



Innovation and Networks Executive Agency

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN GUIDELINES & MODEL

Background

Article II.2.4 of the standard text of the Commission Decisions granting Community financial aid for projects of common interest in the field of the trans-European transport networks, introduced the requirement for a submission of a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) that is expected to form the basis for monitoring and controlling progress throughout the implementation period of the Action. The content and control mechanisms of the SAP are described in this same article, which is annexed for ease of reference.

General guidelines for the submission of SAPs

Purpose of this document: This document provides general guidelines regarding the content of an SAP. The various headings are presented in such a way that the document may also be used as a model SAP. Since projects of the type and size as those of the TEN-T programme normally apply their own project management plans, the submitted SAP will in many cases be an executive summary of such plans concerning the particular Action. The intention is not to *impose* a model but rather make the best use of existing (national) project management systems and available project-related information. Furthermore, some more complex projects are likely to be managed using project management software and therefore the provision of such information about the Action is expected to form part of the regular project reporting.

This document is an update of the 2009 SAP guidelines and model text that was provided by INEA.

Purpose of the SAP: The purpose of the SAP is twofold, firstly to describe the project management system applied to the preparation, planning and implementation of the Action up to its final completion; secondly, during implementation, to provide decision-makers with all relevant information and analysis in order to take informed decisions whenever deviations from the SAP are encountered, as well as for assessing the impact of such decisions over the remaining implementation period. As such, it is expected that the SAP will greatly facilitate the preparation and examination of the annual Action Status Reports (ASRs) as well as eventual requests for modifications of Decisions.

The SAP is primarily a tool for the project/Action implementers and managers, which is shared with INEA.

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Type of information to be included and size of the SAP: All information requested in article II.2.4 needs to be provided. If some of the information is not available or pertinent to the case, *this has to be expressively stated and justified*. This document provides guidelines for all types of projects irrespective of their complexity, duration, size or type of interventions/activities. It is up to the beneficiaries to adjust the size and information, as appropriate to the Action in question bearing in mind that the SAP has to fully serve the above stated purpose. Nevertheless, the SAP is expected to provide much more detailed information than described in annex II of the Decision, which enables the reader to fully appreciate all important issues relating to the implementation in terms of time (duration), cost (budget), standards, allocation of responsibilities and risks.

SAPs are therefore likely to provide a further breakdown of activities into smaller pieces of planned work, including durations and costs estimates. This applies whenever activity descriptions include essentially a group of activities, for which different implementation arrangements apply.

SAPs may also need to provide information about issues or planned events or other activities that do not form part of the Action but relate to them in a way that there are inter-dependencies between the Action activities and other plans or activities which are external to the Action. This applies in particular whenever the Action, i.e. the group of activities or parts thereof, which are the subject of the Decision, form part of a wider project or programme ("global project").

Language of the SAP: It is desirable that SAPs are submitted in one of the three working languages of the Commission. Annexes to the SAPs can be provided in their original national language.

Starting date for SAPs: By nature, the content of SAPs keeps evolving and needs subsequent updates (that can be done through the ASRs). At the time of their establishment, SAPs shall contain accurate information about the past progress (for projects that have already started) as well as on the updated plans and estimates about the remaining work and activities to be performed. Given the timing for their submission, SAPs for Decisions from the year N are expected to describe the situation (past performance and future plans and estimates) as at the end of year N+1, which will also facilitate the reporting for years N and N+1. If older or not updated SAPs are provided, then the subsequent ASRs should provide an update.

Modifications to SAPs: Information on and description of the past performance as well as the updated plans and estimates are expected to be included in the subsequent ASRs. ASRs essentially provide updated information, on an annual basis, on the way Decisions and related SAPs have been implemented and on the revised plans and estimates about the remaining work and activities to be carried out. Therefore, there is no need to provide a separate update on SAPs.

Who sends the SAP: All Actions adopted as of 2007 under the current Decision model introducing article II.2.4 are obliged to provide an SAP. It is submitted to INEA by the beneficiary (reference: article II.2.4, paragraph 1) or, if applicable, by the coordinator of the Action (reference: article I.4.2). For multi-beneficiary Actions, one single SAP has to be provided (not single ones per beneficiary).

Exceptions:, SAPs are not required for Decisions which are expected to be fully completed within

1 year after the notification date, at the latest. For these Actions however, the beneficiary

must provide instead, within the time limits laid for the submission of SAPs, a letter to INEA reconfirming that the end-of-implementation date of the Action is scheduled within 1 year after the notification date, providing the factual date. In these cases, the beneficiaries will only need to submit a final report and financial statement following the modalities laid down in the Decision.

Evolution of the current guidelines: The information and text of these guidelines will be regularly updated in the light of the experience gained from their application and based on feedback and information or suggestions received from concerned parties.

With the above in mind, the following guidelines are provided: SAP Guidelines and Model

1 - Background information

1.1 Description of the overall (or global) project

This section describes the global project of which the Action financed by the Decision forms part. It states, in particular how the Action fits in the overall project, defining the conceptual, financial, administrative and technical boundaries between the whole project and the Action concerned.

1.2 Description of the Action

This section describes in detail the activities foreseen in the Commission Decision, including, as may be required, a further breakdown of the activities into smaller prices of work (sub-activities). Each identified sub-activity will be defined in terms of scope.

Where applicable, provide detailed information regarding the exact location of activities, such as maps, etc.

1.3 Other relevant projects or activities financed by the EC or other sources

Identify and provide information on other linked projects financed through previous Decisions, structural funds, EIB, and/or other sources, or any activity not forming part of the Action. This information needs to be provided for parallel projects or activities which interact with the Action and are ongoing or scheduled to be implemented partially or fully sometime during the implementation period of the Action.

Provide information on the sources of funding and the respective amounts for the above projects or activities, whenever these sources include Community or EIB funding.

2 - Implementation of the Action

2.1 Activities description

The implementation of the Action may have started before the adoption date of the Decision. Therefore it is needed to describe what has been achieved up to the date of the SAP, i.e. when exactly activities have actually started and their current progress at the time of the preparation of the SAP. Ideally provide a "photo" of the progress and updated plans as of the date when the SAP is due. The same applies to activities identified in the second paragraph of part 1.3.

2.2 Implementation schedule

2.2.1 Identification of the critical path of the Action

This section has to include a Gantt chart, or any other network diagram used for monitoring the implementation, including, as a minimum, the activities, the sub-activities identified in part 1.2 and milestones. Activity and sub-activity relation and inter-dependencies (e.g. finish-to-start, start-to-start etc.) need also to be clearly stated as part of the critical path identification. This section will be designed according to the technical and administrative specificities of the Action, highlighting in particular studies' development phases, approval phases, land acquisition processes, procurement phases, contracting plans including eventual PPP negotiation phases, construction main phases per geographical sections or submission of study reports and approval processes.

The chart should also include other activities identified and described in the second paragraph of part 1.3

2.2.2 Key performance rates

This section lists the key performance rates used, and all other working assumptions made to calculate activity duration and cost, including the sub-activities stated part 1.2. It may also include other relevant key performance indicators used for planning purposes as well as for monitoring the implementation in terms of scope, schedule, costs, technical specifications and, in general, evaluate and assess performance. The information and indicators should be quantifiable and verifiable.

2.2.3 Risk analysis (political, financial, administrative, technical, other)

This section should identify and describe the main risks that could impact the implementation of the Action. It has to be indicated whether these risks may have an impact on the global schedule of development or to interdependent activities. The risk response strategy and eventual contingency plans should be detailed in this section.

The aim is to anticipate problems and possess all required information for taking decisions on the corrective measures so as to facilitate the implementation of the Action and finally achieve the set objectives.

3 - Financial implementation

3.1 Revised (actual) budget forecast

Provide the latest update of the eligible costs contained in the Decision, including activity cost breakdowns per sub-activity identified in part 1.2. The presentation of the budgeted cost has to be made on a yearly basis reflecting the planned and/or actual physical progress in line with the implementation schedule provided in part 2.2. (NB. Irrespective of the time the corresponding payments were or will be made). If the implementation of the Action has already started, provide, whenever possible, the actual costs of activities and sub-activities (or their parts) already performed.

Provide information on the accounting conventions used for calculating specific costs such as depreciation, staff's costs or indirect costs. There is no need however to provide such information on indirect costs if these costs are covered in the Decision by a flat rate financing.

3.2 Other financial issues

Any specific issue linked to the financial implementation of the project (detailed financing engineering when private funding is foreseen, financing gap, etc.).

4 - Governance & Monitoring

4.1 Organisational structure and governance

*This section identifies all stakeholders and parties who may impact on the implementation of the Action, it describes their respective roles and responsibilities and inputs, the formal and informal communication channels, the respective authorities and mandates, as well all decision-making processes affecting the Action ("who is doing what"). The project manager and the project team need also to be identified and described. An overview of the **human resources** linked to the implementation needs to be provided including an identification of all those who are full-time involved. This covers both resources in the project team and those outside the project team.*

For complex projects, an appropriate project management structure (for example a Project Monitoring Group (PMG) or Steering Committee (SC)) should exist for taking strategic decisions related to the implementation of the project.

*Where applicable, the mandate and role of the **coordinator** (referred to in article I.4.2) will be described in this section.*

*The **authorised representatives** (reference: article III1.2 of the Decision) will also be identified in this section and will be the contact point(s) for INEA, according to the requirements of the EC Decision. This section will provide information on how the authorised representative(s) intervene in the Action. If the authorised representative is not the project manager, provide specific information on how contacts and exchanges with INEA are disseminated to the project manager or the body directly in charge of the implementation of the Action. NB. Direct contacts with the project team are encouraged.*

Where applicable, describe the environmental procedures and the role of the authorities involved during or before the implementation of the Action, particularly in connection with the environmental conditions mentioned in part 4.4.

4.2 Contractual arrangements

This section identifies and describes the (part of the) activities which are to be performed by contractors or consultants, the procurement methods and the eventual groupings of activities under the same contract and/or their subdivision into different contracts. NB. The durations of the respective procurement processes and contractual performance periods, including eventual milestones are expected to be included in part 2.2.1.

NB. The information provided in parts 4.1 and 4.2 above may also be complemented by a graph presenting the different stakeholders, the various formal (and informal if applicable) communication channels and the authority links between them.

4.3 Internal and external reporting

This section provides an overview of the internal and external reporting mechanisms in place (upstream and downstream).

4.4 Environmental conditions

This section details what the specific requirements and plans in terms of the environment and how they will be met and monitored. This is of particular importance whenever the Decision includes an environmental conditionality.

5 - Other Administrative Provisions

5.1 Quality control and audits

Description of the quality assurance plan in place.

Description of the internal control system(s), including supervisory arrangements and other control and audit mechanisms applied by the implementing or other bodies or by the beneficiaries to ensure the sound financial and technical management of the Action.

Description of other external controls and audits, including the respective planning.

5.2 Communication Plans & Publicity

Description of specific measures to enhance communication of the set objectives and the expected benefits to all concerned parties, in particular those who may be sceptical about the Action.

Description of all measures and advertising plans regarding the EU financial support for the Action.

In particular, description of any communication plan or strategy developed for the Action or for the global project of which the Action forms part.

Annex - Legal basis:

Strategic Action Plan ("SAP") – Art. II.2.4

(Source: Standard text of the Commission Decisions granting Community financial aid for projects of common interest in the field of the trans-European transport networks, in use since 2007)

The Beneficiary shall submit to the Commission, **within 90 calendar days** following the **notification** of the Decision granting financial aid, a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) that will form the basis for monitoring and controlling progress throughout the implementation period of the Action. The SAP shall provide an analysis and information at least on the following:

- (a) Interim and final targets based on time, cost and technical criteria. Important targets shall be classified and marked as milestones;
 - (b) Description of the control procedures, processes, including all environmental measures with a clear indication of lines of authority and the internal and external reporting mechanisms;
 - (c) Identification of risks, risk analysis, risk management plan and a quality assurance plan;
 - (d) Milestones, in order to identify progress on (and deviations from) the planned Action implementation;
 - (e) Possible sources of future problems;
 - (f) A schedule based on an appropriate project management form showing clearly the Critical Path deriving from the project management method used for planning and implementation of the Action, which shall include all activities or work packages and shall identify the milestones, including the start-up and end events. It shall demonstrate the basis for the calculation of the overall estimated duration and shall form the basis for any future time re-planning. For less complex actions, GANTT charts may be used;
 - (g) Key performance rates, in particular for critical activities and on the corresponding resources allocated for meeting the target rates and dates;
 - (h) The national or other professional Action management standards on which the SAP is based;
 - (i) Information about all planned communication and publicity on the Action, in line with the provisions of **Article II.2.3** and **Article II.2.5** paragraph 2;
 - (j) The designation of authorised representatives as referred to in **Article III.1.2**.
2. The SAP shall be accompanied by a description of the management and control systems to be carried out by the Member State(s) concerned for the monitoring and controlling the implementation of the Action as referred to in the first paragraph of **Article II.2.5**. It shall include all audit plans as well as an evaluation upon completion of the Action.
3. The Commission may provide comments, which may include a request for additional information to be included in the SAP, within 60 calendar days following the receipt of the SAP. Failure of reaction within this deadline implies acceptance of the SAP. If required, the Beneficiary shall submit the revised SAP within 60 calendar days following the receipt of the Commission's request.