Improving the Effectiveness of Technical Cooperation
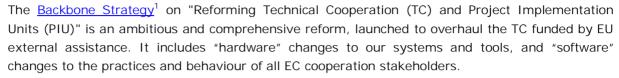
EuropeAid

State of progress of the Backbone Strategy and next steps for Delegations

BACKBONE STRATEGY ON TC REFORM

The [Backbone Strategy](#)[1] on "Reforming Technical Cooperation (TC) and Project Implementation Units (PIU)" is an ambitious and comprehensive reform, launched to overhaul the TC funded by EU external assistance. It includes "hardware" changes to our systems and tools, and "software" changes to the practices and behaviour of all EC cooperation stakeholders.

Measures to reform how the EC delivers technical cooperation are well underway. Whether you're based in headquarters or close to the field in one of the EC delegations, it's up to you to make these changes happen, in the programme you are managing, and in your daily work.

Achievements so far…

Some nine months after adoption of the Backbone Strategy, the key tools of change are in place. Work is ongoing to incorporate those principles into operations. To do this action has been taken in the following areas:

1/ Strategic Dialogue on Technical Cooperation and Coordination:

Central to the successful implementation of the Backbone Strategy is improved dialogue with partner countries, other donors, Member States and various stakeholders.

Dialogue and coordination mechanisms have been established with Member States during the preparation of the Strategy and the finalisation of the Guidelines on TC. Dialogue has been established with DG RELEX and DG DEV to ensure inclusion of the Backbone Strategy at programming level, primarily through mid-term reviews. Dialogue on TC reform has also been developed with the OECD's Development Assistance Committee and other networks, like www.lencd.org.

2/ Programme Design, Implementation and Monitoring:

[Guidelines to improve the design of technical cooperation programmes](#)[2] have been put into place following lengthy consultation with colleagues, Member States and various partners. Specifically, they address the following:

- How to convert "ownership" into an operational concept, so that technical cooperation meets capacity development objectives.

- How to identify and work on "demand" for technical cooperation, including adapting and assessing the context and existing capacity. This includes seeking harmonised delivery and non-traditional sources

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[1] http://www.cc.cec/dgintranet/europeaid/activities/adm/documents/backbone_strategy_on_tc-pius_final_en.pdf

[2] http://www.cc.cec/dgintranet/europeaid/activities/adm/technical_cooperation/index_en.htm

of supply such as public bodies, Non State Actors, universities, etc.

- How to make programme design driven by results beyond the traditional training delivery of experts.

- How to improve the design of project implementation arrangements, starting from the scope and nature of the programme and avoid the negative effects of donor-driven project implementation units.

A 'Matrix of Quality Criteria' is now available as a support tool during identification, formulation, monitoring and evaluation of technical cooperation programmes (see the Guidelines, chapter 6 and annex 4). Formats for Identification and Action Fiches, checklists and specific instructions will be fully integrated in the ongoing revision of the Quality Support Group system.

From January 2009, results-orientated monitoring reports (ROM) on more than 1500 projects/year will include a new section called 'Review of Technical Cooperation Quality Criteria'.

3/ Procurement and Contracting:

Procurement and contracting procedures have been reviewed and a short guide has been produced, called: 'How to apply EC procedures to Technical Cooperation' (see annex 6 of the Guidelines).

This guide provides advice on co-financing and delegated cooperation, different modes of implementation, types of contracts, procedures for tenders and grants to mobilize public sector expertise, and the participation of beneficiary countries in centralised procedures. How to assess and confirm expert experience and how the contractual model deals with replacement of experts, is also discussed in the guide, which includes a Q&A section, practical examples and other useful resources.

4/ Communication, Knowledge Management and Training:

To meet a strong demand for information sharing, an interactive web platform www.capacity4dev.eu will be launched end of April 2009. This will ease communication by promoting the exchange of good practices and encouraging collaboration and e-discussions both in-house and with external stakeholders.

A new EuropeAid training course, 'The New Approach to Technical Cooperation', is available for internal and external participants (apply via Syslog). Coaching on practical cases brought by participants is also offered during the session. Separate training for management has been organised. A hands-on training kit is being developed for use at country level, and will be available in various formats on the platform.

5/ Implementation and Monitoring of the Backbone Strategy:

Since July 2008, EuropeAid's Director General has chaired the regular Steering Committee meetings. One Geographical Team is set up in each Geo Directorate and a Coordination Team (mainly thematic staff plus unit 01) is responsible of overall coordination and of the review of tools/systems. Click here[3] to see the composition of all the teams. An advisory panel of external experts has been set up to monitor implementation, with a view to harnessing their views and inputs.

At country level, the Backbone Strategy has been kicked off with the mapping of ongoing and pipeline programmes (EAMR - annex C). This represents the "baseline" for the implementation of the Strategy and will be the foundation for further work. Delegations have also initiated country action plans to redress policy gaps and to ensure quality of ongoing and pipeline programmes. This valuable work now needs to be discussed between headquarters, delegations and country stakeholder with a view to enhance effectiveness of our TC.

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[3] http://www.cc.cec/dgintranet/europeaid/activities/adm/documents/core_team_list_2009_03_04.doc

Next steps….

The groundwork has been done, and the tools put into place to support change. Now it's time to put the Backbone Strategy into practice in your daily work!

What you can do at country level

1. Enhance dialogue on technical cooperation with your country partners and with other donors. Build this dialogue on the TC mapping and country action plan already prepared.

2. Disseminate the Guidelines on technical cooperation to country partners, other donors and stakeholders. Organise presentations using the material available on the website. Use and apply the Guidelines in the design and management of technical cooperation. Do so in collaboration with country partners, and colleagues from member states and other donors.

3. Use the annex 6 of the Guidelines - 'How to apply EC procedures to Technical Cooperation' - where there are plenty of new options and approaches to consider.

4. Give attention and apply with care the 'Matrix of Quality Criteria' and employ the user-friendly 'Quality Assessment Grid' to ensure quality throughout the cycle (chapter 6 and Annex 4 Guidelines on TC).

5. Identify innovative cases and flag them to your geo team and to the functional mail-box Europeaid-TC-PIU@ec.europa.eu.

6. Build on the mapping of technical cooperation (Annex C - External Assistance Management Report, January 2009) to improve quality of ongoing and pipeline operations.

7. Implement your country action plan and request headquarters support when necessary.

8. Utilise and contribute to the knowledge platform www.capacity4dev.eu. It's your tool to communicate and exchange innovative practices and kick off a structured learning process.

9. Participate in training at headquarters. Training kits and e-learning sessions will also be available online at www.capacity4dev.eu.

10. Use the training kits and organise training in your country. Many options are available: become a trainer yourself, use delegation budget or programme funds to finance training sessions; ask for HQ support or support from the Aid Delivery Methods Programme.

11. "Delegations teams" to boost the overall process, coordinate action around country plans, dialogue with HQs and …………………… give a big push to technical cooperation effectiveness in each country

How can headquarters support you?

Staff in Geographical Directorates and Directorate E will support your work. Your first points of contact are the Geographical Coordinators and the Geographical Teams involved in the implementation of the Backbone Strategy. You can also contact the Coordination Team (mainly thematic staff in Directorate E) in charge of tools and systems, including: training, guidance, communication, platform, etc. Click here[4] to see the composition of all the teams.

Directorate E and the Geographical Teams in charge of the Backbone Strategy are also offering support activities to promote technical cooperation reform at country level. These activities may have various objectives, such as: strengthening country-owned and country managed technical cooperation processes and

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[4] http://www.cc.cec/dgintranet/europeaid/activities/adm/documents/core_team_list_2009_03_04.doc

supporting the harmonisation of technical cooperation among development partners; supporting and disseminating emerging good practices; giving European Commission and the European Union visibility as a driver of change in technical cooperation and project implementation unit reform; assisting delegations in the implementation of the Backbone Strategy; learning about technical cooperation reform in practice, and adapting tools and activities.

We offer you a menu of possible activities, which can be flexibly combined:

- Tailored training and learning/coaching events open to delegation staff, country and donor partners which could have either broad scope across sectors or focus on a single sector. Events would typically run two - three days including practical work on real cases/programmes.

- Presentations and working sessions with EC staff, country stakeholders and other partners. According to context and demand, these sessions could span from basic awareness-raising to having a more specific focus. They may include presentations of the Backbone Strategy and of the Guidelines, follow up and refinement of Country Action Plans and of the TC mapping, work on specific country /sector coordinating mechanisms. Duration is normally 3-4 hours.

- Identification and support to innovative programmes/processes through ad hoc assistance and coaching.

- Promotion of our web platform www.capacity4dev.eu including collecting your views on the platform, video interviews, various material, ideas and viewpoints for sharing on the site.

- Peer support among delegations at regional / sector level and/or partner countries, including reviews of mapping and action plans.

Headquarters can be mobilised through missions or remote support by Directorate E, by the Geographical Directorate staff and may include facilitators and trainers from the Aid Delivery Methods Programme.

For ideas & queries please contact Europeaid-TC-PIU@ec.europa.eu