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# **Evaluation of Partner Country Involvement in the Management and Implementation of the ENPI CBC Programmes and Further Partner Country Needs**

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## 1. Executive Summary

The monitoring of Partner Country involvement in the ENPI CBC programmes is important for the success of the programmes but is not straightforward. The mix and wide geographic dispersion of the Partner Countries, their different political and administrative systems, management cultures and the degree of their prior experience with EU funded programmes, together provide a complex set of contextual factors that may influence the extent of their successful participation in the programmes.

This technical evaluation combines a formative and descriptive examination of Partner Country involvement in the ENPI CBC programmes up to 13 November 2009, the cut-off date for the evaluation. The purpose is to make an initial assessment of the level of Partner Country participation in the management and implementation of the ENPI CBC programmes as this phase of the RCBI project comes to an end, and to identify what further support is needed in this regard. In doing this, the evaluation also seeks to identify a suitable approach to monitoring Partner Country involvement by proposing and testing a set of monitoring indicators for Partner Country involvement and using other monitoring techniques (questionnaires, interviews) to provide complementary qualitative information. The evaluation reaches conclusions on two fronts – the main constraints and support needs related to Partner Country involvement in the programmes and the suitability of the monitoring techniques proposed to monitor Partner Country involvement.

The complexity of the subject is reflected in the use in the evaluation of several different perspectives for monitoring Partner Country involvement. The arrangement of the proposed indicators around the programme cycle (Chapter 1) provides a performance and process based perspective to the issue. The country by country summaries (Chapter 2) separate common factors from country specific factors. The questionnaire (Chapter 3) brings a further horizontal qualitative perspective to the analysis based on the actual experiences of the Partner Countries to date. The constraints analysis (Chapter 4) draws the various perspectives together, while separately identifying programme and project based issues. Data quality was limited as this is the first exercise to monitor Partner Country involvement but this is compensated by the diversity of the evaluation methods used.

### Evaluation Conclusions

#### *Partner Country involvement in the ENPI CBC programmes*

The data provided through the indicators supports the view that Partner Country involvement in the design of the programmes and the establishment of the management and implementation structures has been generally good. This is reflected in participation in the Joint Task Force meetings and active representation on the Joint Monitoring Committees. There is also a satisfactory collaboration on decision making through written procedures and on providing comments on draft rules and procedures proposed by the Joint Managing Authorities. It is natural that some countries will be more active than others in this respect.

The data collected through the questionnaire indicates that the participation in information and project preparation events has been sufficient to expect that the first calls for proposals that are currently underway in several programmes will have a good level of Partner Country involvement. However, there is a reliance on NCPs / NIPs in sea basin programmes who, although they have given very good support did





not in recent calls have sufficient capacity and resources available to provide the support needed. Also, the delay in establishing the JTS and Branch Offices has limited in-country activities that might enhance the overall involvement. The work of the JMAs and the supporting projects (RCBI and Interact ENPI) has compensated for this but the situation is not ideal.

As only one programme (Baltic Sea Region) has reached the project implementation stage it is too early to comment on the actual nature and extent of ENPI CBC projects and their effect on the Partner Countries or on the extent of funds absorption in the Partner Countries. These issues are becoming important as the phases for the programme development and establishment of structures draw to a close.

### *Constraints to Partner Country involvement*

The centralized nature of the national legal and regulatory environments in many of the Partner Countries has the potential to slow down or discourage active Partner Country involvement. This issue is further compounded by difficulties that can arise in communication and information channels within the Partner Countries. Regional tensions and financial constraints, including restrictions of foreign currency flows in the countries were also identified as programme level constraints. The uncertainty caused by the fact that not all Partner Countries had signed the financing agreement is a once off factor that will be resolved by the end of the year but has influence participation in the first calls for proposals.

At project level, the dominant constraints identified were the difficulties in finding the right partners in EU Member States and in other Partner Countries to collaborate on project development and implementation. This constraint is closely related to the level of capacity of the NCPs/NIPs. The delayed start-up of implementation has sharply reduced the remaining time to complete projects. This is already limiting the scope for large scale projects and is likely to begin to affect the nature of projects proposed in the future. While about half of the respondents to the questionnaire had participated in earlier EU funded programmes, the familiarity with the ENPI CBC opportunities, understanding of the rules and regulatory framework for ENPI CBC and the capacity of Partner Country applicants to be lead partners have also emerged as constraints that require further support. A final very practical issue is the language barrier that exists in trying to implement a programme in a diverse number of countries.

### *The approach to monitoring Partner Country involvement*

The proposed set of indicators is divided into seven categories that follow the programme cycle. The categories are funds absorption, involvement in projects, programme development, programme management and implementation, NCP/NIPs, resources and training. The evaluation has shown that a considerable amount of information exists to support the use of the indicator set if a common monitoring framework is developed. The questionnaire used and interviews conducted for this evaluation supported the information collected from other sources and provided a useful qualitative source to enhance the interpretation of the indicators. Overall, the mix of indicators, questionnaire and interviews is considered to be proven as a viable basis for a robust monitoring framework for Partner Country involvement.

