Project Deliverable

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SUPPORT ACTION	INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Title
D5.2.Report on Evaluation of support action and lessons learnt and relevant recommendations (DRAFT)

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RE	Restricted to a group defined by the consortium (including the Commission)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission)	

EU–EECA ICT Cluster is the joint effort of three FP7-ICT support actions (ISTOK-SOYUZ, SCUBE-ICT, EXTEND) to strengthen the collaboration in ICT research between European Union and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) countries

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Abstract :

This document provides an evaluation of the support action ISTOK-SOYUZ, implemented in EU and the EECA region between January 2009 and June 2011. It gives an overview of the lessons learnt and recommendations at different levels:
- External stakeholders level
- Internal Consortium level

<mark>DRAFT – will be completed after EXTEND final conference</mark>

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ABREVIATIONS

- ❖ **EU** – European Union

- ❖ **EC** – European Commission

- ❖ **EECA** – Eastern Europe & Central Asia

- ❖ **FP7** – 7th Framework Programme

- ❖ **ICT** - Information and Communication Technologies

1. Introduction

During the last years, the European Commission has undertaken significant efforts to strengthen strategic global partnerships in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) R&D activities. Under the 7th Framework Programme (FP7), the European Commission has decided to encourage the International Cooperation in the ICT Research domain between the European Union and Eastern European and Central Asian (EECA) countries.

The countries in the EECA region have indeed exhibited ICT scientific potential in the past; however it has not yet been feasible for Europe to exploit their scientific capacity. One of the barriers in this process has been the absence of effective mechanisms for the identification of the scientific stakeholders of EECA countries. This is an issue which must be addressed if the kind of strategic ties, which can allow organizations and specialists from EECA and Europe to benefit fully from each others' specific areas of scientific expertise, are to be developed.

In this context, the European Commission decided to support a cluster of three support initiatives with similar objectives – ISTOK-SOYUZ, SCUBE-ICT and EXTEND – to enable the exploration of new opportunities for ICT R&D collaboration between European Union and EECA organizations, and the diffusion of information about European Union's ICT Thematic area of the 7th Framework Programme. The targeted EECA countries are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

The ISTOK-SOYUZ Project has been implemented for 30 month from January 2009 to June 2011.
The project main objectives were:

- ✓ To promote the EU ICT programme and contribute to the definition of the collaboration strategies between EU and EECA
- ✓ To increase the visibility of mutual R&D potential and networking of ICT stakeholders in EU and EECA
- ✓ To increase the number of joint proposals under the EU ICT programme, including EU and EECA R&D teams

During the 30 months of the project implementation, a significant amount of knowledge and experience has been acquired. The project fulfilled considerable results and learned lessons, which are summarized in the current document.
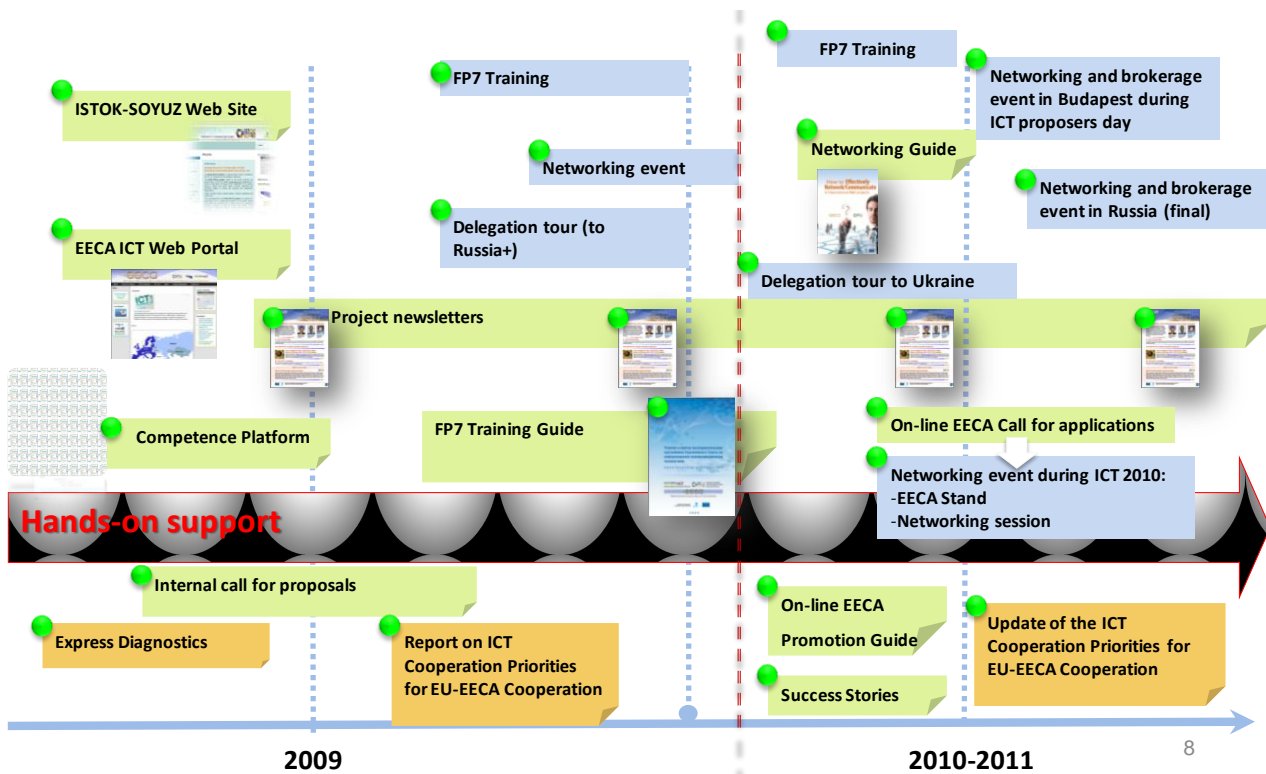
2. ISTOK-SOYUZ Results

ISTOK-SOYUZ is a Support Action. Its aim was to pave the way for the enhancement of strategic partnerships in the ICT R&D sphere between the European Union and target EECA countries. Thus, the implemented activities of the project focused on accelerating the realisation of joint ICT R&D activities (mainly as FP7-ICT research projects) as well as facilitating a policy dialogue that could result to socio-economic benefits and impact for all regions.

The implementation of the project gave a substantial added value to the activities enhancing the EU-EECA cooperation. This includes many exploitable results, such as the knowledge that has been acquired or transmitted by the project partners and deliverables produced during the project lifetime, and other elements with potential impact for the further **collaboration activities between target EECA countries and Europe in the field of ICT**.
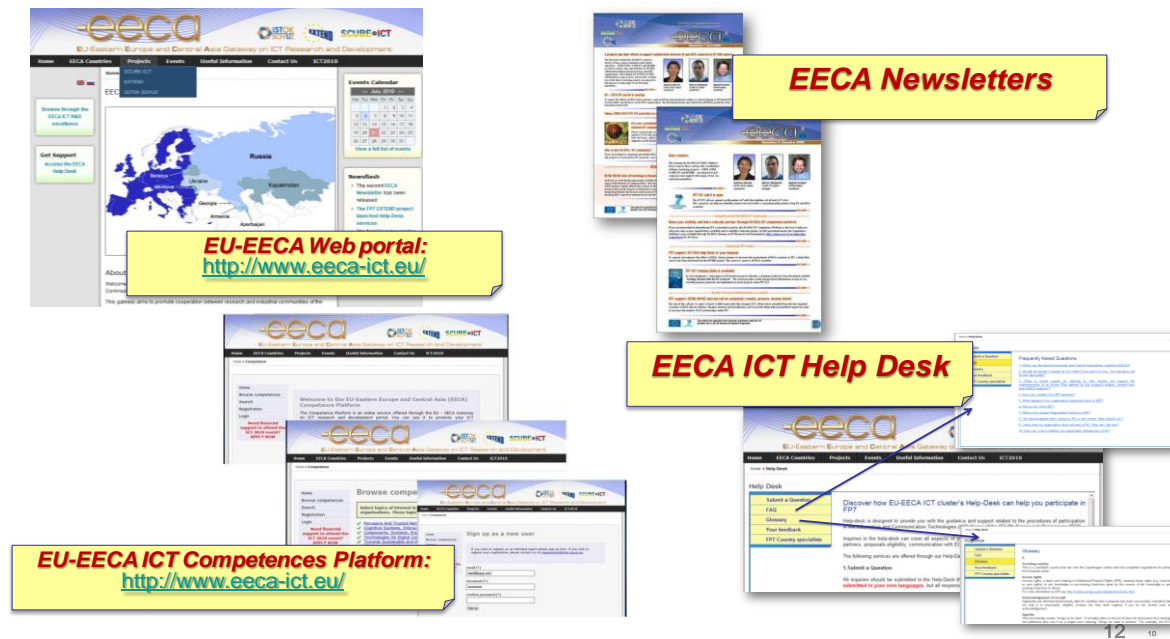
A number of activities were jointly implemented by the whole EECA cluster as well (e.g. awareness, training and networking events, etc), while several supportive 'tools' (i.e. the EECA web portal, the EECA Competence Platform, the FP7-ICT Held Desk and the networking guide) were developed at cluster level (i.e. partners from all clustering projects contributed to their development). In addition to this part of the document the "*EECA Cluster exploitable and sustainability plan*" was developed in June 2011 by all 3 clustering projects will describe in detail the exploitation of the Cluster results beyond its completion.

The following figure presents an overview of the outcomes fulfilled by ISTOK-SOYUZ project partners, often in cooperation with the two other clustering projects SCUBE-ICT and EXTEND:

Last but not least, several instruments, such as the Web Portal, the EECA Competence Platform etc were developed and/or improved, helping to ICT cooperation with the EECA region.

On both project and cluster level, the main assets and exploitable results are summarised in the following table:

Exploitable asset	Sector(s) of application	Owner and partner(s) involved
Project visual identity (including logo, official	-	All partners can use the project logo as reference to their activities.
ISTOK-SOYUZ website	All sectors relevant to the ICT domain	Responsible for the operation and administration of the website is inno. After the completion of the project inno will continue to administer the site for a period of 3 years.
EECA Cluster logo	-	All partners of the 3 clustering projects may use it as reference to their activities. Was developed by ISTOK-SOYUZ.
EECA Cluster web portal	All sectors relevant to the ICT domain	Responsible for the operation and administration of the portal is Q-PLAN NG (SCUBE-ICT coordinator). However, all partners of the clustering projects can use the web site and upload relevant articles. After the completion of all clustering projects , Q-PLAN NG will continue to administer the portal for a period of 3 years.
EECA Competence Platform	All sectors relevant to the ICT domain	Inno is responsible for the operation and administration of the CP. However, all partners of the clustering projects can use the web site and upload relevant articles. After the completion of all clustering projects , INNO will continue to administer the CP.
"EECA Promotion Guide" interactive application including the research profiles	All sectors relevant to the	All clustering projects were involved in the development of these reports. The application is publicly available through

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Exploitable asset	Sector(s) of application	Owner and partner(s) involved
of ICT actors from the EECA region	ICT domain	the EECA cluster web portal (www.eeca-ict.eu)
"Getting started with EU ICT research" training guide. **English version**	All sectors	Q-PLAN N.G. was the main author of this document. However, all partners of the clustering projects may use it.
"Getting started with EU ICT research" training guide. **Russian version updated and extended**	All sectors	All partners of the clustering projects may use it. The document is publicly available through the EECA cluster web portal (www.eeca-ict.eu)
"How to Effectively Network / Communicate in International R&D projects" guide	All sectors	RTTN and INNO (ISTOK-SOYUZ project coordinator and Russian partner) were the authors of this document. However, all partners of the clustering projects may use it. The document is publicly available through the EECA cluster web portal (www.eeca-ict.eu)
Promotion Guide of EECA ICT actors, including ISTOK-SOYUZ target countries	All sectors relevant to the ICT domain	All ISTOK-SOYUZ partners were involved in the development of the guide. The tool is publicly available through the EECA competences platform (http://www.eeca-ict.eu/eeca/index.php/en/competence)
Catalogue of ETPs/NoEs willing to cooperate with EECA teams	All sectors relevant to the ICT domain	The ISTOK-SOYUZ coordinator inno AG and the partner ISPRAS are the authors of the catalogue. The document presents useful information for EECA teams willing to join the ETPs/NoEs. The document is publicly available through the EECA cluster web portal (www.eeca-ict.eu) and the ISTOK-SOYUZ project web site (www.istok-soyuz.eu)
Article "European technology platforms: using the European experience to create the new tool for the Russian innovative economy development (in Russian)"	All sectors	The article was prepared by by the project partner Oleg Luksha, RTTN and published in the "Inovacii" (Innovations) Magazine. It is available on the EECA web portal (www.eeca-ict.eu). and the ISTOK-SOYUZ project web site (www.istok-soyuz.eu)
Article "EU Seventh Framework Programme – new prospects for international cooperation"	All Sectors	The article was prepared by the ISTOK-SOYUZ project coordinator Svetlana Klessova, inno AG and the partner Nikolay Pakulin, ISPRAS and is published in Computer instruments in education, vol 4. It is available for download on the EECA portal (www.eeca-ict.eu) and the ISTOK-SOYUZ project web site (www.istok-soyuz.eu)
Article "Prospects for the Development of EU-Russia Cooperation in the Field of Science and Technology as Exemplified in the Seventh Framework"	All sectors	The article was prepared by the ISTOK-SOYUZ project coordinator Svetlana Klessova, inno AG and the project partner Oleg Luksha, RTTN and Published in the yearbook New Economy: Innovation Insight in Russia, DUMA. The article is available on the EECA portal (www.eeca-ict.eu) and the ISTOK-SOYUZ project web site (www.istok-soyuz.eu)
Express Diagnostics of potential for ICT R&D collaboration with the EU for the nine target EECA countries.	All sectors relevant to the ICT domain	All the EECA partners from the ISTOK-SOYUZ project prepared the documents, covering the 9 addressed EECA countries. The documents are publicly available through the EECA cluster web portal (www.eeca-ict.eu) and the ISTOK-SOYUZ project web site (www.istok-soyuz.eu)
Cooperation priorities in the field of ICT R&D between the European Union and the five target countries: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan	All sectors relevant to the ICT domain	All ISTOK-SOYUZ partners were involved in the development of these reports. The documents are publicly available through the EECA cluster web portal (www.eeca-ict.eu)
EU-CA ICT R&D cooperation potential assessment and recommendations for the four Central Asia countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan	All sectors relevant to the ICT domain	The documents are publicly available through the EECA cluster web portal (www.eeca-ict.eu)

During January, 2009 - April, 2011, the ISTOK-SOYUZ project team, in collaboration with the EECA clustering projects have achieved the following **measurable** results:

- **101** EU –EECA Partnerships established and **25** Proposals submitted under FP7 ICT Calls
- **120** EECA teams received hands-on support
- **25** EECA organisations integrated into ETPs/NoEs
- **More than140** detailed profiles of EECA experts on the EECA Competeces Platform
- Express diagnostics of potential for ICT R&D collaboration with the EU of the EECA countries
- Synergies and Liaison activities with stakeholders and other projects
- Identified Courses of Action for More Effective Research Cooperation
- Training Guide "Getting started with the EU ICT Research" and Networking Guide "How to effectively network/communicate in International R&D projects"

Under "**partnership**", the ISTOK-SOYUZ team understands a written or oral voluntary arrangement where two or more teams / organizations (parties) from EECA and EU countries agree to cooperate to achieve common purpose and mutual success. In our case partners aimed at elaboration of project ideas for FP7 ICT Work Programme.

Under "**proposal**", the team understands projects have been written and submitted to FP7 ICT Calls by EECA-EU partnerships.

In addition to the figures in the scheme above, **EECA-EU partners, supported by ISTOK-SOYUZ submitted 19 project proposals for other Calls** of FP7 specific programmes "Cooperation" (Health and Transport priorities), "People", "Capacities" and other programmes supported European Commission (EU Baltic Sea Region Programme, ERA-Net Programme). These programmes include the use of R&D ICT collaboration potential of supported teams.

These results were achieved ISTOK-SOYUZ consortium partners by using not only their own tool and activities, but also EU-EECA ICT-cluster's joint tools and activities.

The ISTOK-SOYUZ partners took part in some partnerships and proposals and supported respective consortiums, but time allocated for these support activities was not accounted under ISTOK-SOYUZ project.

3. Evaluation of support action and lessons learnt

The ISTOK-SOYUZ support action, targeting the five countries (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Armenia and Kazakhstan) and covering by its hands-on support and information campaign the four other countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) has played an important role in the enhancement of the strategic EU-EECA cooperation focusing on the ICT domain. During that period the project team has acquired extensive experience and knowledge that could be further exploited by the EU and EECA ICT stakeholders, including EC representatives, EECA and EU policy makers.

The central theme running through this report is "how to help improve the future support actions, through the lessons learnt and good practices of ISTOK-SOYUZ project". There are no "one size fits all" recommendations for the ICT stakeholders that could benefit from the projects experience and lessons learnt. That is why two levels of evaluation and lessons learnt have been identified, addressing different levels of stakeholders:

- *External level:* It covers the activities, implemented with regard to the European Commission, the EECA Policy makers, the Intermediary organisations such as NCPs, innovation centres and the ICT specialists supported by the EECA cluster.

- *Internal level:* It includes the lessons learnt from the management and support activities, done by ISTOK-SOYUZ consortium and the EECA cluster. The lessons learnt and recommendations could be of interest for future support actions at the EECA level.

3.1. Evaluation and lessons learnt at external stakeholders level

Target Group	The European Commission
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	For the ISTOK-SOYUZ Lifetime many awareness raising and dissemination events have been organised in the EECA countries and in the EU. During these events, the EC representatives were always welcome attend these events as the EECA stakeholders consider that the presence of the EC representatives is important for the impact of the awareness raising and dissemination events.
Recommendations	🖥 **Reinforce the EC representatives attendance in important EECA events**

Target Group	The European Commission
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	The three clustering projects supported by the European Commission, have overlapping activities. They have been agreed during the joint negotiation meeting, and most of the activities allowed for synergies. However, each of the project had their own deliverables, and the overlapping led to the lost of time, and then criticism during the review. In addition, too much time was spent on the coordination of some activities at the beginning of the process

	(e.g. catalogue of organisations , etc)
Recommendations	🔲 **The support to the cluster activities is good and allows for synergies, but the overlap of the project' work needs to be carefully assessed and the overlapping activities deleted. Also, more time should be planned for cluster coordination activities.**

Target Group	**The European Commission**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	There are various support actions targeting different countries. These projects can learn from each other. For example, the Indian researchers put high accent on two-ways cooperation and integration of young scientists in the cooperation process, and the co-supervision of thesis is one of the national priorities, including for EU-India cooperation projects. Exchange of experience between the projects would be very beneficial.
Recommendations	🔲 **It is recommended to organise a workshop, at least once a year or once each two years, bringing together project coordinators (and perhaps other project staff) to present experience and lessons learnt. One of the projects could be responsible for organisation of such workshop, the project activities can be adjusted in the DoW to allow this additional task. Such workshop was organised a few years ago by DG INFSO, but it would be very beneficial to repeat this experience.**

Target Group	**EECA Policy Makers**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	During the implementation of the ISTOK-SOYUZ project and the EECA cluster initiative it was noticed that the lack of awareness and information about the opportunities offered by the European Commission are still a barrier for creation of strategic partnerships between both regions. In this context, it is very important for the EECA Policy makers to maintain the infrastructures, supporting EECA teams and to provide more opportunities for awareness raising and information events.
Recommendations	🔲 **Maintain infrastructure for supporting EECA teams oriented on participation in FP7 and other international EU programmes**

Target Group	**EECA Policy Makers**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	<mark>Will be completed, in discussion</mark>
Recommendations	🔲 <mark>**Will be completed**</mark>

Target Group	**Intermediary organisations (NCPs, Innovation centres etc)**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	The Intermediary organisations, such as NCPs, Innovation centers and other support teams, should expand and diversify the list of services oriented on promotion of competences and project ideas of the EECA teams among the EU organisations. For example, during the ISTOK-SOYUZ lifetime, it was noticed that the EECA partners lack awareness about the networking opportunities offered through participation in ETPs/NoEs or other networks. In this context, the EECA intermediary organisations have a role to play in

	provoding more and diversified information both to EU teams, regarding the EECA competences and to the EECA teams, regarding networking opportunities through different channels.
Recommendations	🔲 **Expand the list of services oriented on promotion competences and project ideas of EECA teams among EU organisations** 🔲 **Develop networking with European networks, associations, ETPs and NoEs etc.**

Target Group	**Intermediary organisations (NCPs, Innovation centres etc)**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	<mark>Will be completed, in discussion</mark>
Recommendations	🔲 <mark>**Will be completed**</mark>

Target Group	**The EECA ICT specialists**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	The ISTOK-SOYUZ experience shows that the EECA specialists have to improve the communication and networking skills, when promoting their competences. During the networking and brokerage events, the EECA specialists have to present their ideas, knowledge and experience. The lack of contacts establishment is most of the time due to existing communication gaps, such as language barriers, lack of information and awareness about the existing opportunities. Furthermore, the EECA ICT specialists need to adopt the practice to reply as quickly as possible to EU partners. That's why the Networking Guide is very much appreciated by the ICT specialists, and ITSTOK-SOYUZ team (and other cluster projects) promoted it through project and ourside project channels.
Recommendations	🔲 **Be as quick as possible with the answers to the European partners** 🔲 **Communication and Networking skills should be improved** 🔲 **Translate all the relevant "marketing" documents in English**

Target Group	**The EECA ICT specialists**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	The ISTOK-SOYUZ project has organized a number of FP7 training and provided hands-on support to many ICT specialists, willing to cooperate with EU teams. During these exercises, it has been noticed that many EECA teams do not address sufficiently the important stage of consortium building, which is the partners search process. Of course, many of them do not have the good practices to start the search by disseminating the information about team's competences and project ideas via CORDIS, Ideal-IST web-portals and EECA platform; via special networks and associations. But relatively often, the teams asked for support and did not want to spend much time to publish their announcements on Cordis or IDEAL-IST, which means that the teams were not too motivated to enter into partnership.
Recommendations	🔲 **First step, before any specific action made by the team of experts, shall be a publication on ideal-IST or CORDIS websites** 🔲 **When the EECA teams find an EU partner/ consortium it should address only one or two subjects covered by the call , in order to focus on**

	▪ specific skills of the team ▪ **Address contact with coordinators of EU consortiums organized where the team's competences would be relevant** ▪ **Prepare short and clear presentations and leaflets presenting the competences of the team.**

Target Group	**The EU and EECA ICT specialists**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	Many ICT specialists, willing to participate in FP7 projects commit some errors when preparing the proposals, such as exploring many different objectives covered by the call or proposing innovative project ideas, which are not clearly responding to the EC objectives. Another issue that the ISTOK-SOYUZ team notices is that ICT specialists have ambitious projects, but they are not always feasible into the budget frame and time limitations, which impedes the success in the projects. Sometimes EECA teams proposed R&D ideas focused on the decision only to their national problems, which is not in line with the EU strategy and objectives: actions should be of mutual interest.

Recommendations	▪ **Project ideas \ competences for FP7 Calls have to match EC priorities / objectives stated in the relevant work programmes**
	
	▪ An idea should be structured in terms of the required document to be submitted to the call. Applicant should to outline the
	    o needs and problems it addresses,
	    o the scientific and technological objectives of the proposal,
	    o the current state-of-the-art, and
	    o the proposed advances beyond state-of-the-art.
	
	▪ **Proposed ideas should be feasible** At stage of elaboration of a project idea, it should be validated along several different dimensions:
	
	    o is it technically feasible to develop within the proposed timescale, and with the proposed budget?
	    o are your objectives / targets measurable and verifiable?
	▪ is your idea clearly formulated and is it understandable by others?

Target Group	**The EECA ICT specialists**
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	The EECA ICT organisations, taking part in consortia are not always aware of the tasks requested in support actions for example. As working in the research filed, they consider that the projects will cover the research activities. This kind of problem increases the learning curve and could impact the timing and efficiency of the project and that is why this problem should be addressed during the proposals preparation. In addition, the EECA participants, who are not used to this kind of projects, should take this into account.
Recommendations	▪ **The consortium should include people and organisations that possess the competences the project needs and include representatives of different stakeholders (research, business, users, associations, etc.), covering the specific tasks planned in the project**

3.2. Evaluation and lessons learnt at internal consortium level

Target Group	The Support Actions' Consortia
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	The ISTOK-SOYUZ project noticed that regular coordination meetings (by phone, web channel or physical meeting) have a very important role to play in the project management activities. It should NOT be underestimated how the partners' meetings influence the project results.
Recommendations	🔲 **Ensure that the strategic consortium meetings, such as kick-off and review are attended by key representatives of each member of the consortium.** 🔲 **Pay attention to take part in all project meetings**

Target Group	The Support Actions' Consortia
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	The FP7 project management always require a strong administrative and financial commitment in order to ensure the quality of reporting and use of resources, according to the EC rules. The wide range of rules is not always easy to understand, even more when a language barrier exist. That is why it is very important to rely on a coordinator with strong knowledge and experience in the FP procedures, who can help in the speed of the learning time.
Recommendations	🔲 **Ensure a strong Administrative and financial office** 🔲 **Join consortiums with experienced coordinators**

Target Group	The Support Actions' Consortia
Evaluation and lessons learnt from relevant activity	When a person or a team is taking part in a project consortium, it is very important to respect deadlines. The collaborative projects are run thanks to the contributions of different partners and the final tasks achievement is often with a very rigid timing. If one of the partners does not provide its contribution on time, it is possible that the cascade effect take place and other tasks are compromised. That is why a project partner has to provide the feedback with respect to the deadlines. If there is no possibility to fulfil the outcome in the previewed timing, the partner has to prevent the concerned partners and the coordinator. When the partner is responsible for specific tasks, he/she should reply within deadlines, which are realistic, but also respect the overall project planning. The problem with lack of contributions happens when the consortium partners are understaffed, or are implementing activities that are beyond their physical capacities.
Recommendations	🔲 **Respect deadlines and fix well estimated deadlines when you are responsible for tasks and activities** 🔲 **Assess physical capacity of its own organisation to implement the project, and hire additional personal in case of problems.**

4. Conclusion

During the lifetime of the ISTOK-SOYUZ project and the EECA ICT Cluster a lot of knowledge and experience have been acquired. The present document summarised the achieved results and the lessons learnt by the project partners in order to allow the future generations of projects and activities in the EECA regions to be more efficient. The good practices and examples presented here represent an asset which should be taken into account by the other ICT stakeholders, such as European Commission, ICT specialists, Policy Makers and intermediary organisations, such as NCPs, innovation centres etc.