* *“Even now the 15 % of co-financing is a high obstacle for applicants. Time of refunding is few months, so applicants will have issues related to financing.”*
* *“Project beneficiaries (PB) already have problems in finding 15 %. Their problems will increase if the percentage goes from 15 to 20 %.”*
* *“From past experience, co-financing was a major obstacle for applicants. Its increase would create more issues.”*
* *“15% is already high percentage that local organization struggle to provide. Our organization has solid financial standing; however, we assess the efficiency of each project individually. Thus, increasing the co-financing percentage will make the projects highly burdensome. A simple illustration – how a local organization can provide co-financing of 60,000 EUR (20% of 300,000 EUR)?”*

Many comments referred to the difficult financial situation for NGOs/CSOs. Examples of comments grouped under ‘no sufficient finances’ (24 %) are as follows:

* *“Ensuring co-financing has not been easy for most grant beneficiaries so far. We have examples of partners giving up an already approved project due to difficulties/inability to find financial resources for co-financing (especially in case of bigger grants). We do not find the situation in IPA countries mature enough to reduce the EU co-financing below 85 %.”*
* *“Local associations, local and regional governments and society organizations etc. have a lack of funds for financing projects, and reduction of 5 % in co-financing by EU would make those projects more difficult for realization. For example, local governments enter in credit agreements with commercial banks to fulfil co-financing and pre-financing commitments, because there are not any pre-planned funds intended for co-financing and grants scheme, so they should make credit agreements or rebalance the budget.”*
* *“As potential beneficiaries of these funds have very limited budgets, especially for these purposes, increased contributions will jeopardize the effects of the program. Particularly in view of the timing of the planning and approval of these funds.”*
* *“Sometimes applicants cannot find other funds or they have no own funds.”*
* *“These are poor LSGs and they will not have enough budget resources for co-financing additional 5 %.”*
* *“Major issue for the NGO sector. Much more artificial partnerships would be initiated.”*
* *“Grant beneficiaries mostly have weak financial capacities; especially NGOs.”*
* *“The problem regards the NGOs they cannot co-finance the percentage as public institutions.”*

Examples of comments grouped under ‘Other’ (28%):

* *“The problem is not so much in the amount; the major problem is pre-financing. It is not easy to plan money in advance before a project is approved.”*
* *“Yes, since cross border regions are usually the least developed areas in any country.”*
* *“Yes, with the current beneficiaries for the selected priorities. The % should also consider options of national co-financing scheme.”*
* *“According to the general situation with municipal budgets, it’s very hard to find finance for proposed projects, meaning municipal budget financial resources. In-kind co-financing is acceptable form for municipality to implement CBC project. But also, if national co-financing is 15% and others 5% are obligation of the organization, will be very hard to find this money for co-financing, having in the mind the amount of the project.”*

There were 30 comments from the respondents who selected “NO” as an answer regarding the potential decrease of EU co-financing which would present a major obstacle for applicants. The explanations of the respondents may be grouped and come down to the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| not a significant change = no influence | 14 |
| due to support from national authorities | 8 |
| Co-financing % should be the same for all CBC programmes | 2 |
| other | 4 |

*Chart No. 8.2. NO, decrease of EU co-financing to 80% would not present a major obstacle for the applicants*

* *“reducing the EU co-financing from 85 to 80 % will not be significant, and will not have a great influence on applicants”, stated by 10 respondents;*
* *“support from national authorities is important” stated by 5 respondents which means that “national authorities should be encouraged and helped in creating a helpful environment for securing co-financing and pre-financing funding (revolving funds etc.)”’;*
* *“co-financing percentage should be the same for all CBC programmes”, stated by 2 respondents and*
* *“other issues are more significant” such as “much more challenge to find funds for pre-financing of the projects” or that “mayor obstacles are when the applicants are not prepared and informed in due time about the Calls and when the Banks increase the interest instead of being of help during the co-financing”.*
* *“although this is also related to the grant size (so it has to be analysed in both relative and absolute terms, but it will not discourage us from participating in the programme”*
* *“20% is acceptable and applied by other donor organizations also. “*
* *“We are a local government unit so from our own financial resources we can contribute more than 15%”*
* *“if the amount for co-financing is provide by the state institution, as it is now”*

# THE BEST OPTION FOR THE POST-2020 CBC PROGRAMMES

## **Q.9 – Which of the following options for the post-2020 generation of CBC programmes do you think that has more pros than cons and would be your first choice?**

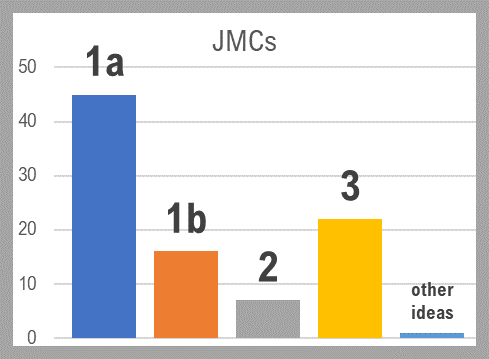
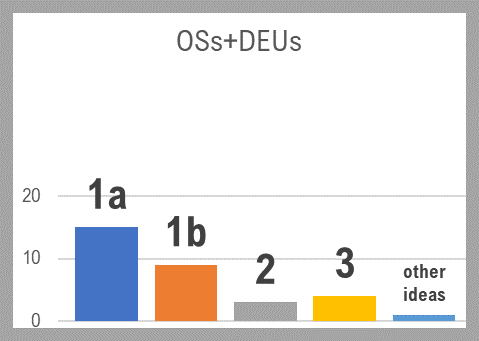
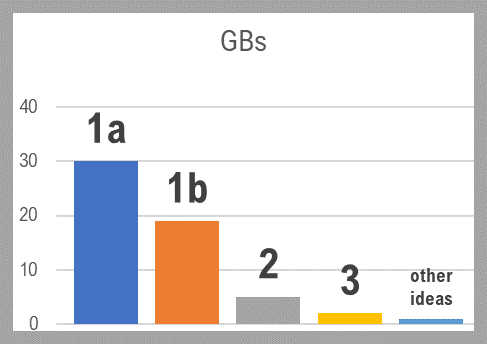
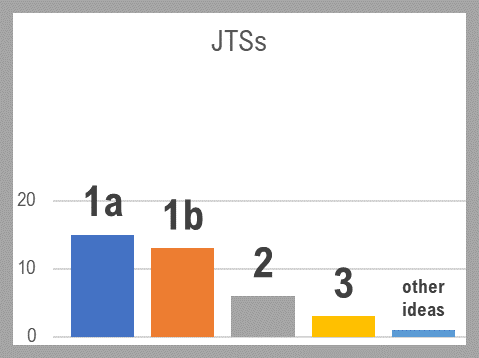
The final question required the selection of an option out of a given choice numbered 1a, 1b, 2 and 3 for the post-2020 generation of CBC programmes as it had more pros than cons and would be the first choice of the respondent. The options were as follows:

* 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, quadrilateral or even multilateral/transnational programmes), as well as an increased financial allocation that would allow funding more sizeable projects.
* Option 2: The management of the programmes is centralised with one single managing 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.

As presented in the chart no. 9 below, most of the respondents representing or working at the JMCs, JTSs, GBs, OSs and DEUs selected the option *1a:* *The current bilateral set-up of the IPA II CBC programmes is maintained and the financial allocation of the programme is increased to fund more sizeable projects*, as the most favourable option for the strategic orientation of the post-2020 CBC generation of programmes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Options** | | | | |  |
| **Bodies** | **1a** | **1b** | **2** | **3** | **other** | Total per body |
| **JMC** | 45 | 16 | 7 | 22 | 1 | 91 |
| **JTS** | 15 | 13 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 38 |
| **GB** | 30 | 19 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 57 |
| **OS+DEU** | 15 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 32 |
| Total per option | 105 | 57 | 21 | 31 | 4 |  |

*Chart No. 9. Opinions on the options for post-2020 by members of the JMC, JTS, GB and OS+DEU*



When opinions of all members are grouped, the preferred option for post-2020 is still 1a, as presented in the chart No. 9.1 below. The option 1a has 48 % in total, followed by option 1b with 26 %, option 3 which has 14 % and option 2 with 10 %. Other ideas for strategic orientation were provided by 4 respondents and represent 2 % of the total.

*Chart No. 9.1. Summary of opinions on the options for post-2020 by all respondents*

In the chart no. 9.2., the opinions of all respondents were also presented in percentages of options preferred per group. This way of data presenting showed that the preference of the options by the groups of respondents is more or less equable for options 1a, 1b and 2. The great exception of this pattern is the preference of the option 3 by JMCs with 24%.

*Chart No. 9.2. Summary of opinions on the options for post-2020 grouped by the options preferred*

Some respondents provided further arguments for their selection of the option as follows:

* For Option 1a
  + *“We think that under other options (except for 1a), the valuable basic concept of CBC programmes would be lost. Maintaining the current set-up of bilateral IPA-IPA programmes (which is fully aligned with CBC programmes in the EU) would build up on experience and knowhow gained in the previous periods. Changing geographical coverage to multilateral programmes does not necessarily mean simplification although in such a case, the total number of joint programme structures at regional level would be reduced. The more countries involved the more coordination is required while on the other side, communication among programme structures in a bilateral programme remains much simpler than in multilateral ones.”*
  + *“It should remain the same in the WB given membership perspective. Trilateral, quadrilateral or even multilateral / transnational programmes have more difficulties in implementation regarding reaching consensus for every issue such as border areas, thematic priorities and objectives. Also, TA spending is more substantial due to the complexity. CBC should not integrate into national sector programmes since CBC is unique and it is already a net contributor to national development.”*
  + *“Based on the results of different analyses during programming, the territory of the existing programmes might be revised and enlarged.”*
  + *“With flexible combination of partnerships and number of countries involved.”*
  + *“JTS to be an independent body. Perhaps to be registered as local NGO or to be given to agencies that have experience in implementation of similar projects.”*
  + *“Based on the results of different analysis during programming, the territory of the existing programmes might be revised and enlarged.”*
  + *“To keep as it is.”*
* For Option 1b
  + *“For some thematic areas it will be better to consider transnational programme since the priorities and objectives of existing programmes are almost the same and, in some cases, the same area is eligible.”*
* For Option 3
  + *“This structure resembles the most to the future structure for using EU structural and Investment funds.”*

## **Comparison of the opinions of JMCs, JTSs, GBs and OSs+DEUs and the TWG members on post-2020 options and other**

As an activity of the technical working group (TWG) number 4, under the CBIB+ Phase II project, dealing with the characteristics of post-2020 CBC programmes, the members of the group were invited to respond to another questionnaire. The latter basically focused on advantages and disadvantages of each of the four suggested options. Despite that differences between this questionnaire and the one that the main topic of this report, the analysis of the TWG members’ opinion showed that the option which received the highest support was option 1a, that is*, the current set-up of the IPA II CBC programmes should be maintained (bilateral CBC programmes) and the financial allocation of the programme is increased to fund more sizeable projects*. Chart No. 10 displays the comparison of the summary of these opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of each option with the results of the options preference analysis for the members of JMCs, JTSs, GBs, Oss and DEUs.

*Chart No. 9.3. Comparison of post-2020 options preferences by the members of JMCs, JTSs, GBs and OSs+DEUs with TWG members*

Although not directly comparable, it may be concluded that all respondents (JMC’s, JTSs, GBs, OSs, DEUs and TWG members) selected option 1a as the most favourable one.

The TWG members’ questionnaire also referred to the possibility of having strategic projects, which was prioritized as one of the three most important (and wanted) possible future innovations. This goes in line with the result of the question No. 5 from the questionnaire analysed within this report where 77 % of the members of JMCs, JTSs, GBs, OSs and DEUs stated they would consider strategic project calls as a possibility.

A parallel conclusion may be drawn also regarding the opinions on ‘reduction of the EU maximum co-financing at programme level for operations from 85 % to 80 % in order to increase the local ownership of the CBC programmes’ which was one of the 3 most unnecessary innovations suggested, while 68 % of the members of JMCs, JTSs, GBs, OSs and DEUs also expressed their disagreeing with this innovation.

Likewise, in terms of focusing the calls for proposals, the innovation stating that ‘CBC programmes would have one thematic priority, with one specific objective and a maximum of two results’ became one of 3 most unwanted innovations for members of the TWG. This is consistent with the responses collected from the questionnaire analysed within this report for questions 1 and 2. The opinion of the JMCs, JTSs, GBs, OSs and DEUs was that the thematic priorities of the future calls should not have a more restricted scope than what is the case now and that the method of defining specific objectives should continue as before.

# Conclusion

Following the scrutiny of opinions expressed by the representatives of JMCs, JTSs, GBs, OSs and DEUs on the characteristics of post-2020 CBC programmes, the option that received the highest support is the option 1a, that is, ***the current set-up of the IPA II CBC programmes should be maintained (bilateral CBC programmes) and the financial allocation of the programme is increased to fund more sizeable projects***. The second most favoured option is 1b, while for the options 2 and 3 the respondents showed a much lower preference. Therefore, the latter two options are not regarded as an improvement for the future CBC programmes.

Questions regarding funding of the post-2020 CBC were the most commented ones. A vast majority of respondents stated that the availability of more EU funding per CBC call for proposals would increase the impact of the programme. When it comes to grant size, the optimal grant ranges for most of the partnerships under the programme are ‘between € 100 000 and € 200 000’ and ‘between € 250 000 and € 500 000’. The majority of respondents (68 %) stated that a reduction of the percentage of the EU financial contribution from 85 % to 80 % of the total eligible costs of the operation would be a major obstacle for applicants.

Analysis of other responses covering aspects such as focusing of the programme shows that the opinion of the stakeholders is that the thematic priorities of the future calls should not have a more restricted scope and that the same method of defining the specific objectives should remain unaltered. When evaluating the impact of the first call regarding the thematic priorities and specific objectives, 92 % believe that the CBC programme will be able to have a tangible impact on the population of the eligible area. Regarding the strategic project calls as a possibility, 77 % of the respondents would consider them, preferably as a combination of usual calls but for small scale projects with calls for strategic projects.

When comparing the opinion expressed by the TWG4 members and the opinion of representatives of the JMCs, JTSs, GBs, OSs and DEUs regarding the options for post-2020 strategic orientation of CBC programmes and possible innovations, one realises that all of them head in the same direction and that the majority of respondents from both groups have similar opinions.