



NORTHERN PERIPHERY PROGRAMME

DATASHEET 5: Lead Partner's Responsibility

The Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme is based on the Lead Partner principle. This means that each project has to appoint a Lead Partner, who will be the partner in charge of the project. The partner in charge, i.e. the Lead Partner, will bear the overall **financial and legal responsibility** of the project and co-ordinate the various partners in the operation. The Lead Partner guarantees that it is entitled to represent the various project partners, concludes the grant letter with the Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat, requests payments and is liable for the total amount of the grant.

Lead Partners have to have proficient administrative and financial capacity to be able to operate a transnational project funded by the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme, as they will carry the overall responsibility towards the Commission and the Programme Administration. The demands on a Lead Partner are therefore higher than on other project partners.

The Lead Partner has to be a public body or similar and should come from within the programme area of Finland, Scotland, Sweden, Norway or Iceland in order to be entitled to take full responsibility for the Northern Periphery funding. Total support going to Norwegian partners from an EU Member State shall at no stage exceed the Norwegian contribution.

Examples of Lead Partners are:

1. Regional and local authorities
2. Research and educational institutions
3. Public-like organisations like regional and local self-government of entrepreneurs (e.g. chambers of commerce)

The allocation of financial assistance from the European Union for the implementation of a project generates a series of obligations of different kinds. The Lead Partner undertakes to comply with these obligations when they agree to benefit from European Regional Development Funding through the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme. Formally speaking, even if the project is conducted as a partnership, even if the partners have certain obligations to meet, fundamentally there is only one Lead Partner; the organisation that signs the declaration of acceptance in the grant letter. The Lead Partner's obligations are presented in the grant letter of the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme funding and the various annexes and sub-annexes which are an integral part thereof. The Lead Partner is responsible for ensuring the correct organisation and management of the project throughout its duration, satisfying obligations and any consequences arising from their non-compliance, even if these consequences are not directly their fault.

The Lead Partner will pass the necessary contracts with the co-operation partners specifying the partnership terms and conditions by detailing the division of the mutual responsibilities. The Lead Partner may require bank guaranties from other eligible partners.

The Lead Partner (entity) is the organisation, which is "legally" responsible (liable) for the entire implementation of the project, including for the other partners located in other Member States or Non-Member States. The Lead Partner will receive all Northern Periphery Funding and will then pay it to the other partners. The Lead Partner will be responsible for indemnifying any claim made against the project and their project partners.

The Lead Partner is required to appoint a project auditor. The Grant Offer Letter will not be considered valid before an auditor has been appointed. An independent financial controller (internal or national) or a certified external auditor should perform all audits. In addition auditors must have sufficient EU programme auditing experience and be familiar with EU rules and regulations. If an external auditor is appointed, the auditor must declare to be certified according to EU regulation 84/253/EEC or have equivalent qualification. If an internal or national auditor is appointed, the auditor must be pre-approved by the Paying Authority.

In order to be approved by the Paying Authority, the appointed auditor should describe in written:

- the nature and tasks of the auditing body
- how the impartiality and externality to the project is guaranteed
- qualification concerning ERDF rules

The Lead Partner is responsible for defining the structures for dialogue and decision-making with the partners participating in a project and ensuring the effectiveness of these structures. The Lead Partner is also responsible for notifying the Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat as to any unforeseen problems, which may arise in the course of the project (i.e. possible redefining of the project, budgetary revisions exceeding what is considered 'minor' in the grant letter, deficiency on the part of one of the partners) and jeopardise the schedule.

The Lead Partner will also ensure the co-ordination and day-to-day management of the project, acting as the permanent contact point for the Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat. The Lead Partner delivers project reports and documentation, project outputs as well as audit and applications for payments.

"CHECK-LIST" OF THE LEAD PARTNER'S ROLE:

1. Organisation of the partnership and co-ordination of key actors under the authority of a steering committee for the smooth implementation and performance of the actions
2. Management of the project team (project co-ordinator and persons designated responsible in the other organisations or regions)
3. Preparation of contracts and reference terms for sub-contracting; monitoring of agreements between project partners;
4. Development of project management and monitoring instruments; (situation charts, progress reports, evaluations, etc...)
5. Management of the team responsible for administrative and financial matters, bookkeeping, verification of accounting records
6. Finalisation of working documents and technical and financial progress reports for submission to the steering committee, then to the Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat, and the organisation of their production

7. Preparation of steering committee meetings
8. Organisation of the project's participation in inter-network activities (thematic seminars, conferences, specific meetings)
9. Maintain dialogue with the Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat
10. Hosting and organisation of possible visits to sites concerned by the project by representatives of the NPP, project co-ordinators or experts from other projects in the framework of the programme's exchange activities
11. Information diffusion/dissemination of project results, in liaison with the Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat.