

HINTS & TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERREG PROJECT

According to the Project Management Handbook, available on the official [INTERACT website](#), there are several conditions to meet for a successful cross-border cooperation project. The planning is equally important as the development and the implementation of the projects. Here are some hints and tips, while all interested applicants are advised to read the entire Handbook.

Project idea generation

For a project idea generation checklist, please visit [Interact | cooperation works | Library \(interact-eu.net\)](#), Section 5.

The key features of a good **idea** should verify at least that the project is:

- ✓ demand-driven: Identified target groups will be able to benefit from the project

Any project should respond to the specific needs of defined target groups (i.e. the end users of project outcomes), that is why the applicants need to know, already at the idea generation phase, if there are potential beneficiaries of the envisaged project results.

- ✓ result-oriented: will make a change by addressing the need of the target groups

The target group's needs should determine the choice of partners, outputs and activities and involving them from this stage is important for the success of the project.

- ✓ relevant: contributes to the programme objectives and results

The project idea must be relevant for the Programme, addressing a challenge of the Programme Area (as identified in the IP – Section 1.2 - *Joint programme strategy*) and contributing to the priorities of other (territorial) strategies covering the programme territory.

- ✓ requiring cooperation: would not succeed without cross-border cooperation

Interreg programmes are cooperation based, and ideally should combine the programme inputs with applicants' ideas about the best way to address the needs they are interested in on either side of the border.

- ✓ capitalizing: makes use of available knowledge and the idea is built on existing results and practices

The applicants should be aware of the existing capital of knowledge and experience on which to build upon when preparing a new proposal. Thus, background research and seeking complementarity with other projects being carried out in the Programme Area are highly recommended.

- ✓ tested: the programme has been consulted and comments considered.

The applicant should make sure all IP requirements have been analysed and understood, and all information/recommendations resulting from helpdesk consultation (if the case) have been taken into account when writing the project proposal.

The qualities of a good **partnership** are:

- ✓ to address the need and achieve project objectives

Cooperation projects must always be based on a need to work together in order to achieve common objective(s).

- ✓ to be balanced with respect to levels, sectors, and territory

Romania - Hungary

To turn the project idea into a coherent set of activities and convincing results, the right partners have to be identified. Key criteria for a good partnership: shared needs and complementary expertise, knowledge of the relevant issues, commitment, enthusiasm and trust.

- ✓ to involve partner organisations with experience and competence in the thematic field concerned, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the project.

Any partnership-building process should start with an assessment of each partner's ability to contribute to the project, both in technical and financial terms, based on the project idea.

The relevant **stakeholders** are targeted if:

- ✓ their roles have been identified

The role of the stakeholders is to share their experiences and expectations. They can contribute with valuable inputs related to specific requirements in the relevant field of intervention (for ex. complying with environmental rules).

- ✓ they have been engaged according to their interests

Stakeholders' engagement is necessary for the project results to reach beyond the partnership and produce a lasting effect.

Application form preparation tips:

- ✓ Send the project application form and budget templates to the partners as early as possible to familiarise them with the structure and explain which information they need to collect from other colleagues or departments.
- ✓ Carefully read the programme rules, especially the eligibility rules, and make sure that all partners can reach the Joint Secretariat/Info-Point to clarify specific matters.
- ✓ Do not underestimate the efforts necessary to explain the descriptive parts. You need to support your case with competence and convincing arguments.
- ✓ Create your own Word files for drafting descriptive sections; this will make it easier for the partners to comment and review.
- ✓ Test the application form template well in advance of the deadline. Make sure you know which parts fill in automatically; this will help you trace eventual mistakes.
- ✓ Allow yourself and the partners several rounds of review and make an overall consistency check prior to submitting the application form.

Project development

For a project development checklist, please visit [Interact | cooperation works | Library \(interact-eu.net\)](https://interact-eu.net), Section 5.

Any good Interreg project is governed by the same quality criteria that define all other types of projects. They need to achieve fixed objectives with limited resources (budget and staff) and within a defined timeframe and therefore, all stages of the project lifecycle are assessed on whether the outcomes justify the resources used (efficiency) and whether the activities carried out really contribute to the objectives (effectiveness).

The **objectives** of a good Interreg project must be:

- ✓ Specific: the objective should be as concrete and precise as possible about what will be achieved.
- ✓ Measurable: you need to be able to measure the output or result to see whether the objective has been achieved. This is easier to define the more operational the objective is and is closely

Romania - Hungary

linked to the project indicators. It should include the unit and the quantity (for example % increase in xyz).

- ✓ Achievable: objectives must be realistic and possible to achieve within the given time and with the given resources (time, budget, staff, skills). Proposals with clearly unrealistic objectives are likely to be rejected by the programme.
- ✓ Complying with Programme's general/specific rules: special attention should be paid to particular requirements included in the IP. For instance, if your project addresses one of the SOs under Priority 1, measures to prevent and mitigate the possible adverse effect that your project might have on the environment should be put in place and described in the application. Annex F (hyperlink) to the Guide for Applicants, as well as DNSH related documents (hyperlink) offer supplementary information in this respect).

A good Interreg project must demonstrate contribution to the Programme performance **indicators**. Defining project's indicators should consider:

- ✓ avoiding double counting, count one output only once in the respective indicator
- ✓ a measurement methodology and a source for verification for each defined indicator

Indicators definition/targets/correlations between output and result indicators, as well as other relevant information are to be found in the Output and Results Indicators and Performance framework Methodology (hyperlink).

A project implementation requires several aspects to be covered :

- ✓ General project management: all the activities necessary to coordinate the work of the partnership, to monitor it, to verify expenditure, to report it to the programme and oversee the general implementation of the project

Based on lessons learnt, the Programme requires to include the procurement expert position in the project management team or the related ToR, whenever relevant.

- ✓ Communication: all the activities necessary to ensure targeted awareness about the project work and achievements outside the project partnership

Please consult the Programme's VIM (hyperlink) for compulsory communication/information activities to be included in the project and make sure you allocate an appropriate budget for their performance.

- ✓ Implementation / Thematic work: this work package clusters the project specific activities

The activities in the work packages are organised based on dependencies and interdependencies: "What needs to be done first in order to do this next"? For example, if the project intends to use an output which does not exist yet, it will first plan the activities necessary to produce it (or get it) and then it will start using it.

When drafting the **work plan**, it is required to provide sufficient level of detail to:

- ✓ assess whether the proposal is realistic,
- ✓ be able to give reliable advice to partners on their roles,
- ✓ produce a convincing, well-argued application,
- ✓ draw up a sound budget.

When planning your **budget** consider the following:

- ✓ unclear or excessive costs and unrealistic figures will be spotted at the assessment stage,
- ✓ project budget should reflect project partners' involvement in the activities planned,

Romania - Hungary

- ✓ special attention should be paid to the correct application of the available simplified costs options.

The successful Interreg project shall be mature enough to immediately start implementation/execution, considering its specific (soft or hard), **the size and duration** (e.g. planned activities must be implemented in the provided timeframe and with the allocated resources), **legal framework** (e.g. approvals from the relevant authorities, special legal requirements to be respected), **and the capacity of the implementation team** (e.g. public procurement expert).

Soft projects (not including infrastructure component that would require a building permit) will have to be submitted until a maximum 3-month period from the launching of this call; be coherent content wise, well documented with information provided by verifiable/mentioned sources; be supported by relevant documents and proposed to be implemented by competent teams. Ideally, this type of projects should avoid including complex public procurements, given the rather short implementation period allowed. However, for the planned procurements, the terms of references should be prepared by project contracting.

Hard projects (including infrastructure component that requires a building permit) will have to be submitted until a maximum 6-months period from the launching of this call and, in addition to all requirements applicable for the soft type of projects, will have to be ready to start execution of the planned investment immediately after the subsidy contract is signed, at the latest! (see annex B concerning required supporting documents for submission of the application and for contracting). Ideally, infrastructure works will not be foreseen in natural protected areas, to avoid the prolonged approval process and most importantly, to “do not significant harm” the environment.

When designing your **budget** consider the following tips:

- ✓ Be realistic when indicating what you will need to complete the project and how much it will cost. Unclear or excessive costs and unrealistic figures will be spotted at the assessment stage.
- ✓ Project budget should reflect project partners' involvement in the activities planned. Tell partners how to plan the budget and what is possible/eligible. Make sure that partners' internal accounting systems can provide information on the programme's budget lines.
- ✓ Be aware that budgeting takes time. Start early enough. Have a realistic approach to the almost inevitable delays at project start up.
- ✓ Experience shows that guess-based budgets are increasingly dangerous.
- ✓ There are no shortcuts, and no standard budgets are available.

When planning the project's **sustainability**, all partners are recommended to elaborate a financial plan on how the maintenance costs of the results and activities are expected to be covered after the end of project implementation. The plan would be a useful tool to ensure project's sustainability and should specify the expected costs (in Euro) of maintaining the result and activities annually, and the source of financing (in Euro) annually planned to cover the expenditures in relation to the project part.