



European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument

Black Sea Basin

Joint Operational Programme

2007-2013

***MULTIANNUAL
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE STRATEGY***

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Abbreviations

AA - Audit Authority

AD - Audit Directorate

Black Sea Basin JOP - Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme

DITC - Directorate for International Territorial Cooperation

EC - European Commission

GDPAP - General Directorate for Programme Authorizing and Payments

JMA - Joint Managing Authority for Black Sea Basin JOP

JMC - Joint Monitoring Committee

SC - Selection (Evaluation) Committee

JTS - Joint Technical Secretariat

MDPWH - Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing

NA - National Authority

NIP - National Info Point

OPTA - Operational Programme Technical Assistance

RCBI - Regional Capacity Building Initiative

TA - Technical Assistance

TA Officer - Technical Assistance Officer within DITC

TA Strategy - Technical Assistance Strategy



INTRODUCTION



„Community assistance may also be used to finance technical assistance and targeted administrative measures, including those cooperation measures involving public-sector experts dispatched from the Member States and their regional and local authorities involved in the Programme” (Article 15 - Types of measures from the REGULATION (EC) No 1638/2006 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 24 October 2006 laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument).

The Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme includes a component dedicated to the technical assistance used to finance activities that are necessary for the effective and smooth implementation and management of the Programme.

LEGAL BASIS

- Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument;
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 951/2007 of 9 August 2007 laying down implementing rules for cross-border cooperation programmes financed under Regulation No. 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument;
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 of 17 July 2006 establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA);
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 718/2007 of 12 June 2007 implementing Council Regulation (EC) No. 1085/2006 of 17 July 2006 establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA);
- Government Decision no. 457/2008 setting up the institutional framework for the coordination, and management of structural instruments;
- EC Decision No. 7406 on the joint operational programme "Black Sea 2007-2013" for the ENPI Cross-Border Co-operation 2007-2013 to be financed under Article 19 08 02 01 and 19 08 02 02 of the general budget of the European Communities.



I. GENERAL CONSIDERATION

I.1 Vision

Sound and balanced use of the resources in order to ensure efficient, effective and transparent management of the Programme.

I.2 Mission

Provide adequate support to the activities of preparation, management, information, publicity and training, procurement of necessary equipment, monitoring, evaluation and control of the Programme in order to efficiently manage and implement the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme.

I.3 Objectives

The Technical Assistance (TA) component of the programme aims to support efficiently the programme implementation by funding two main actions:

- **Management of the programme:** project selection, day-to-day management, monitoring, audit and control;
- **Communication and information flows within and around the programme:** seminars, translation, information dissemination, and publicity measures.

To this end, the strategy's objectives are:

- To ensure a smooth and effective management of the Programme;
- To reach a high quality level of project applications;
- To increase the administrative capacity of the Programme management bodies;
- To increase the general level of information and awareness of the JOP and dissemination of results so that the purpose and scope of the Programme is widely understood and that it is accessible to the maximum range of eligible partners;
- To ensure timely and efficient commitment and disbursement of Programme funds, in order to cover the needs identified in the programming phase of the Programme;
- To increase the cooperation level between partners of this JOP.



II. THE IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM OF TA Strategy

The Technical Assistance Strategy (TA Strategy) is a framework document of all TA interventions dedicated to the Black Sea Basin JOP and details the basic elements needed to reach the TA Strategy objectives: the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the strategy, the eligible actions, the general methodology, the allocated resources and the action plan for implementing the TA Strategy.

Analysis

In order to ensure a smooth implementation of the programme the JMA will have to carry out actions to ensure the launch of call for proposals, organizing the JMC meetings, ensuring the timely evaluation and selection of the project applications, supporting the potential beneficiaries in finding out about the financial opportunities of the programme through info days and other means of communication and in preparing good project applications and finding partners through dedicated seminars/workshops and communication tools (programme website, partner search tool), ensuring the functioning of a good monitoring system, and ensuring timely and efficient commitment and disbursement of Programme funds in order to cover the needs identified and reach the programme's objectives. In its daily work the JMA could be supported by a JTS with international staff, located in Romania.

However, the large number of partners, the extension of the eligible territory, the participation of three types of partner countries, including member states, one negotiating candidate country, and non EU member states, makes the Programme implementation especially demanding in terms of human and technical resources, and the logistic extremely expensive in relation to the total financial allocation for the Programme.

The TA budget available represents a maximum of 10% of the total ENPI contribution to the Programme budget - around 1,7 million EUR, insufficient to carry out all management activities needed to implement the Black Sea Programme. No national co-financing is foreseen for TA component.

In terms of communication challenges, the Black Sea Basin eligible area occupies a territory of **834,719 sq. km.** and includes a population of **74.2 million people.**

The programme financial allocation for projects is insufficient in order to respond to all needs of the area and to the high expectations of all potential beneficiaries.

In addition ENPI is the first EU financial instrument dedicated to the cross border cooperation in the Black Sea basin area, having specific rules new to the potential beneficiaries (lead partner principle, joint projects, joint budget, joint implementation, PRAG rules etc).

All the above suggests the need to develop a communication strategy targeted to attract on one hand potential beneficiaries with previous experience in EU or international projects and on the other, new potential beneficiaries with less experience from the



area. At the same time the JMA must use the most economic tools to disseminate the information and generate projects.

In addition, giving that the EC is financing the *Regional Capacity Building Initiative II*, a three year project (2007-2009), which aims at providing support to all ENPI CBC Programmes in their implementation (technical assistance to the managing structures, training for potential beneficiaries, and information and publicity), the JMA will coordinate its 2009 annual communication plan with the activities financed through RCBI. The RCBI supports specifically the partner countries to participate in the ENPI CBC Programmes 2007-2013 and is implemented by a consortium led by MWH.

Already during the programming phase the JMA has drawn the attention to the participant countries and the EC about the limited resources of the TA budget and of the impossibility to finance all the activities of the JMA and the functioning of a JTS.

Thus, the EC has reserved additional funds that amount to 1,3 million Euros. This amount shall be awarded to the Programme, via a direct agreement between EC and JMA, that could be used either for the functioning of the JTS or for the activities financed through the TA.

Solutions

Taking into consideration the financial constraints, already during the programming phase, Romania decided to contribute financially to the Programme by covering Staff costs, office and overheads of the JMA and Audit Authority. Greece will contribute by covering the costs of the *Principal Advisor for the Black Sea Basin JOP*.

Additionally, Romania has used PHARE funds to develop the programme logo, website and visibility and identity manual for the programme.

The partner countries decided to contribute with own resources by financing staff costs of the National Info Points, which will operate in coordination with the JMA/JTS activities, and according to the annual communication plans approved by the JMC, for those events and activities occurring in each country. The JMA will organize annual meetings and trainings for the NIPs to coordinate activities and to support them in building their capacity to be able to support the potential beneficiaries. In this respect, the travel, accommodation and daily allowance expenses for these meetings/trainings shall be covered from the TA budget.

During 2009, RCBI shall cover the costs for all information and project preparation workshops to be implemented in the partner countries. The schedule of these events shall be coordinated with the events organized by the JMA in Romania, Greece and Bulgaria and the events organized in Turkey.

The above provisions shall be applied to cover partially the TA necessities of the Programme uncovered by the Programme's TA budget, but these do not form an official part of the Programme's TA budget.



Starting 2010 all information activities shall be covered by the TA budget for all participating countries, unless RCBI project shall continue.

In the process of Programme implementation, further financial deficit could still emerge, and a potential revision of the financial allocation for TA is not excluded. According to a rough estimation of the TA budget, in order to ensure proper functioning of the JTS and the Programme implementation, the 10% of total Programme funds and the identified additional funding from EC will not be sufficient.

IPA contribution to TA

Turkey is a partner country in the Black Sea Basin JOP, whose participation is funded by IPA funds, but is supported by the Programme's joint implementing structure established in Romania, including the activities carried out by the JMA, JTS, and NIPs. Therefore, Turkey will support the costs of implementation of the Programme, including the operating costs of the JMA and JTS (when established), project assessment and selection, implementation of the Communication plan, including training, information and publicity for potential beneficiaries in the Turkish eligible regions, external audit of the partners in Turkey, decentralized structures of the Programme in Turkey, and the costs related to the participation of its delegation at the Joint Monitoring Committee meetings. In general, Turkey as one of the ten countries participating in the Programme shall finance from the IPA TA funds about 10% of the Programme's TA costs.

Turkey will contribute to the Programme implementation with IPA funds. From these funds 10% will be allocated to the TA component - this contribution will be around 100,000 Euro and this amount will be matched with a 15% national co-financing from Turkey for the whole programme implementation period.

The Joint Managing Authority will use TA IPA allocation with Turkey's agreement for all the common management activities, but also for activities dedicated specifically for Turkey. In some particular cases, and only when not the entire Turkey's TA contribution has been spent, the JMA and Turkey can decide on some additional activities (services), specifically dedicated for Turkey, such as additional information seminars organised or publicity materials published specifically for Turkey.

The Implementing Agency in Turkey will act as the Contracting Authority for the IPA contribution to TA to cover Turkey's participation in the Programme, according to DG Enlargement recommendation to the JMA. The JMA and the IPA Contracting Authority shall agree on a procedure of transferring the IPA TA funds to the JMA to support the implementation of the Programme.

Direct beneficiaries of TA funds (ENPI or IPA) are the programme bodies that actually make expenditure and benefit from TA funds.

For ENPI TA: JMA (DITC, GDPAP, IAD), and JTS, for IPA TA: Operating Structure, JMA and JTS).



Indirect beneficiaries of TA funds (ENPI or IPA) are the programme bodies which only benefit from TA support but do not make themselves the expenditure. For ENPI TA: JMC, SC, AA and NIP; for IPA TA: JMC, SC, and NIPs in Turkey.

The action plan for implementing the TA-Strategy

Necessary steps to be taken for the implementation of the TA-Strategy:

- Approval of the TA-Strategy and TA-Budget by the JMC
- Approval by the JMC of the annual work programme and work plan of the JMA
- Signing agreement of cooperation JMA-TIKA/Operating Structure
- Signing of the Implementing Framework Agreement and the annual Financing Contracts between JMA and JTS.

In order to best assess the annual TA needs, as well as prepare a viable annual TA Strategy, the following shall be considered:

- Annual Communication Plan;
- Annual Work Plan of JMA;
- Other annual plans developed by the JMA (annual audit plan, etc.).

As a general rule, expenditures under Technical Assistance component are considered eligible as follows:

- From the date Black Sea Basin JOP is officially approved by the European Commission - for the JMA;
- For the JTS, from the date when the Financing contract concluded between the JMA and the JTS comes into force.

At the Programme start-up and during the implementation period, the JMA and the JTS shall use the Technical Assistance funds based on the annual work plan proposed by the JMA in accordance to the TA-Strategy and approved by the JMC.

The costs for NIP's and AA activities will be included either in the JTS or the JMA budget.

Each step of the TA-Strategy Implementation System will be detailed within the internal procedures of the JMA and JTS.

The JMA is responsible for procuring and contracting the ENPI TA funds, according to EC Regulation No 951/2007 and with the National Legislation.

All expenses shall be duly justified with documentary evidence (service contracts, invoices, internal memoranda etc.) and shall follow the national rules applicable to the JMA.



The **Annual Technical Assistance Budget** comprises the following expenditure categories divided per budgetary headings (JMA, JMC, SC, NIP, Communication Plan and Programme audit):

- Staff costs
- Travel and accommodation
- Equipments
- Consumables
- Indirect costs
- Subcontracting costs
- Other costs

When making expenses the JMA/JTS will be able to shift money from one budgetary heading to another on the same category of expenditure in a limit of maximum 15 %. The JMA shall notify the JMC on the modifications made. If the budgetary change is higher than 15%, the JMA shall request the approval of the JMC in written procedure.

Contingency expenses will be used for all expenditure categories when necessary.

III. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPONENTS

Based on the TA needs identified, the following indicative activities have been set under the two actions belonging to Technical Assistance component of the Operational Programme:

Action 1: programme management and implementation

This action will support the functioning of the Programme bodies: JMA, JMC, JTS, Selection Committee, NIP's.

Evaluation of the Programme will be performed by the EC.

Direct ENPI TA eligible beneficiaries:

- JMA (DITC, GDPAP, IAD)
- JTS

Indirect ENPI TA eligible beneficiaries:

- Other supporting directorates of JMA
- JMC members
- Audit Authority
- Selection Committee
- NIP's



Direct IPA TA eligible beneficiaries:

- Operating Structure
- JMA
- JTS

Indirect IPA TA eligible beneficiaries:

- Turkish representative in the Joint Monitoring Committee
- Selection Committee
- NIPs in Turkey

Eligible activities:

- Establishment, management and running of the JTS (staff costs included);
- The participation of the JMA and JTS to different committees, meetings, conferences in the interest of the programme
- The participation of JMA, JTS, AA and NIPs to training locations for training sessions, seminars, workshops, study visits and info sessions organized for strengthening the administrative capacity of the implementing structures
- The participation of the JMA and JTS staff for activities foreseen under the Information and Communication Plan
- The preparation and organization of the meetings of the Joint Monitoring Committees
- Activities in connection with Selection Committees and project selection (travel, accommodation and daily allowance of the evaluators, and contracting of the independent assessors by JMA);
- Ensuring office equipment for JMA and JTS required for the management and implementation of the Programme (PCs, notebooks, telephones, faxes, copy machines, printers, photo cameras, flipcharts, accessories, consumables etc.)
- The acquisition, installation, integration and maintenance of IT equipment and software for management, monitoring, evaluation and coordination of the Programme;
- Expenditure related to controls, audits and on-the-spot checks of projects;
- Audit of the programme according to the Commission Regulation (EC) No 951/2007;
- Support the JMA for studies and expert consultancy on themes relevant for the programme implementation and the neighbourhood strategy development;
- Contracting external expertise (Legal, ad-hoc evaluation of the Programme, translation, financial expertise, support to programme implementation etc)
- Elaboration and publication of reports, studies, analyses and surveys on general and specific problems concerning the border area (e.g. annual reports, on-going evaluations, etc.).



- Costs deriving directly from requirements imposed by EC Regulation no 951/2007 and the programme including financial services, in particular costs of bank transfers

Eligible expenditures include:

1. Staff costs

1.1 Salaries plus social security charges of the permanent staff of the JTS

2. Travel and accommodation

2.1 Travel costs (transport, visa and insurance)

2.2 Accommodation

2.3 Unexpected travel costs(transport from airport to hotel)

2.4 Daily allowance

3. Equipments

3.1 IT equipments

3.2 Software

3.3 Other electronic devices needed

3.4 Office furniture

4. Consumables

4.1 Toners

4.2 Office materials

5. Indirect costs

5.1 Overheads

5.2 Other administrative expenditure

6. Subcontracting costs

6.1 Studies, analysis, reports

6.2 Programme audit

6.3 External expertise (independent experts for project assessment and selection, studies and expert consultancy on themes relevant for the programme implementation and the neighbourhood strategy development, etc.)

6.4 Catering for JMC meetings

6.5 Postal and courier services

6.6 Car renting

7. Other costs

7.1 Bank charges and commissions



7.2 Any other expenditure needed for the successful implementation of the Programme

Achievement Indicators

The financing contract concluded between the JMA and JTS shall contain achievement indicators that shall be strictly monitored throughout the programme implementation. Based on these indicators, the JMA will evaluate the degree of completeness and conformity with the pre-established standards and with the Framework Implementation Agreement of the contractual duties of the JTS.

Relevant indicators include, but are not limited to:

- Number of calls for proposals finalized;
- Number of potential applicants that attended to project preparation workshops;
- Number of project applications received from potential applicants that participated to projects preparation workshops;
- 80% of project applications received/assessed by JTS/assessors approved by the JMC;
- Number of Joint Monitoring Committee meetings organised;
- Number of on-the-spot checks held;
- Number of officers participating in trainings and successfully performing their duties in JTS and other programme bodies;
- Number of internal training sessions organized;
- Number of contracts signed;
- Number of projects successfully implemented;
- Purchase of equipments and contracting of services in time and in line with annual plans;
- Number of reports, studies, analyses and surveys drafted.
- **Number of calls for proposals finalized**
- Number of contracts signed from projects application selected.
- Number of projects successfully implemented from contracts signed

Action 2: information, promotion and project generation activities

The measure will finance all activities related to information and promotion of the programme, and those activities aiming to the generation of projects, creation of partnerships among eligible partners in the programme area.



Information activities to raise awareness about the programme funding possibilities and the launch of call for proposals will be held in various ways: through JTS organization of information seminars in the eligible regions and animation of a programme web-site; through the editing and dissemination of written materials via the National Info Points. JTS will assist potential applicants in international partner search, provide information on objectives, priorities and implementation rules, and provide impartial advice to the applicants.

Eligible ENPI TA direct beneficiaries

- JMA
- JTS

Eligible indirect ENPI TA beneficiaries

- AA
- NIPs

Eligible IPA TA direct beneficiaries

- Operating Structure
- JMA
- JTS

Eligible indirect IPA TA beneficiaries

- NIPs

Eligible activities include:

- Capacity building activities for the JMA, JTS, NIPs, AA (training sessions and workshops for the staff involved in the implementation of the programme);
- Preparation, publication and dissemination of information materials (current official programme documents, newsletters, brochures, posters) including translation of information materials
- Production of promotional materials (ex. pens, maps, memory sticks etc.)
- Information and publicity activities according to the Annual Communication Plan (organisation of conferences, presentations, workshops, seminars, awareness raising campaigns, etc)
- Designing, updating of the information and managing the programme web site
- Evaluation of the activities comprised in the Information and Communication Plan

Eligible expenditures include:

1. Subcontracting



- 1.1 Organization of events expenditure (conferences, info days, seminars, workshops)
- 1.2 Production of leaflets, publications, etc.
- 1.3 Production of promotional materials, pens, maps, memory sticks etc.
- 1.4 Upgrading and optimization of the web site
- 1.5 Management and maintenance of the website

2. Equipments

- 2.1 Software

Achievement indicators

- Number of information and promotion events;
- Number of printed publications (types);
- Number of publicity campaigns carried out;
- Number of visitors on the programme website;
- Number of events organised for final beneficiaries;
- Number of participants in the events.

1.2 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE STRATEGY EVALUATION

TA Strategy evaluation shall assess the degree to which the proposed objectives have been met in targeting sound management of the allocated funds under the programme and in reaching high absorption of funds.

TA Strategy evaluation shall take place twice during the programming period (mid-term evaluation in 2010-2011 and final evaluation in 2015, in order to improve the actions undertaken, adopt any corrective measures and support the drafting of the TA Strategy for the next programming period.

Evaluation indicators

1. Quantitative indicators

All actions foreseen under TA component shall be quantitatively assessed based on the proposed indicators.

2. Qualitative indicators



These indicators shall assess each component, action and result of the TA Strategy in terms of quality and consistency.

Risk factors in TA Strategy implementation

- Weak experience of potential beneficiaries in relation to the enhanced complexity of programme's project application and implementation requirements.
- Absorption capacity of potential beneficiaries might not be developed at the proper level to allow the range of newly available different funds.
- Lack of continuity of management structures and insufficient administrative capacity.

1.3 COMPLEMENTARITIES WITH THE TA STRATEGY OF THE OPTA

The Romanian National Strategic Reference Framework includes an Operational Programme dedicated to technical assistance, the Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OPTA), having as Joint Managing Authority the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

The Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OPTA) aims providing the implementation and coordination of structural instruments with the necessary support, by:

- Support to the implementation of Structural Instruments and coordination of programmes (horizontal training in the field of project/programme management)
- Further development and support for the functioning of the Single Management Information System (including the development and functioning of the Management Information System-European Territorial Cooperation (MIS-ETC);
- Dissemination of information and promotion of Structural Instruments

While Black Sea Basin JOP TA provides support for programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Black Sea Basin JOP, OPTA aims at defining common standards and guidelines for all managing authorities, facilitating exchange of practice between MAs.

OPTA shall finance studies and evaluations on horizontal aspects of structural instruments implementation in Romania, while Black Sea Basin JOP TA shall cover specific aspects within the cross-border eligible area.

As regards administrative capacity building, OPTA shall finance horizontal trainings, while Black Sea Basin JOP TA shall finance activities aimed at building the administrative capacity at the level of the Joint Managing Authority, NIPs and Joint Technical Secretariat.

In the case of information and publicity activities, although the target group of OPTA in the eligible area is mainly the same as the one targeted by Black Sea Basin JOP TA,



complementarily is ensured in terms of content. OPTA shall cover general awareness needs on structural instruments, while Black Sea Basin JOP TA information and publicity shall focus on specific aspects of European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and of the Programme (e.g. implementation system, selection criteria).

Specific and detailed approach of Black Sea Basin JOP characteristics shall also constitute the focus of all training activities, while OPTA shall only cover the general training needs.

With the view to coordinate Technical Assistance's implementation (OPTA and TA's priority axes within the framework of all Operational Programmes) and to ensure the coherence and complete character of Technical Assistance within NSRF (National Strategic Reference Framework), the Coordination Committee for Technical Assistance was established, under the presidency of OPTA MA. The Directorate for International Territorial Cooperation (DITC) within the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing is represented in the Coordination Committee for Technical Assistance.