



**The European Union's Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)
FWC COM 2011 - Lot 1 – Studies and Technical Assistance in All Sectors**

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Evaluation of TALEX Instrument

Final Evaluation Report

August 2015



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Contract N°2014/346665/1

**FWC COM 2011 - Lot 1 – Studies and Technical Assistance in all
Sectors**

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Final Evaluation Report

August 2015

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGRI	Agriculture and food safety
BA	Beneficiary Administration
BC	Beneficiary Country
CP	Contact Point
DEI	Directorate for European Integration
DEU	Delegation of European Union
DG	Directorate General
DG AGRI	Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG DEVCO	Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development - EuropeAid
DG ENER	Directorate General for Energy
DG ENTR	Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry
DG ENV	Directorate General for Environment
DG GROW	Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DG SANTE	Directorate General for Health and Food Safety
DG TAXUD	Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union (TAXe et Union Douanière)
DPI	Directorate for Project Implementation
EC	European Commission
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EUD	European Union Delegation
EU	European Union
EUMS	European Union Member State
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EQ	Evaluation Question
ETT	Environment-Transport & Telecommunications
FER	Final Evaluation Report
FWC	Framework Contract
IBU	Institution Building Unit (also referred to as the TAIEX Unit)
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPRs	Intellectual Property Rights
JHA	Justice & Home Affairs
JLS	Justice, Liberty and Security
LAF	Local Administration Facility (TAIEX)
MAFF	Multi-Annual Financial Framework
MEUA	Ministry of EU Affairs (Turkey)
MFEA	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Croatia)
MIFF	Multi-Annual Indicative Financial Framework
MIPD	Multi-Annual Indicative Planning Document
MS	Member State
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NCP	National Contact Point
NIP	National Indicative Programme
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
NP	National Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation
PAR	Public Administration Reform
SEI	Support Activities to Strengthen the European Integration Process
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SWOT	Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats

TA	Technical Assistance
TAIB	Transition Assistance and Institution Building
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange
TMS	TAIEX Management System
TORs	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of this final evaluation has been to assess the capacity of the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX). The assessment has specifically covered TAIEX's capacity in making available the expertise of Member States' public officials and administrations to countries wishing to align their standards with those of the European Union (EU) in the most relevant and effective way. The final evaluation covers all TAIEX assistance funded by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) from 2007 to date.

Evaluation process and methodology

The evaluation was structured into three phases: Inception (November 2014 -January 2015), Data collection (February - May 2015), and Analysis and Reporting (March – June 2015). The evaluation addresses a sample of 4 IPA Countries (Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey) and TAIEX events (particularly workshops), expert missions and study visits to European Union Member States (EUMS). The exercise encompassed a range of evaluation methods. This included face-to-face interviews with thematic Directorate Generals (DGs) in Brussels; the Czech and German National Contact Points (NCPs); one EUMS Expert for TAIEX; telephone interviews with Line Stakeholders in the sampled four countries; and two comprehensive e-Surveys with line beneficiaries and NCPs in the four IPA countries. E-Survey 2 was conducted with the European Commission's relevant thematic DGs, European Union Delegations (EUDs) in the IPA countries and EUMS NCPs. The Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis was also conducted with the aim of providing useful insights into TAIEX for future conceptualisation and programming.

Key findings

Relevance and design

TAIEX assistance has been **highly relevant** in view of existing and emerging international and national commitments of IPA country governments, with respect to furthering public administration and governance reforms and in light of the EU accession requirements. **The evaluation identified several strengths and no significant weaknesses in the overall design of the Instrument.**

The broad, system-focused design of the TAIEX instrument is appropriate in view of the needs of the beneficiary governments and their respective institutions. TAIEX is a demand driven instrument, based on the recognised need of the Beneficiary Administrations (BA) for assistance in certain internal processes (legislative, implementation or procedural).

Effectiveness

TAIEX contributions to envisaged reforms are almost exclusively positive. There is a record of useful results being delivered in beneficiary countries, which supported reform goals across the various sectors of support. This was achieved through informed strategies, improved legislation, enhanced institutional capacity, the modernisation of practices and new models of work, but also behavioural change. There is evidence of a contribution to successful changes in legal frameworks, policies and strategies, through support provided by TAIEX assistance - in synergy with other instruments - to strengthen the respective BAs' organisational capacities. TAIEX empowered positive changes and the ability of adjustments with the approximations into the EU *acquis*.

Efficiency

While it is difficult to assess cost-effectiveness of TAIEX (due to the fact that it is a demand driven instrument featuring a less systematic framework of outcome and impact indicators), there is evidence that TAIEX assistance has been delivered in a timely and efficient manner. Its management structures and approaches are appropriate and allow for the selection of the

best mechanisms to respond to the needs of the BA. Despite the fact that TAIEX is a demand driven instrument by nature - which can cause fragmentation - it is in a good position to overcome this obstacle by increasingly ensuring sequenced events that have been programmed and supported within sectors. Some positive lessons and experiences from such examples are taken into account and used to inform programming of new TAIEX interventions. TAIEX has a strong in-built Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system that provides a good overview of efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of support provided by the instrument.

Impact

TAIEX's overall contribution to EU accession must be looked at in conjunction with other forms of EU (and other donor) assistance to individual countries. Nonetheless, available data on TAIEX and data gathered through this evaluation indicate that TAIEX efforts have contributed to moving existing change processes into the desired direction in the IPA countries. This is particularly the case in terms of behavioural change and legislative/institutional mechanisms development and reform.

Sustainability

The instrument helped create a number of conditions likely to support the sustainability of results. Good foundations for sustainability included adopted legislation and newly established mechanisms, as well as administrative and organisational structures, which are in place - ensuring the effective implementation of TAIEX assistance. While certain achievements are likely to be sustained without further support, others will require additional efforts from national and/or international actors. The main threat to sustainability is a high turnover of staff and low capacities in the public administrations. This is compounded by a lack of political/senior management support to sustaining changes brought about by the TAIEX instrument.

SWOT Analysis of TAIEX

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of TAIEX to most ardent needs of the BAs; • Participatory approach to programming; • Expertise brought about by TAIEX; • Mobilisation and networking; • Synergy with other development efforts; • Flexible implementation framework; • Strong M&E system. 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmentation of support.
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequencing of TAIEX assistance; • Knowledge management and learning; • Complementarity. 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deteriorating situation in individual countries or in the region; • The late communication of logistical arrangements to the participants and the relevant BA.

Recommendations

The following table presents recommendations for TAIEX instrument.

Strategic (S)			
S1	Enhance ownership of BAs over TAIEX instrument through encouraging their leadership in prioritisation of TAIEX assistance, preparation of requests and selection of implementing partners/experts.	Governments, with the assistance of EUD and TAIEX management	2015-2016
Programming, delivery and co-ordination of the instrument (P)			
P1	Continue good practice of sequencing assistance through combination of TAIEX events.	NCPs and the TAIEX Unit at the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)	Planning and programming phase of TAIEX
P2	Continue approving study visits as a TAIEX support mechanism.	NCPs and the TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Planning and programming phase of TAIEX
P3	Enable access to M&E data gathered and analysed in the system for internal users in EC (e.g. line DGs) to contribute to shared understanding of the value added and effectiveness and impact of the TAIEX assistance.	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Ongoing
P4	Increase awareness-raising concerning the TAIEX instrument and support the monitoring function of national contact points.	EU Delegations National IPA Coordinators (NIPACs)/NCPs	Permanently
P5	BAs should invest their efforts to build further capacities for prioritization of TAIEX support activities and fulfilling the requirements from the online form.	BAs	Permanently
P6	Continue ensuring logistics arrangements run smoothly.	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Permanently
P7	Improve the application form by introducing analysis of impact and sustainability prospects of the event (or series of events, if applicable).	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Permanently
P8	Strengthen the website presentation of the TAIEX instrument – to be used also as a visibility tool.	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Permanently
P9	Consider stronger support through webinars as a good practice that can contribute to sustainability of measures.	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	2015-2016

1. INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report summarises the key evaluation findings, conclusions, and forward-looking recommendations deriving from the evaluation of the TAIEX Instrument.

1.1. Purpose of the Evaluation

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR) (page 4, Annex 1), the purpose of the '**Evaluation of TAIEX instrument**' is 'to assess the capacity of the TAIEX Technical Assistance and Information Exchange in making available the expertise of Member States' public officials and administrations to countries wishing to align their standards with those of the EU in the most relevant and effective way.' The overall objective is to enhance EU value added and cost-effectiveness in delivering assistance while addressing beneficiary needs. The European Commission (DG NEAR, Unit A.3 Inter-institutional Relations, Planning, Reporting and Evaluation) has contracted an external contractor – AETS - to carry out the evaluation, which took place during the period October 2014 – June 2015.

The **specific objectives** of the assignment are to provide an assessment of the relevance, added value and cost effectiveness (efficiency) of TAIEX assistance by:

- Assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability of TAIEX assistance;
- Providing Lessons Learnt and Recommendations for decision-making on improvements of future financial assistance.

An additional requirement of the evaluation was to conduct a SWOT analysis on targeted *acquis* assistance funded by TAIEX in the IPA region; and to assess the cost-efficiency of its management mode.

The evaluation has been carried out by the following Evaluation Team:

- Ms Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic, Lead drafter of the Evaluation Report on the TAIEX Instrument;
- Ms Marie Kaufmann, Junior Expert 2;
- Mr Levent Sayan, Junior Expert 3.

1.2. Methodology and Approach

Evaluation Phases

The evaluation has been carried out in three consecutive phases: Inception (desk) Phase, Main assessment Phase and a Synthesis Phase, with a flexible borderline and overlapping in order to ensure maximum effectiveness and to avoid the impractical constraints of a rigid timeframe/work plan.

Inception (desk) Phase. The Evaluation started with the kick-off meeting conducted in Brussels on 22 October 2014, and other follow-up meetings conducted with the Evaluation Unit and the TAIEX Unit. During the inception phase, the Evaluators conducted comprehensive face-to-face interviews with several thematic line DGs¹, the Czech NCP, the

¹ Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Directorate General for Energy (DG ENER), Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry (DG ENTR), Directorate General for Environment (DG ENV), Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) and the Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD).

External Contractor for TAIEX Logistics and Belgium's Federal Training Centre² on 12, 13, 14, 20 and 21 November 2014 (see **Annex 7**). The minutes of these face-to-face interviews are attached in **Annex 16** (Brussels meetings) and **Annex 17** (Czech NCP).

The Final Inception Report was submitted on 21 January 2015.

a) Main assessment Phase. The assessment Phase took place between January-May 2015. It was used to collect information from the countries in the sample, the line DGs, EUMS, the TAIEX Unit (through semi-structured interviews), the two e-surveys, and telephone interviews based on the Evaluation Matrix and the sample.

The ToR of this Evaluation did not envisage field missions to the target countries and as such, telephone interviews were held with officials from key ministries and other governmental bodies that were beneficiaries of TAIEX, line DGs and EUMS representatives involved in TAIEX relevant to the TAIEX evaluation. Telephone interviews were essentially conducted simultaneously with, or after, the e-Surveys and were used for corroborating and confirming the desk research findings. In addition, when appropriate, they were used for collecting additional information, which could in turn be used for reporting and generating recommendations, and lessons learnt.

b) Synthesis Phase. Information and facts collected during the first two phases have been analysed and integrated in this Evaluation Report. The Final Evaluation Report incorporates the feedback received from the stakeholders following a presentation event held on 18 May 2015 in Brussels.

The Evaluation has followed a **participatory process** with active involvement of as many relevant line beneficiaries and stakeholders as possible both in Brussels and the four IPA countries, who contributed directly and indirectly to the management and implementation of TAIEX activities.

Evaluation Matrix

The five generic Evaluation Questions (EQ), which frame the evaluation methodological approach reflect and focus on, **42 sub-questions** broken down into each of the evaluation criteria as indicated in the assignment's ToR. However, after careful review of the ToR, the Evaluators reshuffled the list of those questions to link them more accurately to each of the proposed criteria, which was approved in the inception phase (see **Annex 3** for the detailed list of **reshuffled Evaluation Questions with cross-references**). Moreover, several questions were added to **Interview Guide N°1** prepared for the telephone interviews with the line beneficiaries and the TAIEX NCPs in the 4 IPA countries (**Annex 4**). Questions were also added to **Interview Guide N°2** (**Annex 5**) prepared for the meetings with the thematic line DGs in Brussels and the telephone interviews with the EUMS NCPs.

Finally, on the basis of their analysis and findings under each of the evaluation criteria, the Evaluators provided **Conclusions** and **Recommendations** that shall be considered for future TAIEX interventions under the next IPA programming cycles.

The Final Evaluation Report structure fully reflects the questions indicated in the ToR against the Evaluation Criteria. A **matrix including the generic Evaluation Questions, their Sub-Questions, Judgement Criteria and Indicators** has been prepared and is attached in **Annex 6** to the present Final Evaluation Report. The matrix follows the evaluation sub-questions indicated in the ToR. Those sub-questions have been consolidated into the various chapters and sub-chapters of the Final Evaluation Report.

² Home organisation of the EUMS Expert for TAIEX.

1.3. Evaluation Sample

The chief criterion considered for selecting the evaluation sample has been to make it as representative as possible of all the TAIEX events implemented in the IPA Region from 2007 to present. The rationale for this approach is that the Evaluation eventually needs to extrapolate validated findings to the entire EU-funded TAIEX instrument in the IPA Region from 2007 to present.

Sampling approach

This evaluation addresses a sample of 4 IPA Countries, which consists of one new EU Member State (Croatia³) and three Candidate Countries (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey). The four-country sample represents just above 60% of the total number of TAIEX requests in the IPA Region for 2010-2014 and slightly more than 55% of the total number of TAIEX events in the IPA Region over the same period. This Evaluation covers workshops, expert missions and study visits to EUMS as types of TAIEX events for the focus of the assessment.

In accordance with the ToR, the present Evaluation focuses on Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability issues. The ToR (p.4) also specify that 'the Evaluation focuses on a sample of IPA Financial Decisions, more particularly IPA Financial Decisions 2011 and 2013 (see **Annex 1** to the TORs), which means that the Experts should cover TAIEX support provided by the EU via its latest Financing Decisions (IPA/2011/022-928; IPA/2011/022-964; IPA/2011/022-852; IPA/2013/023-746)'. However, this question was also discussed further by the Evaluation Unit and the Evaluators in the subsequent meetings of 12-13 November 2014.

As agreed during the kick-off meeting and subsequent discussion with DG NEAR, for the Desk Research Phase, the Evaluators focused on the years 2011-2014, i.e. the most recent events. Moreover, the Evaluation Team also analysed how TAIEX evolved in the IPA countries over the period under consideration, i.e. from 2007 to date. Therefore, in order to gain a full understanding of the design of EU sector support/assistance, main achievements to date and particularly where and why the TAIEX instrument has worked well, and where and why it has worked less well were covered. This Evaluation covers the IPA-I (2007-13) and IPA-II periods (2014) with a particular focus on TAIEX assistance from mid-2012 onwards.

The broad priority sectors for this Evaluation were indicated in the Terms of Reference for this assignment and were discussed between the Evaluators and DG NEAR's Evaluation Unit and its Reference Group during the kick-off meeting conducted in Brussels on 22 October 2014. They correspond to the internal division of sectors of the Unit managing TAIEX:

- Agriculture & Food Safety;
- Freedom, Security & Justice (JLS), also referred to as Justice & Home Affairs;
- Environment, Transport and Telecommunications, Energy;
- Internal Market (and others).

1.4. Evaluation Tools and the Data Collection Methods

Preliminary face-to-face interviews with thematic DGs in Brussels, the Czech NCP and one EUMS Expert for TAIEX

³ Croatia joined the EU as Member State since 1 July 2013, but has continued to benefit from TAIEX activities. To date, Croatia is the EU's 28th Member State.

Evaluators conducted comprehensive face-to-face interviews with several line thematic DGs⁴, the Czech NCP, the External Contractor for TAIEX Logistics and Belgium's Federal Training Centre⁵ on 12, 13, 14, 20 and 21 November 2014, and the German NCP (see **Annex 7**). The minutes of those face-to-face interviews are attached in **Annex 16** (Brussels meetings), **Annex 17** (Czech NCP), and the German NCP (Annex 27).

Telephone Interviews with the Line Stakeholders

Two Interview Guides were developed for the telephone interviews. One was intended for the line beneficiaries and the other was intended for the line thematic DGs and the five EUMS NCPs. Both interview guides are attached in **Annex 4** and **Annex 5**. The final lists of interviewees can be found in **Annex 8**. Minutes of the telephone interviews with the 4 IPA countries can be found in **Annexes 12-15**.

The two e-Surveys

Two comprehensive e-Surveys were conducted within the scope of this Evaluation. The e-Survey 1 was conducted with *line beneficiaries and NCPs in the four IPA countries*. The e-Survey 2 was conducted with the *European Commission's relevant thematic DGs, EUDs in the IPA countries and EUMS NCPs*.

The questionnaires for these two e-Surveys are attached to the present Evaluation Report in **Annex 9** and **Annex 10**. DG NEAR's Evaluation Unit provided the Evaluators with a **supporting certificate** to be sent to the line stakeholders prior to the launch of e-Surveys and the ensuing telephone interviews. The Evaluation Unit's certificate is attached in **Annex 11**.

Both e-Survey questionnaires were based upon the ToRs for the present evaluation assignment (evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators) and are in line with the telephone and face-to-face Interview Guides attached respectively in **Annex 4** and **Annex 5**.

Both e-Surveys normally cover all TAIEX assistance from 2007 to date within the framework of IPA I and IPA II.

Contact details for the e-Survey target groups were harvested from the relevant documents received from DG NEAR's Evaluation Unit (e.g. reports on informal/formal visits, suggestions made by the Reference Group, etc.).

Both e-Surveys consisted of close-ended and open-ended statements and questions. Their final versions were also fine-tuned during the Field Phase for the above-indicated target groups. Those surveys were shared with the Reference Group and comments received from DG NEAR were integrated into the final versions of both e-Surveys.

Both e-Surveys were prepared in the English, Croatian, Macedonian and Turkish languages. Targeted respondents were able to select their preferred language on the start-up screen for the four target countries.

A web-based interface, **QuestionPro**, was used for the preparation of the forms, direct and indirect distribution (via dedicated link) to participants via e-mail, and collection and analysis of their responses. Microsoft Excel was used for aggregating the data, carrying out quantitative frequency analysis and preparing the graphs.

⁴ DG AGRI, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, DG ENER, DG ENTR, DG ENV, DG GROW, DG SANTE and DG TAXUD.

⁵ Home organisation of the EUMS Expert for TAIEX.

Both e-surveys were launched on 12 February 2015 and ended on 6 March 2015. They were distributed to approximately 500 individual e-mail addresses via **QuestionPro** with an official DG NEAR support letter to encourage participation. All the queries made by participants were answered via e-mail.

The e-Survey 1 participants were a rather uniform group of BAs in the four target countries. Within three weeks, the webpage for e-Survey 1 was visited more than 758 times. 262 participants registered; following the elimination of incomplete forms, there were a total of 246 filled-in forms, which were used for this Evaluation. Five respondents declared that they had not heard of the TAIEX instrument before and were thus removed. 214 responses were quite satisfactory and the participation rates were balanced amongst target countries. Specifically, in Croatia, it was agreed that the NCP disseminate the information about the survey among all the relevant BAs in order to invite them to participate - and thus support their willingness to provide feedback.

Excel was used to analyse the data and to prepare the graphs and tables. E-Survey data was aggregated into one single report and also processed via quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative analysis of the open-ended comments, relevant tables and the various comments made. Below is the breakdown of the home countries of respondents (based upon their place of residence for each target country):

Table 1 – breakdown of home countries of respondents (e-survey 1)

<i>Where do you currently reside?*</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>%</i>
Albania	1	0,41%
Croatia	57	23,65%
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	41	17,01%
Montenegro	21	8,71%
Serbia	1	0,41%
Turkey	120	49,79%
Total	241	100%

** Certain participants included in the survey currently reside in countries outside of the four target countries which consist of one new EU Member State (Croatia) and 3 Candidate Countries (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey). Nevertheless, they were involved with TAIEX in one of the target countries and as such their responses were included. The current place of residence is reflected in the survey (e.g. Albania or Serbia).*

E-Survey 2 for line DGs, NCPs and European Union Delegations in the four IPA Countries was distributed to approximately 110 addresses and only 31 responses (fully filled-in questionnaires) were received, i.e. approximately 30% of the total target population. Overall, the website for e-Survey 1 received 137 visits.

Table 2 – persons in distribution list and participants per group (e-Survey 2)

	Number of persons in the e-Survey distribution list	e-Survey 2 participants per group	%
Line DGs	14	5	36
4 IPA Beneficiary Countries (BC)	15	8	53
Other IPA BCs	12	1	8
EUMSs	61	16	26
Other	5	1	50
TOTAL	107	31	29

The list of e-Survey 2 participants can be found in **Annex 19**. The **e-Survey Summary Reports** are attached in **Annex 20** (e-Survey 1) and **Annex 21** (e-Survey 2). The answers to the open-ended questions of both e-Surveys were used for compiling the present Final Evaluation Report. The full overview concerning the number of institutions per country which were addressed by the survey and the number of responses finally received is provided in Annex 26.

1.5. SWOT analysis – overall assessment of TAIEX in the IPA Region

Within the framework of the Evaluation, a SWOT analysis was developed to sum up opinions, comments, remarks, recommendations and key messages received from the line stakeholders in the IPA Region, European Commission services in Brussels, EU Delegations to IPA countries and EUMS. It also brings together answers to the evaluation questions within an overall assessment of the TAIEX Instrument, reflecting views and feedback by the Line Beneficiary Institutions in the IPA Region. This SWOT analysis may provide useful insights into TAIEX for future conceptualisation and programming.

As such, the Evaluators have conducted a **SWOT analysis** on targeted *EU acquis* chapters, assessed the cost-effectiveness (efficiency) of the TAIEX management mode, appreciated the strengths and weaknesses of the TAIEX-specific demand-driven modalities, assessed the feasibility of making TAIEX more instrumental to a sectoral approach and also its complementarity with the sectoral approach in IPA-II (i.e. complementarity of TAIEX with budget support operations; TAIEX instrumentality for designing a new programme).

1.6. Evaluation constraints

The following constraints were encountered by the evaluation team:

Given that a large number of TAIEX events were completed more than one year ago, several line beneficiary institutions have restructured and several of their representatives who had direct hands-on experience of the events under evaluation left their positions for various reasons: retirement, resignation, promotion or assignment to another institution or other duties. As a result, some of the beneficiaries to be contacted were replaced by other relevant persons from a given BA.

It was not possible to reach EUMS experts even though they have a crucial role in the TAIEX events. It is mentioned that it was not possible to send e-mail invitations to this group because of the limitations in the TAIEX Management System (TMS) related to data protection constraints. For the same reason, it was not possible to reach the participants of the TAIEX events for the period of 2007-2014; only e-mails of the participants of the TAIEX events were provided by the TAIEX Unit for a 6 month period.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 TAIEX Instrument

In June 1993, the European Council meeting of Copenhagen identified alignment with the EU *acquis*, in particular with regard to the internal market, as one of the main elements of the pre-accession strategy. The European Commission White Paper on 'Preparation of the Associated Countries of Central and Eastern Europe for Integration into the Internal Market of the Union' emphasised the importance of the implementation and control structures, the establishment of which must support the adoption of legislation in the internal market. The White Paper suggested the establishment of a **Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office** (TAIEX) '...within the Commission in order to provide for the exchange of information and to give direct advice to associated countries'.

The TAIEX Office was created on 5th July 1995 and commenced operations in January 1996. It was originally set up for a two-year period to provide complementary and focussed technical assistance (TA) to public administrations in the areas of legislation covered by the White Paper. Importantly, following the adoption of the Agenda 2000, the remit of TAIEX was extended to cover the entire *acquis*. Subsequently TAIEX was made available to Cyprus and Malta (2001), Turkey and the Western Balkans (2003), and to the Turkish Cypriot community (2004) and has since then become an integral feature of the pre-accession strategy. In 2006, TAIEX's original scope in candidate countries and potential candidates was extended to the European Neighbourhood countries.

TAIEX activities are directly linked to the implementation of the overall cooperation objectives of the European Union with these partners: it provides short-term EU public sector expertise to beneficiary countries. The expertise assists in understanding, transposing and implementing the EU *acquis*.

Although TAIEX is a demand driven instrument, the requests submitted by beneficiary public administrations largely matched the policy priorities set by the European Union. In recent years, the enlargement strategy policy papers have attached increasing importance to strengthening the rule of law and countering corruption and organised crime. In particular, assistance requests submitted by IPA beneficiaries have focused precisely on this policy area, i.e. freedom, security and justice. TAIEX assistance has also covered other areas, namely internal market (IM), agriculture and food safety (AGRI) and environment, transport and telecommunications (ETT), etc.

In IPA countries, TAIEX relies on a network of National Contact Points at the level of national public institutions implementing or enforcing EU legislation. TAIEX then shares the expertise of EUMS public officials with beneficiary countries to 'fill the gaps' in their knowledge and understanding of EU rules and procedures via the exchange of experience and best practice – thereby fostering networks between public officials and civil servants in EUMS and partner countries. TAIEX delivers peer-to-peer assistance and contributes to the delivery of appropriate tailor-made expertise to address problems at short notice.

TAIEX provides four types of assistance:

- **Expert missions** to Beneficiary Countries: maximum five days in principle, to provide guidance on legislative projects and on the functioning of the administrative process, to advise on legislative acts and on their implementation, to explain the EU *acquis* and to present EU Best Practice examples;
- **Workshops or seminars** in Beneficiary Countries: average duration of approximately two days to present and explain the EU *acquis*-related and EU best practice issues to a large audience (selected by the Beneficiary Country) from the same country or from

several countries, regarding issues of common interest. Regional workshops can also be organised (for several countries at a time);

- **Study visits** to EUMS: maximum five days in principle, to train a maximum of three BC officials on how MS deal with practical issues related to the implementation and enforcement of the EU *acquis*;
- **Assessment missions** involving several EUMS experts to provide feedback on legislative, institutional and administrative gaps in areas identified to produce analytical peer reports and recommendations. However, this fourth type of assistance is usually considered as part of the Expert Missions.

The beneficiaries of TAIEX assistance include those sectors having a role to play in the beneficiary countries in the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation, or in the case of ENP countries, in deepening economic and political cooperation by sharing the experience gained during the enlargement process. TAIEX does not provide any direct capacity building support to civil society organisations, private citizens or to individual companies.

2.2 TAIEX statistics for the countries in the sample for 2010-2014

It is possible to derive a specific breakdown reflecting 'submitted vs. accepted TAIEX requests per country per sector'; the following tables provide insightful breakdowns for the IPA region. It must be noted that on average, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) is the sector where most applications have been received (1200 requests) and has the highest approval rating (88%, i.e. 1055 approvals) for 2010-2014. However, the approval rate for JHA requests declined to 76% in 2014. The number of TAIEX applications and approval rates are almost similar for the Agriculture and Internal Market sectors. The approval rate for ETT is slightly lower, while the number of ETT applications is considerably smaller in comparison with the other sectors.

Table 3 – TAIEX operations 2010-2014

	2010			2011			2012			2013			2014			TOTAL		
	S*	A*	Rejection Rate %	S	A	Rejection Rate %	S	A	Rejection Rate %	S	A	Rejection Rate %	S	A	Rejection Rate %	S	A	Rejection Rate %
Croatia	198	140	29%	153	124	19%	180	157	13%	130	112	14%	107	97	9%	768	630	18%
fYRoM	392	271	31%	212	143	33%	256	227	11%	236	205	13%	175	135	23%	1271	981	23%
Montenegro	83	58	30%	74	50	32%	72	58	19%	100	76	24%	167	121	28%	496	363	27%
Turkey	169	122	28%	157	119	24%	231	196	15%	207	185	11%	184	149	19%	948	771	19%
Total	842	591		596	436		739	638		673	578		633	502		3483	2745	
Average			30%			24%			14%			14%			21%			21%

* S – submitted; A - accepted

Table 4 – TAIEX statistics for the IPA Region per sector for 2010-14 based on the Accepted (A)/Submitted (S) requests

	2010		Approved Rate %	2011		Approved Rate %	2012		Approved Rate %	2013		Approved Rate %	2014*		Approved Rate %	Total		Approved Rate %
	A	S		A	S		A	S		A	S		A	S		A	S	
ETT	56	89	63%	57	68	84%	67	78	86%	69	85	81%	59	83	71%	308	403	76%
AGRI	148	228	65%	107	148	72%	169	191	88%	115	145	79%	133	168	79%	672	880	76%
JHA	244	266	92%	166	208	80%	245	265	92%	272	292	93%	153	193	79%	1080	1224	88%
IM	143	259	55%	106	172	62%	157	205	77%	122	151	81%	157	189	83%	685	976	70%
Total	591	842	70%	436	596	73%	638	739	86%	578	673	86%	502	633	79%	2745	3483	79%

Table 5 - Number of participants (2007-2014)

	IPA I							IPA II	
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Croatia	4784	3716	4078	4337	3301	3232	4380	2184	30012
<i>the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</i>	704	1196	2240	3589	3269	3433	4313	3446	22190
Montenegro	529	574	1008	792	673	1312	2144	2544	9576
Turkey	3428	6239	8836	8707	5429	4681	6705	3144	47169
Total	9445	11725	16162	17425	12672	12658	17542	11318	108947
IPA I Annual Average	13947								
IPA II Annual Average	11318								

Table 6 - Overall number of TAIEX requests per year and per country (2010-2014)

IPA Beneficiaries	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Croatia	198	153	180	130	107	768
<i>the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</i>	392	212	256	236	175	1271
Montenegro	83	74	72	100	167	496
Turkey	169	157	231	207	184	948
Sub-total						3483

3. KEY FINDINGS

IMPORTANT NOTE: Overall, it must be pointed that TAIEX is a unique⁶, EU-funded institutional capacity building instrument with no equivalent to be found in other donors' portfolios of international multilateral and bilateral technical cooperation programmes and instruments. Therefore the present evaluation of the TAIEX Instrument's performance in the IPA region aims, above all, to demonstrate the reasons why TAIEX has been and remains so popular and successful amongst line users. It will highlight - via its recommendations and lessons learnt - what could be undertaken to improve the instrument where appropriate and necessary.

RELEVANCE

EQ1 – Relevance: To what extent are/have the intervention logic, strategy, approach and the objectives of TAIEX actions been consistent with, and contributed adequately to, beneficiaries' requirements, IPA country needs, global priorities and partners' and EU policies?

The relevance level of TAIEX during the period 2007-2014 was particularly high. TAIEX provided technical assistance in the form of events focusing on pre-accession process, particularly in the field of approximation, application and enforcement of the EU *acquis* and related issues. In that sense, TAIEX support has been extremely relevant as it is in line with the aspirations and efforts of enlargement countries for EU membership. The accession agenda, steered by the national programmes for integration and regular EC progress reports, has been the driving force in the programming of TAIEX and reflects to great extent the needs of BAs for capacity building and technical assistance in different areas of *acquis*. The increasing commitment and recognition of TAIEX as useful assistance by BAs and structuring the programming of it in some countries (e.g. *the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*) have assisted in streamlining TAIEX and its evolution into a functional and valuable instrument. TAIEX is an ad hoc and quick instrument, triggered by direct requests submitted by beneficiaries' central public administrations. As such, it allows for quick responses and ways to address the arising needs of BAs, with best expertise and experiences from the EUMS.

In **Croatia**, TAIEX is perceived as a **very valuable instrument** and the possibility to benefit from TAIEX assistance in Croatia both as a candidate country and the EU member country was highly appreciated by the all interviewed stakeholders. The use of TAIEX in Croatia has significantly evolved over the years. This relates to the change of priorities and needs for TAIEX assistance in Croatia pre- and post-accession, the use of TAIEX for providing expertise to other beneficiary countries and changes in types of event priorities. In the pre-accession period, as a candidate country, the Croatian Government adopted the National programme for EU accession on an annual basis, establishing a plan of harmonisation of Croatian legislation with that of the EU *acquis*. Since 2014, the Croatian government has been preparing a Programme for the Adoption and Implementation of the *acquis communautaire* – a document containing the obligations arising from EU membership. The programme is no longer divided into chapters, but is divided according to the government bodies responsible for the adoption of regulations, which incorporates the EU *acquis*.

The consulted BAs are primarily focused on TAIEX activities that ensure the most suitable insight into best practices, relevant implementation experiences and links to the present legal, political and economic framework. The most urgent needs pertain to information regarding legislation and examples of best practices in specific fields. As a new Member

⁶ The Dutch MATRA facility offers an intervention scope somewhat similar to that of TAIEX and targets the IPA countries: <http://www.government.nl/issues/matra/grant-for-strengthening-democracy-matra-rule-of-law>, but it does not have the same level of access to human and financial resources as TAIEX.

State, with short-term and limited experiences in certain practices, Croatia highly appreciates receiving expertise and opportunities to visit Member States in order to learn more about practical solutions for the implementation of legislation. Currently, Croatia is focusing on the implementation of the *acquis* and Council decisions, which require action from MS related to the ongoing *acquis* transposition in order to ensure full and effective implementation of the harmonised legislation arising from membership (in accordance with the deadlines for transposition of the *acquis*). The administrations need to understand how to apply the new rules and how to adapt to the impending changes to the legal system. They are seeking the best model to choose. Hence, the current focus is on improving their activities within the given circumstances (budget, resources), more focus on the implementation of the law, collecting information and data, reporting, learning different implementation models and exchanges of information to fulfil their legal obligations.

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, as confirmed by all interviewed stakeholders and as per findings of the e-survey, TAIEX is perceived as **very relevant** for the country's EU accession aspirations and overall work towards modernisation of the public administration and legislative and policy framework. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the BAs have shown an outstanding interest in TAIEX assistance on their path to modernisation and reform of legislation and public administration⁷. The BAs have requested TAIEX support in all sectors of relevance for EU accession and overall modernisation of processes and procedures. Strong interest was recorded in the areas of personal data protection, health, food safety and agriculture, etc. Interviewed BA representatives - but also the NCP and EUD - agree that the TAIEX activities requested are needs-based and reflect the strategic but also ad-hoc needs of BAs. The requests cover various issues, including the transposition of EU legislation and its development (and this is where most TAIEX assistance in terms of expert missions and workshops is requested), to the implementation of legislation and policies but also mechanisms and procedures set up (where BAs usually request primarily study visits). As such, the TAIEX instrument is in line and responsive to governmental needs for aligning its legislation, institutions and models of work with EU. E-surveys show that almost 80% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that TAIEX events responded to the needs of participants. Over 31% of respondents from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia requested TAIEX to strengthen networks with EU Member States and other IPA countries. 25% requested TAIEX to carry out assessment missions for the EU *acquis* transfer or any other capacity building purpose, and 22% requested TAIEX to identify issues for future Twinning, Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA), BS and other TA projects within the framework of EU *acquis* transfer activities.

The TAIEX instrument has been **relevant in view of national and international commitments and priorities** of the **Montenegrin** government, as well as in view of existing knowledge and capacity gaps in different areas of reforms in the country. The instrument is aligned with EC priorities for the accession of Montenegro. TAIEX is aligned with existing international commitments of the government under the strategic documents adopted within the context of the EU integration process, including the 2014-2018 EU accession programme the 2013-2016 pre-accession economic programme and the 2014-2018 strategy for informing the public on the EU accession process. TAIEX contributes to the government's continued focus on the objective of EU membership. Montenegro has started fulfilling requirements for accession as outlined in the EU *acquis*⁸ and ensuring capacities and mechanisms are being developed to align with EU standards. In Montenegro, BAs have requested TAIEX support in various sectors of relevance for EU accession and the overall modernisation of processes and procedures. Strong interest was recorded in the areas of agriculture and food safety, freedom, security and justice, environment, free movement of capital, intellectual property rights, financial services and public health etc.⁹. Interviewed BA representatives - but also the NCP and EUD - agree that the **TAIEX activities requested**

⁷ European Commission (2013); TAIEX and Twinning Activity Report 2012, p. 1.

⁸ See: <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/chapters-of-the-acquis/>

⁹ Data from e-Survey 1 (Question 7).

are needs based and reflect the strategic but also ad-hoc needs of BAs. The requests come for various issues, transposing EU legislation and its development (and this is where most TAIEX assistance in terms of expert missions and workshops is requested), to implementation of legislation and policies but also mechanisms and procedures set up (where BAs usually request primarily study visits). As such, the TAIEX instrument is in line and responsive to governmental needs for aligning its legislation, institutions and models of work with EU. E-Survey 1 shows that almost 94% of survey respondents from Montenegro agree or strongly agree that TAIEX events responded to the institutional needs¹⁰, while all respondents state that TAIEX events are very useful with regard to the priorities stated in the national pre-accession country strategies¹¹. Over 37% of respondents of the e-Survey 1 requested TAIEX to carry out assessment missions for EU *acquis* transfer or any other capacity building purpose; while 25% requested TAIEX respectively for Identification of issues for future Twinning, SIGMA, and other TA projects within the framework of EU *acquis* transfer activities and for strengthening networks with EU Member States and other IPA countries.

In **Turkey**, there is a **close link between the enlargement strategy and the priorities for TAIEX assistance** according to the documentary review and interviews with BAs and the EUD. In 2014, the Ministry of EU Affairs (MEUA) announced a new National Action Plan, a roadmap laying down Turkey's priorities to further the political reforms and socio-economic transformation within the context of the ongoing EU accession process and Turkey's new European Union strategy. It is a reference for Turkish BAs for the current TAIEX applications as well. In the TMS application system and the MEUAs' internal application system, there are specific fields, which need to be addressed by each applicant. They have to establish relevance to the aforementioned strategic documents; such conditions were an obligation for IPA I and will also be applicable for the IPA II period.

According to the interview and e-Survey results, the Turkish BAs agree that TAIEX rules and procedures are, in general, well designed and they contribute to the achievement of TAIEX objectives and expected results. They are in line with the IPA and other strategic documents for Turkey in particular in terms of preparations for the EU *acquis*. The involvement of line stakeholders, including the Turkish NCP and BAs in the project preparation phase was adequate and contributed effectively to project relevance.

The interviewed line DG officials appreciate the TAIEX instrument and usually provided positive observations. Similarly, the EUMS NCPs also find TAIEX as relevant and appropriate instrument to address the needs of governments in the Western Balkans and Turkey within their EU accession negotiations.

3.1 Intervention Logic

The broad, system-focused design of the TAIEX assistance is **appropriate** in view of the needs and priorities of the BAs in the target countries. It provides the possibility to address the needs quickly and with relevant expertise. The activation of TAIEX assistance is largely based on the recognised need of the BA for assistance in a certain internal process (legislative, implementation or procedural). Previously, there were no questions about the type of event in the application form. TAIEX has now streamlined clear questions through the online application form – encouraging the beneficiaries to explain their reasons for selecting the specific type of event and presenting a clear description of their expectations.

According to the experience of the TAIEX stakeholders in **Croatia**, the structures of requests for TAIEX technical assistance fit the fundamental TAIEX purpose as short-term technical assistance with a straight-forward procedure for submitting requests. The experience was that with the use of guidelines for the application for TAIEX technical assistance and the

¹⁰ Data from the e-Survey 1 (Question 23).

¹¹ Data from the e-Survey 1 (Question 23).

presentation of some very good examples of requests, they managed to ensure the quality of the requests submitted. Even though during the pre-accession period there were more TAIEX events organised in Croatia, events in the current period (post-accession) are considered to be more focused and better targeted towards concrete, practical experiences. The public administration in Croatia is already familiar with and this is in line with the TMS that requires clear and focused requests. The BAs in Croatia feel more experienced and self-confident. They already possess significant know-how about the preparation of applications and they also provide their expertise to other beneficiary countries. According to the NCP, all lessons learnt from previous TAIEX events and the experience of the NCP working with beneficiary is transferred into new TAIEX requests. The NCP transfers the experience and shares best practices with other potential beneficiary institutions. The BAs usually try to integrate lessons learnt into new TAIEX requests by making the requests more focused and by providing more necessary background information. However, the TAIEX events have been mostly used on an ad hoc basis in order to satisfy training needs that the national budget and/or the planned or ongoing projects were not meeting.

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the BA, in close coordination with NCP and wider NIPAC office, develops the application and submits it to NCP and through online application system to the TAIEX desk and EUD. The online application system, despite its technical challenges reported by some BAs, is generally functional and allows good description of needs and outline of desired type of assistance from TAIEX. The BAs also have the freedom to propose countries and/or experts with whom they would like to work, which constitutes an added value and contributes to the effectiveness of the instrument. In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the NIPAC office has established a system through which the mapping and the prioritisation of needs for TAIEX assistance for the coming year is made at the end of each year. This system is effective in ensuring that relevant ideas are taken forward and developed, but also helps the BAs and the NIPAC and the EUD to adequately plan the events and know what priorities are for the year to come.

In **Montenegro**, the BA prepares the application and submits it to the NCP and through online the application system to the TAIEX desk and the EUD. The online application system, despite the technical challenges reported by some BAs, is generally functional and gives the possibility to provide a good description of needs and an outline of desired type of assistance from TAIEX. The BAs also have the freedom to propose countries and/or experts with whom they would like to work, which constitutes an added value and contributes to the effectiveness of the instrument. In Montenegro, there is no devised specific procedural approach to the mapping and prioritisation of needs for TAIEX assistance for the coming year. However, the requests are submitted by BAs and then verified or further developed in coordination with the NCP.

In **Turkey**, according to the interview results, the Turkish BAs agree that TAIEX rules and procedures are, in general, well designed. The majority of the Turkish e-Survey 1 participants (80%, 79 respondents out of 99) agreed that the TAIEX setup and methodology (intervention logic, strategy and approach) are well defined to contribute to the achievement of TAIEX objectives and expected results and are in line with the IPA and other strategic documents in Turkey – particularly in terms of preparations for the EU *acquis*. Furthermore, the majority of the Turkish e-Survey 1 participants (79%, 79 respondents out of 100) thought that the TAIEX implementation modalities are sufficiently developed. It is stated by one participant that in general, all EU facilities including the definition and implementation of procedures, monitoring and evaluation are systematically well designed and implemented and that indicators are well chosen.

The majority of the Turkish e-Survey 1 participants (75%, 74 people) thought that BCs and Bas have been directly/indirectly involved in the design of TAIEX assistance and their involvement is regarded as sufficient.

More than half of the Turkish e-Survey 1 participants (58%, 56 respondents) thought the technical activities supported by the TAIEX assistance and the country strategies under the IPA and other strategic documents are relevant to the risks and assumptions.

3.2 Programmatic approach

According to the consulted TAIEX stakeholders in **Croatia**, the TAIEX modalities, rules and procedures are coherent and relevant in addressing the needs of the Croatian administration. The BAs think there is no need for a more programmatic approach to TAIEX, since it is best suited for providing short-term help for very specific topics/problems that are encountered. The flexible nature of TAIEX is highly appreciated. Other instruments such as projects financed from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) provide a programmatic approach for longer-term help. TAIEX is used as immediate assistance and as a complementary tool when there is a gap identified.

The approach of the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** government, in cooperation with the EUD, may be regarded as a **best practice for the programmatic approach of TAIEX**. The mapping and prioritisation exercise that is conducted at the end of each year - for the upcoming year - functions well and requires BAs to think strategically and plan in accordance with their annual planning. Another good example of a strategic approach comes from the Environment sector. The Ministry of Environment has prepared a request for sequenced TAIEX assistance events that will provide for longer term and more quality-based assistance.

There are examples of a programmatic approach of TAIEX in **Montenegro**, particularly in recent years. As an example, the work of the government under Chapter 23 includes **annual training mapping for TAIEX**, whereby a total of 10 TAIEX events have been planned for 2015 to assist the process of establishment of the Anti-Corruption Agency and related exchange and peer learning and training events. Nevertheless, this approach is not consistent and systematic across all sectors and as such represents an area for improvement.

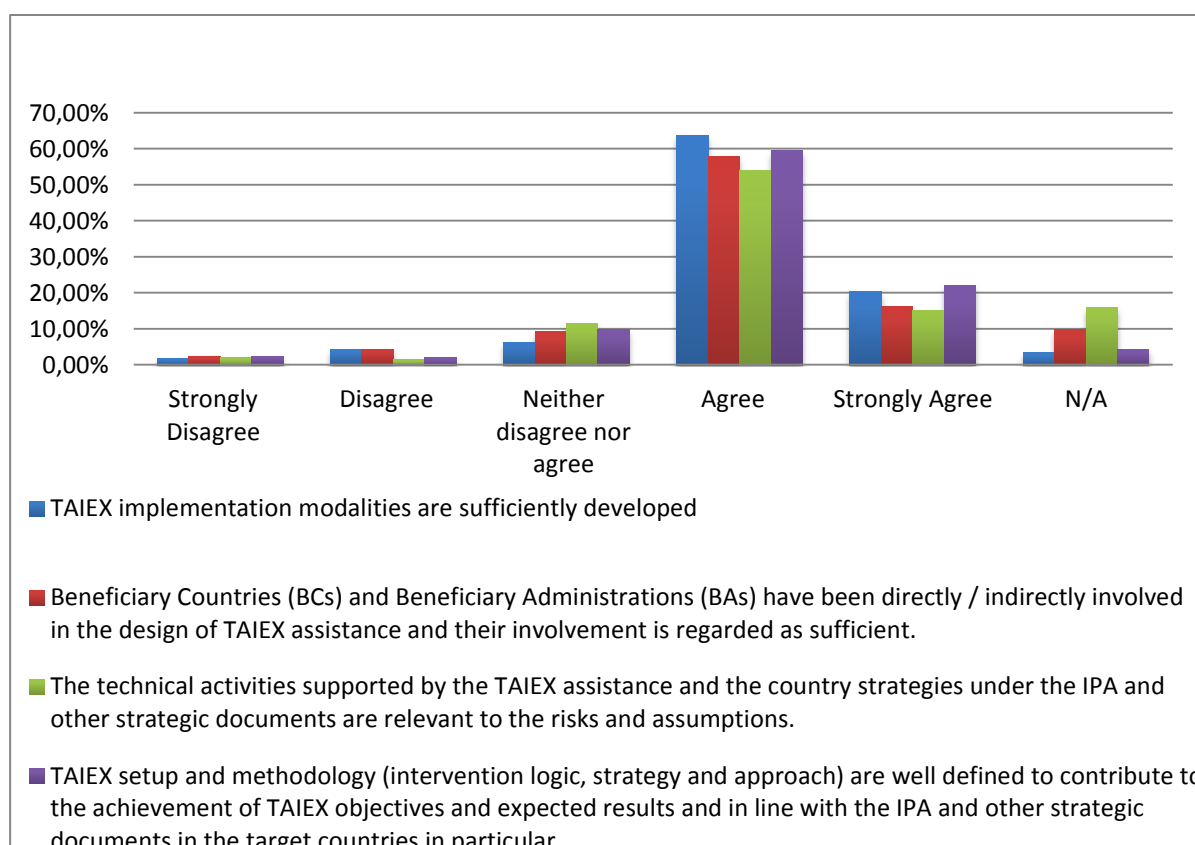
According to the **Turkish** BAs, TAIEX is a well-adapted mechanism and particularly useful given its fast and flexible nature. It is also emphasized that TAIEX would be more effective if it was used together with other instruments, such as the Twinning. From a conceptual perspective, the Turkish e-Survey 1 participants state that, in general, TAIEX is a well-designed and well-implemented program and that it is a good instrument for EU *acquis* alignment and as a technical and networking facility.

According to the interview results of the Turkish NCPs and EUD, all TAIEX requests were reviewed by the relevant sections in the MEUA and EUD in order to check whether the requested activities are meaningful or not as far as their objectives are concerned and whether they are coherent with the other types of EU assistance and/or bilateral donor assistance to avoid duplication. In such cases, the requests were rejected, sent back for revision or some suggestions were made to combine or consider these activities with other activities.

Furthermore, the Turkish BAs state that the TAIEX requests are based on their requirements. The idea of a programming approach for the TAIEX assistance is not supported as it can harm the flexibility of the system. It is also argued that sectoral approaches are in line with the scope of TAIEX assistance and that they should not harm the flexibility of the mechanism. The Turkish BAs mentioned that country strategies and progress reports of the EC are useful but they are, in some cases, insufficient to reflect the complex issues in Turkey. Almost all Turkish e-Survey 1 participants stated that they requested all TAIEX events themselves (93%, 88 respondents out of 95).

In line with country level findings, 84% of the e-Survey 1 respondents agree or strongly agree that the TAIEX modalities have been sufficiently developed. Furthermore, 74% agree or strongly agree that Beneficiary Countries and Beneficiary Administrations have been directly/indirectly involved in the design of TAIEX assistance and their involvement is regarded as sufficient. Another important area which is positively regarded by BAs is that the TAIEX setup and methodology (intervention logic, strategy and approach) is well defined to contribute to the achievement of TAIEX objectives and expected results and in line with the IPA and other strategic documents in the target countries – particularly in terms of preparations for the EU *acquis* alignment (81.46% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to this statement) (See Graph 1 below).

Graph 1 – What do you think about the following statement about TAIEX assistance?



E-Survey 2 respondents also agree that TAIEX implementation modalities are sufficiently developed (81 'agree' or 'strongly agree'). Furthermore, 75% of them 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that TAIEX setup and methodology (intervention logic, strategy and approach) are well defined to contribute to the achievement of TAIEX objectives and expected results. It is also in line with the IPA and other strategic documents in the target countries in particular in terms of preparations for the EU *acquis* and that TAIEX assistance is coherent with other activities.

EFFICIENCY

EQ2 – Efficiency: To what extent have the event activities been delivered and achieved adequately to IPA beneficiaries of TAIEX? To what extent have things been done right?

In general, the cost-effectiveness of TAIEX is very difficult to assess due to the fact that it is a demand driven instrument with not such a systematic framework of outcome and impact indicators, which does not help in adequately measuring and quantifying the results of an intervention. In addition, it is a small-scale and short duration activity that can only contribute

to overall reform to some extent, but cannot drive it to the extent necessary to reach conclusions on overall cost-effectiveness. On the other hand, all BAs agree that TAIEX, despite its short duration and limited numbers of people included in some form of activity (e.g. study visits), **brings high value and benefits which BAs could not obtain through other instruments**. Specifically, assistance in the form of support to legislation development, learning about new modalities of work and introducing new quality standards is definitely cost-effective as it provides value at low costs. This is particularly the case where BAs offer training premises for TAIEX events.

The evaluation also looked at the cost-effectiveness of study visits as a form of TAIEX support event. While no financial cost-benefit study could be conducted within the scope of the evaluation, the team explored views of BAs and other interviewees regarding the cost-effectiveness of this type of event. All BAs agree that **study visits are significantly valuable**. Primary value is found in the opportunity for BAs to see - first hand - how some models of work function in EUMS. Additionally, they have an opportunity to talk to their peers on how to operationalise new models and approaches to work and see these in practice. Finally, they network with a wider range of their peers and build links to be further strengthened and utilised once they begin implementing the desired model of work. The downside of the study visits is the restriction to have a five-day study tour with three staff members of a given BA. Interviewees consider these numbers as being too low for a study visit, which negatively affects the real understanding of how things work and how they could be transferred to their context. BAs have various suggestions regarding the increase of the number of participants; decreasing the number of days in favour of the number of people to attend the event (e.g. three days for five people), etc. In Croatia, for example, funds for an additional participant to participate in a study tour were covered by the national public administration, in agreement with the host EUMS. Both respondents to e-Survey 1 and interviewees agreed that the effects of the study tours exceeded the costs entailed.

The management structures and approaches used by TAIEX are appropriate and, together with the technical competence and mechanisms that allow for the selection and choice of experts and type of event that will best suit the needs of BAs, contributes to the effective implementation of the instrument. There is **centralised and readily available monitoring data** on various perspectives of TAIEX assistance (e.g. types of activities, type/number of activities as per priority area, events' reports, etc.), which enables better understanding of the real scope and depth of TAIEX support to various sectors. However, the system is for TAIEX internal use only, and as such, few external stakeholders are aware of the wealth of data this system contains and the opportunity it provides for further analysis and learning. The efficiency of TAIEX is linked to the constant improvement of the IT system; currently, an authorisation is provided by the system (electronic signatures) for the Head of Unit and since recently, for other levels too. The interviewed TAIEX Unit officials provided examples of its contribution to time saving and economies in terms of administration costs.

TAIEX assistance was implemented largely in line with expectations although the contracting process remains too long for the sometimes rapidly evolving beneficiary needs in a transition country environment. Most activities were appropriately prepared and organised, although some concerns were raised by individual interviewees with the logistics. However, the TAIEX evaluation data shows that vast majority of participants in all types of events are satisfied with all aspects of logistics (interpretation, conference venue and hotel) (see Annex 28 with elaborated data from the TAIEX monitoring system). The evaluation found that the assistance provided responded to the real needs when the beneficiary institution had a clear vision of what it wanted.

According to the e-Survey 1 respondents, the overall quality of TAIEX interventions (organisation, logistics, flow of information, cost-effectiveness/value for money, results and fulfilment of objectives) in the fields of capacity building and Public Administration Reform (PAR), as compared to other donors supporting similar activities rated as follows:

Table 7 - Overall quality of TAIEX interventions as compared to other donors

Much better	43	30,94%
A little better	57	41,01%
A little worse	9	6,47%
Much worse	0	0,00%
No opinion	30	21,58%
Total		139

According to the data received regarding the IPA financing decisions, in general there are no significant deviations in terms of the expenditures of IPA funds. The only major difference between allocated and eventually disbursed funds may be found in the IPA/2013/023-746 decision (see Table 8 below).

Table 8 – IPA (incl. TAIEX) Budget Allocation - IPA Region¹²

Decision No	Allocated	Contracted	Paid
IPA/2007/018-666	9.280.000,00	9.260.521,20	9.260.521,20
IPA/2010/022-334	17.000.000,00	16.979.000,00	15.167.468,10
IPA/2008/019-896	12.900.000,00	12.900.000,00	12.900.000,00
IPA/2009/021-466	9.000.000,00	9.000.000,00	9.000.000,00
IPA/2011/022-852	12.000.000,00	12.000.000,00	12.000.000,00
IPA/2013/023-746	12.000.000,00	11.903.247,40	2.320.618,45
IPA/2007/018-665	7.830.000,00	7.351.132,31	7.351.132,31
IPA/2008/020-025	16.388.797,85	15.994.387,50	15.943.785,39
IPA/2010/022-028	56.857.382,59	56.835.623,89	51.093.796,74
IPA/2011/022-964	102.582.500,00	102.169.394,13	84.957.357,06
IPA/2011/022-928	12.000.000,00	11.999.798,80	10.996.850,22
Total	267.838.680,44	266.393.105,23	230.991.529,47

For the IPA Region, approximately €82.1 million was allocated for the different type of TAIEX activities for the years 2010-13. Available data exists in an aggregated format as budgetary allocations per year for the target countries. Yet there are no data available about the actual expenditures per country per year for the period under consideration according to the various types of supported TAIEX activities. Thus, it is not possible to provide findings about the cost-effectiveness based on the budget allocation/actual spending per year for the statistics below:

- Per activity type;
- Per number of events;
- Per number of participants;
- Per number of EUMS experts;
- Per sectors.

As the BAs are not directly involved in TAIEX expenditure, they were not able to provide any comments. As such, they expressed their gratitude in not having to deal with such issues (covered by the TAIEX system).

Regarding the TAIEX budgetary commitments, it can be observed that IPA/2010/249-928 had the highest allocation for the period 2010-2013, with an amount of €16.7 million, followed by IPA/2008/167-823, with €12.9 million (see Table 9 below).

¹² IPA (incl. TAIEX) budget allocation 2007-2013, provided by the TAIEX Unit.
AETS Consortium – August 2015

Table 9 - TAIEX Budget Allocation - IPA Region (2010-2013)¹³

Decision No	Budget Allocation	Commitments (EUR)
IPA/2007/18666	7,320,000.00	7,320,000.00
IPA/2010/22334	16,770,000.00	14,958,468.10
IPA/2008/19896	12,900,000.00	12,900,000.00
IPA/2009/21466	9,000,000.00	9,000,000.00
IPA/2011/22852	12,000,000.00	12,000,000.00
IPA/2013/23746	11,500,000.00	7,050,647.61
IPA/2011/22939	100,000.00	97,499.68
IPA/2010/22028	1,139,087.00	1,139,087.00
IPA/2011/22964	337,816.68	337,816.68
IPA/2012/22928	11,041,178.08	11,041,178.08
Total	82,108,081.76	75,844,697.15

3.3 Timeliness of implementation

Evaluation findings with respect to the TAIEX Management System's operations are almost entirely positive. In addition, **communication is considered as 'adequate'**. There were no missing links in the communication loop between the line institution, the NCP, the TAIEX Unit, line DGs, EUMS NCPs and Experts. All applications are submitted to the TAIEX Unit, with prior liaison with the NCP and country NIPAC office. The Institution Building Unit of DG NEAR, managing the TAIEX instrument, takes the final decision. TAIEX can quickly deliver the requested assistance, albeit with some deviations reported in Turkey (see below). From the submission of the application, a minimum of four to five weeks for the dispatching of an expert is necessary and about eight weeks for the organisation of a seminar. However, a very short timeframe is foreseen for the recruitment of experts and as such this can constitute an obstacle to recruit the desired, highly qualified expert. TAIEX covers all the costs related to the provision of its assistance, while it can also consider the opportunity to co-organise events together with Institutional stakeholders and/or other donors (e.g. with the Office for Combating Drugs Abuse in Croatia).

The proposed duration (in principle, five days maximum) of each type of technical assistance is generally sufficient and is in line with the purpose of the TAIEX technical assistance as a model of a short-term assistance. The consulted stakeholders are usually content with the current duration format, while interviewed stakeholders believe that longer lasting events of six or seven days would be beneficial in case of specific wide area topics. Sometimes the duration of events is modified by intervention of the TAIEX unit, and experiences from these events could provide good inputs for approval of other potential similar requests.

The main reasons for the rejection of TAIEX requests were principally due to overlapping, duplicates or repeats, and exploring areas that were not relevant or that had been previously addressed. In addition, requests from the private sector were a cause for rejection.

More specifically, the **Croatian** NCP reports on good contacts with line institutions, as well as with the TAIEX unit, especially with the national contact point for Croatia, who was always very cooperative and ready to tackle all issues that arose. During the pre-accession phase, the contacts in line DGs - who were always consulted - were the experts working on Croatian negotiations; communication and consultations with them were always in line with the ongoing negotiation priorities. The Croatian NCP also experienced very good cooperation through the regular meetings with the contacts at the EUD in Zagreb.

¹³ IPA TAIEX budget allocation 2010-2013 provided by the TAIEX Unit.
AETS Consortium – August 2015

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, TAIEX is generally perceived as an instrument that offers timely and adequate support, both from a management and an expertise perspective. The time lapse between the submission and approval of an application is short (usually not longer than one month), and the mechanism established by the NIPAC office to prioritise needs and areas of support for the upcoming year facilitates the efficiency of this process. BAs are satisfied with the way in which the process of requesting and receiving the assistance takes place and they value its efficiency and consistency.

In **Montenegro**, TAIEX is generally perceived as an instrument that offers timely and adequate support, both from a management and expertise perspective. The time lapse between the submission and approval of an application is acceptable, even though there are cases when the approval time took longer than envisaged, which affected the planning schedule of the BAs. The main issue is the level of capacity for filling in the online application. Before the introduction of the online application tool, the process was such that the BAs would submit an application in a word document and then the NCP would manually upload it on to the system. The NCP insisted that the BAs submit applications in a draft form to the NCP, so the former can ensure good quality of applications before they are officially submitted; this also serves as a means of verification. Since the online application has been introduced, the procedure has been simplified and the NCP does not need to verify the application any more, even though there are many cases where the NCP needs to assist the BAs to fill them in.

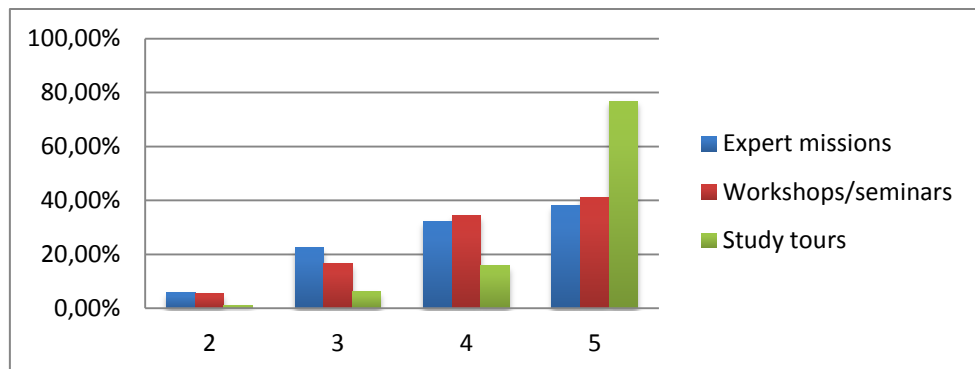
The available statistics for TAIEX activities in **Turkey** do not indicate the date of approval and actual implementation date. Turkish participants raised the issue whereby even though TAIEX approval procedures are quick, during the implementation period, there have been cases of delays in the actual implementation of activities (examples were made of some activities whose implementation was delayed for two months or longer, and even - in some extreme cases - two years). Some of them were cancelled by the applicants and the TAIEX Unit for varying reasons.

3.4 Types of events and their efficiency

Interviewed BAs agree that **various types of events are useful and that each of them has its specific value** in accordance with the different stages of institution building work. This is confirmed by the post-six month evaluation questionnaire data, indicating that 70% of respondents state that TAIEX events' usefulness is 'excellent', whereas the remaining 29% find it 'very good'. While expert missions and workshops are useful for legislation/policy development, BAs agree that study visits are important when BAs begin the implementation of new mechanisms or models brought in by the legislation/policies. **Workshops** are suitable to clarify general topics to a broader audience; **expert missions** help to work on specific subjects with a small group of people and **study visits** can show how certain institutions or systems work in practice.

The decision of TAIEX not to fund study visits extensively - unless there is strong justification - is generally not seen as a good step by BAs. Whilst it is understandable that such support is costly, it may still bring about value for money, particularly for BAs, which proceed with putting innovative models of work in place, for which there is no adequate in-country expertise. The workshops and expert missions are a substitute for this, but not sufficiently strong enough as they do not provide the opportunity to BA representatives to observe and understand how certain processes work and how models operate. The feedback from e-Survey 1 respondents confirm the preference of the interviewed BAs, where the highest rating goes to study tours where 92.7% of respondents rate it with 4 or 5 (5 being the most relevant). This is followed by workshops, rated by 74.5% of respondents as 4 or 5 (see Graph 2 below).

Graph 2 – In your opinion, what is the type of TAIEX event most relevant to your institution? Rating from 1 (least relevant) to 5 stars (most relevant)



“The most appropriate type of event for learning and applying the new harmonized analytical method is study visit where hands-on training is performed, and participants are involved directly in the whole procedures from sample preparation to final identification and determination. This type of experience has shown to be very valuable in transposing the methodology. In a few occasions, it could be beneficial to extend the duration of the visits.”

e-Survey 1 respondent

Another issue raised regarding the study visits was that sending three participants for a period of five days was inadequate. Proposals for changing this vary, but the most prominent is to ‘swap the numbers’ and have five persons for a three-day study visit.

“I do not see any obstacle to successful TAIEX event implementation. What we would appreciate is that (in addition to our most frequent request for on-the-job training) also study visits to an Intellectual Property office from the region could be approved (because we could exchange experience and practice and discuss some concrete practical issues.”

e-Survey 1 respondent

“Expert Mission does not provide enough different views. It is the knowledge and attitude of one expert, which does not have to be a generally accepted one. Workshops sometimes have a tendency to deviate from the desired direction. Study visit provides for the entire cycle, the user gets more insight and complete picture of the whole process.”

e-Survey 1 respondent

With regards to specific country by country assessments, in **Croatia**, among the three types of standard TAIEX events, study visits and expert missions are the most requested, especially over the past years. The majority of interlocutors consider that the most efficient types of TAIEX events are combinations of study visits with expert missions, covering practical issues with theoretical and legal aspects, thus providing a clear and integrated picture. All stakeholders consider workshops as a valuable and most efficient model of assistance even though half of consulted BA do not intend to request workshops anymore. Workshops, in particular, had a significant impact at the beginning of Croatian accession process when it was essential to explain the fundamentals of EU policy and *acquis* to a wide audience of civil servants and all concerned parties and stakeholders. Expert missions are considered as a very important element of practical assistance in drafting legislation transposing the EU *acquis*. The study visits are useful with regards ensuring proper implementation of newly adopted legislation, learning from the best practices of other member states. These are prioritised in the current configuration of EU membership.

Croatian institutions were mostly focused on practical knowledge, i.e. insights into the best and most appropriate implementation practices. Therefore, study visits were preferred by most BAs, and expertise was also appreciated with a view to applying best practices in the relevant legal, political and economic areas.

All interviewed **Macedonian** BAs agree that a variety of events are useful and that each of them has its specific value in accordance with the different stages of institution building work. There are cases of BAs in the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** where sequenced TAIEX events have been requested and received (e.g. environment), and the feedback from beneficiaries was very positive. Such a combination of events and the possibility to have a range of follow up learning experiences gave the BAs the opportunity to learn and apply newly acquired knowledge with mentorship by the expert/institution from the Member State.

The most popular type of event in **Montenegro** is study visits. This largely owes to the fact that Montenegro has succeeded in adopting a majority of laws and policies in line with EU *acquis* with implementation now being the focus. Within the process of building capacities and strong mechanisms for the implementation of mechanisms and legislative solutions, BAs urgently need to learn and apply new work approaches and study visits can provide the necessary time and space for BA representatives to see - first hand - how the work is organised in a Member State. It also offers more in-depth peer-to-peer learning and exchanges. Expert missions and workshops are also perceived as useful and valuable, particularly if the assistance is sequenced and can include different expert perspectives and combinations of in-country and site visit events. One critical aspect for Montenegro - raised by interviewed stakeholders - is the language issue. Public Administration officials in Montenegro - in the majority of cases - do not speak foreign languages and this weakness affects the effectiveness and efficiency of exchanges and peer-to-peer learning. As such, Montenegrin BAs prefer to cooperate with Croatia or Slovenia as countries, which have the possibility to speak in the same language. There is also a sense of common history, which also brings with it an understanding of the old system out of which Montenegrin institutions have developed. An additional reason for cooperation with these countries is their recent experience of accession and the ensuing reform process, constituting a valuable channel for sharing lessons learned.

In **Turkey**, study visits are the most relevant type of TAIEX events for the Turkish BAs (average score 4.64 out of 5 (5 being the most relevant)) followed by workshops/seminars (average score 4.09). Expert missions are the least relevant type (average score is 3.87). On average, all three types score 4.20, constituting a very satisfactory result. This result also explains the increased trend to request study tours in comparison to the other types of TAIEX assistance in 2014. Six Turkish e-Survey 1 respondents claim that all of the types of TAIEX assistance are appropriate tools for their institutions' needs.

"I work for the Ministry of Customs and Trade of Turkey. The Ministry's working areas are widely covered by the TAIEX's tools and working areas. So, I think that TAIEX's three events are quite relevant and useful for this Ministry."

e-Survey 1 respondent

15 Turkish e-Survey 1 participants also re-stated that study visits are the most useful and effective type of TAIEX events because it enables them to observe concrete practices, the implementation of EU legislation and ask questions to the relevant MS experts directly.

"During the study visits you might contact many experts during the event because of the availability of the experts. For instance, in one of my study visit at Italy we have contacted with almost 10 experts which is very good not only have different approaches but also have a "good networking with the EU experts for the follow up studies."

e-Survey 1 respondent

Another important issue with the efficiency of the TAIEX activities is related to expert selection. BAs agree that positive outputs of TAIEX events come in cases where BAs indicate the experts with whom they already have worked or had previous informal contact in the requests. However, cases do exist where BAs do not have a specific expert in mind. In the majority of cases, the expertise received is considered as good; there have nevertheless been cases where experts did not deliver good results. In some cases, the NCP and the BAs were faced with a very short timeframe to indicate participants or experts for some TAIEX events. It should also be noted that the identification of EUMS experts is still based on the available experts on the roster.

“It is useful to have an instrument such as TAIEX that is demand-driven and relatively easy and fast to use. The problematic aspect of it is the lack of transparency in the experts’ selection process, so that the beneficiary institution can never be sure in advance whether the experts will meet its expectations. In such a system it can occur that the beneficiary institution gets an expert based on the sole criterion of his/her availability at a given moment.”

Interview respondent

The European Commission’s DGs also have their respective pools of experienced experts. However, TAIEX does not in principle invite such experts to participate, as they often tend to be independent consultants. Several line DG officials expressed concerns with the fact that their ‘sector experts’ could not be involved due to the limited indemnities paid by TAIEX (€250/day).

3.5 Project reporting/monitoring and Quality Assurance

The TAIEX monitoring and evaluation system is extremely well organised and enables TAIEX teams to conduct extensive analyses of TAIEX events and their contribution through the TMS. The M&E consists of a very well organised system whereby each TAIEX event is followed up with the following M&E instruments: a) participants and experts lists; b) a questionnaire for experts to rate the event in terms of participation and potential for follow up on the topic on the side of BA/government; c) a questionnaire for participants to rate the quality of the event and the expert(s) but also the logistics; and importantly, d) the evaluation questionnaire that is filled in six-months after the finalisation of an event by a designated correspondent for that respective event. The system allows for easy access to data on each individual event with overall ratings on a number of questions stated in the questionnaires and also allows for filtering as per country/year/type of event/expert/sector, etc. The system is also very well organised and the presentation of data is easy to follow and allows for comparative analyses and cross tabulation with other types of events/country/expert/sector, etc. The system also allows for internal assessment of experts, even though this is treated very confidentially and may only be shared with an expert if need be. The analysis of the tools available within the system and the approach, which facilitates data collection, presentation and analysis constitutes a **best practice example for such a type of international assistance** mechanism. The main potential weakness of the system is that it is not accessible to all interested parties within the Commission (line DGs for example); as such, they rely on six-monthly or annual TAIEX reports for additional data. Nevertheless, the line DG officials interviewed within the scope of this evaluation largely expressed their satisfaction with the functioning of the information system.

In addition to the questionnaire for experts, the TAIEX system contains a format for expert mission reports. There is no format for study visit reports to be filled in by participating BA teams, as it is expected that they draft reports in accordance with their internal processes for their line management and peers. However, an analysis shows that not all TAIEX events are

necessarily followed up by written reports from experts. There are cases where, even if reports are provided, they are not consistently used for follow up or for planning further initiatives. There is also no system whereby all parties have access to reports in order to use them. The main reason for the lack of a consistent system for sharing and accessing the expert reports resides with factors: 1) while there is a format for such reports and it is very simple and straightforward, **the quality of reports received from experts varies** (with, at times, very poor levels of quality and an insufficient degree of detail regarding the event and its context); and 2) some experts provide analyses that may be controversial and can lead to debates between the BA and the experts, which cause long and unnecessary correspondence between parties (experts and BAs or even governments). The lack of consistent follow up on the reports affects the motivation - both of experts and BAs - to improve them and turn them into a knowledge tool. Interviewees and e-Survey 1 respondents emphasise that the reports from experts are in most cases not shared with BAs and as such cannot be used as a reference for further learning.

"Report must be sent to the agency with which the event was made not only a national contact point."

e-Survey 1 respondent

"Expert missions (to be clear, mission of experts in trademarks and designs which provide general and practical training for our staff) are of great importance for us because the experts who visited our Office provided both general information of expert IPR topics together with practical advices on concrete issues (cases from our practice). Study tours are desirable form of exchange of experience and practice because they always result in enhanced knowledge of our staff in specific areas (work flow, details on latest practical cases, etc.)."

e-Survey 1 respondent

The monitoring of TAIEX is conducted through the systematic database of events, which provide comprehensive data on types of events, thematic areas of focus, results and follow up actions.

There are several periodic reports provided by the TAIEX Unit and these are considered to be useful. Nevertheless, there is an expectation to increase not only their frequency but also the consistency of data presented in order to increase their benefits and to generate greater visibility of the achievements made and the added value of the instrument.

The application forms do not contain sections dedicated to impact and sustainability issues at the planning level and applicants are not required to provide information at this point (setting their targets and indicators).

Yearly TAIEX Activity Reports

Since 2003, DG NEAR has published TAIEX Activity Reports for the public via their official website on an annual basis; they encompass basic TAIEX activities per country and per sector with straightforward statistics and success stories. The 2012 and 2013 editions also cover Twinning activities. Since 2012, the aggregated results of the six month evaluation surveys were included in the content of the report. There used to be a small section for the budget of TAIEX entitled 'Financial Implications' till 2010; this was removed from later editions. These reports are useful, even if their main area of improvement is the consistency of data presented. The reports do not enable a comparative analysis of achievements and/or events for subsequent years (or longer periods), as they present different data sets across different years. This may present an obstacle to grasping the overall value and achievements of the instrument for external readers who cannot access the TAIEX M&E system.

Bi-annual Flash Report for the IPA BCs and EUMs

The TAIEX Unit publishes bi-annual flash reports presenting data on a number of implemented activities and participants per semester and per beneficiary country.

Event Reports Prepared by BAs

Although it is not common practice, some BAs stated that depending on the importance of the subject and event, ad hoc reports are produced - mainly for administrative and information purposes – and these are shared with the relevant stakeholders in the country via e-mail and official websites.

3.6 Communication and visibility activities

The general opinion of the interviewed BAs is that **TAIEX assistance contributed greatly to enhancing the visibility of EU funding** among public institutions. Interviewed stakeholders agree that TAIEX has become an increasingly popular and visible instrument - filling in the gaps in some sectors and reform areas in BAs. The visibility of TAIEX is high among the e-Survey 1 respondents and interviewed BAs. The TAIEX system is appreciated for its focus and clear support in the transfer of know-how. The EU Delegations and the NCPs do hold visibility events for TAIEX and also promote and encourage the BAs to use TAIEX as an instrument when they need additional support in some areas - especially where peer learning can bring about added value. These events also serve a purpose in improving the familiarity and capacities of BAs to adequately prioritise and fill out the applications. In general, the visibility of TAIEX activities is good, particularly for workshops. Expert visits and study visits are most visible within the BA, and among the teams focusing on a given area. Conferences usually tend to increase the visibility of TAIEX as senior officials and media participate. It is important to note that such a 'small' instrument does have high visibility, thus contributing to the positive image of EU assistance in the region.

An example of visible and effective TAIEX assistance was presented by the **Croatian** Ministry of Interior in the case of the Border Police evaluation training obtained through sequential study visits (a small group of officials visit a neighbouring EU country), expert missions (the identified experts come to Croatia) and the workshops from which police officials working in the field - and other organisational units - could benefit. This sequence of TAIEX events lasted two years.

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, informative sessions are organised with BAs (e.g. in 2014, the Country Contact Point from Brussels participated in the informative session for TAIEX) and needs, problems, best practices and possibilities for mutual cooperation were presented. This is an important investment both to encourage BAs to use all instruments at hand for the improvement of their capacities and for the promotion of EU support arrangements in the respective countries.

EFFECTIVENESS

EQ3 – Effectiveness: To what extent are/have TAIEX results and specific objectives been achieved? *Have the right things been done?*

Evaluation findings on **TAIEX contributions to envisaged reforms are almost exclusively positive**. Since 2007, TAIEX has delivered useful results in beneficiary countries, which supported the reform goals across various sectors of support through informed strategies, improved legislation, enhanced institutional capacity, the modernisation of practices and new models of work, but also behavioural change. While the available data does not enable the measurement of the extent to which TAIEX contributed to the overarching goal of opening the EU accession negotiations (and in the case of Croatia, its accession to EU), it nevertheless indicates that it has made meaningful contributions to strengthening the capacities of key actors and their efforts to this end, as well as to strengthening the overall enabling environment for change in the country.

TAIEX positively contributes to the achievement of improvements in the BAs, and there is evidence of contributions of TAIEX in the progression towards envisaged reform outcomes in different sectors within the countries. Consulted national stakeholders in countries in the sample attributed successful changes in legal frameworks, policies, strategies, also to the broader support provided by TAIEX assistance as complementary to other instruments and to strengthen the respective BAs' organisational capacities. TAIEX empowered positive changes and the ability of adjustments with the approximations into the EU *acquis*. TAIEX and EU assistance in general was mostly goal-oriented and supportive to beneficiaries and sectors concerned. It induced both a sustainable behavioural change and a development of the stakeholders' administrative capacities in the beneficiary country. Another important added value of TAIEX is the opportunity for BAs to establish networks, working relations and durable partnerships with their colleagues in the EU Member States. An elaborate M&E system developed for the instrument enables systematic monitoring and evaluation for TAIEX assistance. However, the official TAIEX website has a search function for current and past events based on chapters of the *acquis* and other criteria, but is not easily accessible or easy to navigate.

Line DGs see TAIEX as an effective mechanism to tackle issues of importance for their own areas of work. Cooperation between line DGs and TAIEX is such that ideas on areas to be supported are taken by TAIEX and operationalized through events of different type.

“The main benefit from realized TAIEX study visits is that laboratory professionals, who participated, became familiar with analyses of vitamins in food, allergens, additives, trace elements, food contact materials, contaminants. Training in some topics such as method validation, measurement uncertainty, and internal control (as requirements of ISO 17025) was also achieved through TAIEX workshops”.

e-Survey 1 respondent

“The knowledge and experiences that EU experts shared with us, along with their passion and enthusiasm, contributed immeasurably to the success of TAEIX projects”.

e-Survey 1 respondent

3.7 Appropriateness of the TAIEX instrument to needs (from an implementation perspective)

As discussed in the section on Efficiency above, the TAIEX instrument is, overall, **a very appropriate instrument to address the (immediate) needs of BAs**. TAIEX has been considered as a useful instrument for technical assistance for all EU *acquis* chapters. TAIEX

positive influence is visible in all successfully developments on strengthening administrative capacities in state institutions and administration and by upgrading the knowledge on EU legislation. In terms of implementation, it may be argued that different types of TAIEX activities bring different values. Each type of event has its specific use at a specific stage of the development/reform process. TAIEX monitoring data show that participants in each type of TAIEX event are very satisfied with their effectiveness. 80% of workshop participants¹⁴ confirmed that workshop enabled them to improve their knowledge, while 17.7% stated that workshop partially enabled them to improve their knowledge. Over 92% of study tour participants consider that the overall aim of the study visit they participated in was achieved and 7.7% of them considered it as partially achieved¹⁵. Finally, 88% of participants consider that the overall aim of the expert mission was achieved, and 10.6% consider them as partially achieved¹⁶. A general remark made by many BAs is that the value and purpose of study visits is understated/underestimated by the European Commission and that the decision not to promote and fund it more extensively should be reconsidered.

According to the TAIEX beneficiaries, TAIEX assistance was of great help and vastly contributed to various sector focus areas for this evaluation, as well as administration capacity development and strengthening. Dozens of projects led to various improvements and developments, not only from a legal standpoint, but also in terms of practical implementation of adopted legislation.

“Since events organised by TAIEX can be relatively quickly organised, it is an excellent instrument for providing assistance in specific areas or on specific topics to the experts in our country when the need arises.”

“Over the years we realised that TAIEX positively affects the capacity, competence and expertise of our experts in Ministry so we increased number of TAIEX events.”

Interview respondents

Each type of technical assistance has its own purpose; however, logical sequencing is justified and there is always a possibility for follow up events if necessary. There is a strong potential for activity sequencing - as a part of systematic activities - connected to ongoing projects and activities.

In **Croatia**, interviewed BAs consider the financial assistance as very effective in achieving the desired results. The achievement of the desired results was sometimes hampered by a lack of national stakeholder will to put the possible solutions recommended by TAIEX experts into practice in certain cases. The experience of Croatia is that in some areas, the BAs have prepared their internal plans in coordination with the line institutions on the usage of the TAIEX assistance. An example is the areas of agriculture and food safety, where the line ministry prepared a yearly plan for the sequencing of requests for TAIEX assistance. This was not done in all areas - but in these very demanding areas – such an approach was demonstrated as constituting good practice and was recommended by the NCP. The TAIEX Unit pointed out a valuable example of a successful series of two years of seminars tackling corruption and the fight against drugs in Croatia.

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, within the strategic prioritisation of the TAIEX assistance exercise that is conducted at the end of the year (for the forthcoming year), teams discuss the sequencing of assistance and plan for this accordingly. For example, as a result of the initiative to start a more systematic sequencing of assistance, an application for the environment sector was elaborated for a sequenced approach of activities

¹⁴ TAIEX data for period 01/2011-31/05/2015 analysed.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

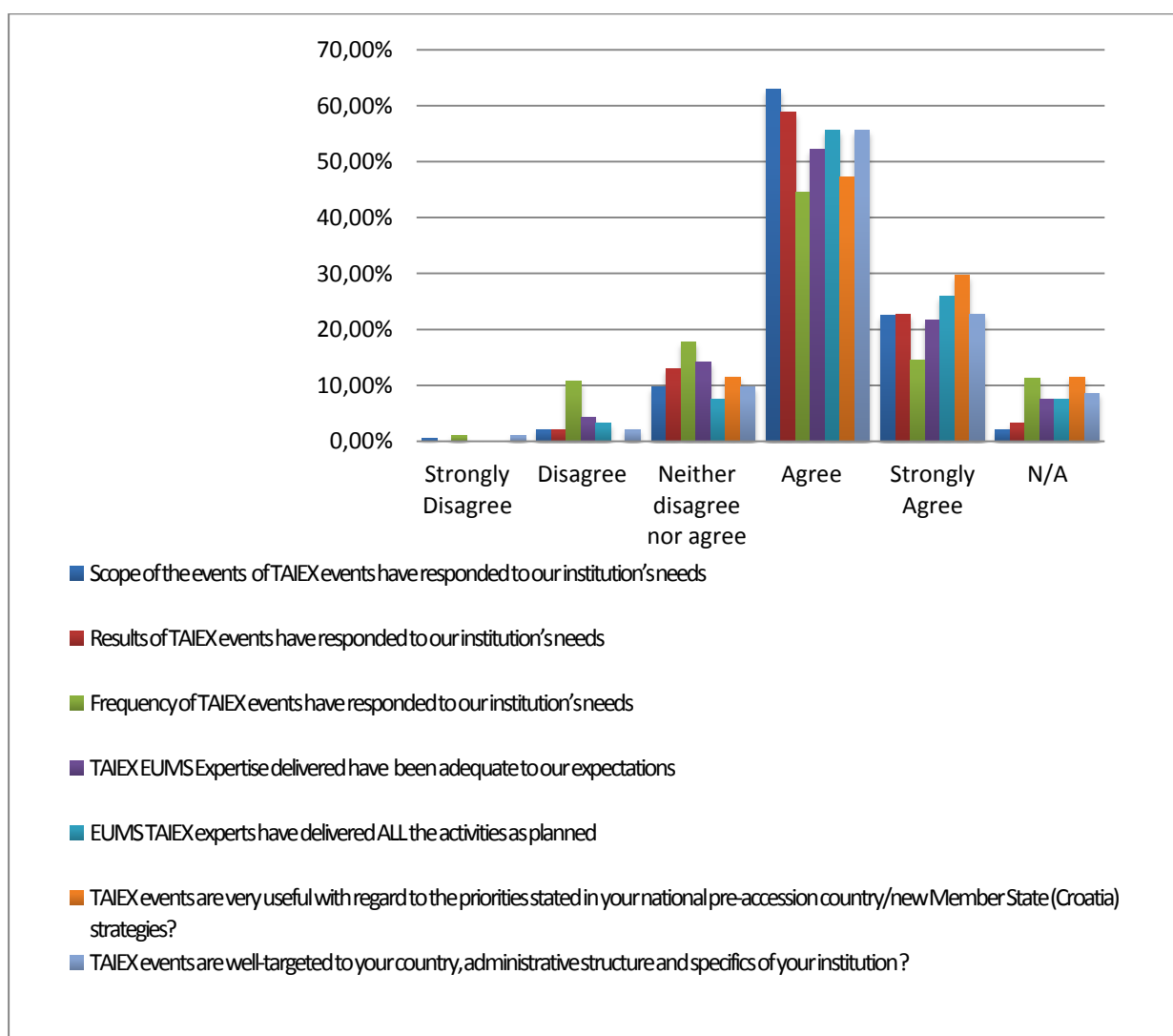
that will assist reforms in this sector. This is an example of good practice that could be replicated in other sectors/countries.

Other countries/sectors also have experience of sequencing TAIEX activities and all experiences have led to positive overall results. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these activities were not always systematically planned and programmed but were a result of demand-driven initiatives that resulted in a range of activities that followed on from each other.

Overall, the relevant stakeholders participating in e-Survey 1 agree or strongly agree that TAIEX events are well targeted to their country, administrative structure and specifics of their institutions (78.4%). TAIEX events are very useful with regards to the priorities stated in countries' national pre-accession country/new Member State (Croatia) strategies as per confirmation of 78% of survey respondents (see Graph 3 below).

E-Survey 1 demonstrates rather positive feedback on EUMS TAIEX experts. Almost 82% of respondents either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that EUMS TAIEX experts have delivered all the activities as planned, and their expertise has been adequately aligned to BAs' expectations (74%) (see Graph 3 below). This is a very positive finding and points to a generally high satisfaction rate and relevance of TAIEX to countries' needs.

Graph 3 - What do you think about the following statements about TAIEX events and EU Member State (EUMS) expertise?



3.8 Obstacles to the effectiveness of TAIEX events

The main issues raised relating to the effectiveness of TAIEX events are linked to the **selection of the right participants for events (on the side of the BA)**, the **selection of right experts/host institutions** and the language skills of BA teams (the issue raised particularly in Montenegro). As reflected by the interview stakeholders, language is very often an important obstacle to the full use of the TAIEX events; in some cases, it even caused a lack of extensive interest in participation. In Montenegro, this has been overcome by requesting expertise from neighbouring countries (Slovenia and Croatia), which subsequently proved to be beneficial on many levels (language, recent memory of reform steps, common history and familiarity of the starting point of Montenegro). Another issue relates to the importance of selecting the right participants, as a TAIEX event can potentially miss its target in cases where the right participants are not adequately selected. This is a relevant concern, particularly as BAs request the event. This is beyond the immediate control of the TAIEX mechanism per se, and responsibility lies primarily on the BAs to capitalise upon what TAIEX is able to offer. Similar issues arise with the selection of experts. While BAs/NCP may provide inputs for the selection of experts (suggest a suitable candidate), other experts can also be selected. Notable examples included cases where experts did not match the specific needs of the request or had weaknesses (e.g. language skills) that affected the event and its overall added value.

E-Survey 1 respondents identify different obstacles to the successful TAIEX event implementation (Table 14 below). Over 15% of respondents respectively think the main obstacle is owed to a lack of absorption capacity of the line beneficiary, while 19.8% consider it to be a lack of political or institutional commitment, followed by 16.5% who think it is the lack of preparation or a resistance to change (13.5%).

Table 10 - As far as you know, what is/are the major obstacle(s) to successful TAIEX event implementation? (Question 24)

Resistance to change	13.5%
Lack of absorption capacity demonstrated by the line beneficiary	15.2%
Inadequate type of event selected	9.57%
Lack of political or institutional commitment	19.8%
Lack of preparation	16.5%
Poor formulation of requested activities remaining pervasive	8.2%
Lack of commitment to the ultimate project ownership goal	9.6%
If other, could you please specify	7.6%

On the other hand, e-Survey 2 respondents listed a lack of political and institutional commitment and poor formulation of requested activities remaining pervasive as the main obstacles:

Table 11 - As far as you know, what is/are the major obstacle(s) to successful TAIEX event implementation? (Question 5)

Lack of political or institutional commitment	19%
Poor formulation of requested activities remaining pervasive	19%
Lack of absorption capacity demonstrated by the line beneficiary	15%
Resistance to change	13%
Lack of commitment to the ultimate project ownership goal	11%
Inadequate type of event selected	9%
Lack of preparation	7%
If other, could you please specify:	7%

Other obstacles are listed as follows:

- Poor expertise of the selected expert;
- Personnel and time capacities, security risks;
- TAIEX compensation (expert fee, host fee) is insufficient;
- Lack of involvement of EU Delegations in the preparation of requests/events.

The Turkish NCP pointed out that it was difficult to manage all TAIEX applications before 2010, as there were four rounds in a year and all the aforementioned screening was done via offline application forms in Turkey. Such a procedure created difficulties in receiving the feedback from all relevant parties and caused an enormous workload for certain periods, whereas for the rest of the period there was no activity. Presently, the whole process is running more smoothly and the workload is much more balanced throughout the whole year. The waiting and implementation period has been shortened which makes the whole process much more effective. Furthermore, the Turkish BAs as well as BAs in other countries agree that the current application system is more practical and useful and they are able to provide guidance to the application owners much more efficiently.

The Turkish NCP mentioned that there are some problems related to the host institutions within the context of TAIEX activities. Other common complaints are related to logistics (i.e. location of events, accommodation and translation). It is suggested that service subcontractors should be able to find competent personnel for the workshops and expert missions. Furthermore, the NCP at the EUD in Turkey stated that they had serious issues with the previous service contractors before 2009 and several complaints were made to the TAIEX Unit. However, with the new service contractor, they have not encountered any problems.

BAs have been directly involved in the design of TAIEX; the EUD has nevertheless raised concerns regarding the effects of a lack of timely consultation in the preparation of requests/events and a selection of relevant participants.

3.9 Complementarity/coherence with other donor and EU-funded programmes and instruments

The assessment of complementarity/coherence of TAIEX assistance with other donors and the EU funded programmes and instruments shows that this instrument is complementary to other interventions. Additionally, countries integrate mechanisms to ensure the minimisation of overlaps and complementarity.

During the pre-accession period in **Croatia**, the coherence of TAIEX technical assistance with other instruments was guaranteed through the coordination mechanisms and communication with the EUD, as well as with the responsible national authorities. Currently,

there is no mechanism for enhancing complementarity/coherence with other instruments, but there is a mechanism that is already integrated within the application form. When preparing TAIEX applications and requests, the BAs usually try to avoid overlaps. TAIEX is more often used as a stand-alone instrument, while there are cases where the TAIEX assistance was provided as a complementary initiative to other EU projects (e.g. if the component on the transposition of legislation was not included or covered in some IPA technical assistance project, then the beneficiary institution could apply for TAIEX assistance). Within the Ministry of Labour and Pension Systems, for example, TAIEX is used more as a complementary instrument, covering the needs for specific training that is not covered by larger technical assistance projects. The needs of that ministry are currently covered through ESF and World Bank projects.

A Case study, Office for Combating Drugs Abuse

Example of synergy of TAIEX and other donors including sequencing of TAIEX activities:

In 2011, an independent evaluation of the national drugs strategy was needed and the agency had limited financial resources. They approached the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and enquired co-financing what was supported by the EMCDDA. TAIEX covered experts' missions used for data collection. The BA financed the analysis and the report. This was considered as an excellent combination of the three sources (Croatia, TAIEX, EMCDDA) and an effective use of TAIEX assistance (expert missions and follow-up in workshops). The result was an outstanding evaluation report. A TAIEX workshop was organised based on the findings of the evaluation.

Series of 5 inter-connected TAIEX events – 2014/2015

A series of events related to the monitoring of intoxication has been organised, starting by a study visit to Italy, followed by an expert mission to Croatia and two subsequent workshops.

There are strong mechanisms set up by the **Macedonian** NIPAC in coordination with BAs and the EUD to avoid overlaps and also to ensure synergies and complementarity. The process of prioritisation of needs and requests for TAIEX assistance is done in such a way that BAs provide their ideas and needs, while also stating the existing or planned Twinning/TA or other types of support through IPA or other donors. The NIPAC and BAs ensure that priorities are justified and that they do not overlap with some other interventions before the BAs develop applications and submit them officially. The decision process is such that the EUD provides their opinion on the validity of applications, which is another filter for potential overlaps. Finally, TAIEX approves or rejects an application, based on their devised criteria. This approach is resulting in decrease of rejections of TAIEX requests based on the ground of overlaps, as confirmed by the EUD. The consulted BAs state that their complementarity and coherence with other donors has increased, and TAIEX serves as an excellent, quick, ad-hoc and complementary instrument to ongoing support received from other sources.

The TAIEX approval system in **Montenegro** appears to be quite strong and successful in ensuring that there is no overlap or a duplication of efforts. All BAs are requested to ensure that the TAIEX event does not overlap with another similar event implemented through Twinning or another IPA or other donor intervention. The application is verified by the NCP, the EUD and finally by the TAIEX office in Brussels. The decision process is such that the EUD provides their opinion on the validity of applications, which is a filter for potential overlaps. Finally, the TAIEX office approves or rejects an application, based on their devised criteria. In this specific case, TAIEX serves as a quick, ad hoc and complementary instrument to ongoing support received from other sources.

According to the **Turkish** BAs, TAIEX events are better in comparison to other types of EU-funded and other donors' projects in the fields of EU *acquis* transfer. The interviews reveal

that over 78% of e-Survey 1 BA respondents confirm that there are no overlaps between TAIEX assistance and other EU funded cooperation activities/projects¹⁷ implemented in their country. Nevertheless, over 89% of respondents from BAs believe that complementarity with other EU funded activities could be further improved. Furthermore, almost 80% of respondents 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that TAIEX is coherent with other programmes, while 68% of respondents agree or strongly agree that there is a clear and well-established mechanism (operational or envisaged) for optimising the additional and coordinated implementation of the TAIEX assistance and/or other multi- and bi-lateral donors (see Annex 20 for a detailed overview of e-Survey 1 responses).

¹⁷ Activities such as Twinning, SIGMA, classical TA, Grant Schemes, Community Programmes, Framework Contracts (FWCs), procurement, etc.
AETS Consortium – August 2015

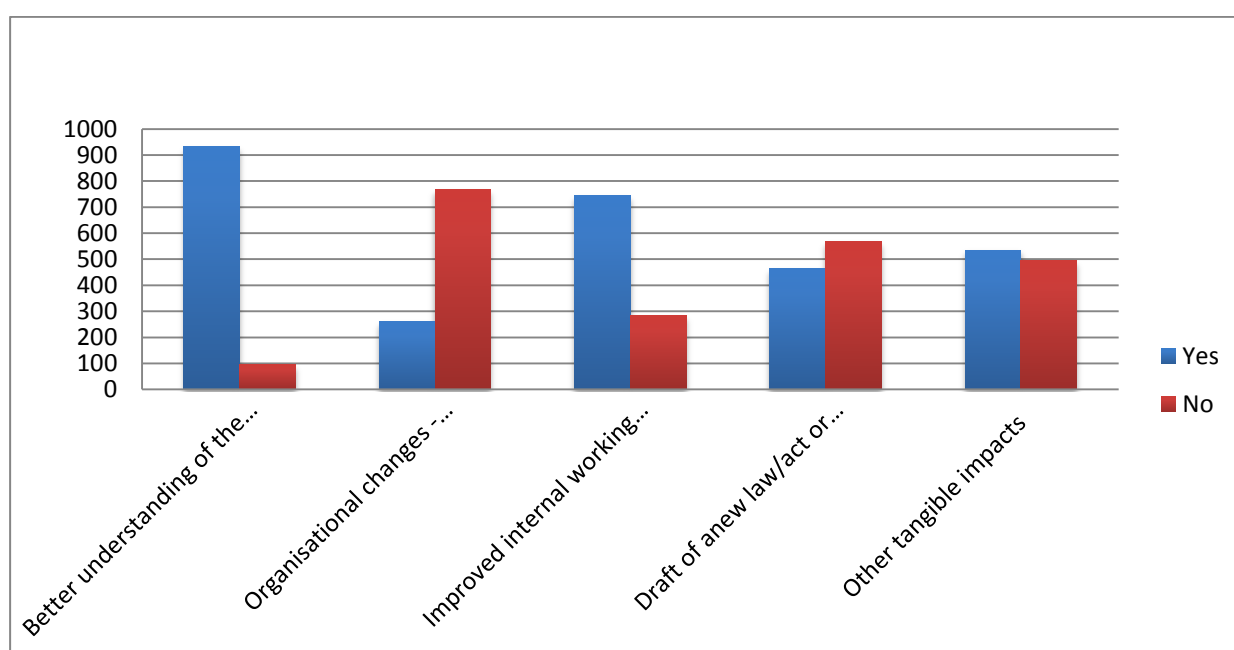
IMPACT

EQ4 – Impact: To what extent will/have the objectives of TAIEX events be/been achieved as intended, in particular the planned overall objective, in terms of policy advice, capacity building, legal approximation (e.g. *EU Acquis*), economic integration into the EU internal and/or global international markets, and institutional modernisation? To what extent was the achieved outcome of effects due to TAIEX activities?

The TAIEX instrument is a short term and rather **ad hoc instrument**, and as such **it is very difficult to assess the real impact** of the instrument on overall reforms in a given country. However, as outlined in previous chapters, TAIEX has made important contributions both in view of influencing the enabling environments for such changes in a country, through assisting the development transposition of EU legislation, and supporting capacity building for the implementation of legislation and new mechanisms. The results delivered by the TAIEX instrument across the region have contributed to positive impacts. This is particularly the case for improved legislation and better informed strategies, a more functional institutional framework, strengthened capacities to deliver the strategic priorities in various segments of EU accession, as well as the overall modernisation of public administrations.

The effects of TAIEX can be best considered in conjunction with other forms of EU assistance in general. In this regard, interviews confirm that TAIEX and EU assistance in general has positively affected country administrations by helping them to become more professional and client oriented. It has been assessed that the outcomes of TAIEX assistance are highly appreciated and implemented – on a large scale - by beneficiaries. EU assistance has been supported and implemented by the beneficiary institutions through the implementation of various project activities and the application of lessons learned in their everyday work, albeit to varying degrees at the level of countries and sectors. In support to these findings goes the feedback received through the ‘Post-6 month’ evaluation questionnaire, which shows generally high satisfaction with the usefulness of TAIEX (with 90.6% of the total of 1030 respondents considered it ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’), which indicates that knowledge of EU legislation and internal procedures have improved (72%), while new laws have improved in 45% of cases (see Graph 4 below).

Graph 4 - Following TAIEX assistance, what type of result was achieved?



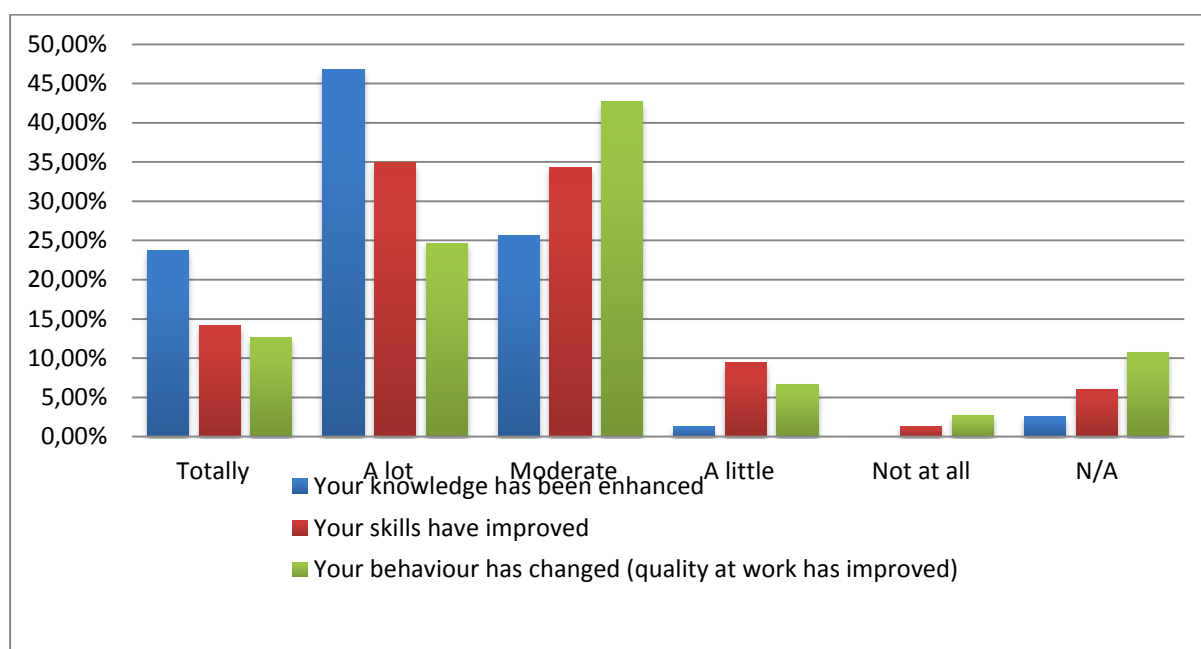
* data presented in Graph 4 above covers all countries in the WBT region

E-Survey 1 illustrates that a higher percentage (75%) of laws drafted with the support of TAIEX have been adopted than the post-6 month evaluation questionnaire. This is understandable as legislation changes require more time and indicate positive impacts. As per the e-Survey 1 responses, 23.2% of laws are fully implemented; 61.6% are partially implemented and 15% are not implemented. Concomitantly, 69% of amendments to the laws developed with the support of TAIEX have been adopted, out of which 18.6% are fully implemented; 58.1% are partially implemented and 23.2% are not implemented. By-laws supported by TAIEX also have high rate of adoption (77.5%), out of which 26.4% are fully implemented; 62% are partially implemented and 11.3% are not implemented. Finally, the adoption of amendments to by-laws supported through TAIEX assistance is 74%, and their implementation is 'full' for 13.5%, 'partial' for 67.5% and 'non-existent' for 19% (see Annex 20 for an overview of e-Survey 1 responses).

The TAIEX instrument was also of great value within the processes of development of country strategies for various sectors of importance for EU accession. 62% of those strategies have been adopted, out of which 16% are fully implemented, 66% are partially implemented and 18% are not implemented.

E-Survey 1 respondents consider TAIEX events as having high impacts. Being asked about impacts of events (including all activities that have contributed to the development of skills, including for instance advice to senior management, etc.), 70.5% respondents state that their knowledge has been enhanced 'totally' or 'a lot', while almost half of them state that their skills have enhanced 'totally' or 'a lot'. In terms of behavioural changes, 37% state that their behaviour has changed (quality at work has improved) 'totally' or 'a lot', while 42.7% see a moderate change in this domain (see Graph 5 below).

Graph 5 – TAIEX Event Impact Assessment



Another important finding from e-Survey 1 relates to major institutional changes as a result of TAIEX assistance. As per the e-Survey 1 results, internal procedures changed for 44.8% of institutions; administrative structures were improved or modified for 27.8%, and the systematisation of acts were changed in 14.2% of cases (see Annex 20 for an overview of e-Survey 1 findings).

According to the experiences of the interviewed BAs and the NCP in **Croatia**, EU assistance overall had a positive effect on the facilitation of the enlargement process. The evidence is to be seen in the fully harmonised legislation with the EU *acquis*, which was the precondition for the closure of negotiations, as well as enhanced, administrative capacities for implementation. During the EU accession process, EU assistance ensured that Croatian beneficiaries' knowledge was enhanced via the sharing of experiences and insights into good practices, legislation and frameworks. Therefore, other candidate countries are also aware of the overall positive effect on the facilitation of the enlargement process. EU assistance has contributed to change at the national state and public administration levels. In some segments, it has had a positive impact on the administrative culture of beneficiary institutions. Interviewed officials believe TAIEX events **positively affected the corporate culture** in the beneficiary administration. TAIEX provided Croatian officers with examples of successful *acquis* implementation, practical case studies and experiences. It therefore contributed to a change in the system - not only in practice - but also in corporate culture. Administrative culture in Croatia has evolved fairly significantly over the last 10 year period thanks to TAIEX and EU assistance in general - helping it to become more professional and client-oriented. However, the beneficiary institutions have used TAIEX events on an ad hoc basis, and this is not sufficient to mark a significant change in its corporate culture as a result of TAIEX assistance per se.

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, interviewed stakeholders agree that the main impact of TAIEX work can be seen in improved legislation and the approach to work in various sectors (particularly highlighted are improvements in approaches and standards in the work of institutions and agencies). E-Survey 1 shows that internal procedures were improved thanks to TAIEX (45% of respondents) and administrative structures (32.5%). TAIEX also contributed to the transposition of EU legislation, as evidenced by the (non-exhaustive) list of legislation that was developed thanks to TAIEX support (Annex 25). Overall, consulted stakeholders widely agree that, while progress has been made in the reforms, considerably more time and efforts are needed to influence overall changes in the public administration to adequately implement legislation, policies and mechanisms.

Similarly, over half of **Montenegrin** stakeholders participating in e-Survey 1 agree that internal procedures in their institutions have improved as a direct result of TAIEX assistance (58%), while one quarter of respondents state that their administrative structures have improved (26.3%). Another important contribution of TAIEX is the improvements to the institutional and legal framework in Montenegro – the list of which can be found in Annex 25 of this report. Respondents reflect that the main impact of TAIEX events happened on the level of knowledge and on skills (100% stated that it helped 'totally' or 'a lot'). Furthermore, the impact on behavioural changes was relatively high, and over a half of respondents state the level of change of behaviour was 'total' or that it changed 'a lot', whereas 46.67% of respondents claimed moderate or low changes in behaviour.

According to interviews and e-Survey 1 results, TAIEX events have fulfilled - to a great extent - the various needs of the **Turkish** BAs in terms of legal approximation and alignment with the EU *acquis*. Three quarters of the Turkish e-Survey 1 participants (75%, 68 respondents out of 90) state that the results of TAIEX events have responded to their institution's needs. Only 4% did not agree (4 respondents), and 10% had no idea (9 respondents). The majority of the Turkish e-Survey 1 participants (60%, 54 people out of 89) states that the TAIEX events are very useful with regard to the priorities stated in Turkey's national pre-accession country strategy and 19% were neutral (17 respondents). A further 20% had no idea (18 respondents). Half of the Turkish e-Survey 1 participants (50%, 61 respondents out of 123) were satisfied with the TAIEX events as they responded to their institution's needs, 45% were neutral (56 respondents out of 123). Only 5% did not agree (6 respondents out of 123).

There is also evidence of the successful delivery of the planned outputs and for achieving the TAIEX events' objectives. It is widely acknowledged in Turkey that TAIEX activities have contributed considerably to the adoption and implementation of the EU *acquis* and the

development of Turkish democracy by paving the way to public discussions over taboo issues, which could not be questioned before, e.g. issues of Romany Citizens in Turkey. In addition to the financial benefits, the EU has been providing Turkish beneficiaries with programmes serving as a means of integration into their respective fields. TAIEX assistance has provided a visible contribution to the institutional capacity building objectives required by the pre-accession process. The main impact of TAIEX events occurred at the level of knowledge and - to some extent - on skills. However, the impact on changed behaviour was not so high compared to knowledge and skills. More than one third of the Turkish e-Survey 1 respondents selected 'Internal procedures' as the major institutional changes that have been implemented directly as a result of TAIEX events with 29% selecting 'improved or modified Administrative structure' as the second major change.

The Turkish BAs have drafted or adopted new strategies, laws, by laws or made modifications and standards enabling them to align with the EU *acquis*. According to the Turkish participants three quarters of the documents have been adopted already and majority of them stated that at this moment they are partly implemented (see Annex 25).

Interviewed line DGs are satisfied with concrete outputs of TAIEX and its help to the countries. Some of these impacts, such as adoption of laws can be measured, but it is hard to measure all areas of assistance provided by TAIEX.

SUSTAINABILITY

EQ5 – Sustainability: To what extent have/are the positive outcomes of TAIEX events and the flow of benefits continued/likely to continue after external funding ends/has ended?

Overall, consulted stakeholders agree that adopted legislation and new mechanisms in place are a strong input for the sustainability of reform results. TAIEX support is instrumental to supporting BAs to adequately implement these new mechanisms; this constitutes a valuable sustainability input. Another important contribution to sustainability is administrative and organisational structures, which are in place and ensuring the effective implementation of TAIEX assistance. Line beneficiaries are directly involved in the formulation of their TAIEX requests, which contributes to needs-based activities - bringing with them sustainable results.

Line DGs expressed concern with the lack of sustainability of TAIEX results due its demand driven nature. As such, knowledge is provided but the issue lies with its overall sustainability. Evaluation findings indicate that the main **hindering factor for the sustainability of the TAIEX instrument is the high staff turnover** in the concerned public administrations and low capacities in terms of language skills. In Turkey, as confirmed by the Turkish BAs, there is still a high degree of political commitment from the Turkish administration; however, this is negatively influenced by the slow progress in the accession negotiations.

A good example of a low staff turnover fluctuation in relation to TAIEX activities was observed in Croatia's public administration with NCP officials in their positions since the early stages of the enlargement process. It should also be noted that the individual BAs request colleagues who participate in TAIEX events to develop an internal report after the completion of such an event. These reports are monitored by a TAIEX co-ordinator and the relevant superior official. They are used for information dissemination and the formulation of an eventual TAIEX request.

According to interviewed BAs across the sample, it is expected that the outcomes of TAIEX assistance will continue to produce constructive effects after the end of EU funding within the extent of technical assistance. There is overall agreement that that outcomes of EU assistance will last over and beyond EU funding, as administrative cultures have evolved. TAIEX induced both a sustainable behavioural change and a development of the stakeholders' administrative capacities in the beneficiary countries. However, sustainability will also depend on the development policy of national institutions and on their administrative and financial capacities. Financial resources and the financial obligations may hamper sustainability, as in some cases huge investments are required. At a time of financial restrictions, this is not always and entirely possible. For example, budgetary restrictions negatively affected the organisation of one expert mission in Croatia, as the BA could not financially contribute by covering the catering expenditures. Beneficiaries with strategic/policy and management responsibility have and still are demonstrating an ownership of the results, but they also need continuous communication and eventual training.

Networking and improved know-how of public servants have been recognised as sustainable effects of the TAIEX assistance. The direct contact with experts, easy exchanges of knowledge and experience and the further strengthening of the administrative capacities have been appreciated. Consulted stakeholders agree that TAIEX events contribute to building links between experts and professionals in a given reform area.

As seen from the Table 12 below, e-Survey 1 and e-Survey 2 respondents agree that continued networking with EUMS Experts and/or partner institutions after TAIEX event completion are a good means for strengthening the sustainability of TAIEX results. An additional means is continued institutional commitment by a Line Beneficiary after event completion via further internal training in order to ensure continued enhancement of

administrative capacity, followed by full project ownership of results through further TAIEX events.

Table 12 - Which of the following measure can ensure sustainability of TAIEX results? (Question 42)

	<i>e-Survey 1</i>	<i>e-Survey 2</i>
Full project ownership over results to be continued via further TAIEX events	21.4%	21%
Continued institutional commitment by the Line Beneficiary after event completion via further training in order to ensure the continued enhancement of administrative capacity (and absorption capacity)	22.82%	21%
Financial budget allocated by the Line Beneficiary to continue the results	9.3%	10%
Continued networking with EUMS Experts and/or partner institutions after TAIEX event completion	27.6%	28%
Further dissemination of documents produced by TAIEX events (e.g. "Training of Trainers" Manuals, etc.)	18.8%	21%

A lack of sustainability was expressed by some of the interviewed DGs, especially due to the demand driven nature of TAIEX. It is recognised that knowledge is transferred but there is a residual problem with sustainability. It is difficult to find evidence regarding the sustainability of the assistance.

SWOT ANALYSIS – OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF TAIEX IN THE IPA REGION

In order to summarise all opinions, comments, remarks, recommendation and key messages received from the line stakeholders in the IPA Region, European Commission services in Brussels, EU Delegations to IPA countries and EUMSs as well as the answers to the evaluation questions into an overall assessment of the TAIEX Instrument, the Evaluators have hereinafter put forward a **SWOT analysis** reflecting views and feedback by the Line Beneficiary Institutions on the TAIEX Instrument as implemented in the IPA Region. This SWOT analysis may provide useful insights into TAIEX for future conceptualisation and programming.

A reminder of the SWOT analysis concept as an evaluation method:

Strengths:	Characteristics of the programme that give it an advantage over others. Aspects that have been working well and that line stakeholders are happy to talk about.
Weaknesses:	Characteristics that place the programme at a disadvantage relative to others. Aspects that have not been working so well.
Opportunities:	Elements that the programme could exploit to its advantage. Ideas on how to overcome the weaknesses observed and how to build on strengths.
Threats:	Elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the programme by constraining or threatening the range of opportunities for change.

SWOT Analysis – TAIEX Instrument

The **strengths** of TAIEX assistance delivered during 2007-2014 have been the following:

- **Relevance** – TAIEX addresses the most ardent needs of the BAs and respective governments, in their aspirations towards EU membership, through offering assistance in terms of policy advice, capacity building, legal approximation (EU *acquis*), economic integration into the EU internal and/or global international markets, and institutional modernisation;
- **Participatory approach to programming** – opportunity for BAs design the applications and participatory mechanisms for programming of IPA assistance (e.g. in *the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*) informs adequately the programming, creates ownership and commitment over the process;
- **Expertise** – there is evidence of positive impact brought about by TAIEX through the deployment of top technical expertise and dissemination of good practices as benchmarks for reforms in various sectors in IPA countries. Also, a strong expertise has developed within the TAIEX unit;
- **Mobilisation** – TAIEX events contribute to building networks and communities of interests between beneficiary and EUMS towards common development goals and offer possibility to pool together best intelligentsia in the planning, programming and implementation of support;
- **Synergy** – TAIEX complements other development efforts supported by governments, EU and other donors. In recent years, there have been efforts to fully integrate principles of complementarity and subsidiarity in programming of TAIEX;
- **Flexible implementation framework** - allowing for quick deployment of experts and response to new needs or unmet assumptions;
- **Strong M&E system** – allowing for extensive analysis of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impacts of the assistance.

The **weaknesses** of TAIEX during 2007-2011 have been the following:

- **Fragmentation of support** – TAIEX is by nature an ad-hoc and short term intervention which may deter the possibility to achieve and understand ultimate impacts on overall reforms in BCs.

Opportunities for TAIEX are the following:

- **Sequencing of TAIEX assistance** - Examples of sequenced TAIEX assistance through various types of events for various needs (e.g. in FYROM with Environment) offers insights on how such an approach could be beneficial for the BAs and overall reforms in a given sector. For example, the TAIEX strategy would consist in an expert mission in order to conduct a gap analysis. Then a workshop/seminar would be organised to address the priority needs in order to fill the gaps and only when and if appropriate, a study visit to an EUMS partner institution would take place;
- **Knowledge management and learning** – TAIEX has gathered a range of success stories, good models of work and lessons learned. Designing a good approach for knowledge management and learning may contribute to better understanding of the instrument's value, its achievements and attribution of results;
- **Complementarity** - Already effective complementarity with other EU classical TA projects should be extended to ensuring synergies with other donors. This may be done through already established mechanisms for donor coordination by NIPAC offices in the region.

Threats for TAIEX are the following:

- **Deteriorating situation in individual countries or in the region** – EU assistance in general and TAIEX in particular face threat of overall deterioration of political, economic and social situation in countries or regionally. Such situation would negatively affect results of the assistance in terms of reversion of positive effects of instruments on the reformist processes.

It is clear from the above that the TAIEX Instrument's positive aspects considerably exceed those that are negative. TAIEX is and remains a very popular capacity-building tool, notwithstanding several weaknesses, for which corrective actions may be introduced on a flexible basis.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Relevance. The relevance level of the TAIEX instrument during the period 2007-2014 was particularly high. TAIEX assistance has been in line with national sector strategies and actions plans, as well as with countries' aspirations for EU membership. The accession agenda has been the driving force behind the requests and approvals of assistance provided by TAIEX to complement other types of assistance implemented both EU and other donors. This agenda has naturally included legal approximation (EU *acquis*), economic integration into the EU internal and/or global international markets and institutional modernisation steered by the national action plans for accession and regular EC progress reports. The approach whereby BAs - in consultation with NCPs - elaborate requests and also their increasing involvement in the programming of TAIEX has embedded the needs-based dimension of this type of support.

Effectiveness. Since 2007, TAIEX has delivered useful results, which have supported the reform goals across various sectors through improved strategies and legislation, enhanced institutional capacity, modernisation of practices in institutions and overall improvements to public administrations. The extent to which these results have boosted the continuation of reforms is hard to assess, in consideration of the short-term nature of TAIEX.

Efficiency. With few exceptions, TAIEX assistance has been delivered in a timely and efficient manner. Its management structures and approaches are appropriate and allow for the selection of the best mechanism to respond to the needs of BAs. Efficiency has been affected by the natural fragmentation of TAIEX into short-term and generally small interventions set against sometimes long approval frameworks. TAIEX has a systematic approach to M&E, which facilitates the tracking of interventions in terms of their approach, efficiency, effects and contributions made towards reforms in BAs.

Impact. TAIEX has contributed to the development of a legal and institutional environment enabling structural reforms in the countries, contributing to an accelerated pace of change and direction of reforms. The increased professionalism of staff and public administrations serves as a contribution for a better implementation of the reforms. The impact of assistance has nevertheless been uneven, as this depends on the various levels of commitment and interest of the government counterparts (BAs) to take on the positive effects of assistance and transform them into long lasting impacts - for their institutions and for the overall development of their countries.

Sustainability. TAIEX has invested important resources in developing national capacities to lead the reforms; develop and implement new laws and strategies and use new practices, methodologies and tools. However, staff turnover, frequent institutional changes and - at times - low commitment for using the newly acquired competences, skills and knowledge reduce the benefits of capacity building investment.

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions of the evaluation point to the following recommendations, as elaborated in this section. Each recommendation has an addressee and a proposed timeframe. For ease of reference, recommendations are divided into two categories, as follows:

S - Strategic recommendations (1)

P - Programming, delivery and coordination recommendations (9)

No	Recommendation	Addressee	Timing
Strategic (S)			
S1	<p>Enhance ownership of BAs over TAIEX instrument through encouraging their leadership in prioritisation of TAIEX assistance, preparation of requests and selection of implementing partners/experts</p> <p>NIPACs/NCPs should further enhance BAs leadership role throughout the prioritisation of TAIEX assistance, preparation of requests and their selection.</p> <p>This may include the development of screening procedures, based on agreed and transparent selection criteria, which ensure the strategic relevance of selected TAIEX requests with strong inputs and leadership by BAs.</p>	Governments, with the assistance of EUD and TAIEX management	2015-2016
Programming, delivery and co-ordination of the instrument (P)			
P1	<p>Continue good practice of sequencing assistance through a combination of TAIEX events</p> <p>During the evaluation, the benefits of sequential assistance were noted, particularly in terms of the development of legislation and further implementation through the establishment of strengthening mechanisms and services. For areas where support is needed for a longer period to achieve the estimated impact (improvement of institutional practices, implementation of new laws and regulations) and which would need further support than one-off TAIEX assistance, it is suggested to develop an application form elaborating overall needs for support in order to provide a holistic</p>	NCPs and the TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Planning and programming phase of TAIEX

No	Recommendation	Addressee	Timing
	view of what is required to achieve the envisaged impact. Ideally, this would be followed by the preparation of a pipeline of well-sequenced events. For example, the TAIEX strategy would consist in an expert mission in order to conduct a gap analysis. Subsequently, a workshop/seminar would be organised to address the priority needs in order to fill the gaps and only when and if appropriate, a study visit to an EUMS partner institution would take place.		
P2	Continue approving study visits as a TAIEX support mechanism These are valued highly by BAs and bring considerable added values, particularly when BAs are tasked with the implementation of new mechanisms and the implementation of adopted legislation and strategies. Study Visits to Member States preferably need to be approved when the existence of a supporting sectoral strategy and appropriate Government legislation is in place.	NCPs and the TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Planning and programming phase of TAIEX
P3	Enable access to M&E data gathered and analysed in the system for internal users in EC (e.g. line DGs) to contribute to shared understanding of the value added and effectiveness and impact of the TAIEX assistance The M&E system in place for the TAIEX instrument is impressive and presents a wealth of information and data on TAIEX relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and also impacts. However, the system is used only internally, within the TAIEX Unit. As such, this system is not widely known and/or used. The TAIEX Instrument's visibility would be enhanced if the system would be more accessible to other actors in the EC (e.g. line DGs, decision makers) as it would provide hands-on knowledge of the instrument, its effectiveness and contribution to overall reforms in the BCs. The system could put a 'read-only' option in place for internal users, with restrictions on confidential data (e.g. ratings of experts and comments), but would enable cross-tabulation and filtering as per country/type of event/sector, etc.	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Ongoing
P4	Increase awareness raising concerning the TAIEX instrument and support the monitoring function of national contact points The evaluation noted that, while BAs are generally aware and familiar with TAIEX assistance, there is still insufficient information concerning the available funding through TAIEX. The NCPs and EUDs are trying hard to disseminate information, but do not have enough capacity to do it in a more systematic and regular way. It is therefore of importance that possibly interested BAs are aware and ideally guided in finding the right stream of support to ensure successful participation and benefits from the assistance. In this respect, improvements in the system should be made to establish a more systematic electronic platform with all available funding opportunities, monitoring data for countries and sectors as well as types of assistance. In order to improve the monitoring of	EU Delegations NIPACs/NCPs	Permanently

No	Recommendation	Addressee	Timing
	assistance, BAs should notify the relevant national contact points, as an obligatory requirement on results of events, supported also by expert reports. At the same time, information on best practices and success stories should be posted by the EC on its websites and should be as comprehensive as possible.		
P5	BAs should make efforts to build further capacities regarding the prioritisation of TAIEX support activities and fulfilling the requirements of the online application form Feedback received during interviews is that BAs - in some cases - struggle with the online application and as such, the NCP needs to be assisted. BAs should ensure their capacities are strengthened to fill in the survey, even via requesting separate training on this topic.	BAs	Permanently
P6	Continue ensuring that logistical arrangements run smoothly The TAIEX Unit - the service provider - should take measures to ensure that the logistical arrangements run smoothly and do not affect the implementation of an event. Travel, translation (if applicable) and venue arrangements, ensuring event participants are fully aware about an event's preparation is critical in order to provide better response and generate greater benefits from the event.	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Permanently
P7	Improve the application format by introducing analysis of impact and sustainability prospects of the event (or series of events, if applicable) Integration of the sections on impact and sustainability would enable BAs to reflect and analyse potential sustainability and impacts of the event, linking them to higher level of reforms and initiatives within the structures. This approach would also introduce setting targets and (potentially) indicators of success that could be measured through a more systematic M&E to be established for TAIEX.	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Permanently
P8	Strengthen the website presentation of the TAIEX instrument as a visibility tool Potential and/or current TAIEX users, but also EU and other international and national stakeholders interested in the instrument, use the website as a first-hand information source for the Instrument. Improvements to the website could include a more efficient search function (allowing options to search per country, per sector, per BA, etc.) including best practices, examples of good applications and more comprehensive statistics would ensure a better understanding and visibility of the instrument.	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	Permanently

No	Recommendation	Addressee	Timing
P9	<p>Consider stronger support through webinars as a good practice example that can contribute to sustainability of measures</p> <p>TAIEX is already supporting some forms of ongoing follow up support to BAs in various ways, primarily through enabling sequenced events and support through preferred experts. Another avenue of support that could be explored by TAIEX are web-based seminars (webinars), which could provide requested follow up support after a 'classical' TAIEX event takes place.</p>	TAIEX Unit at DG NEAR	2015-2016

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