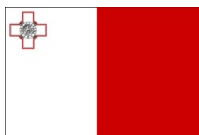




MEASURE 20 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN 2014-2020



Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020

Part financed by the European Union

Co-financing Rate:

75% European Union; 25% Government of Malta



***The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas***

Malta's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

Following the decision taken on the 24th of November 2015, the European Commission has approved the Maltese Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, thus guaranteeing co-financing on expenditure of eligible actions as defined and referred to in Article 58 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, and Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013. Such actions also include the costs for setting up and operating the European network for rural development referred to in Article 52 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 and the EIP network referred to in Article 53 of the same regulation. The set up and the activities of the National Rural Network, referred to in Article 54 of Regulation (EU) NO 1305/2013 will also be financed through the technical assistance budget.

Malta's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 provides guidance on eligible actions under Technical Assistance with the main scope being the effective and correct implementation of the programme through preparatory, management, monitoring, evaluation, and information and control actions of the financed interventions.

For this scope the financial plan of the Rural Development Programme establishes a budgetary allocation for Measure 20 - Technical Assistance, a maximum level of support amounting to 4% of the total Programme budget. This budgetary allocation amounts to €5,190,768 (public expenditure) which is co-financed at a rate of 75% from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), with the remaining 25% being financed by the Maltese Government.

The Managing Authority is obliged and must ensure adequate publicity to all potential beneficiaries, as well as maintaining an effective common monitoring and evaluation system which includes the following activities:

- The EAFRD Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee shall carry out the monitoring of the programme;
- All monitoring activities should be carried out in conformity with the Common Monitoring Evaluation Framework (CMEF) adopted by the European Commission in collaboration with Member States – the objectives of this system are stipulated under Article 68 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013;
- The progress on programme implementation and respect of the objectives and priorities should be measured on the basis of indicators that allow for an evaluation of the financial execution, products, results and impact.

Within the obligatory actions that are defined by the relevant Regulations, a set of objectives have been defined as priorities (Figure 1) and consequently the execution mode of Measure 20, whilst taking into consideration the operational parameters of the Measure and the actions that need to be accomplished during the lifetime of the Programme (Figure 2), also ensuring that activities linked with the National Rural Network are effectively implemented.

Figure 1 - Objectives within the Measure

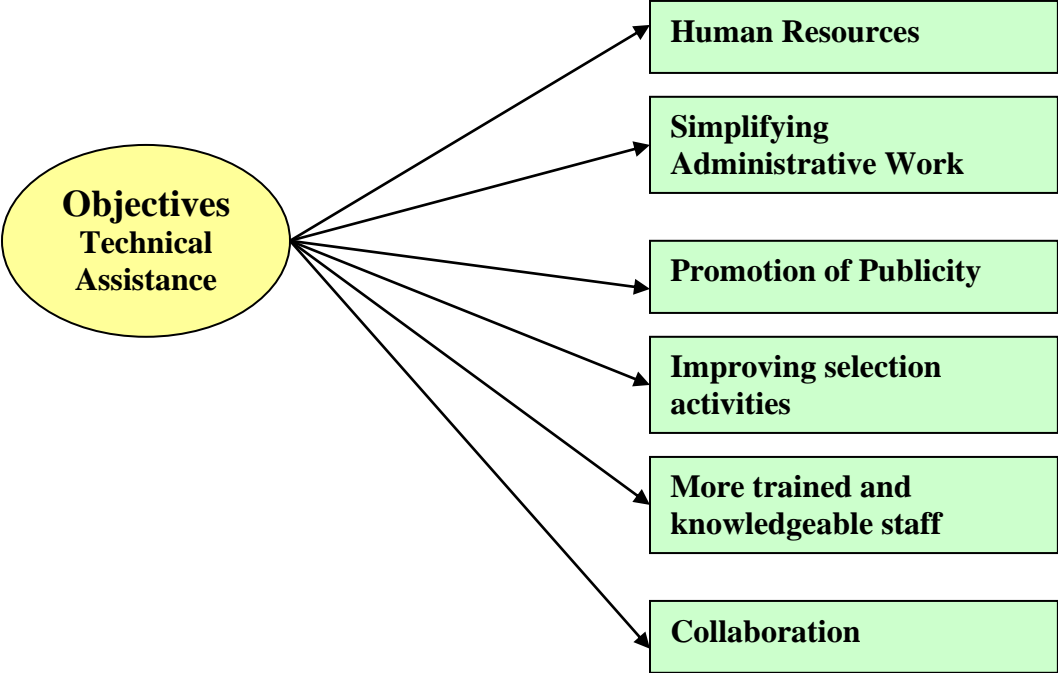
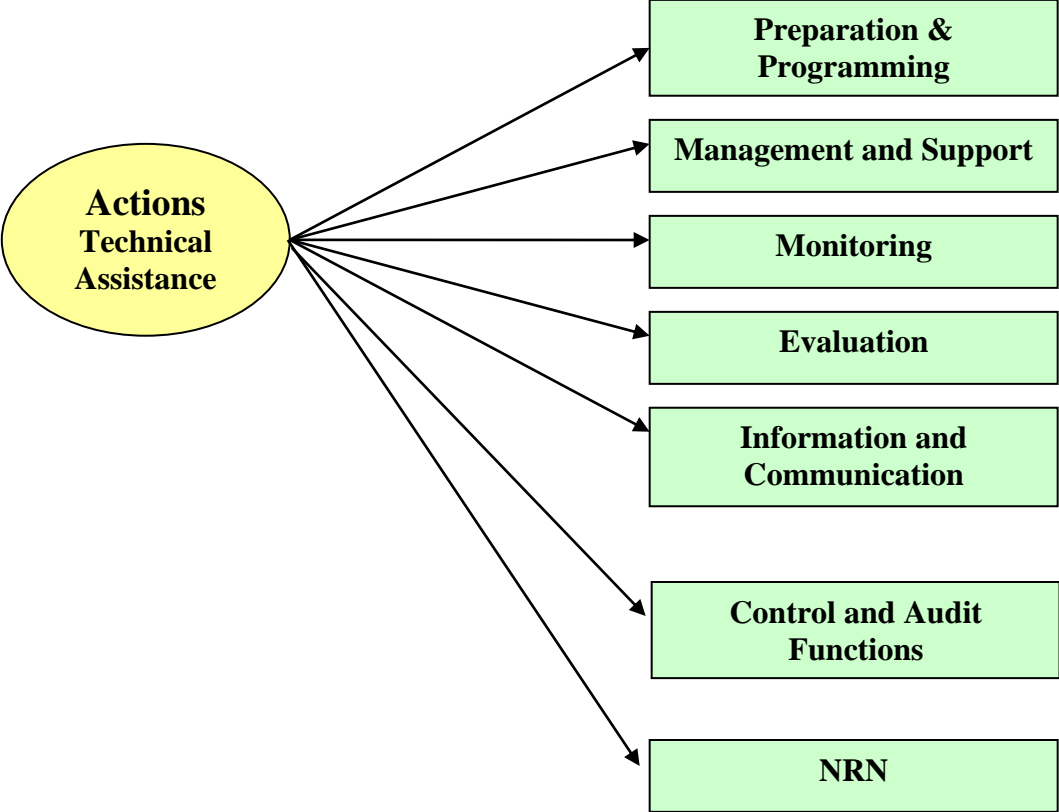


Figure 2 - Actions to be carried out under the Measure



The following is the Plan of Action defining the interventions under Measure 20 (M20) for the 2014-2020 programming period. This Measure will be directly managed by the Funds and Programmes Division (FPD), within the Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto (MEAIM), hereinafter referred to as the EAFRD Managing Authority (EAFRD MA).

Technical, Administrative and Managerial Support

This is a fundamental element in order to ensure constant and appropriate support to the activities and phases linked with the RDP, in terms of preparation, programming, financial execution and budgeting of the various measures within the programme.

In order to have such support in place an information system is necessary. This system will cater for the requirements of both the EAFRD MA and the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (ARPA), hereinafter referred to as the Paying Agency (PA), according to the roles and functions established in the relevant Regulations, and in Malta's RDP 2014-2020. This system will aid in the simplification of the administrative procedures, application process, and information archive thereby catering for the monitoring of the programme as well as the reporting obligations.

A System for Monitoring and Evaluation

This information system allows the EAFRD MA to measure in a tangible way the implementation, efficiency and execution of the programme against a set of targets and objectives. For this scope a set of indicators with a determined baseline will be utilized that will allow to measure progress, financial execution, deliverables, results and impact of the programme as defined in the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF).

According to Article 72 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, the EAFRD MA and the Monitoring Committee (MC) shall monitoring the quality of the implementation of the programme, and carry out monitoring by means of financial, output and target indicators.

For this monitoring requirement the data required for the input, output and result indicators will be collected as follows:

- Information system (capturing all application data);
- Surveys (to collect data that could not be captured at time of application).

For this scope all beneficiaries are obliged to provide any information requested for monitoring and evaluation purposes thus guaranteeing conformity with reporting obligations. Where data is collected through application documents this will be captured by the system and it will facilitate the compilation of the various data requirements pertaining to the output, result and impact indicators.

This system will be an effective and important tool for the EAFRD MA in order to comply with the obligations arising from Article 75 of the EAFRD Regulation which states that an annual report must be submitted to the Commission by the 30th June of 2016 and of each subsequent year after being examined and approved by the MC.

The impact of the programme will be assessed and evaluated through the ongoing, ex post and ex ante evaluations.

The ex-ante evaluation (Article 77 of the EAFRD Regulation) forms an integral part of the elaboration of the programme and has the scope to optimize the use of financial resources allocated to the programme as well as improve the quality of the programme.

The ex-ante evaluation is integrated with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which stipulates how this evaluation is to be carried out.

The ex-post evaluation, as indicated in Article 78 of the EAFRD Regulation, constitute a juridical evaluation on the basis of the results, impacts and requirements of the Programme and will be carried out in 2024 by an independent evaluator.

Information and Communication

Information and Publicity are an integral part of the Programme and the European Commission stresses the importance of having an instrument by which correct information on the programme objectives reaches the general public and especially potential beneficiaries.

Article 66 of the EAFRD Regulation establishes that the Managing Authority has the obligation to ensure publicity for the programme, including through the national rural network, of the possibilities offered by the programme and the rules for gaining access to programme funding, as well as by informing beneficiaries of the Union contribution and the general public on the role played by the Union in the programme.

The information and publicity interventions with regards to the RDP are under the responsibility of the EAFRD MA and the activities to be undertaken are to be included in the Communication Strategy, and Annual Communication Plan.

Activities

In order to establish a clear delineation of the various activities that can be financed under Measure 20, as well as to establish the priority areas that are mandatory, the eligible activities have been categorized under 6 areas of intervention, as well as a dedicated area for NRN which will likely include various horizontal activities.

Under each area or typology the eligible activities are being listed as follows:

Interventions

Action 1 – Preparation and Programming

Activities in relation to this Action comprise:

- i. Support of activities in relation to the preparation, programming, modifications, financial forecasts and management of the programme;
- ii. Training of the personnel involved in the running of the programme, including travel abroad;
- iii. Development and support of the Local Action Groups LAGs;
- iv. Training of the personnel engaged with LAGs responsible for animation, including travel abroad;
- v. Travel abroad for EAFRD Managing Authority and Paying Agency personnel to attend EU-level committee meetings, seminars, information sessions, bilateral meetings, and other reasons as necessary to ensure the continued successful implementation of the programme;
- vi. Reimbursement of wages of EAFRD MA and Paying Agency.

All eligible expenditure under this Action is described in the Table 1- Categories of eligible expenditure in relation to the interventions eligible under Technical Assistance.

Action 2 – Administrative and Managerial Support

Activities in relation to this Action comprise:

- i. Development, upgrading and maintenance of an information system for the monitoring and evaluation functions with integrated administrative tools for measure implementation;
- ii. Support of activities and personnel involved in the programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Table 1 indicates the type of interventions that can be financed with particular reference to the following:

- Contracting of personnel/experts/consultants on a determined period (01)
- Collaboration and provision of service by professionals (02)
- Acquisition of materials and equipment (03).

Action 3 – Monitoring

Activities in relation to this Action comprise:

- i. Commissioning of studies, research and analyses of the Programme in relation with an effective implementation and monitoring of the Programme thereby catering for input, output and result indicators as per Articles 79, 80 and 81 of the Regulation;
- ii. The information, reports presented to the Monitoring Committee, Annual Reports and associated documents and the logistics related to the meetings held;

- iii. Training of personnel involved in monitoring.

All eligible expenditure under this Action is described in Table 1 hereunder.

Action 4 – Evaluation

Activities in relation to this Action comprise:

- i. Realization of the evaluation of the Programme including the ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluation, as described in Articles 85 and 86 of the Regulation, and to be contracted to an independent evaluator;
- ii. Training of personnel involved in evaluation.

Table 1 hereunder indicates the type of interventions that can be financed with particular reference to the following:

- Production and diffusion of the documentation and information (04)
- Training and support of personnel involved (05)
- Realization of analyses, studies and research (06)

Action 5 – Information

Activities in relation to this Action comprise:

- i. Publicity, information and communication activities pertaining to the RDP, targeting potential stakeholders, private and public entities on a local or national basis, on methodologies and implementation process thereby catering for a transparent process;
- ii. Diffusion of information on the evaluation, call for proposals and selection activities, etc.;
- iii. Initiatives and activities identified in the Communication Strategy.

All eligible expenditure under this Action is described in Table 1 hereunder and caters for all the measures of the Rural Development Programme.

Action 6 – Controls

Activities in relation to this Action comprise:

- i. Provision of services to external controllers having the necessary competences to sustain and assist the Paying Agency (competent authorities) in all levels of controls/checks;
- ii. Provision of services to external controllers having the necessary competences to sustain and assist the Managing Authority (competent authorities) in all levels of controls/checks.

All eligible expenditure under this Action is described in Table 1 hereunder and caters for all the measures of the Rural Development Programme.

The expenditure related to these interventions can vary and can be of a tangible or intangible nature, such as consultation services or purchase of hardware, software or wages of contracted personnel.

Action 7 – National Rural Network

Activities in relation to this Action comprise:

- Costs related to the setting up of the National Rural Network;
- Diffusion of information, publicity and communication actions through the National Rural Network;
- Organisation of National Rural Network events, training, information session.

Table 1 hereunder encodes the eligibility of expenditure according to the intervention and will serve as a guide to eligibility.

TABLE 1- Categories of eligible expenditure in relation to the interventions eligible under Technical Assistance

CODE	CATEGORY OF ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE	ACTION						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Acquisition of hardware and software for the management, control and monitoring of the programme	*	*	*	*	*	*	
B	Development and implementation and maintenance of information systems for the management, control and monitoring of the programme	*	*	*	*	*	*	
C	Restructuring works, office furniture and materials	*	*	*	*	*	*	
D	Human resources on a defined period	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
E	Collaboration and provision of service by professionals (including technical experts participating in selection/appeals boards)	*	*	*	*	*	*	
F	Costs of studies, research, surveys (including expenses related to publication and diffusion of results)	*	*	*	*	*	*	
G	Expenses related to participation in events directly related with the management of the programme, and for capacity-building purposes (even abroad)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
H	Expenditure related to programme evaluation				*			
I	Organization of study visits	*	*	*	*	*	*	
J	Training of personnel involved in the running of the programme, national rural network in terms of preparatory activities, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and controls	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
K	Interpretation and translation services	*	*	*	*	*	*	
L	General expenditure related to the running of the structures involved in programme implementation (such as	*	*	*	*	*	*	

	stationary)							
M	Expenditure related to the launching of measures	*	*	*	*	*		
N	Expenditure related to the functioning of the Monitoring Committee such as interpretation, translation, renting etc)			*				
O	Organization of seminars, conferences, workshops, information diffusion activities including interpretation, renting and translation facilities	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
P	Organization of fairs, exhibitions and similar activities					*		*
Q	Planning and accomplishment of logos					*		
R	Information campaigns, publicity, production material, web sites, billboards, etc					*		*
S	Realization and elaboration of the activities related to the Communication plan					*		*
T	Reimbursement of personnel wages	*						

Financial Resources and Allocation

In support of the interventions indicated, a financial allocation of **€5,190,768 (public expenditure)** has been budgeted, this in line with the limits set out in Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013.

In the following table an indicative financial allocation, according to the specific Actions identified, is to serve as guidance on the resources available and the prevailing priorities. These allocations can be revised in view of Programme modification or priorities.

TABLE 2. Financial allocation 2014-2020

Action	Forecasted expenditure	
	Euros	%
Action 1	1,557,231	30
Action 2	1,038,153.60	20
Action 3	501,452.15	10
Action 4	855,777.65	16
Action 5	622,892.16	12
Action 6	415,261.44	8
Action 7	200,000	4
Total	5,190,768	100

The Public contribution is sub-divided into € 3,893,076.00 financed by the EAFRD, whilst the remaining €1,297,692 will be financed through National Funds.

This thereby implies a contribution rate of 75% EU and 25% GoM.

Procedures and Implementation

The programming, coordination and responsibility of the interventions of the Technical Assistance Measure are solely of the EAFRD Managing Authority, as established in the respective Regulation, whilst the financial execution will fall under the responsibility of the Paying Agency.

Request Procedures

Aid under this Measure may be requested by the Paying Agency, delegated services, Local Action Groups and NGOs following a written request to the EAFRD MA, as well as directly by the EAFRD MA. The requests for single activities, initiatives or items need to be in line with public procurement regulations.

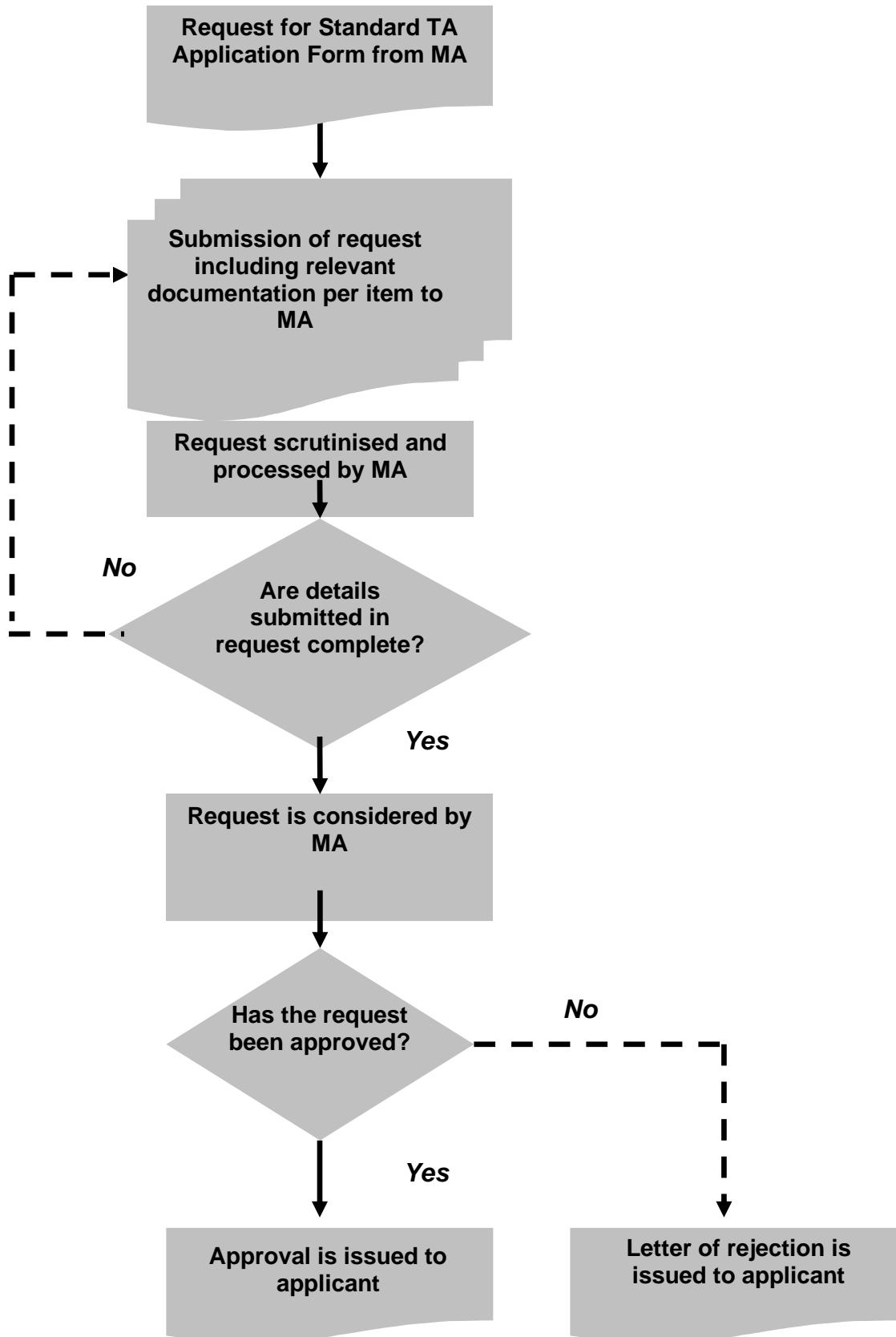
Requests will be processed and assessed by the EAFRD MA and approvals will be effected in writing. Following approval by the EAFRD MA, the selected applicant will proceed to procure the goods/services in conformity with applicable procurement regulations and in respect of any conditions pertaining to the grant.

The timeframes for implementation of initiatives or provision of services must be adhered to. Requests for approval and funding may be refused if these are not carried out within the stipulated timeframes.

Payment Process

Payments carried out under Technical Assistance shall follow the procedures as set out in the following page:

Audit Trail of Procedures for Technical Assistance Measure



Controls

All controls on provision of services and goods will be carried out by the EAFRD MA. Controls on payment claims will be carried out by the Paying Agency.

Monitoring

All the interventions listed previously under each specific action will be subject to specific monitoring actions.

For this reason a set of indicators (TABLE 3) have been defined in order to measure in an objective manner the effective realization the activities financed.

TABLE 3. Monitoring Indicators for assessment of Technical Assistance Measure

Action\Intervention	Indicator
01. Contracting of personnel	1. Number 2. Working Days
02. Provision of services	1. Number
03. Purchase of material and equipment	1. Number
04. Production and diffusion of information	1. Number
05. Training and skills acquisition	1. Number of courses/seminars 2. Number of training days 3. Number of training hours 4. Number of participants
06. Studies, research and reports	1. Number 2. Working Days
07. Organization of and participation in meetings, seminars and workshops	1. Number of meetings 2. Number of participants