European Commission

Technical assistance for broadband

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The European Union has made several technical assistance instruments available for the design and implementation of broadband programmes and projects.

This guide offers an overview of the main sources for technical assistance for public administrations involved in the promotion of connectivity in Europe.

Some of the sources included, like the Broadband Competence Offices (BCOs) and the European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH), can also be useful for private entities.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR BROADBAND IN EUROPE:
THE BCO NETWORK

*Broadband Competence Offices (BCOs) provide **legal, technical and financial guidance to project promoters and policy makers** to accelerate the roll-out of broadband in their country or region.*

The functions of a BCO include, among others:

- **Supporting the expertise and administrative capacity of public authorities** in the planning, implementation and monitoring of broadband projects;
- Underpinning the implementation of the Digital Single Market by **accelerating public investment in broadband,** including through the ERDF and EAFRD;
- Providing **advice and assistance to citizens and businesses about broadband deployment** (mapping coverage, quality of service and penetration, future investment plans, etc.);
- **Helping in the coordination with relevant EU entities:** EIAH, Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS), Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), Directorate-General for Competition (DG COMP) and Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT);
- **Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of broadband investments** and promoting the use of financial instruments.

Watch this video for more information

European funding for technical assistance

Different types of technical assistance are funded under different programmes:

ESIF[1]
- BCO staff and resources
- Capacity building
- Study visits
- Support for mapping

TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER

SRSP

- Investment planning

EIAH

JASPERS

[1] The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are comprised of: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF); the Cohesion Fund (CF); the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD); and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

Contact your national BCO

For more information:

- How to set up a Broadband Competence Office
- European funding for broadband
- Guide on high-speed broadband investment
- Guide for decision-makers on State aid rules for broadband
- EU guidelines for the application of State aid rules in relation to the rapid deployment of broadband networks

a. How ESIF can support the creation of BCOs in your country or region

Technical assistance is available to help **public administrations** implement European Commission-funded programmes and projects. Under the European Union's cohesion policy, such financial support can be used to pay for preparation, management, evaluation, monitoring, audit and control measures.

Article 59 of **Regulation (Eu) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council** and Article 51 of **Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council** offer the regulatory basis for technical assistance at the initiative of Member States. This possibility has been materialised through different paths:

1 Some Member States have specifically approved **Operational Programmes (OPs) for Technical Assistance (TA)** which establish horizontal support to the governance of all European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) as well as specific technical assistance to other OPs. The general objective is to strengthen the administrative capacity in the coordination, management and control of the ESI Funds. Through the TA OPs, support is provided to the beneficiaries in preparing and implementing projects as well as disseminating information on those funds.

Examples of TA OPs: **Romania**, **Portugal**, **Greece**, and **Slovakia**.

2 **In other cases, technical assistance is part of the ERDF thematic or regional Operational Programmes.**

The examples on the right illustrate some measures adopted to enhance competencies for broadband development.

3 The provision of technical assistance can also be covered by **EAFRD**, under measure 20 of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

GERMANY

OP NIEDERSACHSEN, ERDF-ESF:

The OP supports the promotion of the Broadband Competence Office of Niedersachsen, which supports regional and local broadband development actors. It prepares questions and requirements from local authorities, companies, qualified specialists and potential entrepreneurs for broadband supply and for the development of broadband mapping in Niedersachsen. It also ensures expert, non-commercial and provider-neutral advice and support to municipalities and the local economy, and plays a key role in the development of regional broadband concepts.

SWEDEN

OP SKANE-BLEKINGE, ERDF:

The OP makes analyses and surveys ahead of future initiatives, as well as strategic development projects ahead of investments in the broadband area. The programme is not intended to implement investments in infrastructure.

OP SMÅLAND AND ISLANDS, ERDF:

Resources from this OP are not intended to support broadband investments, but are to focus instead on operations aimed at improving efficiency and making it easier to make decisions on roll-out of broadband investments, as well as providing improved skills in the area for stakeholders who coordinate the roll-out of investments.

SLOVAKIA

OP EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, ESF:

The Slovak BCO is financed from this OP which is managed by the Ministry of Interior.

The approved project aims to set up processes, tools and methodologies for a better management and regulation of broadband coverage.

The project budget is split between the National Regulatory Authority and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatisation of the Slovak Republic (DPMO). The role of DPMO is more strategic and focused on management of national broadband initiatives and interventions. The role of the telco regulator is, in close cooperation with DPMO, to collect data, monitor deployment and physically measure connectivity in the field.

The budget of the project is split into external services (to be procured) and internal costs (BCO staff and new positions within the telco regulator).

Examples of other OPs for an Effective Public Administration are: **Hungary** and **Romania**.

Public administrations involved in the promotion of broadband plans interested in accessing technical assistance should contact the relevant **managing authority**.

For more information, please contact the **BCO Network Support Facility: info@broadbandeurope.eu**

b. How your country or region can benefit from the expertise of other Member States

TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER *is designed to share expertise between bodies that manage funding under the* ***European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)*** *and the* ***Cohesion Fund****.*

It helps public officials involved in the management of these funds to exchange knowledge, good practice and practical solutions to concrete problems, thus improving their administrative capacity and ensuring better results for EU investments. Broadband mapping, State aid or how to set up a BCO have been some of the topics supported.

Who can participate?

Public institutions involved in the management of the ERDF or Cohesion Fund can request support:

- Managing authorities
- Intermediate bodies
- Coordinating authorities
- Audit authorities
- Certifying authorities
- Joint secretariats for European territorial cooperation programmes
- Other bodies (where justified)

What exchanges are supported?

Workshops:
single or multi-country workshops can be organised. Workshops would normally last two days.

Study Visits:
employees (maximum three) from a requesting institution can be sent on a working visit to other EU Member State institutions to learn from peers and exchange good practices. Study visits can last between two and five days.

Expert Missions:
EU Member State experts can be sent to institutions in other Member States that have requested peer advice and exchange of experience on a specific topic. Expert missions can last between two and five days.

Examples:

Study visit on implementation of broadband PPP projects
Beneficiary: Agency for Investments and Competitiveness, Croatia.
Host: BCO Sweden

The goals of this study visit are to increase the exposure of participants to the lessons learned from the PPP broadband projects implemented in other countries; to increase PPP related competencies with project oriented know-how; and to maintain the continuous learning process for PPP practitioners.

Topics for potential collaboration could be:

- exploring measures to reduce the cost of deploying high-speed electronic communications networks
- identifying under-supplied areas, or areas where there is little to no market interest in providing broadband services
- use of State aid in compliance with EU legislation
- mapping broadband infrastructure
- developing the skills and competencies of BCO staff

Watch this video for more information

Online application for TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER

THE STRUCTURAL REFORM SUPPORT PROGRAMME (SRSP)

A demand-driven programme supporting structural reforms in EU Member States, including those related to the Digital Agenda.

Possible activities supported by **SRSP** include:

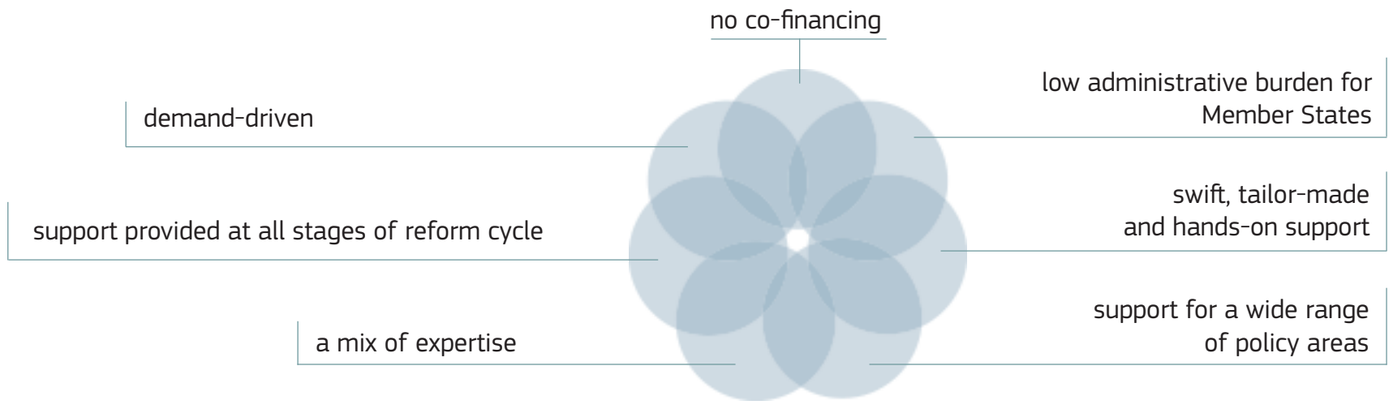
- provision of *ad hoc* experts
- placing resident experts on the ground
- seminars and conferences
- training and workshops
- working visits
- collection of data
- development of methodologies
- studies and expertise related to policy advice, policy change, legislative, institutional, structural and administrative reforms, etc.

Watch this video for more information

- Application deadline - **31 October**

- Total SRSP **budget for 2019** will amount to ***€38.5 million***
- **Individual requests for funding can vary**, according to the specific needs.
- All requests from individual Member States are submitted in a **centralised way through the Coordinating Authority.**

*BCOs are encouraged to look into their specific needs, such as **training of BCO staff** or **support for mapping activities.***



SRSP roll-out calendar

31 October
Deadline for requests under SRSP

November
Analysis of SRSP requests

December
Selection of projects under SRSP

Jan-Feb
Cooperation and support plans amended/prepared

February
Annual Work Programme (financing decision)

Spring
Projects launched

Contact the SRSP for more information on the application process and on identifying your national authority: SRSS-SRSP@ec.europa.eu

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP BROADBAND PROMOTERS TO PREPARE PROJECTS

Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS):

a technical assistance partnership between three partners (European Commission, European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) that provides independent advice to beneficiary countries to help prepare high quality major infrastructure projects (generally over €75 million for Smart Development Projects) to be co-financed by EU Structural and Investment Funds.

What JASPERS does:

- Advises authorities on strategic planning in a wide range of sectors so that better projects are realised.
- Supports promoters in preparing projects in areas benefiting from EU funds so that they meet all the necessary standards.
- Improves the capacity of administrations and promoters by transferring knowledge about project preparation, environmental issues, EU legislation or any related needs.
- Carries out independent quality reviews which prepare the ground for the European Commission's decisions.

Examples of assistance for broadband projects under JASPERS:

- *Development of a broadband backhaul infrastructure in Croatia.*
- *Deployment of Next Generation Access networks across low-density areas in France.*
- *Development of infrastructure of electronic networks offering wholesale broadband services in rural areas of Slovakia.*

JASPERS assistance is free of charge for local authorities and promoters.

Potential beneficiaries should contact the **Managing Authority** responsible for coordinating EU Structural Funds in their country for information

Contact JASPERS

Click here for further information on JASPERS and smart development

The European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH):

provides targeted support to identify, prepare and develop investment projects across the European Union.

The Hub provides dynamic and specific project support both to private and public sector promoters. It offers different types of assistance depending on the size, nature, sector, location and development stage of your investment project.

Watch this video for more information

RESOURCES in your country

FIND SUPPORT for your project

THE BCO NETWORK

The Broadband Competence Offices (BCO) Network is a European Commission initiative with the purpose of supporting Member States to reach the EU Digital Agenda objectives, with an emphasis on the Digital Single Market and Gigabit Society. The BCO Network is expected to play an important role in broadband development in rural and remote areas, as part of the Rural Broadband Action Plan. For information on specific national BCOs, consult the BCO Network Directory.

The European Commission has set up a Support Facility to assist the BCO Network members in the planning, programming, implementation and monitoring of broadband projects through an annual programme of events, workshops, training seminars and the exchange of good practices, and by contributing to the organisation of the annual European Broadband Awards competition.

The BCO Network's annual programme is created in close coordination with the Directorates-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, for Regional and Urban Policy, and for Competition.

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