



# **Guide to the Facility for Eastern Partnership Investment in Connectivity (EPIC)**



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98 -100, boulevard Konrad Adenauer – L-2950 Luxembourg

+352 4379-1

[info@eib.org](mailto:info@eib.org)

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# Foreword

The Facility for Eastern Partnership Investment in Connectivity (EPIC) is funded by the European Union. It supports beneficiary countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood with Advisory Support and Technical Assistance (TA) to prepare and implement viable connectivity investment projects related to the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). It was jointly set up by the European Commission, which is providing grant funding, and the European Investment Bank (EIB), which is managing the facility. EPIC is also supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank, which can also provide Advisory Support and Technical Assistance. Investment projects prepared with support from EPIC are expected to meet the requirements of the aforementioned international financial institutions and hence become investment-ready<sup>1</sup>.

The purpose of this guide is to present the facility and explain how it works. It may be updated from time to time, both to clarify processes and procedures and to reflect any evolutions of EPIC.

## This guide comprises three chapters:

- **Chapter 1 – EPIC at a glance** – An overview of the EPIC facility detailing its objectives, stakeholders, governance, eligibility rules and the kind of support available.
- **Chapter 2 – Accessing EPIC support** – The process through which EPIC support is allocated to projects and beneficiaries.
- **Chapter 3 – Implementing EPIC support** – How EPIC Advisory Support and Technical Assistance are to be implemented, including reporting on EPIC operations, amendments to applications and the cancellation of activities. Communication and visibility activities are also overviewed.

<sup>1</sup> International financial institution financing remains ultimately subject to the successful outcome of the respective institutions' due diligence process, approval by their governing bodies, as well as the negotiation and signature of a finance contract.

## CHAPTER I

# EPIC at a glance

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## Context

### The European Union and its Eastern neighbours share a vision, a network and a transport investment plan

Under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative involving the European Union (EU), its Member States and its Eastern European partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter Moldova) and Ukraine. The EaP aims to build a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation. An important building block of the EaP is close cooperation on transport infrastructure networks to foster connectivity between the European Union and its Eastern partners.

In this context and based on high-level agreements between the European Union and the EaP countries, in November 2018 the European Commission adopted maps of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)<sup>2</sup> in the EaP region. In December 2021, the European Commission presented a Communication on the extension of the TEN-T to third countries underlining that the EaP should continue building a pipeline of TEN-T projects and bring the projects to maturity in view of meeting the conditions for funding and financing. The EaP should focus on projects located on the indicative TEN-T core network.

Further to this and to assist decision-makers in prioritising strategic investments in transport infrastructure related to the TEN-T, the European Commission — with support from the World Bank and in consultation with the EaP countries and civil society representatives — prepared the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan<sup>3</sup> (December 2018). This plan identified priority investments totalling €12.8 billion, including €4.4 billion of ongoing projects and €8.4 billion of projects in the pipeline for the period up to 2030. This plan will be updated to reflect the Eastern Partnership post-2020 priorities.

Investing in sustainable, rules-based and secure transport connectivity with a focus on the extension of the core TEN-T network is also among the long-term policy objectives of the Eastern Partnership Policy beyond 2020 as outlined in the Joint Communication *Eastern Partnership Policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience — an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all*<sup>4</sup> adopted in March 2020. The Joint Staff Working Document *Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities*<sup>5</sup> published in July 2021 outlines the EaP priorities and targets for the post-2020 agenda. This agenda is structured under two pillars — Investment and Governance — and proposes an Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership to support the partner countries' socioeconomic recovery by pursuing the green and digital transitions. The Economic and Investment Plan includes significant investments in transport connectivity aiming to mobilise up to €4.5 billion and will use innovative tools, such as blending and guarantees, to foster sustainable development and mobilise public and private investment. This includes priority investment projects in the extended core TEN-T network.

A key recommendation of the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan was to allocate more attention and resources to high-quality project preparation to ensure the ambitious plan's successful implementation. For this purpose, it was considered essential to create a dedicated multimodal project preparation facility: EPIC was subsequently designed to perform this role.

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/international/european\\_neighbourhood\\_policy/eastern\\_partnership/tent-maps\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/international/european_neighbourhood_policy/eastern_partnership/tent-maps_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/ten-t\\_iap\\_web-dec13.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/ten-t_iap_web-dec13.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/joint-communication-eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020-reinforcing-resilience-eastern-partnership-delivers-all\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/joint-communication-eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020-reinforcing-resilience-eastern-partnership-delivers-all_en)

<sup>5</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd\\_2021\\_186\\_f1\\_joint\\_staff\\_working\\_paper\\_en\\_v2\\_p1\\_1356457\\_0.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd_2021_186_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v2_p1_1356457_0.pdf)

## Objectives

### Connectivity for democracy, prosperity and cooperation

The overall objective of EPIC is to support the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in the EaP region and help build a common area of democracy, prosperity and increased cooperation.

EPIC targets improvements in connectivity both within the EaP region and between EaP countries and the European Union. More specifically, EPIC aims to provide Advisory Support and Technical Assistance to select, prepare and implement priority projects related to the TEN-T in accordance with international best practice and requirements and standards of the European Union and international financial institutions. This is expected to enhance the readiness of the projects concerned for financing and implementation.

With its programmatic approach, EPIC aims at fostering transparency, coordination and cooperation among stakeholders, including the EaP beneficiaries and promoters, the European Commission and the international financial institutions concerned, focusing efforts and financing on true and agreed priorities in an era marked by large investment needs but scarce resources. Furthermore, the scale and longevity of EPIC makes it possible to establish and refine a mechanism for efficiently delivering eligible Advisory Support and Technical Assistance.

At the level of individual projects, EPIC aims to generate concrete, viable connectivity investments that can deliver tangible results for citizens and businesses, such as reduced travel time and cost, improved road safety, elimination of bottlenecks, adaptation to climate change, as well as other socioeconomic and environmental benefits.

Finally, by providing support for specific projects, as well as through training and networking events, EPIC aims to strengthen local institutional capacity to prepare and implement transport infrastructure projects in line with international best practice and EU requirements.

# Outset

## A new thrust to turn a plan into reality

Following publication of the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan, the European Commission and the EIB jointly developed the first concept for a facility to help EaP countries prepare connectivity infrastructure projects. On 10 April 2019, the concept was discussed and feedback collected from representatives of EaP countries, civil society and all relevant IFIs during the 16th EaP Transport Panel in Brussels.

Subsequently, at the EaP transport ministerial meeting in Luxembourg on 6 June 2019, representatives of EU Member States and the EaP countries agreed a joint declaration to work towards establishing a facility to assist EaP countries in preparing and implementing priority TEN-T projects. They also agreed that the facility should promote quality infrastructure projects and a level playing field, including open public procurement and alignment with high standards of good governance.

Against the backdrop of this wide consensus on the overall concept, and taking account of the feedback received, the EIB developed a detailed proposal for an Advisory Support and Technical Assistance facility called the Eastern Partnership Investment in Connectivity. On 7 November 2019, the Board of the Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP) approved this proposal. EPIC was subsequently developed throughout 2020 and 2021 and launched as a joint initiative of the European Commission and the EIB, the EBRD and the World Bank in early 2022.

EPIC takes a programmatic approach, promoting viable transport infrastructure projects related to the TEN-T and the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan, thereby pursuing a key EU priority in the Eastern Neighbourhood in line with the priorities for the EaP post-2020 and the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership. It combines Advisory Support and Technical Assistance to help EaP countries prepare connectivity investments in line with international best practice and EU/international financial institution requirements and standards, ready for financing and implementation.

EPIC is driven by experience accumulated through other similar initiatives, particularly the Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS)<sup>6</sup> and the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)<sup>7</sup>, Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans (CONNECTA)<sup>8</sup>. It also builds on existing experience and portfolios of promoters and IFIs in preparing projects in the EaP region.

EPIC provides a cooperation framework between the Commission, the EIB, the EBRD, the World Bank and possibly other international or national financial institutions accepted to participate therein, under which international financial institutions will contribute through Advisory Support and the facilitation of Technical Assistance to support priority connectivity investments in the EaP region.

6 <https://jaspers.eib.org>

7 <https://www.wbif.eu>

8 <https://connecta-info.eu>

JASPERS is a joint advisory initiative between the EIB and the European Commission, and has been an important instrument of the EU Cohesion Policy for more than 15 years. Since 2013, it has also been working in EU pre-accession countries under the European Union's Instrument for Pre-Accession, where it has built a solid record of accomplishment. JASPERS helps beneficiaries to shape high-quality projects by offering support for project preparation (all stages of the project cycle) and capacity strengthening. Its assistance covers all sectors of infrastructure, including all transport sub-sectors — road, rail, air and maritime. JASPERS has a critical mass of expertise (110+ staff, including around 40 transport experts, largely based in regional offices in Eastern and Central Europe), which enables the necessary complementarity of advice for cross-sector/cross-border projects. JASPERS expertise is independent and autonomous regarding the financing of underlying projects.

**EPIC consists of three building blocks:**

1. A Coordination Committee, with members from the European Commission, EIB, EBRD and World Bank, the role of which is to ensure coherence with EU policies, transparency and good governance. The EPIC Coordination Committee is supported operationally by a secretariat.
2. The EPIC Advisory Team and/or international financial institution advisory teams that provide direct high-level advice to beneficiaries regarding project prioritisation, scoping of Technical Assistance, and supervision of consultants.
3. Consultants that perform the bulk of the Technical Assistance work necessary to produce high-quality project documentation, such as pre-feasibility studies or feasibility studies.

Though primarily focused on the preparation of infrastructure projects, EPIC can also organise dedicated training and networking events on aspects relevant to more than one project. Both project-specific support and horizontal support are geared to strengthening institutional capacity in Eastern Partnership countries.

Given the long lead times of transport infrastructure projects, EPIC is initially scheduled to last up to six years, starting in 2022.

EaP countries can obtain EPIC support through the application process explained in Chapter 2.

# Who is involved?

## Stakeholders

### Key EPIC stakeholders include:

- **Beneficiary countries:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine;
- **Promoters:** Sub-sector entities (e.g. roads authorities) responsible for preparing and implementing projects;
- **Donors:** European Commission; possibly bilateral donor governments;
- **International financial institutions:** EIB, EBRD and World Bank;
- **EU Delegations (EUDs);** and
- **the EaP Transport Panel.**

## Beneficiary countries

Within the beneficiary countries, EPIC's main points of contact are typically the ministries of transport/infrastructure. Ministries of transport/infrastructure are in charge of setting the strategic orientations for the transport sector as a whole, hold the sectoral lead in selecting priority projects and maintain the sectoral relationship with the EU and notably the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Transport Panel. They are, therefore, well placed to act as the central entry point to EPIC and be in charge of the coordination of efforts amongst relevant transport stakeholders, notably in the selection of projects to be proposed for EPIC support and the preparation and submission of EPIC support applications.

Within each beneficiary country, other relevant actors regarding major transport investment projects are notably finance ministries, national investment coordination bodies, transport sub-sector authorities, public companies, Programme Management Units (PMUs) and Project Implementation Units (PIUs) and possibly private sector entities.

Together with the sectoral line ministries, the role of the ministries of finance and — to the extent that they exist — national investment coordination bodies is to decide on national priorities for transport investments and make the corresponding financing and borrowing capacity available commensurately. Although preliminary analyses and studies are useful inputs for the priority-setting process, there is no point committing resources in detailed preparation for projects unless financing capacity is clearly available in the foreseeable future. Hence, it is essential to consult the ministries of finance and (possibly) national investment coordination bodies when selecting projects to be proposed for EPIC support. In principle, EPIC can provide support for countries in the process of prioritising transport investment opportunities.

## Promoters

Sub-sector authorities (e.g. roads authorities), public companies (e.g. railway companies), PMUs/PIUs and possibly private-sector entities (e.g. logistics centre owners/operators) act as promoters of infrastructure investment projects, with primary responsibility for preparing and implementing projects.

As they are usually the legal owners of the assets to be created, it is essential for these bodies to maintain a sense of ownership of the entire process of project preparation. At the technical level, these bodies are also the main interlocutors with the EPIC Advisory Team. EPIC fosters a sense of ownership on the part of promoters through regular and appropriate coordination, communication and coaching.

## Donors

To date, the entire grant funding for EPIC comes from the European Commission (DG NEAR) through the NIP.

## International financial institutions

The international financial institutions currently represented in the EPIC Coordination Committee are the EIB (managing EPIC), the EBRD and the World Bank. At a later stage, other international or national financial institutions may be accepted to participate therein. For the international financial institutions, EPIC creates a forum for exchange regarding not only co-financing opportunities but also project-related lending requirements and standards. EPIC aims to ensure that the projects it supports are prepared so as to meet the requirements of those institutions considering financing the related investments. All participating international financial institutions can contribute through Advisory Support and the facilitation of Technical Assistance to support priority connectivity investments in the EaP region.

Under EPIC, the above-mentioned institutions can act as lead international financial institution or co-financing international financial institution. The lead international financial institution is the financial institution designated by agreement of all the co-financiers of the project and the project promoter, to coordinate their actions in respect of the project. The endorsement of an EPIC support application by the lead international financial institution enhances that application's credibility from the EPIC Coordination Committee's perspective.

The European Investment Bank (EIB)<sup>9</sup>, owned by and representing the interests of EU Member States, has a track record of experience in all transport sub-sectors.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)<sup>10</sup>, mandated to foster the transition

<sup>9</sup> [www.eib.org/en](http://www.eib.org/en)

<sup>10</sup> [www.ebrd.com](http://www.ebrd.com)

towards open market-oriented economies and to promote private and entrepreneurial initiatives, covers all transport sub-sectors.

The World Bank<sup>11</sup> offers support to developing countries through lending, policy advice, and technical support with research and analysis. It also covers all transport sub-sectors. The World Bank supported the European Commission in preparation of the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan.

## The EaP Transport Panel

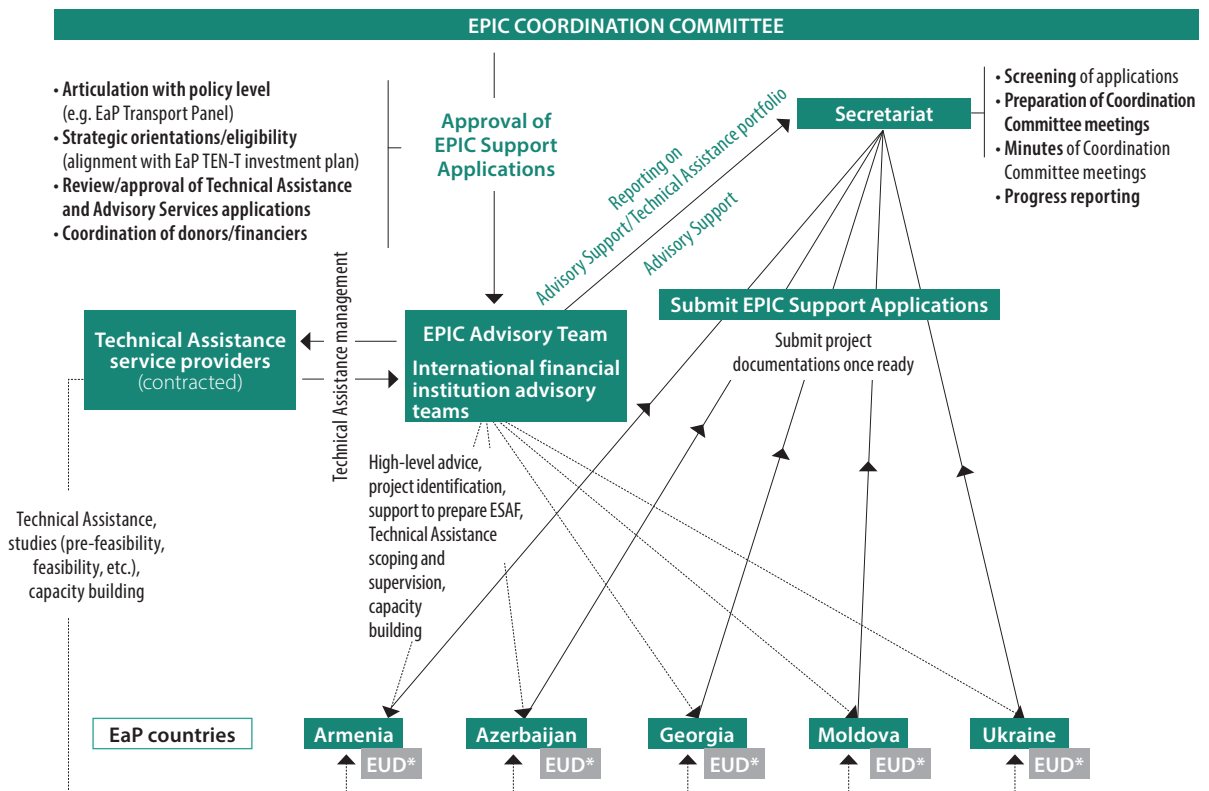
The EaP Transport Panel was established on 23 September 2011 as a framework for exchanging information and best practice between the EaP countries and EU Member States. Its goal is to strengthen transport connections both between EaP countries and the European Union and among EaP countries. It addresses reforms underpinning regulatory convergence across transport modes. EPIC regularly exchanges information with the EaP Transport Panel regarding the progress of their respective work so as to keep efforts aligned.

<sup>11</sup> [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

# Governance

## Who takes the decisions?

The overall functioning and governance structure of EPIC is depicted in the figure below:



\* EUD: European Union Delegation.



**EPIC's main decision-making body is the EPIC Coordination Committee, in which each of the following member organisations is represented by one person:**

- **the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR; chair);**
- **the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE);**
- **the EIB;**
- **the EBRD;** and
- **the World Bank.**

**The key tasks of the EPIC Coordination Committee are to:**

- select applications to receive EPIC Advisory Support and Technical Assistance;
- provide guidance to the EIB and to any other party participating in the EPIC Framework on the orientations set by the EU Neighbourhood Policy, the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership, the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) for the EaP region and the Eastern Partnership Transport Panel;
- set and from time to time review eligibility and selection criteria for EPIC support;
- approve the EPIC Vademecum and any modifications thereof;
- review progress on execution of the actions implemented under the EPIC Framework;
- be responsible for high-level reporting to and liaison with the Eastern Partnership Transport Panel.

The EPIC Coordination Committee usually meets every six months. It is supported operationally by a secretariat, whose role is to prepare Coordination Committee meetings (invitations, agenda, supporting documents), report on progress, compile the work programme for the next period, and minute Coordination Committee meetings.

Information about approved EPIC actions and their status is posted on the EPIC website<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.eib.org/en/products/advisory-services/epic/index>

# What to support?

## Eligibility requirements

**EPIC has been set up to provide Advisory Support and Technical Assistance mainly for projects related to TEN-T, the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership (EIP) and the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan, or other policy objectives that the EPIC Coordination Committee may from time to time decide. This implies two gateway conditions for projects to receive EPIC support:**

- they must be located in at least one EaP country; and
- they must be related to the TEN-T, the EIP, the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan or another endorsed policy objective.

**Further gateway conditions are that applications are supported by:**

- the ministry of transport/infrastructure or equivalent and the ministry of finance of the country concerned;
- a mandated sub-sector entity in charge of preparing, implementing and operating the type of infrastructure concerned with a reasonable track record (the promoter);
- the European Union Delegation in the country concerned; and
- the international financial institution(s) expected to contribute to the financing plan for investment in the project.

**Other criteria used to prioritise and select applications are as follows:**

- level of priority in the TEN-T, the EIP and the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan;
- project priority in national strategy or masterplan;
- project priority in regional strategy/plan;
- facilitation of border-crossing transport;
- coherence with other EU and internationally recognised policy goals (e.g. road safety, climate change mitigation and adaptation, social and environmental sustainability, gender equality, harmonisation of sector standards with those of the European Union, and other goals that may become relevant);
- additionality of the proposal, namely the outcomes that would not be achievable without EPIC support (e.g. optimised project design, reduced cost, enhanced social and environmental performance, accelerated project implementation, capacity strengthening, and promotion of appropriate innovative features);
- complementarity of the EPIC support (requested support is the only/most appropriate support available and applied for; if there is other external project support, it must be complementary);
- likelihood of a viable/buildable project emerging in due course; and
- fiscal space of the beneficiary country to finance the investment.

## What kind of support?

### EPIC support can cover the following aspects:

- **Support for project preparation:** e.g. pre-feasibility studies, feasibility studies, safety audits, environmental and social impact assessment, preliminary design documents.
- Provision of **strategic orientation** and support for prioritising projects coherent with the strategic framework for EaP countries under the TEN-T and the TEN-T Investment Action Plan and in line with the EIP.
- General **methodological guidance:** e.g. on cost–benefit analysis, environmental and social matters, road safety and climate change adaptation, taking into account the applicable requirements of the European Union and the international financial institutions.
- **Support for project implementation** through on-the-job advice at arm’s length regarding selected issues, such as procurement strategies and processes, Terms of Reference and tender documents, as well as designing and establishing PIUs<sup>13</sup>.
- **Capacity strengthening and knowledge transfer** through a hands-on approach with promoters, dedicated training events, and working papers (e.g. on gap analysis, cost–benefit analysis, and EU standards, regulation and policies).
- **Communication, visibility** on achievements, and citizens’ **awareness raising**.

### Support under EPIC can essentially come in two forms:

- **Advisory Support:** Under EPIC, Advisory Support is the expert advice, guidance and coaching provided directly by the EPIC Advisory Team, or advisory teams of other international financial institutions, to eligible beneficiaries/promoters on a not-for-profit basis, in good faith, and with reasonable care and due diligence. The EPIC Advisory Team draws on the experience and practices of JASPERS, the European Commission and the EIB. Advisory Support can also be provided by other international financial institutions’ technical teams, if leading the project.
- **Technical Assistance:** In the context of EPIC, Technical Assistance is the technical expert support sourced from commercially operating consultancy companies normally contracted by the EIB or other international financial institutions. It can be used to undertake analyses and studies underpinning the project development documentation.

It is important to note that these two types of support are highly complementary and — based on experience — yield the best results if used together. This is because the quality of work delivered by Technical Assistance consultants depends significantly on how they are initially instructed and continuously guided.

The EPIC Advisory Team stands beside beneficiaries and promoters to help define the Terms of Reference of Technical Assistance consultancy assignments and review consultants’ outputs to ensure the end results are of high quality and in line with international best practice and EU/international financial institution requirements.

Where the lead international financial institution prefers to provide its own Advisory Support for an EPIC Technical Assistance assignment, and the beneficiary agrees to that, it can do so without drawing on support from the EPIC Advisory Team.

<sup>13</sup> NB: During the project implementation phase, it is generally expected that detailed design studies, consultancy support for PIUs, and construction supervision Technical Assistance is financed from promoters’ own funds, grants from external sources other than EPIC or proceeds from international financial institution loans, and directly procured by the promoters themselves.

CHAPTER II

# **Accessing EPIC support**

## The process of allocating Advisory Support and Technical Assistance resources under EPIC to specific actions and projects is application-based.

Usually upon a call for proposals, EaP countries can submit applications to the EPIC Coordination Committee for a decision in its next session.

Calls for proposals are launched as and when financing becomes available, published on the EPIC website<sup>14</sup> and notified to EPIC's main point of contact in each beneficiary country and respective EU Delegations.

### **The template of the EPIC Support Application Form (ESAF) is available on the EPIC website. Key information to present in the ESAF includes:**

- Description of the investment project to which the application relates and its background.
- Justification for the requested EPIC support.
- Analysis of the status of project preparation and elements missing for investment maturity.
- Description of the support sought from EPIC, including an estimate of Technical Assistance cost.
- Description of the institutional framework for project development.

Supporting documents, including statements of support or intent from the ministry of finance (specifying the type of support envisaged), underpin the application's credibility and chances of succeeding. The checklist used by the EPIC Coordination Committee to evaluate applications is annexed to the ESAF template.

As explained above, the body in charge of submitting ESAFs is the ministry of transport/infrastructure or equivalent. This ensures good coordination of EPIC applications in each EaP country.

For reasons of technical competence and responsibility, as well as to foster a sense of ownership, the promoter is expected to prepare the technical parts of the ESAF, in close coordination with the responsible unit in the ministry of transport/infrastructure or equivalent.

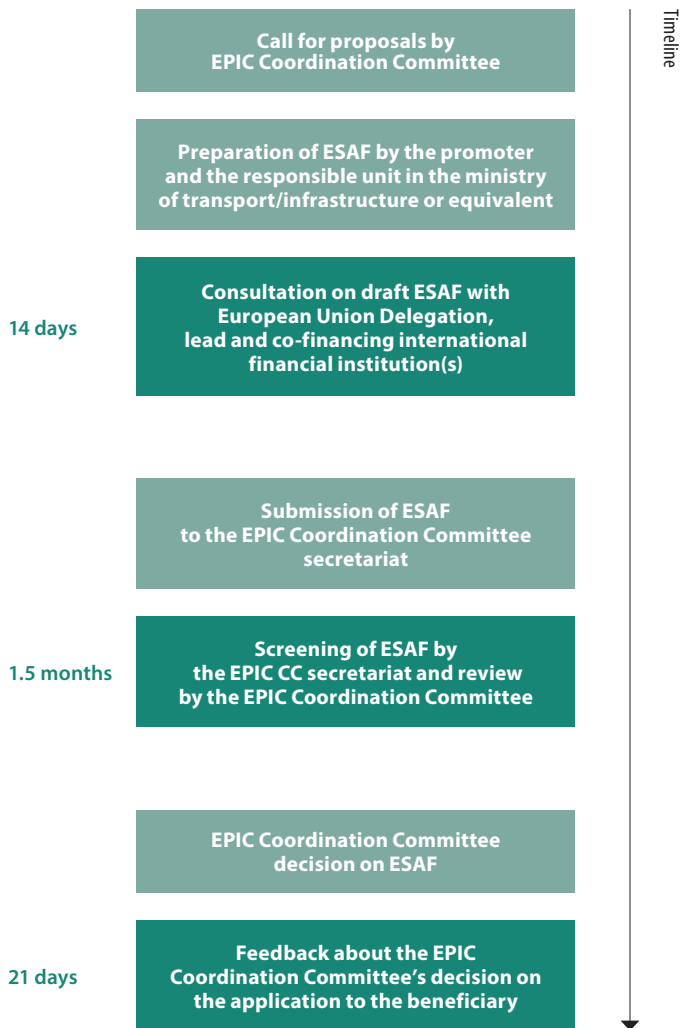
### **The EPIC Advisory Team and/or international financial institution advisory teams are available to assist national authorities with two aspects of preparing an EPIC support application:**

- Identifying promising candidate projects based on the eligibility criteria and considering the views of relevant players, including international financial institutions, the ministry of finance and the European Union Delegation; and
- Preparing the ESAF for selected priority projects: a core task in this process is assessing the gaps in existing project documentation and the scope of Technical Assistance that would be necessary to close these gaps, considering the benchmark of best international practice and the requirements of the European Commission and relevant international financial institutions.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.eib.org/en/products/advisory-services/epic/index>

**Before submission of an ESAF, the ministry of transport/infrastructure or equivalent consults the following entities on an advanced draft:**

- European Union Delegation;
- lead international financial institution; and
- co-financing international financial institution(s).



Once the final version of the ESAF, including supporting documents, is ready, the responsible unit of the ministry of transport/infrastructure or equivalent undertakes a final quality check before submitting it by email to the EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat ([epic@eib.org](mailto:epic@eib.org)). Deadlines for submission are communicated, together with the call for proposals, on the EPIC website.

Upon receipt of the ESAF, the EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat, supported by the EPIC Advisory Team, scrutinises the submission for completeness, soundness and accuracy. It prepares a short summary note with a recommendation to the EPIC Coordination Committee. Applications with potential to succeed but not yet mature enough (e.g. incomplete, poor presentation) for an EPIC Coordination Committee decision are screened out by the secretariat and returned to the applicant with suggestions for improvement. Once enhanced, these applications may be resubmitted through the written procedure outlined at the end of this chapter.

The EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat sends all ESAFs received (including those screened out) and the summary notes to EPIC Coordination Committee members ahead of the meeting.

Decisions on EPIC support allocations are taken by consensus of EPIC Coordination Committee members, based on applications submitted and the extent of available financing. The EPIC Coordination Committee may accept for resubmission, via written procedure, applications that have been screened out but hold potential for improvement. Applicants are informed of the outcome following approval of the minutes by EPIC Coordination Committee members.

If an application is rejected, the reasons for rejection are also communicated to the applicant. If an application is rejected due to incoherence, incompleteness or lack of funds, it can be resubmitted at a later stage, when it has been enhanced to the extent necessary or when funding becomes available. If an application is rejected for non-eligibility, it can only be resubmitted if amendments to it or future changes to eligibility rules make it eligible.

Calls for proposals are normally launched just after an EPIC Coordination Committee meeting and the submission deadline is set four months after the launch of the call, leaving time for the screening of applications by the EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat and their review by the EPIC Coordination Committee before its next meeting.

## Written procedure

In some situations, an ESAF may only be fully ready for submission shortly after the applicable deadline. So that consideration of such ESAFs need not be deferred until the next EPIC Coordination Committee meeting, it is possible to submit an advanced draft ESAF to the EPIC Coordination Committee for information and discussion, to be followed by submission of the complete ESAF within one month following the EPIC Coordination Committee meeting. After receiving the final ESAF from the beneficiary within this time period, the EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat has up to one month to screen the ESAF and submit it to EPIC Coordination Committee members for tacit approval (within one further month). The EPIC Coordination Committee only authorises use of the written procedure for ESAFs with a reasonable chance of being approved and to the extent that there is sufficient residual Technical Assistance budget to cover the cost. Generally, written procedure is the exception, not the rule.

## CHAPTER III

# Implementing EPIC support

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## Assignment of a Technical Assistance consultant

After the EPIC Coordination Committee has approved an application for EPIC support, the implementation of that support may start.

This chapter aims to overview the implementation processes. The ESAF already includes a relatively detailed description of the EPIC Technical Assistance support envisaged and related budget. However, the scope of Technical Assistance must be developed further towards a full set of Terms of Reference for each consultancy assignment.

**Under EPIC, the preparation of Terms of Reference for Technical Assistance is a collaborative process involving:**

- the promoter (lead role, to the extent feasible, to ensure a sense of ownership);
- the EPIC Advisory Team or the lead international financial institution's technical team (drafting support and review);
- EPIC Technical Assistance consultants for more complex Terms of Reference; and
- the lead and co-financing international financial institutions (rapid review to ensure consistency with their requirements).

The EPIC Advisory Team or the lead international financial institution's technical team is responsible for undertaking final quality assurance of the Terms of Reference, following which it sends them in PDF format to the promoter.

The promoter submits the final Terms of Reference by email to the EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat ([epic@eib.org](mailto:epic@eib.org)), requesting the allocation of a consultant to the Technical Assistance assignment.

In parallel to the preparation of the Technical Assistance Terms of Reference, the lead international financial institution may want to put in place a Technical Assistance cooperation agreement related to the Technical Assistance assignment with the promoter and/or the beneficiary country.

To ensure an efficient and swift mobilisation of competent consultants, the EIB (through its Consultancy Procurement and Contracts Management Division) procures Technical Assistance Single Framework Contracts, from which individual Technical Assistance assignments can be sourced. On that basis, individual Technical Assistance operations can be assigned rapidly, upon submission of agreed Terms of Reference to the EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat. Other international financial institutions may implement similar arrangements for the EPIC Technical Assistance grants awarded to them.

During the procurement process, the consultants will develop a methodology to deliver the Technical Assistance, including a team and schedule, in accordance with the Terms of Reference. Upon approval of the methodology by the EPIC Advisory Team or the lead international financial institution's technical team, the Technical Assistance assignment is activated.

## Monitoring of a Technical Assistance consultancy assignment

**For individual Technical Assistance assignments, an assignment Steering Committee may be formed for consultative purposes, including representatives from the following parties, as relevant and representing their field of competence:**

- the promoter as chair, to ensure a sense of ownership;
- the ministry of transport/infrastructure;
- other public bodies relevant to the discussion topics (e.g. ministry of finance, competent authority for the environment);
- lead and co-financing international financial institutions;
- European Union Delegations;
- members of the EPIC Advisory Team (or the lead international financial institution's technical team) as observer, if applicable;
- Technical Assistance consultants to present the results of their work.

The Technical Assistance assignment Steering Committee is consulted at the time of key milestones during the Technical Assistance assignment to enable the various parties to share opinions and discuss the assignment's direction. The first consultation usually happens following the appointment of consultants. Targeted outcomes are submitted sufficiently ahead of each consultation to allow for review and commenting by the parties.

The EPIC Advisory Team (or lead international financial institution) actively supervises the Technical Assistance consultants by reviewing and commenting on outcomes and by participating in assignment Steering Committee consultations. It collects, filters and consolidates a coherent set of comments regarding Technical Assistance outcomes to be shared with other parties represented in assignment Steering Committee consultations and sent to the Technical Assistance consultants for implementation.

The owner of the final output of the Technical Assistance assignment (e.g. studies, documentation and associated materials) is the promoter. The lead and co-financing international financial institutions and the European Commission can access and use the final outputs for due diligence purposes.

The activities of a Technical Assistance assignment are considered complete when the EIB (or other contracting authority) has accepted approval of all relevant outputs by the EPIC Advisory Team (or the lead international financial institution's technical team), taking into account the opinions of the promoter and other international financial institutions involved.

If the promoter refuses to approve the outputs because it disagrees with the results, but does not question the quality of the outputs, the Technical Assistance activities are deemed complete.

If Technical Assistance assignment activities are completed for an amount smaller than the budget, the residual budget is freed for new assignments for which any eligible beneficiary may apply. The same applies where a Technical Assistance assignment is cancelled. When the implementation of a Technical Assistance assignment has started but its completion is not possible or desirable (e.g. due to technical or environmental issues revealed by a survey), the Technical Assistance assignment may be terminated. Cancellation or termination of a Technical Assistance assignment are discussed and agreed during EPIC Coordination Committee meetings.

## Monitoring of the Technical Assistance and Advisory Support portfolio

### Operational monitoring

The EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat monitors the progress of the operational implementation of the Advisory Support and Technical Assistance portfolio by analysing progress reports, collecting feedback from stakeholders and carrying out monitoring missions. The purpose of these monitoring activities is to enable the secretariat to inform the EPIC Coordination Committee of the overall progress of the EPIC facility and its impact on implementing the Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan. International financial institutions managing their own Technical Assistance funds related to EPIC need to supply the EPIC Coordination Committee secretariat with appropriate inputs for this monitoring function. Regular feedback to the EPIC Coordination Committee enables the committee to take appropriate decisions on the facility's strategic orientation, including on topping up the Technical Assistance budget if warranted by progress.

### Reporting on implementation

Information on approved EPIC actions and their status is continuously posted on EPIC's website. International financial institutions will thus coordinate on progress reporting for Technical Assistance assignments.

### Amendments to the ESAF

During the implementation of an action, certain data and parameters regarding the Advisory Support, the Technical Assistance or the project might change. Where these changes are substantial, the ESAF needs to be amended by the beneficiary and re-approved by the EPIC Coordination Committee before any adjustment is implemented.

### Cancellation of EPIC support

**Cancellation of approved EPIC support is the last resort, used only when all other measures have failed to yield the necessary adjustment in performance. Cancellation may be considered when any of the following indicative events occur:**

- preparation of the Terms of Reference has not started within one year of Technical Assistance approval by the EPIC Coordination Committee;
- implementation of the assignment has not started within two years of approval by the EPIC Coordination Committee; and/or
- the assignment has not been completed by the end date indicated in the ESAF, or within four years of ESAF approval by the EPIC Coordination Committee.

There may be a legitimate reason for delays. The aforementioned criteria serve as a trigger for further investigation. If the EPIC Coordination Committee decides to cancel an EPIC Technical Assistance assignment, any residual funds are reallocated to subsequent EPIC calls for proposals.

## Visibility and communication

### Ensuring proper communication and visibility for EPIC activities is in all stakeholders' interests.

EPIC-supported projects have a direct positive impact on people's welfare and living standards in Eastern Partnership countries and, therefore, offer excellent opportunities to raise the profile of the beneficiaries, the European Union and the international financial institutions involved. Proper communication and visibility regarding the facility and its activities are ensured.

The EIB — with help from a service provider — will develop and implement a regional communication plan for EPIC at the start of the implementation period of the facility, in line with the DG NEAR–EIB Contribution Agreement and the Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU external actions<sup>15</sup>, and in consultation with the European Commission, the European Union Delegations in the beneficiary countries and other stakeholders.

Beneficiaries, promoters and service providers are expected to take appropriate measures to publicise that projects have benefited from EPIC support. Information given to the press and all related publicity material, official notices, reports and publications shall acknowledge that EPIC activities are “Funded by the European Union” and shall display in an appropriate way the European Union emblem and the EIB logo.

Promoters are also expected to ensure European Union, EIB and other international financial institutions' visibility, through outdoor promotion (e.g. display project boards, billboards, and commemorative plaques), as appropriate.

Where high-level visits are planned, beneficiaries, promoters and other stakeholders shall inform one another and consider coordinating these visits and agreeing on joint messages.

For press conferences, donor conferences and public debates specifically organised in relation to EPIC, beneficiaries, promoters and other stakeholders shall invite the European Union Delegation, the EIB and other international financial institutions (as applicable) to participate.

### **Reports or outputs produced by beneficiaries, promoters and other stakeholders with support from EPIC shall include the following content:**

- “This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union, in the framework of the Neighbourhood Investment Platform.”
- “Disclaimer: The authors take full responsibility for the contents of this report. The views expressed in this document are not necessarily those of the European Union or the European Investment Bank. The European Union, the European Investment Bank, their members, governing bodies, employees or agents, accept no liability whatsoever for any loss or damage arising from the interpretation or use of the information, or reliance upon views contained herein, or from the use by third parties of results or methods presented in this report.”

<sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/comm-visibility-requirements\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/comm-visibility-requirements_en)

# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>DG MOVE</b>	Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport
<b>DG NEAR</b>	Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
<b>EaP</b>	Eastern Partnership
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>EIB</b>	European Investment Bank
<b>ENP</b>	European Neighbourhood Policy
<b>EPIC</b>	Eastern Partnership Investment in Connectivity
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUD</b>	European Union Delegation
<b>JASPERS</b>	Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions
<b>NIP</b>	Neighbourhood Investment Platform
<b>PIU</b>	Project Implementation Unit
<b>PMU</b>	Project Management Unit
<b>TEN-T</b>	Trans-European Transport Network
<b>WBIF</b>	Western Balkans Investment Framework

# Glossary

**Advisory Support:** In the context of EPIC, Advisory Support is the expert advice, guidance and coaching provided directly by the EPIC Advisory Team and/or international financial institution advisory teams to eligible beneficiaries and promoters on a not-for-profit basis, in good faith and with reasonable care and due diligence (*diligentia quam in suis*), drawing on the experience and business practices of JASPERS, the European Commission and the EIB. Advisory Support can also come from the EBRD or World Bank if they are leading a project.

**Beneficiary countries:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

**EPIC Advisory Team:** A team of technical experts (e.g. engineers, economists, environmental specialists) sourced from JASPERS to provide Advisory Support under EPIC.

**EPIC Support Application Form (ESAF):** A standardised template that beneficiaries shall use to apply for EPIC Advisory Support and Technical Assistance. Upon approval by the EPIC Coordination Committee, the ESAF becomes part of the contractual framework.

**International financial institution:** A multilateral or bilateral financial institution that supports a given project and provides a loan once the project is mature. The following international financial institutions are associated with EPIC: EIB, EBRD and World Bank.

**Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP):** Officially launched in 2008 as the Neighbourhood Investment Facility, the NIP — as it is now termed — aims to mobilise additional funding to finance capital-intensive infrastructure projects in the transport and other sectors in EU partner countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

**Promoter:** The transport sub-sector body in charge of developing, implementing and — usually — owning and operating the project.

**Technical Assistance:** In the context of EPIC, Technical Assistance is the technical expert support sourced from commercially operating consultancy companies. It can be used to undertake analyses and studies underpinning the project development documentation.

# Contacts

## **EPIC Coordination Committee Secretariat**

Name: Markus Pfeffer

Email: epic@eib.org

## **DG NEAR**

Name: Michaela Hauf

Email: Michaela.HAUF@ec.europa.eu

## **DG MOVE**

Name: Kristoffer Refberg

Email: Kristoffer.REFBERG@ec.europa.eu

## **EUD Armenia**

Name: Andrea Baggioli

Email: Andrea.BAGGIOLI@eeas.europa.eu

## **EUD Azerbaijan**

Name: Ulviya Abdullayeva

Email: Ulviya.ABDULLAYEVA@eeas.europa.eu

## **EUD Georgia**

Name: Alexandre Darras

Email: Alexandre.DARRAS@eeas.europa.eu

## **EUD Moldova**

Name: Ion Guzun

Email: ion.guzun@eeas.europa.eu

## **EUD Ukraine**

Name: Agnieszka Skiba

Email: Agnieszka.SKIBA@eeas.europa.eu

## **EIB**

Name: Rafal Rybacki

Email: r.rybacki@eib.org

## **EBRD**

Name: George Holroyd

Email: holroydg@ebrd.com

## **World Bank**

Name: Gregoire F. Gauthier

Email: ggauthier@worldbank.org

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