

3.4 Component II: Cross-Border Cooperation

Implementation improved in the second half of 2012 and progressed particularly well for the bilateral programme with Greece, whereas the poor track record of the bilateral CBC programme with Albania led to a transfer of the 2012 and 2013 allocations to Component I, where they will serve to support the upgrade of two customs clearance facilities at road border-crossings with Serbia and Albania.

The programme with Kosovo advanced very slowly. With the exception of the concept design study for a joint border crossing, contracted by the EU Office in Pristina in April 2012, very little progress has been made in two years. The Commission did not receive the necessary assurances that the two sides share the same political and economic interests regarding the use of a new international border crossing that was jointly chosen in 2010 to be part of the IPA CBC programme. Therefore, in order to avoid a de-commitment of funds in 2013, the Commission proposed that the programme be implemented through a single joint call for proposals to be launched before summer 2013.

3.5 Component III

Thanks to the major Corridor X project and its disproportionately high weighting in the overall Operational Programme, some progress started to show in financial terms. Despite some last-minute setbacks, this major project has by now clearly moved ahead more than any other under Component III. Following the submission of a valid bank guarantee letter, the contractor received the advance payment of over EUR 20 million, paid out by the National Fund in early December 2012.

The Prilep waste-water treatment plant faced additional delays in the tendering phase in 2012 and the EU Delegation finally had to cancel the evaluation, following serious concerns about breach of the confidentiality of the process.

The accumulation of delays on several fronts means that physical implementation (of infrastructure projects as opposed to studies and services) is still very modest, which makes it difficult to draw lessons with a view to planning the next programming period.

The issue is being followed up and DG REGIO, in consultation with the EU Delegation and the JASPERS experts have proposed: a) technical solutions for speeding up the pipeline; b) drawing the attention of the highest possible political level (Prime Minister) to the bottlenecks experienced by IPA so that appropriate additional national input in supervisory (and possibly financial) efforts can be secured. However, national authorities have not reacted with the necessary sense of urgency.

3.6 Component IV : Social development

In 2012 the implementation of IPA component IV advanced at a slow pace and a huge backlog in terms of procurement was accumulated, which risks having negative consequences in terms of de-commitment risks in the coming years. The amount contracted by end 2012 is only EUR 12.6 million, i.e. 19% of the financial plan 2007-2013. Up to the end of the current programming period, the authorities still need to contract –and pay/declare to DG EMPL