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D.3 - REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PROGRAMMES

Head of Unit

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DG ELARG D3/4390015

- Conclusions -

Multi-country Coordination Meeting Brussels, 13 & 14 November 2014

General remarks:

The main objective of the multi-country meeting was to discuss the priorities for regional cooperation in the 2015 programming exercise, in full complementarity with the programming of national IPA assistance.

Other objectives were to:

- Give an update of the completion of the programming exercise 2014 and the planning for the next programming cycle, e.g. it is planned to merge IPA programmes of 2015 and 2016 in the national programming exercises.
- Give guidance on sector budget support as a delivery mechanism under IPA II.
- Inform about EUROSTAT's medium- to long-term planning in support of statistics in the Western Balkans and Turkey.
- Brief about the timeline and discuss the indicative outline of the proposed interventions that form part of the Multi-country Annual Action Programme 2015.
- Get an update on the Regional (SEE) 2020 Strategy.
- Inform participants on TAIEX as an important instrument of the enlargement policy.
- Draw lessons learnt from the Results-Oriented Missions (ROM) monitoring of regional and horizontal programmes.

General conclusions:

The meeting provided a timely and useful framework for discussions of the 2014 and 2015 programming exercises, given that the 2014 programming can be seen mostly as a continuation of delivery methods used in IPA I, whereas 2015 programming needs to fully embrace the new approach under IPA II. Close cooperation with geographical units, EU Delegations and NIPACs is necessary to ensure complementarity of the multi-country programmes with National Action Programmes in 2015. The NIPACs underlined the importance of this meeting format for networking and exchanging experience on their programming efforts. Information sharing and good

communication is important upstream as well as downstream, e.g. the NIPACs should share conclusions of the meetings with their administrations/line ministries.

The fundamentals of the new Enlargement strategy were recalled: Rule of Law, economic governance and competitiveness as well as public administration reform. Improving connectivity between the Western Balkans and between them and the EU as a key factor for growth and jobs is a priority that has gained increased political importance and momentum.

More efforts need to be deployed to demonstrate the added value of IPA assistance, make results and impact visible. To this end, more attention should be devoted to have a pipeline prepared of mature projects that can start implementation as soon as the programme is adopted and are thus not hampered by legislative hurdles or pre-conditions not yet met.

Key points:

- NIPACs expressed their commitment to better integrate regional cooperation into their national planning, in particular their national IPA programming. To this end, they stressed the importance to be consulted on Multi-country programming early enough to integrate the proposed intervention into their sector planning documents.
 - The draft Action Documents that will form part of the 2015 Multi-country Annual Action Programme will be circulated for comments in December/early 2015.
 - NIPACs were reminded of time pressure to sign and ratify the Framework Agreements (FAs).
 - This was the last meeting organised by DG Enlargement; under the new Commission, a new DG NEAR will, as of 1 January 2015, cover the Neighbourhood (East and South) as well as Enlargement.
 - The next meeting will take place in Pristina/ Kosovo^{*}, in Spring 2015. NIPACs were invited to propose points for the agenda.
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^{*}This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the IJC Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of Independence.