

Trans-European networks: eTen telecommunications programme, Community funding ceiling

2003/0086(COD) - 03/06/2008 - Follow-up document

This Communication provides a final evaluation of the eTEN Programme covering the period from re-orientation in 2002 until programme end in December 2006 in response to the requirement expressed in Article 19 of the Financial Regulation covering the programme.

eTEN evolved from the TENs initiative whose objectives were to provide Trans-European networks in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy. The programme was implemented through cost-shared projects selected on the basis of public calls for proposals. A total of 149 cost shared projects were established following public calls for proposals with a total funding of just over EUR 160 million. Projects from the 2003 and 2004 programmes have been completed but those from 2005 and 2006 are still ongoing. All projects are expected to complete by the end of 2009.

This evaluation was carried out in 2007 by a team of professional evaluators from a company, which was contracted for that purpose. The evaluation assessed the following issues: relevance of the programme's objectives, priorities and means of implementation, the effectiveness and impact of the programme, its efficiency and cost effectiveness, its utility and sustainability, and causal links from resources used through to activities and presumed impacts (the intervention logic).

The Commission welcomes the evaluation report and its findings confirming both the effectiveness of the programme management and the utility of the programme. Contrary to what the conclusions state, the Commission agrees that the potential for synergy between the eTEN programme and the European Cohesion Fund might have been better exploited.

It considers that this is a very positive report confirming both the effectiveness of the programme management and the utility of the programme.

Immediate impacts are the involvement of stakeholders from New Member States, SMEs and public bodies favouring the further deployment and uptake of project outputs at a pan-European level and the competitive health of markets for these and related services. Based on the results so far the programme may thus reasonably be expected to produce strong overall impacts by stimulating new areas of activity and demonstrating the ways in which ICTs may contribute to effective policy relating to innovation and the Lisbon Agenda and i2010 objectives. The results provide evidence that the follow on programme, the Policy Support Programme of the CIP, can be expected to build effectively on the results of eTEN. Work will continue into 2009 by both the evaluators and the Commission to determine the impact of projects from later years of the eTEN Programme. The Commission will report on this work in the midterm evaluation of the Policy Support Programme of the CIP.

The Commission also recognises some weaknesses identified by the professional evaluators, notably on the time from closure of call to contract award and long project time-scales. It notes that these weaknesses have however had a minor effect on the overall programme implementation: The Commission has already initiated new services which will reduce such delays in the future.

The Commission welcomes the positive assessment of the programme design; the efficiency of the programme management; and the programme's potential to deliver sustainable results, generate positive

impacts and add real value by mobilising all of the functions necessary to successful ICT deployment and catalysing structural changes. The results provide also evidence that the Policy Support Programme of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) can be expected to build on the results of eTEN.