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**BACKBONE STRATEGY ON REFORMING TECHNICAL COOPERATION AND
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UNITS"**

Work plan - Phase 2

Introduction and Objectives

The implementation of the Backbone Strategy (BB) that started in September 2008 is on track. Major achievements till September 2009 include: guidance and tools developed with the QSG starting to address TC and PIUs issues; procedures screened and user friendly guidance available and disseminated; dialogue initiated with international bodies, with MS and at country level; in house communication well advanced, knowledge management platform and training in place, overall implementation framework set up with the first round of the mapping completed.

Main hardware changes, relating to systems and tools have been completed. What is now needed is to give a big push to the Backbone implementation at the country and at operational levels, with delegations on the frontline and HQ providing support and tracking results.

It is now time to start a second phase with a revised work plan translating the focus to the operational level, with delegations playing a central role. At HQ level, the Geographical Directorates will now become the driving force for the implementation, and Directorate E will fulfil its mandate being in charge of specific activities (notably communication/training and tracking) and providing overall support and coordination

This work plan replaces the previous version and includes actions already in the previous plan which are still valid /ongoing or not yet completed and a few new actions.

The indicative timeframe for its implementation is October 2009 – end 2011. The implementation will be regularly reviewed. In September 2011 a final review will be conducted and decisions taken on follow up.

In synthesis the working priorities of this second phase are:

- 1. Focus on operations and on the country level: mainstream the BB principles and the TC quality criteria in the design and implementation of programmes, report in CRIS and use/follow up on ROM reports; develop a geographical "roadmap" to frame and support delegations work with a view to addressing specific challenges[1] and build on opportunities and strengths;

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[1] Such as the high proportion of centralized management in certain regions, alignment to the Strategy of centralized operations managed by HQ, exit strategy for parallel project implementation units, etc…

- 2. <u>Quality assurance</u> in the design phase: the new QSG system has great potential in supporting the quality aspect of new programmes which deserves special focus;

  3. <u>Communication/knowledge management</u>: Enhanced communication and dialogue with all stakeholders and address in particular partner countries' stakeholders so as to facilitate and promote "real ownership". Promote "www.capacity4dev.eu" and provide evidence that the new approach is "feasible" and "promising" through sharing of good practices;

- 4. <u>Learning/Training</u>: promote operational training giving priority to events at country level focused on sector programmes and on other "significant" TC operations;

- 5. <u>Implementation/tracking of the BB</u>: set up within the new PCM Platform an information system to produce statistics on TC; develop a tracking system to measure results of the BB, including: a TC/PIU annual mapping[2], a monitoring mechanism based on the ROM, regular processing of QSG data and of evaluations. Continue the high level Steering Committee, regular reviews and reporting to COCUBU and other bodies;

- 6. <u>Procedures and other actions at system level </u>; complete the work done at the procedural level by developing complementary guidance on how to mobilise public expertise; finalise the set up of the database on performance of FWC firms and follow up on the issue of the suspensive clause; address pending issues at the policy level as the implementation of BB when working in fragile contexts, through International Organisations or Budget Lines.

Annex I presents this Work Plan in a matrix format.

In conclusion, focus is now at country level implementation and on the dialogue with partner country stakeholders, with HQ delivering ad hoc support, collecting feedback and measuring results.

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[2] To be progressively integrated into the PCM Platform

1. Focus on Operations and Country Level

1.1 à Mainstream BB principles in the cycle of operations - *by Delegations and Centralized Operations Units – ongoing*

    a. Design projects/programmes in line with the Backbone Strategy and its related Guidelines on "Making TC more effective".

    b. Monitor projects/programmes on TC issues. Regularly update information in CRIS with critical elements. Implement corrective measures.

1.2 à Boost overall BB implementation at country level - *by Delegations - ongoing*

    a. Elaborate within the EAMR of January 2010 (with the mapping exercise) an Action plan including crosscutting actions[3] to support implementation of the BB with special focus on dialogue with national partners and other donors.

1.3 à Support delegations/country work: *by Geographical Directorates - ongoing*

    a. Formulate and implement a "**road map**" to frame and support the work at country level, addressing critical areas and enhancing potential for innovations *– by Geo Dir – 15-11-2009*

    b. Give active **feed back** and support to delegations;

    c. Support **learning** and promote **capacity** of geo and delegations staff.

2. Quality Assurance at the Design Phase: the QSG

The reformed QSG system will allow a specific focus on the principles of the Backbone Strategy. The QSG system will screen the TC components of programmes/projects against the main quality criteria highlighted by the Guidelines. The new format for the Identification Fiche templates and checklists (steps 1 and 2) as well as the use of the quality grid for "significant" TC operations are the main tools in promoting quality on TC aspects for newly designed programmes. This will be finalized with the QSG reform process.

Questions on TC and PIUs in the new checklists for project approach

For QSG 1 the check list will include comments and constructive proposals on the following questions:

    a. Where appropriate, have significant technical cooperation interventions (including from other donors) been adequately assessed?

    b. Where relevant, is there evidence of a strong demand from the Partner Government/stakeholders?

    c. Is there an adequate analysis of the options to ensure appropriate programme implementation arrangements with a view to strengthening ownership and sustainability?

For QSG 2, the check list will include comments on the following question:

    a. Where technical cooperation activities are proposed, are they fully in line with the Backbone strategy and related guidelines? -see TC Quality Grid

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The "quality grid" will be filled in by the task manager in charge of facilitating the preparation of the project/programme and attached to the Action Fiche for "significant"[4] TC operations. This will ensure that critical issues linked to the quality of TC operations were given sufficient attention

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[3] This Plan will not include actions directly linked to TC programmes to be mainstreamed within normal work

[4] TC component > 1 M€ or CD focused

within the design process and create the possibility for quality managers in Dir E to provide feedback and support to Delegations.

   a. Train EuropeAid staff on the new QSG system to promote a harmonized assessment – *by E5/Coordination Team (CT) - February 2010*

   b. Ensure active follow up and promote corrective measures at an early stage of the design – *Delegations/Geo Directors ongoing*

3. Communication, Knowledge Management and Dialogue

3. 1 à Continue communication in-house with focus on implementation (Guidelines)

   a. Organize sessions for Directorate A, Directorate B and Directorate F – *by Geo Dir with support of the CT. – 1- 12-2009*

   b. Organize ad hoc presentations/working sessions– *by CT + Geo Directorates- ongoing*

   c. Produce a multimedia presentation on the Guidelines– *by E5 – 30- 12-2009*

   d. Hold presentations addressing Delegations staff and Partner countries when on mission- *by Geo Staff + Dir E –Ongoing*

3.2 à Broaden/Enhance communication to external stakeholders

Communication to the rest of the world will be boosted, in particular at country level towards partners' governments, local stakeholders and TC providers.

   a. Organize an event for Civil Society Organisations and private sector - *by CT – 30- 12- 2009*

   b. Organize regularly short presentations at the Info Point – *by E5 /CT - ongoing*

3.3 à Address Line DGs

Initial contacts with some line DGs actively involved in support to third countries have highlighted the need to increase dialogue on TC issues.

   a. Develop dialogue, hold presentations and disseminate Backbone principles and guidelines- *by CT with Geo Dir – 30- 3- 2010*

3.4 à Knowledge management – "www. capacity4dev.eu"

The platform "www.capacity4dev.eu" is a dynamic component of the Backbone which can substantially contribute to implementing change and developing dialogue in-house and with the rest of the world. Its integration in the daily work of EC staff needs to be given support and tracked.

"www.capacity4dev.eu" – what 4 !
- make available critical info and working tools linked to TC reforms
- promote dialogue between delegations and HQ
- contribute to the improved design of operations by disseminating good practices
- build dialogue with external stakeholders, including partner's governments, other donors (MS) and TC providers

   a. Implement a marketing strategy following the official launch - *by E5/CT - 30-12-2009*

   b. Develop a development strategy for the platform - *by E5 - 30 -11- 2009*

3.5 à Collect and disseminate innovative/good practices

The objective is to promote cross learning/peer support, provide inspiration and incentives. A compilation of "success" stories will be built illustrating in real life the various principles. It will be sustained by "capacity4dev" allowing for interactivity.

a. Launch a <u>competition</u> for "promising TC" with a prize to be awarded– *by CT - 30- 03- 2010*

b. Put in place a <u>structured approach</u> to collect cases through QSG, ROM, Geo team leaders– *by CT – 31- 12- 2009*

3.6 à The Panel of external stakeholders

The objective is to promote dialogue with external stakeholders. The members of the Panel are identified and a menu of actions is ready. There is interest and demand in particular from private sectors and CSOs to participate.

a. Kick off the panel with the official launch of the capacity4dev– *by E5 - 30 -10- 2009*

3.7 à Policy dialogue at international level

There are various work streams around Capacity Development and TC: the EU initiative with Sweden/DGDEV initiative to the activity of the DAC and of Learning Exchange Network on Capacity Development (www.lencd.org) and of the new CD Alliance (CDA).

a. Support development and follow up of the "Joint EU approach on TC" - *by 01/E5 - ongoing*

b. Further develop dialogue with other donors/agencies (including WB, FMI) and explore collaboration/synergies – *by CT - ongoing*

c. Participate in DAC initiatives – *by 01/E5-ongoing*

d. Participate in the Capacity Development Alliance activities - *by Dir. E/ E5-ongoing*

4. Training + ad hoc Support to Operations

4.1 à Tailored training/coaching at country and regional level

Priority will be given to tailored events open to delegation staff, country and donor partners and to regional seminars.

a. Inform delegations on training offer and plan country sessions – *by Geo Dir. + CT – 30 - 11-2009*

b. Implement following demand and budget availability – *by E5+ADM*

4.2 à Training /coaching in HQ

a. Organize 4 sessions a year of basic training on TC – *by E5 + ADM -ongoing*

b. Market and offer coaching sessions on ongoing programmes– *by E5 + Geo Dir - ongoing*

5. Tracking & Monitoring TC /PIUs and the BB implementation

The implementation of an efficient tracking system is now needed to show concrete results including at the process level of the BB and providing feedback on policy / guidance/support level. The system is built on existing mechanisms with minimum additional work. See also presentation in Annex II. The objectives are as follows:

- monitor results including at process level;

- demonstrate changes in the field and measure improvements in TC quality;

- learn lessons on major issues affecting results and impact of TC;

- raise awareness on what the BB means "in practice".

Data to be produced includes: basic quantitative statistics on TC provision; statistics on the compliance of programmes with quality criteria; quantitative/qualitative information on "innovative programmes"; more in depth qualitative analysis on TC/PIU implementation.

This data will also be used to report to external bodies such as the EU Parliament, Court of Auditors, OECD, etc...

5.1 à Set up an information system

The PCM platform and more globally the new info system will take into account TC aspects and constitute the building block for the overall tracking system.

    a.   Include in the first component of the PCM Platform basic information on TC[5] (amount/purpose by region/country/sector) – *by E5+ Consultant – March 2010*

    b.   Propose further technical development (as integration of the annual Mapping from January 2011) (see 5.2) – *tbd*

5.2 à Mapping of TC and of PIUs

The 2010 exercise will use the same format as 2009 and map major features of "significant" TC operations (including quality criteria). The mapping will be extended to centralized operations with an adapted format. The mapping exercise will be integrated in the new PCM platform as soon as possible.

The mapping will provide information needed to steer BB implementation at country, regional, global levels. The data will be used to report on DAC related indicators and EU commitments (within EuropeAid Aid effectiveness Work plan). The mapping is also intended as a management tool for delegations and geo teams to support the BB implementation at country level (feed Country Action Plans – see point 1.2).

    a.   Launch a second round of the "mapping" with the EAMR Jan. 2010 –*by CT + G1*

    b.   Analyse data– *by Geo Dir + 01 - March 2010*

    c.   Launch an adapted mapping for Centralised operations – *by Geo Dir with CT support – 02 -2010*

5.3 à Monitoring

5.3.1. Global Survey via the Standard ROM Process

The ROM methodology has been adapted to include TC and PIU aspects (y/n questions on some TC quality criteria): this will produce a consolidated quantitative analysis based on 1500/1600 reports a year.

Comparing results on TC aspects from one year to another will provide a quantitative baseline and allow us to measure changes. A specific analysis of ROM reports/TC issues will be produced by the ROM Support Office aggregating the regional data, giving an overall analysis and trends per region.

    a.   Review results from the ROM reports from July 2009 to February 2009 – *by E5 +ROM Contractor - March 2010*

    b.   On the basis of this first review, consider if appropriate in the next ROM work plan to select higher number of "significant TC" programmes. – *by CT+Geo Dir*

    c.   Produce regular analysis. – *ongoing*

5.3.2. Building "in-depth monitoring" based on the ROM

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[5] On the amount for TC activities in each programme/project, on its specified purpose with a search function allowing retrieving projects including a TC component based on various criteria (by amount of TC and by amount of TC for each purpose

A more qualitative monitoring will complete the system. During 2010 a pilot scheme will be put in place of an "in-depth "TC monitoring" consisting of qualitative analysis on the performance/results of the TC component and on issues related to the PIUs set up. A light methodology will be designed and between 50 to 80 programmes will be "critically observed" against the quality criteria. The results of the pilot scheme will be reviewed and pending positive assessment the pilot scheme will be extended in 2011 to cover up to 150 programmes (10% of "ROM programmes"). This system should be limited to 3 to 5 years.

Action:

    a. Identify /mobilize the funding available for the pilot scheme - *by E5 – 15- 11- 2009*

    b. Define an adapted ROM methodology consulting different stakeholders – *by E5/CT 30 - 11-2009*

    c. Implement the pilot scheme - *by E5- during 2010*

    d. Process the pilot scheme results – *by E5/CT -end of March 2011*

    e. Pending results of the pilot scheme, launch the extended "In depth monitoring" - *by E5/CT first half of 2011*

5.4 à Evaluation

5.4.1 Global Evaluation on Technical Cooperation

The Global Evaluation on Technical Cooperation will be carried out by the Joint Evaluation Unit. The work is planned to start in October 2009 and contracting is envisaged for the end of 2009 beginning of 2010. *Results will be available mid 2011.*

5.4.2 Integration of TC aspects in mid-term and final project evaluations

On a selected sample of projects/programmes, E5 in coordination with the Joint Evaluation Unit will promote the inclusion of a specific focus on TC aspects.

    a. Include guidance developed in the Guidelines on the "evaluation questions" in the TOR standard for evaluations - *E5/03*

    b. Include "TC related aspects " when defining the criteria for projects to be evaluated– *by E5/CT - by end 2009*

    c. Compile and ensure dissemination of conclusions – *by E5/ CT – from 2011*

5.5 à QSG

Within the context of the new QSG, a two pronged approach is foreseen.

The first component is a qualitative analysis of comments on TC aspects in the QSG checklists and Quality Grids. This will allow regular overview of the evolution of quality at the design stage.

The second component"[6] focuses on "innovative programmes". Geo coordinators will earmark "innovative" TC programmes on the basis of their operational expertise within the specific country context and the comments received by Dir. E. This will allow a systematic identification of "good practices, and will contribute to further developing qualitative analysis and measure trends.

Action:

    a. Under the oQSG "conclusion part" of the new checklists, introduce in the comments of the "Cooperation Officers" a box for "innovative/promising TC programme" – *by E5*

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[6] This is also useful to feed knowledge management, training and communication activities as well as development of cases studies.

b. Train Dir E staff/AIDCO cooperation officers on assessing TC aspects (in the training on the new QSG system) – *by E5 - February 2010*

c. Include the "quality grid" in the development of oQSG module of the PCM platform in a searchable format, to allow cross fertilisation and exchanges *by E5 - June 2010*

d. Within the forthcoming methodology for quality analysis of QSG data, develop a light methodology to analyse the data on TC – *by E5- March 2010*

e. Identify good practices, lessons learnt. Disseminate this information - *by E5- from 2010*.

6. Procedures and Other Actions at System Level

6.1 à Follow up Work on Procedures

Most of the work regarding the adaptation of procedures and production of tools/guidance has been completed. Nevertheless, some issues still need to be followed up.

The <u>mobilisation of public expertise of EU MS</u> should be supported in other regions as in Neighbourhood countries, but with lighter procedures than institutional twinning and in a flexible way. In complement to Annex 6 of the Guidelines on TC, light guidance should clarify certain operational aspects (such as fees and other expenses, insurance, etc.).

The possibility of facilitating the use of the <u>suspensive clause</u> under the EC budget, as currently already possible under the EDF should be explored in the context of the next revision of the FR/IR in 2010.

Actions*:*

a. Elaborate "light" operational guidance on mobilisation of public expertise – *by CT with active Geo support –   30- 06 -2009*

b. Follow up suspensive clause issue. *by Unit G7- tbd*

c. Follow up database on FWC – *Unit F4*

6.2 à Consider Specific Issues and produce Light Guidance

There is a need to clarify how the BB is implemented in specific contexts/system:

a. TC and the Backbone Strategy in fragile situations - provide some practical guidance –*by CT/ ad hoc WG - June 2010.*

b. TC implemented trough projects financed via Budget Lines: develop a diagnostic and define way forward (including if relevant an adapted Mapping) - *by Dir F - December 2010*

c. The BB and International Organisations: define how to promote the application of BB principles when an EC funded project/programme is implemented through IOs (including the contractual arrangements). *by CT/G8 – March 2010*

d. The "Topping up" debate and how to best ensure that the NAO support provided in EDF countries is compliant with the Backbone Strategy. Initiate a work stream and consider if short guidance is needed - *by CT / Geo Dir*

Annex I - Matrix Work Plan Phase II Summary
Annex II - Monitoring framework for Backbone implementation

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