



NORTHERN PERIPHERY PROGRAMME

Transnationality

Practical Guidance for Applicants

Transnationality is a crucial element of the Northern Periphery Programme. In order to make an application to the programme, project applicants must carefully consider transnationality, and ensure that it is applied to all elements of their project. This can be a complex task and managing a transnational project often presents challenges that are not found in national projects. However, transnational projects can be very rewarding and often achieve results that could not be achieved in a national context. This paper is intended to help applicants to recognise and overcome many of the most common problems experienced when managing or taking part in a transnational project.

The Project Idea

Experience has shown that the most successful transnational projects occur when the topic dealt with is of strategic importance to each of the partners involved in the co-operation. A principal reason for this is that if the project is incorporated into the daily tasks and routines of the organisation, then it has a more significant impact on the way in which that issue is dealt with by the host organisation. By integrating the project into the organisation, maximum benefit can be achieved from practical experience with the project. In order to achieve this result, it is essential that the organisation is fully committed to the project, particularly the senior management. This will ensure that sufficient time and resources are allocated to the project, and that dissemination of project results is not restricted to the individual project manager or co-ordinator.

Project Partnership

A transnational partnership, consisting of at least 3 partners from 3 countries within the programme area, is required to apply to the Northern Periphery Programme (further information can be found in the Programme Complement and Document). However, the types of project partnership in a transnational project can vary significantly, and experience has shown that this can have a major impact on the setting-up and managing of an NPP project. It is generally agreed that a diverse project team is considered to contribute to a broader and more challenging discussion. However, a sufficient degree of commonality, with regard to professional background and work tasks is needed, in order to ensure a real exchange of experience. It is also vital that all project partners have a strong interest in the project idea and its implementation, to ensure that the transnational team is balanced.

Evidence also suggests that more diverse project groups can take longer to establish a mutual understanding on how to take the project forward, this in turn can demand more time and resources. Nevertheless, working in transnational teams will always mean differences in culture, language and administration, but this can simultaneously represent an asset to the project and is one of the major benefits of participation in such a co-operation. It is often useful to establish an inception phase at the beginning of the project, in order to allow the partners to develop working relationships. The use of Micro and Preparatory project funding can help assist with this process and ensure that the project can begin work as soon as approval is given, rather than being delayed while common working practices are established.

Transfer of Expertise

Transnational projects normally base their project idea around the exchange of experience, in order to create a common or joint solution. However, the differences in administrative and legal systems, as well as in culture, of the various regions in the Northern Periphery Programme can hamper the transfer of experience between countries. It is therefore important that those involved in a transnational project recognise that solutions cannot always be exported, but may have to be tailored to the needs of the specific country or region. Generally, projects with more concrete, practical tasks and hands-on approaches face fewer difficulties in this regard. This should not deter more policy oriented projects from transnational co-operation and should not affect the success of a project; instead partners may wish to consider the solving of common challenges rather than reaching joint solutions that can be applied across the area.

Project Knowledge – How to Ensure Experience is Maximised

Experience has shown that it is often the individual project co-coordinator/manager in each partner organisation that gains the most experience and competence from participation in a transnational project. The development of personal skills is an important spin-off from involvement in a transnational project, but to gain maximum benefit from the project, the host organisation needs to ensure that this knowledge can be transferred to other colleagues. If the project results remain individualised then this reduces the efficiency of co-operation in a transnational project for the partner organisation. As outlined above, integration of the project into the organisation's daily tasks (rather than being added to the ordinary workload), as well as support from senior management, can help ensure that project results are fully exploited. Information on the tangible outputs of a project (publications, results from seminars, websites, etc) is frequently easier to disseminate to the organisation than non-material outputs, such as exposure to new working practices and opportunities. When participating in a transnational project, it is therefore vital that organisations are open to new suggestions and the trialing of new working methods. This should help the organisation to gain maximum benefit from participation in such a project.

Ensuring Transnationality in Sub-projects

The majority of trans-national projects use sub-projects in each of the participating areas, in order to carry out common work in a local context. These provide a useful tool in the learning and knowledge creation process, which brings the project closer to the individual regions and allows more detailed investigation of a particular topic. Evidence also suggests that trans-national co-operation is a means of improving national co-operation networks. However, in order to create a real trans-national benefit these sub-projects need to be sufficiently integrated into the trans-national learning process, otherwise there is no real exchange of experience and benefit from carrying out a transnational project. Networking, project meetings and site visits can help overcome these challenges, but project applicants should be especially aware of this transnational element when drafting their project applications.

Who to Contact

If you have any queries or questions regarding transnational co-operation in the Northern Periphery Programme, please contact the Joint Programme Secretariat or your local Regional Contact Point for further advice. Contact details can be found under 'contacts' at: www.northernperiphery.net