

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

Recommendations, Final report	Responses, DG NEAR: (i) accepted or not, ii) actions to be undertaken	Follow up
<b>Recommendations on the future of IPA CBC</b>		
<p><b>Restructuring IPA CBC (R1-4)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CBC should continue as a distinct element of pre-accession assistance in the next financial perspective;</li> <li>- CBC envelope should be expanded to more viable levels, at least doubling the current allocation;</li> <li>- Consider whether CBC should be integrated into national sector programmes under 'IPA III' either thematically ( by making 'border effects' a cross cutting principle in all IPA 2021-2027 action programmes) or financially (by integrating and mainstreaming CBC funding within IPA III, allowing that each sector action programme has a ring-fenced allocation for CBC projects)</li> <li>- Consider moving to either a bilateral or trilateral (or even quadrilateral) basis for CBC programmes, whichever is most appropriate to the sector and border region</li> </ul> <p>Timeline – next programming cycle 2021-2027</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission.</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts these recommendations.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that CBC should continue as a distinct element of pre-accession assistance in the next financial perspective. Further reflection is needed to determine whether changes to the geographical scope of the programmes are opportune and in which context and which should be the size of the CBC financial envelope. As the CBC design and institutional set-up under IPA II has already been modified compared to IPA I, it is important to wait for a more mature stage of implementation of the CBC programmes before proceeding with further changes.</p> <p>Better consideration should be given to the needs of the border regions within the application of the sector approach principle.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will carry out, with the support of CBIB+, an analysis of the experience of similar CBC programmes with a geographical coverage of more than two countries;</b></li> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will hold consultations with CBC stakeholders in view to determine the most appropriate option for optimizing the implementation of CBC and increasing its impact (e.g. regional events on CBC post 2020).</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5 and A4 -2019</p>

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Programme design (R 6-8)</b></p> <p>To maximise the benefit of EU funding, a greater focus on a narrower and more targeted set of objectives and outcomes that offer a higher probability of sustainable socio-economic impact in the border regions. This could be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carrying out preliminary studies in preparation for 2021-2027 programming, funded under the TA priority axis, particularly within the final TA service contract of the financial cycle as a preparatory activity for IPA III programming;</li> <li>- Involving of the relevant line ministries for the chosen thematic priorities in the programming process.</li> <li>- better-informed SWOT with stronger statistical and analytical foundation</li> <li>- a prioritisation process at the SWOT synthesis stage should be required by the future IPA III regulatory framework</li> </ul> <p>Timeline: next programming cycle 2021-2027</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and partly to the IPA beneficiaries.</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that during the next programming phase greater attention should be put on the context and problem analysis and on the prioritization of needs that should be addressed by the CBC programmes taking into account competencies and capacities at local level, resources available and the duration of the programmes. The intervention logic of the programmes should reflect appropriately these aspects and include a more focused and realistic set of specific objectives and expected outcomes with corresponding indicators. The</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The new programming guidelines for the period 2021-2027 will provide further insights on how to apply this in practice;</b></li> <li>- <b>CBC programmes will become part of the internal quality review process of DG NEAR ;</b></li> <li>- <b>CBIB+ will provide support to the programming process as already envisaged.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, 2019</p>
--	--	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>CBC definition (R 10)</b></p> <p>The definition of cross-border cooperation should be codified in the implementing regulation for IPA III CBC) as “joint implementation of activities by partners resulting in the intensification of cross-border links and sustainable cross-border partnerships and/or the removal of cross-border obstacles to sustainable socio-economic development”.</p> <p>Timeline: next programming cycle 2021-2027</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that the current provisions of the legal framework on the definition of cross border cooperation could be enhanced, also in cooperation with DG REGIO in order to try to align all CBC programmes implemented at regional level.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>A definition will be inserted in the "IPA III" legal framework, on the basis of a common agreed definition in consultation with the relevant EC services.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, 2019</p>
---	---	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Calls for proposals (R12, 14, 16)</b></p> <p>Subject to CBC in IPA III receiving a larger funding envelope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Calls for proposals should be stratified with two lots, to set a minimum size (e.g. €100,000) for the majority of grants, while retaining a specific allocation to fund worthwhile small-scale applications with a strong cross-border element for less experienced beneficiaries.</li> <li>- An alternative scenario would be grant(s) to experienced non-governmental organisations which are capable of re-granting.</li> </ul> <p>A greater weight should be attached:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to selecting projects that demonstrate added value, particularly with regards to synergies with ongoing national/local development strategies or other donor-funded actions</li> </ul> <p>The operating structures should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- publish information at the programme level on EU / multilateral and bilateral funding programmes, so that potential beneficiaries are aware of complementary funding sources.</li> </ul> <p>Each contracting authority should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- publish a timetable of calls for proposals covering the programme period, which sets out when the calls will be launched and which themes will be covered</li> </ul> <p>Timeline: next programming cycle 2021-2027</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and IPA beneficiaries.</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that given the geographical scope of the CBC programmes that address the needs of the border regions through actions of local actors, more should be done to facilitate and increase the participation of small size organizations. Further reflection is needed to determine the best mechanism to be applied (e.g. sub granting, size of grants) while keeping a balance in terms of administrative burden that could be generated with the financing of too small grants.</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that support measures should be put in place to facilitate the synergies with ongoing national/local development strategies or other donor-funded actions which could include publishing relevant information on the programme websites.</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that beneficiaries should be kept informed on a regular basis on the planned and on-going/closed calls for proposals</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The new programming guidelines will provide further insights on how to apply this in practice.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, 2019</p>
---	--	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Strategic projects (R 13, 14)</b></p> <p>Within the recommended larger funding envelope for CBC in IPA III:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number and size of strategic projects that are identified in the programming phase using transparent selection criteria should be increased, particularly if the recommendation to move to national / cross-border integrated sector action documents is taken forward.</li> <li>• The selection criteria for strategic projects should require that they are fully compatible with local, national, EU and other international strategic frameworks.</li> </ul> <p>Timeline: next programming cycle 2021-2027</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and IPA beneficiaries.</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR considers that further reflection is required to understand if an additional categorisation of CBC actions/projects is necessary if the definition of CBC proposed by the evaluators is taken on board: “joint implementation of activities by partners resulting in the intensification of cross-border links and sustainable cross-border partnerships and/or the removal of cross-border obstacles to sustainable socio-economic development”.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>A technical working group on strategic projects has been set up with the support of CBIB+ to reflect on the definition of strategic projects, on their selection and approval procedure; guidelines on strategic projects will be prepared by 2018; this work will be carried out taking into account different existing practices in other CBC programmes;</b></li> <li>– <b>DG NEAR will monitor the use of the guidelines by the programmes bodies; in particular, more emphasis will be put on the selection of "soft" strategic projects; it will ensure the coherence with other platforms where strategic needs of the IPA beneficiaries are addressed.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, 2019</p>
---	--	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Hard infrastructure projects (R 15)</b></p> <p>Assuming the CBC envelope is sufficient to make hard infrastructure projects viable, the European Commission should establish a CBC Project Preparation Facility (CPPF) to prepare cross-border strategic projects for funding consideration. The CPPF would liaise and work closely with the WBIF and the national PPFs, and should link to national/EU/other donor support policies, including the EU Danube Strategy. The CPPF could act as a conduit for investment projects from the local to the national and macro-regional.</p> <p>Timeline: next programming cycle 2021-2027</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR finds that this type of hard infrastructure projects which fall under the competencies of national authorities should be financed with the support of other programmes/facilities. This is also in line with our intention to further enhance the attention provided to border needs in the framework of the application of the sector approach principle and boost the implementation of soft strategic projects under CBC.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will hold consultations internally and reflect further on the way to promote the financing of CBC hard infrastructure projects through other programmes/facilities; the results of the on-going Evaluation of Sector approach under IPA II assistance will be used to feed into this reflection.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, A4 2020</p>
--	---	--

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Programme management (R 25)</b></p> <p>For 'IPA III', DG NEAR should develop a common JTS human resources policy, which would form part of the contract terms, and which would be applied across all programmes and hence by all contracting authorities.</p> <p>Timeline: next programming cycle 2021-2027</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and the Operating Structures.</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>The staff of the JTSs is recruited, under IPA II, by the Operating Structures who are obliged to use a specific template of Terms of References prepared by DG NEAR for the implementation of the Technical Assistance (TA) Service contracts. This template contains common educational and professional requirements for each job position. The EU Delegations participate as observers in the recruitment process by the Operating Structures in order to guarantee the regularity of the process.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will carry out an in depth analysis to determine which other aspects of the human resources policy should be still taken on board by the TA contract under IPA III.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, 2019</p>
<p><b>Recommendations on current programming period (2014-2020)</b></p>		

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Calls for proposals (R9, 10, 11, 29)</b></p> <p>Launch thematic calls for proposals focusing on a few priority issues that have a high cross-border content within the scope of the specific objective (see reply to EQ27 for further details).</p> <p>The definition of cross-border cooperation should be codified in all future guidelines for applicants under IPA II as “joint implementation of activities by partners resulting in the intensification of cross-border links and sustainable cross-border partnerships and/or the removal of cross-border obstacles to sustainable socio-economic development”.</p> <p>Greater weight should be given to the cross-border dimension by increasing the points allocated to applications with high cross-border contents.</p> <p>Each operating structure in dialogue with the contracting authority should draft a work plan of future calls for proposals foreseen under each specific objective that they can put to JMCs for their agreement, and subsequently executed by the contracting authority.</p> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and the Operating Structures.</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that at the level of the calls for proposals the priorities of the programmes could be further narrowed by focusing on a specific area within that priority and categories of beneficiaries targeted by the call. The organization of the calls (thematic or per priority) remains however under the responsibility of the programme management bodies.</p> <p>The proposed definition of cross-border cooperation will be included in the revised Guidance package for calls for proposals issued by NEAR in 2016 with an appropriate weight and scoring. The programme management bodies will be asked to comply with the guidelines endorsed by DG NEAR.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will issue a note on the way the programme priorities could be further focused at the level of the calls and on the introduction of the proposed definition of cross-border cooperation in the programmes’ guidelines for applicants and update accordingly the Guidance package for calls for proposals issued in 2016;</b></li> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will request the programme bodies to update the work plan of future calls for proposals foreseen in the operational programmes.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, A4 -2018</p>
---	--	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Programme management (R 5)</b></p> <p>In the interests of effectiveness and efficiency, there should be consistency across the region in the allocation and execution of duties within the CBC management structures (contracting authorities, operating structures, and joint technical secretariats).</p> <p>This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a common approach to assessing and selecting project applications (with regards to the cross-border dimension and synergies / added value) in response to calls, backed up by mandatory training for assessors and members of evaluation committees</li> <li>- a common JTS manual for all beneficiary countries (given that some countries are developing their own), with variants only where necessary</li> <li>- a certain discipline imposed on managing CBC resources within a reasonable timescale, a maximum length of time for the assessment, selection and contracting of projects should be introduced, which should be made known to beneficiaries through the programme / CBIB+ websites and guidelines for applicants</li> <li>- Where CBC would clearly benefit from consistent, standardised approaches across the whole region, the proposals of CBIB+, after discussion and agreement with all EUDs and operating structures, should be formally endorsed and communicated to the contracting authorities by DG NEAR at Director level.</li> <li>- To complement the work of CBIB+, and help operating structures and (potential) beneficiaries to learn more about inspiring practices, the Commission should mandate the INTERACT project to extend the 'Keep EU Cooperating' database (<a href="http://www.keep.eu/keep/">http://www.keep.eu/keep/</a>) to also include IPA-IPA projects.</li> </ul> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and partly the Operating Structures.</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that a common approach should be followed as much as possible in the preparation of the application package and the assessment and selection of projects. DG NEAR has issued in 2016 a guidance package on calls for proposals which should be used as a basis for preparation of programme specific application package. Similar work is being carried out by DG NEAR on a JTS manual of procedures</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>CBIB+ will continue its work to develop- with the support of programme management bodies - standard guidelines to support the management of the programmes; DG NEAR will endorse at Director level these products while identifying which are the mandatory minimum requirements to be implemented by the programmes;</b></li> <li>- <b>the Guidance package on Calls for proposals prepared by DG NEAR in 2016 will be updated to reflect the commitments taken in this action plan;</b></li> <li>- <b>the JTS manual of procedures prepared by CBIB+ will be finalised and endorsed by DG NEAR;</b></li> <li>- <b>CBIB+ will analyse annually the length of project assessment, selection and contracting and problems encountered based on inputs from the programme management bodies to identify common problems; the results of the analysis will be discussed at the annual CBC forum and based on the inputs of the stakeholders, DG NEAR will issue recommendations for improvement and capacity building activities;</b></li> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will analyse together with DG REGIO the possibility to include the IPA CBC projects into the KEEP database.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D 5, 2018-2020</p>
---	--	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Joint Technical Secretariat (R21-22-23)</b></p> <p>To acknowledge and reinforce this de facto role, the JTSs and their antennas should be re-branded as ‘CBC Help-Desks’, whose sole purpose and mission is to support prospective and actual beneficiaries in preparing and executing high quality projects.</p> <p>The JTSs (‘CBC Help-Desks’) should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– pursue more ‘hands-on’ and pro-active support to beneficiaries in project preparation than is currently the case, including organising regular project preparation workshops, facilitating partner searches and providing feedback on the most promising proposals, especially targeted on more remote areas with the greatest need.</li> <li>– continue to support beneficiaries during project implementation, acting as facilitators/mentors, including advising them on secondary procurement and fulfilling the requirements of the new performance framework.</li> </ul> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020 and next programming cycle 2021-2027</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and Operating Structures.</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that JTS's main role is to support the beneficiaries in the preparation and implementation of projects and instructions were given to the programme bodies in this regard. Apart from the regular capacity building activities organised for potential applicants, the JTSs should do more to support the grantees in the implementation of the CBC projects, in particular providing additional support on secondary procurement and fulfilling the requirements of the new performance framework. Nevertheless, in doing so the JTSs have to strongly keep a fair approach towards each beneficiary/potential beneficiary not to be in any conflict of interests</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>DG NEAR will provide further guidance and instructions to the programme bodies on the type of activities to be implemented by the JTSs as core business in the current programming cycle, with a special emphasis on projects preparation and implementation.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, 2018</p>
<p><b>Technical assistance contracts (R 26)</b></p> <p>The EUDs should review (risk assess) and if necessary amend the TA contracts with operating structures to ensure that they are comparable with other service contracts with private consultancies regarding checks, controls and audits (i.e. proportionate to the risk of irregularities), in particular regarding the authorisation of incidental expenditures.</p> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that the authorisation of expenditure incurred under the TA contracts should be based on harmonised application of the rules.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>DG NEAR will further analyse the issues raised on the authorisation of expenditure incurred under the TA contracts and, if necessary, shall issue a note with relevant instructions.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, R5 -2018</p>

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Secondary procurement (R 24)</b></p> <p>CBIB+ should prepare simplified templates for secondary procurement, which can be applied to single tenders and competitive negotiated procedures by grant recipients in all CBC programmes, and would form part of the standard JTS manual.</p> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>The JTSs must ensure that grant beneficiaries are aware of the basic principles and procedures related to secondary procurement. Nevertheless, non-compulsory templates aiming at simplifying the work of the grant beneficiaries can be prepared and used as appropriate.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will task CBIB+ to prepare non-compulsory templates for secondary procurement.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, 2018</p>
---	---	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Performance framework at the level of calls for proposals (R 28, 30-32)</b></p> <p>The scope of future calls for proposals should be focused, to both improve the impact of limited CBC funding and to provide the foundations for a workable performance framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The objectives of calls for proposals should be tailored to a specific location, target group and/or theme within the scope of the specific objective in the programme document.</li> <li>- The assessors should take account of the applicant's projections of indicator values on and after completion of the project when scoring proposals (i.e. link the indicators to the assessment process).</li> <li>- The beneficiaries should be required to improve the quality of their project performance frameworks (logical frameworks and indicators) before contract signature</li> <li>- The beneficiaries should be required to calculate the value and provide evidence for indicators (at output, outcome and impact levels) as part of their monitoring and reporting duties, with support from the JTSs.</li> </ul> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission), IPA beneficiaries and Operating Structures.</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that the programme priorities should be furthered narrowed within the calls for proposals. The revision of indicators of the actions (definition, baseline, target value) prior to the signature of grant contracts does not contravene to the provisions of section 6.5.10.2 of PRAG 2016. Based on the assessment done by the assessors of the quality of indicators, the contracting authorities should ask the beneficiaries to fine –tune the indicators.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>the Guidance package on Calls for proposals prepared by DG NEAR in 2016 will be updated: a) to reflect the commitment to further focus the programme priorities at the level of calls for proposals; b) to provide guidance to beneficiaries on the description of monitoring arrangements in the full application form; c) to provide guidance to the assessors on how to assess the intervention logic and indicators of the CBC actions as well as monitoring arrangements and d) to provide recommendations for the revision of indicators, if needed;</b></li> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will ensure that JTSs keep providing technical support to the potential applicants/grant beneficiaries in the design of logical framework and indicators and the description of the monitoring arrangements;</b></li> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will ensure that project assessors are trained on ways how to assess the logical frameworks, the indicators and monitoring arrangements during the selection phase.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, A4 2018-2020</p>
---	---	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Programme Performance framework (R 34, 35)</b></p> <p>The contracting authorities should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share the performance data with the (relevant teams within the) operating structures, so that the latter can analyse the findings, conduct their own verifications and monitoring missions, including liaising with the JTSs,</li> <li>- Present their conclusions to the JMCs (including through the annual implementation reports)</li> <li>- Feed the intelligence into evaluation and programming.</li> <li>- Develop a management information system (MIS), which can be used to share and aggregate data automatically.</li> </ul> <p>The operating structures should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publish information on their programme websites about programme performance.</li> </ul> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that the performance assessment of the programmes should be done in collaborative manner by the programme bodies based on constant sharing of information and that information on the progress of the programmes should be published on the programme websites regularly. Actions have already been taken to reinforce the monitoring system at project, programme and instrument level through the development, by CBIB+, of a monitoring system which uses a tailored list of indicators per programme, containing common indicators at CBC instrument level. In addition, DG NEAR is currently developing a new reporting system for programmes in indirect management that shall be an extension of its management information system (MIS).</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will provide guidance to the contracting authorities, operating structures and JTSs on how to improve the performance framework at project and programme level;</b></li> <li>- <b>CBIB+ will establish a working group to develop this guidance and will train the JTSs and Operating Structures on how to use the developed monitoring system.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, 2018- 2019</p>
---	---	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>CBC Performance Framework (R 36)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR's coordinating role should be strengthened in carrying out overall performance analysis for the entire CBC Western Balkans, including periodic overviews and comparisons of CBC programmes, in terms of amounts contracted and spent, outputs/results and outcomes achieved.</p> <p>As a priority, the Commission should reconcile the systems for collecting and assembling basic financial data (contracted amounts and disbursements at the project level) on the CBC programmes using CRIS numbers and its MIS, so that it has a complete and accurate picture in one place.</p> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that more efforts need to be put in aggregating data at CBC instrument level as part of monitoring and reporting procedures to identify common/systemic problems and take the necessary measures on time, but also to be able to better communicate the achievements of the CBC programmes.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will define process indicators on the basis of which all programmes will report on a regular basis to DG NEAR;</b></li> <li>- <b>CBIB + will support DG NEAR by aggregating and analysing the data; the results will be presented annually at the CBC Forum to draw lessons;</b></li> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will further analyse the possibility to include IPA CBC programmes data in MIS irrespective of the management mode in view of the transition to OPSYS</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, A4, R1 -2018</p>
---	---	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>CBC Performance Framework (R 37)</b></p> <p>The performance frameworks of each programme should be reworked at the mid-term review in 2017, to make them more realistic and robust, and that the Commission amends the template for the annual implementation report (AIR) at the same time to make specific reference to the performance framework for the programme, not just the indicators in the framework agreement.</p> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and IPA beneficiaries.</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR will review the indicators of the CBC programmes in 2019 when the implementation of the CBC projects selected under the first calls will be sufficiently advanced to allow for a proposer assessment of validity of the existing indicators at programme level. Work is already on-going on the improvement of the template of the annual implementation report.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will revise the Annual implementation report template to reflect the commitments taken under this action plan;</b></li> <li>- <b>The indicators of the CBC programmes will be revised in terms of their definition, relevance to the intervention logic of the programme, baseline and target.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, A4</p> <p>Revision of the Annual Implementation report Template 2018</p> <p>Review of the programmes indicators 2019/2020</p>
---	---	--

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Programme evaluations (R 38)</b></p> <p>The operating structures should commit to perform programme evaluations during the lifetime of their IPA II programmes.</p> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission).</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that the programmes should make use of evaluations as an instrument to draw lessons and improve the management of the programme. Small scale evaluations could be carried out for specific issues related to programme implementation (e.g. on calls for proposals). The capacity of the programme management bodies to carry out their own evaluations should be increased.</p> <p><b>ii) Actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR will carry out a mid-term evaluation and an ex post evaluation of all CBC programmes in 2019 and 2022 respectively;</b></li> <li>- <b>DG NEAR with the support of CBIB+ will prepare a guidance note on carrying out project/programme evaluations in the framework of CBC programmes.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, A4 2019-2022</p>
--	--	---

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF IPA CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES 2007-2013**

<p><b>Performance culture (R 39-40)</b></p> <p>All the main actors - DG NEAR and CBIB+ at the regional level, EUDs and operating structures at the programme level – should develop a performance culture, focused fully on learning from experience, capitalising on results, and utilising monitoring and evaluation findings to target resources on priority communities and needs within border areas.</p> <p>IPA CBC management structures should maintain a watching brief on other territorial cooperation and CBC programmes (Interreg and ENI) and their evaluations for lessons learned.</p> <p>Timeline: current programming cycle 2014-2020</p>	<p><b>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</b></p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the European Commission (Commission) and IPA beneficiaries.</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</b></p> <p>DG NEAR has already taken some steps to ensure the exchange of practices among the CBC programmes it manages, especially through CBIB+ who has been explicitly tasked to support the promotion of a CBC community of practices with other CBC environments (INTERREG and ENI). At the CBC forum held in 17-18 October 2017, the Finish Managing Authority of the Karelia programme has shared their experience in managing thematic calls for proposals.</p> <p><b>ii) actions to be undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>DG NEAR units D5 and C1 will hold regular meetings to share their experience in the management of the IPA-IPA CBC and ENI CBC programmes; Regular exchanges will be ensured as well with DG REGIO on their relevant experience on territorial cooperation;</b></li> <li>- <b>CBIB+ and TESIM will work together to identify opportunities to facilitate the exchange of practices among the IPA-IPA CBC and ENI CBC programmes;</b></li> <li>- <b>CBIB+ will put priority on the activities that promote the exchange of practices and capitalising of results.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>NEAR D5, C1 - 2018-2020</p>
---	--	---