



Integrated European Cooperation Guide

**Contact Point of the European Network
for Rural Development**

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Preface



A variety of guidance materials have been produced in the past about rural development and transnational cooperation (TNC). Many of these have been prepared by National Rural Networks and provide a mix of useful methodological or technical advice on TNC approaches. These materials have now been distilled and re-packaged in the following '**Integrated European Cooperation Guide**', which aims to provide an effective cooperation tool tailored to the needs of the current 2007-2013 programming period.

The Integrated European Cooperation Guide covers a range of relevant TNC information focusing on two core aims:

- to clarify what cooperation is and the benefits it can bring; and
- to present a comprehensive step by step series of methodological guidance, that clearly explains concepts linked to planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of cooperation projects

A dedicated axis 4 funding measure is available from Member States' Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) to support cooperation actions, and each Member State has established its own rules regarding implementation of this measure (number 421). Such RDP guidance should always be consulted first of all, before undertaking any detailed preparation work on cooperation projects, since understanding the RDP rules and procedures is one of the keys to successful project performance.

Future updates of the Integrated European Cooperation Guide will incorporate links to the Member States' own administrative rules. Updates will also aim to reflect the information needs of readers and so please send any suggestions for new and useful material, or general feedback on the guide, to cooperation@enrd.eu. Your comments are warmly welcomed!

Disclaimer

The text of this publication is for information purposes only and is not legally binding. The publication has been prepared by the EN RD Contact Point and its content does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.

1. Introduction

Transnational and inter-territorial cooperation have become increasingly important for rural stakeholders- substantial experience has been gathered during LEADER II (1994-1999) and LEADER+ (2000-2006)- as effective mechanism for helping rural areas to jointly develop new solutions to common issues (The added value of cooperation). In a nutshell, cooperation projects help all parts of rural Europe to grow together

Facts and Figures

- During the previous programming period, 464 Local Action Groups (LAGs) participated in a total of 383 TNC projects identified in the Leader+ Observatory Database.
- On average each TNC project included partners from 4 different LAGs.
- These TNC projects were linked to specific priority themes: 'best use of natural and cultural resources' (36%); 'improving the quality of life in rural areas' (26%); 'use of new know-how and new technologies' (21 %); and 'adding value to local products (17%).
- In the current programming period TNC projects will also be implemented by LAGs. LAG numbers are expected to increase significantly, up to 2300, and this expansion of LAG activity across rural Europe offers a far greater potential for cooperation partnerships than ever before.

Various sources of complementary EU support are available for cooperation activity. These include aspects of the European Social Fund (ESF), The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). Other sources are also available and each TNC programme has its own set of priorities and procedures. For the purposes of this guide, the text will concentrate on information relevant to cooperation supported by RDP funds.

1.1 What is Cooperation?

1.1.1. Cooperation: the basics

Cooperation encourages and supports LAGs to undertake joint actions with other LAGs, or with a group taking a similar approach, in another region, Member State, or even a third country.

Two main types of cooperation are noted by the European Commission in their 'Guide for the Implementation of the Measure Cooperation under the Leader axis of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013'. These are:

- **Inter-territorial cooperation** - This refers to cooperation between different rural areas within a Member State. Cooperation within a Member State concerns at least one LAG selected under the Leader axis and it is open to other local groups using a similar participatory approach; and
- **Transnational cooperation** - which is defined as cooperation between different rural areas from at least two Member States. Transnational cooperation covers at least one LAG selected under the Leader axis and additional partners could include other local groups using similar participatory approach. It is also possible to extend this cooperation to groups in third countries following a similar approach.

Subsection 4 of Commission Regulation (EC) 1974/2006 provides further orientation about the official 'rules of the game' for these types of cooperation under the EAFRD.

a. Joint Action



Cooperation projects correspond to concrete actions with clearly identified deliverables producing benefits for each of the territories involved. These actions must be 'joint' in the sense that they are being jointly implemented. The content of such joint actions may cover a range of different activities eligible under the RDPs' rules. Joint approaches allow LAGs from one area to contribute funding to joint project that may be happening in another territory. The location of the

project is not a limiting factor if the LAG area benefits from the joint project actions.

Examples of eligible joint actions (subject to national rules for RDP implementation) include capacity building or knowledge transfer via common publications, training seminars, twinning arrangements (exchange of programme managers and staff) leading to the adoption of common methodological and working methods, or to the elaboration of a joint or coordinated development work.

b. Cooperation and networking

Cooperation concepts are often closely related to networking concepts, since networking may foster cooperation and cooperation may result in creating new thematic networks.



Networking: is an activity which brings people (and their organisations) together around a common interest to undertake activities which are mutually beneficial to them.

Active networking can create relations between people and organisations, and generates new knowledge and thus cooperation opportunities.



Cooperation is a dynamic process!

Projects that start out as networking initiatives often end up becoming fully-fledged cooperation projects with tangible benefits and added value.

Establishing a new network can also be seen as a joint action, but networking for networking sake is generally not considered as useful as networking based around the implementation of a specific rural development action. Cooperation projects should therefore:

- address issues and themes important for the participating rural areas;
- complement aims noted in LAGs' local development strategies;
- bring some significant added-value to the LAG areas, the activities targeted, the actors involved or, more widely, the local population; and
- be implemented with well defined and realistic objectives.

In order for tangible results to be achievable, the limits of the project will need to be determined well in advance.

1.1.2. Cooperation: very first steps

Initial cooperation activity can involve establishing 'prototype' partnerships to investigate options for, and/or the feasibility of, of concrete joint actions. Such preliminary work can obtain financial support in some Member States. Examples of different types of preparatory cooperation actions are presented in the table below.

Type of 'proto-type' partnership activity	Objective
Study visit	Understand how a potential partner solves a specific problem or addresses a specific issue in their local environment
Exchange of information, experience and/or good practices	Exchange between areas or actors with similar characteristics or resources to identify potential topics of mutual interest and joint learning opportunities



Be aware!

Eligibility criteria and funding requirements for cooperation actions can differ between RDPs. Always check what kinds of activities are eligible for TNC projects as early as possible in the project development process.

1.2. Why Cooperate?

1.2.1. The added value of cooperation

Cooperation can provide local projects with a new dimension, since they provide stakeholders with alternative and novel opportunities to look for and solve issues in innovative ways. Cooperation projects are capable of producing different types of added-value. The following examples illustrate different added value aspects possible from cooperation actions:

a. Strengthening of territorial strategy and local partnerships

TNC projects are linked to the territory and the respective local development strategies of the cooperation partners. These projects help to meet the needs and challenges addressed in the strategies of the cooperating areas.

b. Making projects more ambitious by reaching critical mass

TNC enables a project to achieve a greater critical mass, since the total benefits are much greater than the sum of individual achievements ($1+1=11$). Pooling resources and expertise can result in economies of scale and synergies, which are favourable to help achieving project objectives (such as costs for technical equipment/technologies, training, marketing, etc.).



Example: Artisan Food Producers Country Market – (UK/Ireland)

The project's objectives were:

- To identify and recruit up to 55 existing/potential producers (total for all LAGs) by December 2004 - To host a market in each area by Dec 2004;
- To establish a steering group by Feb 2005;
- To have hosted a minimum of six markets in each area by Dec 2005;
- To have delivered training to host organisation by April 2005;
- To hand over the running of the market to the appointed host organisation by Dec 2006 Each LAG will participate in the establishment of a Farmers Market within their own area and select and recruit their own producers.

c. Improving competitiveness: finding new business partners, positioning on new markets

Implementing a project with transnational partners can help the promotion of local products and the area of their origin. TNC may provide access to new business opportunities, hence generating a potential for: increased product sales; a complementary business partner to improve a product or process; and additional know-how. In contrast to potential competition, cooperation enables the partners to take advantage of complementarities, and to benefit from similarities.

d. Supporting work and promoting innovation through new skills

New visions and new dimensions can support and promote new ways of working. Furthermore exposure to transnational experiences can help broaden business horizons and encourage companies to adopt improved operational approaches. These in turn should generate knock-on socio-economic and/or environmental benefits for rural areas.

Ex. **Example:** ELREN project (Italy, Ireland, The Netherlands, Spain)

ELREN aimed at:

- Facilitating among LEADER+ Local Action Groups throughout the EU the exchange of technical know-how, application experience, basic commercial information and co-operation opportunities in the fields of Production of Energy from Renewable Sources and of Energy Performance of Buildings;
- Encouraging application of micro-technologies in rural areas by local public institutions and agencies, SMEs and private households;
- Disseminating basic information on country policies, applicable legislation and available funding / incentives.

e. Developing territorial identity and raising awareness

Transnational cooperation can help local people discover their area and history. By improving the understanding of their own territory, transnational interactions can lead to local actors becoming more open to represent their territory, and thereby becoming true 'ambassadors' of their areas.

1.2.2. The 'soft benefits' of cooperation

A number of 'softer', often intangible, benefits can also be gained from cooperation work. The selection of examples below illustrates some of these types of useful TNC development outcomes.

a. Broadening one's mind by considering differences as a source for enrichment

Working with a transnational partner offers the potential to discover new or other points of view and to be aware of different peoples' visions.

b. Developing European citizenship and sense of identity;

A TNC project can provide an opportunity for raising awareness about the European Union's actions and European citizenship among the local population. It is a way to identify and present the local area's place within Europe.

c. Acquisition of new skills

Implementing a TNC project often involves gaining new know-how about specific development methodologies or techniques. They also usually involve learning new language skills. Cooperation actions can therefore represent effective capacity building approaches for rural stakeholders.



The tools which can help you:

- Leader+ cooperation's good practices: examples of projects;
- Report on the achievements of Leader+ territories in France (in English);
- European Database of Approved Transnational Cooperation Projects under Leader+ (2000-2006).

1.3. What is a good cooperation project?

TNC projects are quite distinct by nature, but a number of common TNC success factors exist that can help ensure good cooperation projects. These include:

- **Following a territorial approach.** Leader is supporting "territorial cooperation" between LAGs; TNC projects should fit well with each LAG's local development strategy. Projects should address challenges in LAG areas in order to ensure their relevance and added-value;
- **Having a strong and clear project idea** which contributes to the realisation of the objective(s) of the local development strategy. A general topic, even if it will be adapted at a later stage with the partners, may fail to provide such a contribution;
- **Going beyond simple exchanges.** TNC projects ideally go beyond simple exchange. They should include common actions which create tangible results. Concrete and common actions (like joint acquisition of technology, creation of common events or products, joint experimentation/piloting etc.) are an effective way to find answers to the challenges of rural areas;
- **Planning properly for human resources.** The development, coordination, implementation and management of a cooperation partnership and project can be demanding. Human resources requirements need to be carefully considered from the early stages of project development; and
- **Building a strong partnership.** Throughout the life-cycle of a TNC project it is beneficial to:
 - define the profile of your desired partner(s) to make the partner search easier;
 - negotiate and distribute roles and responsibilities between the partners while developing the project (and include these in the partnership agreement); and
 - maintain and manage the partnership during the implementation of the TNC project.

2. Cooperation step by step

Due to some additional steps in their overall life cycle, TNC projects can tend to be more complex than other rural development projects.

This part of the guide takes readers through each of the main steps involved in planning, implementing and evaluating TNC projects:



2.1. Getting ready to start

Before launching a cooperation project a number of baseline actions are advised. These help ensure the project starts on a sound foundation.

Objectives for this initial step should aim to:

- Make local stakeholders aware of what cooperation can bring;
- Identify cooperation promoters and partners;
- Set up a cooperation structure; and
- Identify tangible cooperation ideas.

Expected results from this process should be an informed a range of stakeholders possessing knowledge about cooperation and the opportunities that it offers. Mobilising potential cooperation project partners for this first step can be helped by setting up a 'cooperation think tank' of local people. The think tank should be tasked to identify and prioritise potential themes that cooperation could focus on for the LAG area.

Key points to getting started:

- Make local stakeholders interested in cooperation;
- Create a local 'cooperation think tank', and
- Identify cooperation ideas.



The tools which can help you:

- Questions which can help you define your cooperation strategy; (Annex 1)
- Internal or external support: pros and cons, terms of reference and selection criteria for external technical assistance (Annex 2)
- Organise the cooperation ideas into a hierarchy. (Annex 3)

2.2. First step: preparing a cooperation project



Preparing a cooperation project represents a transitional step between the cooperation idea and the implementation of the project. Appraisal of the initial project idea will by now have raised awareness about the eligibility criteria and funding rules for transnational cooperation. Once this process has been completed steps can begin to start confirming the partnership.

Objectives for this first step should aim to:

- Find and meet partner(s) with whom you are going to implement your project;
- Meet and/or discuss with your potential partner(s) to agree on the project aims, actions and work programme;
- Prepare a detailed description of the TNC project through a strong dialogue with partners; and
- Clarify the eligibility criteria / funding rules for both your own and your partners' territories concerning expenditure eligibility for different project actions, legal and other restrictions on types of applicant or partners, as well as the application process requirements, deadlines and paperwork.

Expected results from this process should be:

- Partner(s) for the TNC project have been identified;
- A detailed description of the project has been prepared with all its components (aims, actions, work organisation, management modalities, budget, responsibilities, etc); and
- Knowledge about different administrative rules and procedures.

A number of phases are involved in this first step and advice about each phase is presented below.

Key points to preparing a cooperation project:

- Finding transnational partner(s);
- Meeting your partner(s) and agreeing to cooperate;
- Preparing a transnational cooperation application for funding;
- Negotiating the financial aspects of a cooperation project;
- Bringing together the required resources (knowledge and technical); and
- Getting the financial, legal and administrative structures right.

2.2.1. Finding transnational partner(s)



What you have already done at this stage:

- Your local stakeholders are aware that cooperation will bring some added value to the local strategy;
- You have defined a cooperation strategy;
- You have identified your priority cooperation idea(s); and
- You have already mobilised local actors around the cooperation idea(s).

a. Identify the “good” partner and partnership

Searching for a partner is not a question of chance. You should define the partner profile using specific selection criteria. These should include the expectations and the type of expertise and knowledge that you are looking for. Criteria might include:

- Similarities in terms of characteristics and challenges of the area - physical (coast, mountains...), historical (built heritage,...), socio-economic (predominance of small industries, ...), cultural (music, language, identity...) characteristics;
- Complementarities of know-how, experience;
- Geographical location: proximity of territories (cross-border);
- Existence of an ongoing partnership set up by a local actor; and/or
- Language and other communications issues.



Example: similarities...Internationales Landfrauennetzwerk (Finland and Germany)

Germany's Steinburg LAG and Finland's Aisapari LAG both have objectives in their development plans to support the marketing of regional products. Landscapes are very similar in the two LAG territories and each region produces specific local agricultural products.

You should think about the size of partnership and consider how many partners are you looking for? The answer depends on the objectives of your cooperation project. Some projects may need a large partnership to be pertinent. For others, a partnership between three or four areas may be ideal.

A balance needs to be found to ensure that project partnerships are sufficiently sized to be dynamic and provide added value, but care needs to be taken to avoid unduly complex partnerships, where mutual understanding may be hard to achieve.



Example of a large partnership covering 16 partners: Rete per la commercializzazione dei prodotti rurali e del turismo rurale/ Network for marketing of local products and rural tourism

The project intends to build a network of operators and joint activities in order to promote and add value to local areas characterised by similar socio-economic qualities and cultural traditions, through tourism and local agriculture, food, and crafts products. Under construction

b. Prepare an advertisement to attract potential cooperation partners



The drafting of a 'cooperation ad' is very important for the success of this step.

The ad needs to include enough details to help readers understand your main cooperation interests.

It should also indicate your willingness to discuss ideas from partners that might help add value to the TNC proposal.

Ideally, the ad should be able to sum up in few short sentences:

- What do you want to gain from the cooperation project; and
- How will this benefit the rural communities, businesses and/or environment in your area?



Be aware!

Cooperation involves working together and mutual respect is an important TNC principle.

Partners may have useful and interesting new ideas that help improve your original project proposal so you should be flexible and open minded regarding your expectations. If your project idea is fixed and does not allow for any changes, it may be difficult to find a partner.

c. Use different methods to search for a partner

You should use different tools in order to increase your chances of success in searching for your potential partners.

Before starting the search, remember...

- Your cooperation ad should be detailed enough and not too general!
- You should take time to think about the profile of your 'ideal' partner!
- A partnership of only two partners is risky, because if one partner decides to quit the project will end. So do not hesitate to make contacts with more than one potential partner in order to increase your chances for success.

Partners search methods:

Databases - your cooperation ad should be advertised in at least one TNC partners search database. The EN RD PST should be your first port of call during LAG partner searches since this interactive tool provides a large number of search options using specific rural development categories, in addition to country and regional search opportunities.

Other databases also exist at both European and national levels that may provide further prospects for identifying suitable partners.

Cooperation fairs - participating at European or national cooperation fairs is an excellent way to meet potential partners. A few preparations before the fair will help improve your chances of meeting the right partners. These include:

- **Before the meeting** - write your cooperation ad, have a look at the other cooperation ads, identify potentially interesting cooperation offers, organise a first contact with identified potential partners to plan a cooperation 'rendezvous' during the meeting, prepare a presentation of your territory, (using photos, maps, charts etc.);
- **During the meeting** - aim to combine meetings with all your potential partners in one 'cooperation rendezvous'; and
- **After the meeting** - stay in contact with potential partners regularly during the project development phase. Also keep in touch with groups that do not join the partnership, since they may be useful for future cooperation work.

Participation in thematic conferences - is another useful way to meet potential cooperation partners. You will meet rural actors who work on the same topics as you and this can lead to cooperation proposals.

d. Respond to a cooperation offer

If you are approached by a rural area for the purpose of becoming a project partner, you need to think about several elements before reaching a decision:

- Is the cooperation idea relevant to your cooperation strategy?
- Does the potential partner correspond to your partner profile: similarities? Complementarities?



The tools which can help you:

- Template of a cooperation ad (Annex 4)
- Find a partner (Annex 5)
- Rules and procedures (under construction)

2.2.2. Meeting your partner(s) and agreeing to cooperate



What you have already done at this stage:

- Your local stakeholders are aware and mobilised;
- You have defined your cooperation strategy;
- You have identified your cooperation ideas and partners;
- You have your cooperation idea(s); and
- You have identified your potential partner(s).

a. Preparing and organising a visit to your partner

The first meeting with your partner should be carefully prepared in order to improve the chances of good results. Of course, more meetings may be needed...

Before the meeting:

- Do some structured preliminary work with partner(s) - share information about the situation and the challenges of your area, about the outline of your cooperation project (clarify what you imagine, confirm what your partners imagine and what you could do together). It can be useful to exchange documentation about the partners' areas and projects (sometimes, translation of such documents might be needed);
- Exchange views with the partner(s) about the programme of the meeting/visit; Agree the working language. This first meeting is a crucial moment and ideally everybody should speak the same working language. If not, you should plan for interpretation. Separate interpreters are very useful and allow LAG staff to concentrate their minds on the project, rather than thinking about translations;
- Mobilise local stakeholders to attend this meeting;
- Decide the composition of your delegation. The ideal 'team' should include the LAG manager, representative of the LAG's technical team, project promoter, LAG elected representatives, and possible financial partners;
- Identify a moderator for the meeting(s) and a person who will prepare the report of the meetings;
- Prepare a presentation of your territory's context, its challenges and the potential added value of the cooperation project for your territory. Videos can be more attractive than PowerPoint presentations; and
- Organise some gifts, such as local products, to thank your partner(s).

During the meeting:

- All participants introduce themselves;
- Presentations of each partner - territory, structure, administrative organisation, etc.;

- Discussion about individual and common cooperation objectives by each partner - what each of them expects from the cooperation project; and
- Define different roles and agree responsibilities between partners (including the 'lead partner'), the budget and the next steps.

After the meeting:

- Promptly prepare a draft report of the meeting(s)/visit. Send this to partners for comments and validation; and
- Plan a report for the project's local stakeholders in your area, to inform them about their (potential) partners. Photos and videos are useful for raising awareness about the partner territories.



Be aware!

Be clear about who pays for what!

You should discuss and agree with your partner(s) about the sharing out of travel costs, accommodation, catering, interpretation, etc prior to the meeting. This will avoid misunderstandings as to who will pay for what.

b. Preparing and organising a visit from your partner(s)

Besides the above advice, if it is your turn to welcome your partner(s), you should plan specific actions:

- Propose a programme to be agreed by all partners before the meeting;
- Organise of a guided tour of the territory and study visits to help your partner(s) understand the characteristics and the challenges of your territory; and
- Mobilise local stakeholders (including elected representatives) and involve them in the dynamics of cooperation.



Be aware!

Plan for informal visits and for time dedicated to each type of participant!

When you and your partner are thinking about the programme of the visit, you should plan:

- To combine workshops and informal activities for the partners - further to the 'formal' meeting, it is important for people to have time to meet and to get to know each other. They will be the ones working together!
- To have moments specially dedicated for elected people and others for LAGs managers and/or the person responsible for cooperation.

c. Confirming the partnership

It is important to conclude this stage at the end of the initial meeting/visit. Preparing a report document provides a useful means to confirm whether or not the partnership can set-up the first decisions.

Partnerships often produce a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalise and make explicit important agreements. MoUs are not normally binding legal agreements but they establish matters such as: who will be the lead partner; who will coordinate the proposal writing; and/or the preparation of the funding application, etc.



See the Swedish National Rural Network's '[Cross-Cultural Analysis for Learning Handbook](#)' for useful advice about setting up TNC partnerships. The PMI (Plus/Minus/Interesting) methods provide particularly relevant reading regarding partnership work.

2.2.3. Preparing a transnational cooperation application for funding

Following confirmation of the partnership agreement, the next step involves applying for project funding. LAGs will normally each apply for their own funding. Applications can be prepared by the project team or by experienced external consultants.

One of the main success factors involved in drafting TNC funding applications is your understanding of the RDP rules/procedures about cooperation. It is advisable to know about the rules in both your own and your partners' territories. Future updates of this guide are planned to include samples from Member State administrative rules and procedures for LAG cooperation. Another success factor relates to being able to make a clear presentation of your project proposal. This should contain (at least) the following elements:

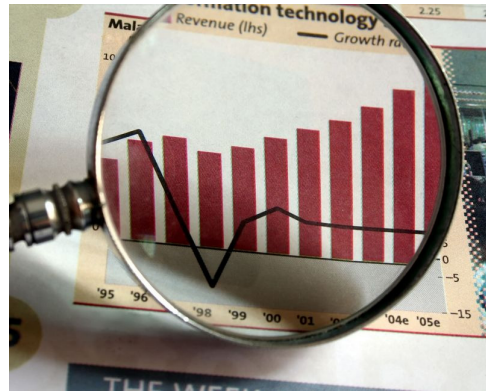
- Presentation of the structure and organisation of the partnership;
- Presentation of the lead partner's and other partners' territories;
- Common and individual objectives;
- Planned actions - transnational actions and, when relevant, local actions which will also be part of (and be financed by) the project;
- Expected results and added value;
- Monitoring and evaluation framework (including indicators);
- Calendar and time-table;
- Roles of the different partners;
- Project management structure (including reference to human resources and their experience);
- Financial aspects covering costs and resource requirements. Differentiate between local and transnational expenditure. Clarify different partners' budget allocations. Present cash flow models. Consider contingencies, especially if different/non-fixed currency exchange rates are involved; and
- Communication strategy (targeting internal and external groups).

The content of the application form has to be approved by partner(s). Such a procedure helps to ensure ownership of the project by all partners and encourages consistency across the partners' different funding applications. Endorsement of the lead application by all partners may require translations of the text, which should be budgeted for.

Complementary documents and adaptations might also be required (i.e. letters of intent and/or of commitment of the different partners, etc.), so make sure that you attach all the required elements when you send your application form.

d. Preparing a project monitoring framework

- All applications require details about the intended results and most ask for these to be quantified in terms of targets.
- Targets should not be viewed as a bureaucratic burden and should be used as a key management tool by the partnership to help it track its own performance.
- These targets should be agreed by all partners in advance. The targets can also include qualitative goals. The important point to note is that you will be required to report on all your targets and so you will need to have monitoring systems in place to track progress against targets.
- It is essential that these must be agreed and established from the start of the project, in order to track the full impact of all project actions.
- The same measurement systems must be used by each partner. For example, if you are aiming to create jobs you must all use the same definition for a job created (i.e. the same number of hours per week for a set number of months).
- In some case it may be necessary to establish baseline circumstances to measure progress against. This is often the case for qualitative targets such as improved quality of life or community confidence.
- Standardised monitoring methodologies and reporting templates will enhance the effectiveness of TNC project monitoring frameworks and help facilitate efficient collation of results from all partners.



Be aware!

Ensure and allocate sufficient time to produce/complete your application form! Do not wait until the last moment! TNC applications take time to complete since they need to be written and then approved by your partner(s) and sometimes by different authorities of respective RDPs.

2.2.4. Negotiating the financial aspects of a cooperation project

Financial aspects of TNC projects are quite unique since they combine:

- Different budgets from partners located in different areas / different Member States / different countries where legal requirements may not all be the same (not just the currency);
- Different levels of intervention, (local expenses incurred by each partner as well as shared expenditures related to the whole partnership); and
- Different financial sources which each have specific requirements.



Clarifying financial issues at the beginning of a project, and involving financial partners at an early stage, enables the partners to anticipate difficulties and find ways to overcome them in advance.

The first questions to be answered are:

- What is the total budget of the project – including costs and contributions from different sources, and what is the budget for each partner?
- What part of the budget is for local activities and what part is devoted to common activities?
- How is the project budget split between the different actions?

This information should be in your application form. You might have to re-organise your own versions of this information to fit with the application form requirements. Reaching common agreements about the project budget is an important step in the preparatory phases, and will help ensure transparency throughout the project implementation phase. A budget planning template is provided on page 19 of the Annexes that accompany the Commission's 'Guide for the implementation of the measure cooperation under the Leader axis of rural development programmes 2007-2013 (RD12/10/2006 rev3)'. The Annexes also include other useful templates for defining project descriptions and partner roles.



Be aware!

Income generating activities!

Some cooperation projects may lead to activities generating income. In this case, you should estimate the income and its distribution between the different partners. Each partner will then have to deal with this income according to their own RDP rules.

2.2.5. Bringing together the required resources: knowledge and technical

Besides the internal human resources that you have foreseen in your application, additional support may be available from rural networks such as:

- Regional rural networks (where they exist). These may offer advice about the content of funding applications;
- National rural networks. Also provide funding advice as well as methodological guidance and partner search functions; and
- EN RD Contact Point facilities help with information about cooperation issues and provide on-line partners search services.



Be aware!

Do not hesitate to seek support!

If you have less TNC experience, you can also involve specialist external expert.

Experts should have good knowledge of TNC methods and also useful language skills. They can give guidance during preparation stages and act as moderators during partner meetings.



In Austria the NRN offers moderator services to LAGs who want to start a TNC project. These moderators are experienced in TNC approaches and their inputs usually occur during the first meeting of potential partners.



The tools which can help you:

- Find a partner (Annex 5)
- Check list 'What to think about the first meeting with your partners?' (Annex 6)
- How to present your territory to your partner? (Annex 7)
- Template for a letter of intent (Annex 8)
- Selection grid for cooperation projects (Annex 9)
- Roles of the different partners (tool under construction)
- Cross-Cultural Analysis for Learning Handbook

2.3. Implement a cooperation project

Implementing a cooperation project involves numerous actions, many of which are technical and specific to individual project themes. Most of these remain out with the mandate of this guide and the following section focuses on common project management aspects of implementation.



Objectives for this implementation step should aim to:

- Set up and manage the partnership (which can sometimes be complex, due to cultural differences and/or the number of partners involved);
- Launch the main cooperation project; and
- Activate and animate the different partners' roles.

Expected results:

- Understanding the different possible roles for partners and what they imply;
- Preparation of an activity plan and monitoring plan for the project;
- Signature to a cooperation agreement;
- Organisation of communication activities between partners;
- Adoption of a legal structure for the partnership;
- Being prepared for activity reports and future controls;
- Carrying out the agreed project activities; and
- Producing the intended benefits

Key steps:

- Organise a cooperation partnership
- Formalise the partnership
- Animate a cooperation partnership

2.3.1. Organise a cooperation partnership



What you have already done at this stage:

- You have confirmed your partnership;
- You have formalised the content and development of the foreseen project in a transnational cooperation application for funding, a Memorandum of Understanding, etc; and
- You have found and brought together the required resources: human, technical, financial, etc.

a. Identifying the project coordinator

Good management of a cooperation project is essential for its success and this should be ensured by the project coordinator. One of the partner structures should be clearly identified as the overall project coordinator. Within this lead partner structure, one person should be in overall charge of the implementation, animation, monitoring and management of the project.



Various approaches exist for TNC project coordination. These include:

- A single TNC coordinator operational throughout the full project lifespan. This person may be one of the partners, chosen by the others, who accepts responsibility for the general management and coordination of the cooperation work programme (example under construction);
- A single transnational cooperation coordinator, reporting to/supported by national steering groups (important for projects involving a larger number of partners); or
- Shared / rotating coordination. Here the partners take turns to manage and coordinate different phases or aspects of the cooperation work programme, according to predefined elements. In this case, good coordination must be ensured between the different coordinators. This may enable a certain acquisition of skills in terms of cooperation project management and coordination, notably for the less experienced partners. (Example under construction).

The choice of coordination approach will depend on the capacity of the partners, in terms of their resources for the coordination tasks (human and financial resources), and on the wish of the partners, plus also on the type of project.



Be aware!

Coordinating a project requires important competencies!

A 'good' cooperation coordinator will preferably have:

- Language skills to communicate directly with the partners;
- Previous experience in cooperation project management or have worked with external partners;
- Good project management capacities; and
- Good communication, diplomacy and negotiation skills.

b. Setting up the decision making process

Decision-making processes should be clearly defined and described in a document validated by all partners (in the application form and in the cooperation agreement) in order to ensure transparency and to avoid any misunderstanding. This document should also refer to relevant legally binding conditions set by the Managing Authority in relation to the RDP funding.

You may chose to set up a decision making committee (executive committee) grouping representatives of the different partners, which will be the decision making structure for the whole project. Decisions can then be made either informally or by vote with pre-defined rules governing representation. This solution is compatible with both a unique coordinator and with a system of shared or rotating coordination. Yet, since it implies the creation of another structure, it may be reserved only for the more complex partnerships (i.e. the ones involving a higher number of partners).

2.3.2. Formalise the partnership

a. The cooperation agreement

A formal project cooperation agreement can be produced and signed once the project details are clear, and the partner roles, road-map and timetable have been approved.

This document is the 'contract' in which partners formally commit themselves to implement the planned actions, within the defined deadlines.

This cooperation agreement is a legally binding agreement that also helps give the partnership a more official status.



Be aware!

Sign a document at an early stage!

The idea is to formalise commitment... and not to explain what has happened. A formal document can be signed as soon as the project, its content and its rules of implementation are clear.

The cooperation agreement might avoid future problems!

The cooperation agreement can contribute to solve remaining questions and/or ambiguities and to clarify missing elements.

A cooperation agreement can take many forms:

- An exchange of detailed letters where the roles, obligations and commitments of each partner is expressed. This is a simple solution which is difficult to make legally binding in case of problems;
- A cooperation protocol which should cover the same aspects as above; and
- A cooperation agreement under national law (normally of the country of the lead partner) or with a European status (e.g. EEIG) where the different articles cover all the aspects of the project implementation and the distribution of the roles (including financial data, decision making process, etc.). See Annex I "Model cooperation agreement" of the Guide for the implementation of the measure cooperation.

b. Set up a common structure for the cooperation project

Even if this is, in most cases, not an obligation, you may want to set up a formal structure for the implementation of your project. This means choosing an appropriate type of structure and writing the related legal status.

c. Possible types of cooperation structures

Before writing statutes, it is important to define which legal form best matches: the partners; the objectives; and the actions to be implemented within the cooperation project, etc. It is also important to understand the pros and cons of different legal structures.

d. Choosing a type of structure for the cooperation project? The structure does not make the project!

The choice of a certain type of structure is directly linked to the project stage. It might not be necessary to envisage a 'heavy' partnership being formalised at the very beginning of the project. A lighter form (which may even be informal, provided a cooperation agreement is clear enough about the roles and obligations of each partner) will enable the project to grow slowly and to be better defined. It is only when it is totally operational that a common structure should be adopted to formalise the partnership.

Check list of questions which the partners should ask themselves before choosing a legal structure:

- Do we need to have a formalised common legal structure for the implementation of the cooperation project? What would the added value of this legal structure be for the cooperation project and the actions to be implemented? Is a complete cooperation agreement not enough?
- Which different types of legal structure exist?
- For each legal structure, different issues will have to be considered:
- Does the legal status match the cooperation project, the status of the partners involved and the actions to be carried out?
- What would the choice lead to in terms of further requirement (notably in terms of administrative, financial and/or control procedures...)
- What would the consequences of the different legal possibilities be for the day-to-day implementation of the project (during its implementation and when running: notably in terms of delays and human resources)?

2.3.3. Animating a cooperation partnership

Animation activities are essential in order to keep a project doing what it is intended to do.

Animation must be carefully planned and cover all project tasks. Animation roles are often assigned to project coordinators but external experts can also be contracted to animate projects. External animation contractors need skills in managing cooperation projects, in multicultural approaches and in moderation of relationships between partners.



Be aware!

External animation does not mean that partners do not need to get involved! Working with an external facilitator takes some of the work load away from the partners. Yet, the partners' must remain in charge of the project and its direction. The project should not be taken over by the facilitator. The partners therefore must stay involved to steer the implementation process and retain control of decision making processes.

In terms of animating project content, it is useful to set up working groups with responsibilities for particular parts of the project's implementation. It may be useful (and more convenient) to give responsibility for each working group to individual partners.

These working groups should operate in close collaboration with the overall coordinator, who will be responsible for collating their inputs and disseminating information about working groups' progress throughout the partnership.

Some tools and method will help you in terms of animation. Each of these points is detailed below.

a. Write a roadmap for the cooperation project...

A common work programme, often called a 'road map', should be defined and validated. This agreed content can help ensure a smooth implementation of the project actions and provide a tool to support relationship between the partners. The coordinators should use this activity plan as a key tool for monitoring project progress and tracking achievements. It can also be used to highlight actions that are lagging behind and encourage partners to rectify such slippage.



The road-map should identify:

- the different components and steps of the cooperation project;
- the actions to be carried out for each step; and
- the responsible partners, targets and indicators for each step.



Be aware!

Cooperation takes time!

You should keep in mind, when writing the time-table, that cooperation activities often take longer than local ones. Therefore be realistic and do not hesitate to slightly over estimate the time required for the duration of some phases of the project in order to be able to stay on the target as much as possible and avoid disappointment!

Writing the road-map at an early stage helps to allow for some flexibility, by planning only major steps and not every small step that make up these major steps.

The road-map should be updated, if required, to fit with any new realities that arise during the implementation phase. The consequence of each change should be well identified. Changes should be kept to a minimum in order to assist's the road-map's monitoring functions.

b. Organise meetings, visits and exchanges...

Implementing a cooperation project involving partners located far away from each other, which are only able to communicate by e-mail or telephone, is not an easy task. In order for the

cooperation to be 'real' and lead to a good exchange and tangible results, it is important to plan meetings. Indeed, face to face contact is crucial to facilitate effective project implementation and boost mutual learning opportunities.

Cooperation meetings can either be regular and short, or less frequent but longer. All will depend on the issues to be discussed, the distance between the partners, the knowledge they have and the number of partners. Whatever the type of meeting foreseen (study visits, seminars, exchange programmes, etc.), it is necessary for every planned meeting to:

- Prepare the meeting well to achieve maximum efficiency;
- Be clear on what each partner will have to pay for during and after the meeting (including in terms of accommodation and meals);
- Plan what each partner should do before the meeting and what they should bring to the meeting;
- Define a clear agenda, agreed by all participants;
- Foresee that complete minutes will have to be written and distributed to all participants for their agreement;
- Foresee which language difficulty may arise and plan professional interpretation if necessary; and
- Conclude the meeting by a short summary of what has been said and, most importantly, on the commitments which have been taken by each participant (who does what and by what deadline!)



Be aware!

Speaking a language does not mean having the skills of interpretation! Interpretation requires specific knowledge and which does not leave any time to participate actively to the meeting. You should therefore not hesitate to appoint a professional interpreter even if people in your team appear to have good language skills. If they are to be involved in the content, they will not be able to spend time acting as interpreter! This is not necessary if there is a common language spoken sufficiently well by all participants (including the more technical projects aspects).

c. Organising communication between partners

Further to meetings and the signing of documents, it is important to ensure that the partners are in regular contact, notably to understand progress in different areas and how this relates to their own work. Communication is also essential to facilitate project management, monitoring, reporting and administration.

A common communication plan should be agreed during the project planning stages. This provides a framework for regular telephone conferences, e-mail exchanges, feedback on the actions carried out locally in the different areas, report submission deadlines etc.

Language issues can limit these regular exchanges. This issue should be foreseen and can be overcome by using translation and interpretation services or, for long terms projects, by considering language training to boost technical know-how for relevant project personnel. All important documents should be translated whenever possible.



Be aware!

Different solutions exist to facilitate the language issue!

It is indeed always possible to work with professional translators or interpreters... but you can also chose to work with language students, foreign students in the area, local residents who may be from another country, etc.

d. Take into account the cultural aspects of the project, of each partner...

Beneficial progress can be made by embracing cultural diversity as a project's strength, and harnessing it as an engine of creativity to stimulate different ideas. Problems can be transformed into opportunities by promoting open dialogue on different perspectives to common constraints.

e. Ensure the continuous commitment of partners to the cooperation project

All partners should be interested in the project and remain committed to participate in it, as established in the cooperation agreement. Further to this 'compulsory' commitment, it is useful to make the project a dynamic partnership in order for all participants to feel ownership, involvement, contributions and benefits from the project. This can be achieved through programmed communication actions such as organising informal events and developing common communication documents.

Actions that help ease potential partnership burdens are also effective techniques to encourage greater participation. Agreeing standardised operating procedures and producing associated guidance (such as manuals and reporting templates) helps reduce potential misunderstandings, conflicts and inefficiencies.



Be aware!

Cooperation is both transnational AND local!

At transnational level, implementation means following the different actions, managing the project and the financial issues, evaluating the results of the project, etc.

At local level, implementation means carrying out the local actions which will feed in the cooperation project and using the results of the cooperation projects for the local development strategy.

Continuous involvement of the local actors helps to secure the link between the cooperation project and what is happening locally. This requires regular communication with local

stakeholders about up to date project progress, including results of cooperation meetings and different project phases, etc.

The local cooperation think tank set up during the first steps of defining the cooperation strategy can act as a cooperation monitoring committee. If this approach is chosen, the committee should receive regular reports regarding on-going progress with each project element.

Members of the think tank/ committee could also be invited to take part in some of the project meetings and visits in order to provide an external viewpoint, and feedback on the activities carried out. These additional human inputs can create valuable benefits for all involved.

Remember...

- Do not assume that all issues are clear for all partners before they have been discussed in depth. It may therefore be better to say things twice than not at all!
- The partnership can change during the implementation phase. Hence, allow for such changes (more partners or less partners) and define from the beginning the rules for such developments.
- When cooperation partnerships involve a great number of structures, it may be useful to plan several smaller meetings rather than one big one. Yet, from time to time, it is still necessary for all partners to come together.



The tools which can help you:

- Roadmap for cooperation project management (Annex 10)
- Possible legal structures to support the cooperation project (Annex 11)
- How to communicate with partners from a distance? (tool under construction)
- Cooperation agreement template (Annex 12)
- Possible presentations of a cooperation budget (tool under construction)
- [Cross-Cultural Analysis for Learning Handbook](#)



What you have already done at this stage:

- You are implementing your cooperation project together with your partner(s);
- You are regularly in contact with your partner(s) ;
- Your project is ongoing;
- You are monitoring your performance.

2.4. Evaluation and Valorisation

2.4.1. Monitoring and Evaluation

Applying monitoring and evaluation tools helps to improve the quality and added-value achieved by TNC projects.

Monitoring and evaluation occur at different stages in a TNC project. They are interlinked since monitoring provides a lot of data for evaluation. Past experience has demonstrated the crucial role of monitoring and evaluation in:

- Steering and managing cooperation projects;
- Communicating the full set of results from cooperation, including its added-value for the local area; and
- Improving the quality of future projects by identifying good practices and sharing knowledge gained.



a. Monitoring

Monitoring is a management tool. It refers to a process of measuring progress against the project monitoring indicators that were agreed at the project start. Monitoring indicators can measure both quantitative and qualitative information and it is essential that all partners use consistent monitoring methodologies (including common indicator definitions).

Monitoring is normally carried out internally by project partners and should occur regularly. The frequency for measuring progress, via the indicators, should also be agreed in advance by all partners. Information gathered from the monitoring helps identify if the project is on track to achieve its objectives.

Monitoring can confirm that a project is proceeding to plan or provide an early warning that performance is not as expected.

b. Evaluation

Evaluation is a tool which aims to assess the achievement of the past, and draw lessons for the future. It involves a comprehensive methodological approach which is very often implemented at the end of the project.

It can include a qualitative analysis of the project's: outputs in social, economical, and environmental terms (relevance and impact); method of implementation and partnership performance (effectiveness, efficiency); and future prospects or mainstreamed outcomes (sustainability). Evaluation information can be collected through analysing monitoring reports and/or by consulting different stakeholders involved in the TNC project.

Evaluation is normally carried out externally by independent evaluators and evaluation should always seek to explore the added-value and synergies gained from TNC processes. These may be both hard and/or soft outcomes.

Evaluation findings can be used as a communication tool. The results of a TNC project evaluation can be used to demonstrate to the local population, the financial partners and to the press, the actual benefits of a European project. Such a presentation may also take the form of organising an event, together with your transnational partner(s) visiting your area.

The 'final event' should present information from the evaluation about your TNC project outcomes and underscore the current and anticipated impacts. This should include highlighting the added-value gained in each participating area.

The following table helps to summarise differences between monitoring and evaluation.

	Monitoring (management tool)	Evaluation (assessment tool)	Evaluation (communications tool)
Function	Operational project management.	Strategic aspects, project implementation method.	Concrete results and added value of TNC.
Objectives	To identify and resolve implementation problems. To assess progress towards objectives.	To assess outcomes, impact, added value. To promote successes and lessons learned.	To promote TNC. To make people aware of the benefits of joint European action, specifically of TNC projects.
Target Group	Project management.	Project stakeholders.	Project stakeholders, local population.
Responsibilities	Lead partner: coordination. Other partners: participation, gathering of indicators.	Lead partner: coordination. Other partners: gathering of information and dissemination.	Lead partner and other partners.

It is extremely important to establish and implement these monitoring and evaluation process from the moment you start writing the project road-map/application form. Only if you follow purposeful pre-defined indicators can your monitoring and evaluation provide meaningful support to the objectives of your TNC project.

**Be aware!**

It is important that the monitoring indicators selected are SMART, meaning:

- Specific: what exactly will be measured, in which geographical area, by what unit(s)?
- Measurable: for the project to be in a position to collect information and data, what are the initial (so-called: baseline) figures?
- Achievable: what changes are anticipated as a result of the project? Are they realistic?
- Relevant: will the indicators measure all of the project's key activities?
- Timed: when something should happen? In which period?

2.4.2. Capitalisation and dissemination of results of TNC projects

European cooperation can facilitate exchanges between countries and, hence, different ways of thinking. It has the potential to push further the emergence of new ideas and of new solutions for rural areas. Disseminating good practices ensures that everybody can benefit from the experiences of others. It is clearly linked to evaluation and contributes to the promotion of transnational cooperation.

Capitalisation tools may be chosen depending on the target group: (potential) beneficiaries, elected representatives, press/media, general or specific public (inhabitants, business community...), etc. The way that information will be presented/structured is likely to differ.

The capitalisation of TNC projects can be achieved by different types of tools:

- Videos about the project with interviews from stakeholders;
- Events promoting TNC projects; and
- Project fact sheets usually comprise the following elements:
 - identity - describing the profile and characteristics of the area of the lead and other partners;
 - presentation of the project objective(s);
 - project implementation methodology;
 - expected and achieved results;
 - lessons learned; and
 - transferability - what are the conditions linked to the local context? What would it take to adapt the project in another context?

**Be aware!**

Many things have already been done, so take a look!

Do not re-do or try to re-invent what it already exists! All rural networks at all levels work on capitalisation of experience. Do not hesitate to make use of these documents!

2.4.3. Communication – how to achieve publicity for a TNC project

All actions co-financed by European Commission funds have to be publicised. Communication is crucial in this public awareness raising process for:

- stimulating interest in TNC opportunities among local actors and potential future TNC project developers/participants;
- contributing to opening up the dominant way of thinking in a territory and ‘broadening horizons’ by introducing new ideas gained during transnational relationships;
- sharing experiences, thus disseminating good practices to the other rural areas in Europe; and
- raising awareness about the potential that Europe offers, thus establishing a concrete vision of European action.

Different communication tools, messages and timings relate to different target audiences:

Target group	What	Which tools	When
Beneficiaries	To raise awareness about EU co-financing obtained	Visibility methods employed include standard reference displayed on project documentation, P/R materials (incl. those addressing schools) and putting up EU flags during project presentations and project events.	Throughout project implementation and particularly when actions involve beneficiaries.
Potential beneficiaries	To display the potential diversity of topics that can be addressed by TNC projects	P/R materials including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Fact Sheet • Project Video • Press Articles • Information meetings involving cooperation operators (testimonies) 	Throughout project implementation
Elected representatives	To raise interest in TNC: what is the added-value for their territory?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information meetings with testimonies of elected people involved in TNC projects • Project Video 	At the beginning and at the end of the project
Press/media	To promote TNC by means of a concrete project example To highlight the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Fact Sheet • Project Video • Press Articles 	When the project has achieved first tangible results. During an important stage of TNC project

	European dimension		implementation (event...)
General public	To raise visibility of the European involvement in the development of rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility means employed include standard reference displayed on project documentation, P/R materials (incl. those addressing schools) and putting up EU flags during project presentations and project events. • Project flyer • Project Videos • Press Articles 	

Remember...

- You should anticipate the monitoring and evaluation mechanism: it all needs to start when you are writing your project application;
- Foresee a communication plan in your application form: which target groups, which aims and what tools/actions/timing?
- Keep your TNC project factsheet short, though understandable and precise;
- Adapt messages for dissemination to the target group.



The tools which can help you:

- Evaluation grid for cooperation (tool under construction)
- Contact details of Rural Evaluation network
- Publicity toolkit (Annex 13)
- Template of cooperation project factsheets (tool under construction)
- Databases about cooperation projects under Leader+ (2000-2006)

3. Glossary

AXIS

a coherent group of measures with specific goals resulting directly from their implementation and contributing to one or more of the rural development policy objectives. There are three thematic axes: Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of agricultural and forestry Sector; Axis 2 - supporting land management and improving the environment; Axis 3 - improving quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural Economy. The three thematic axes are complemented by a "methodological" axis dedicated to the Leader approach (Leader axis).

COOPERATION PROJECTS DATABASE

provides a list of approved transnational cooperation projects

GOOD PRACTICE OR BEST PRACTICE DATABASE

common tool for disseminating selected examples of good or best practices on the implementation of rural development programmes within the European Union.

INTER-TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

means cooperation between two or more Local Action Groups from the same Member State.

LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

is a broad-based local private-public partnership whose aim is to improve the long-term potential of the local area and who has the ability to define and implement a development strategy for the area. The LAG is selected to implement a local development strategy on the basis of criteria set up at the programme level by the Managing Authority.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (LDS)

is a programming document drawn up and implemented by the LAG for a given area with a view to achieving the objectives of one or more of the three thematic rural development axes which should contribute to the local development.

LEADER AXIS

is a methodological Axis or approach which can be implemented to complement the other three thematic axes (objectives) of the EAFRD. The Leader axis is an obligatory element of the rural development programmes which are to be implemented by Member States during the 2007-2013 programming period. The Leader axis is used to finance: the implementation of the Local Development Strategies of Local Action Groups established on one or more of the three thematic axes; the transnational and interterritorial cooperation projects between them; and the operating costs of LAGs, including the capacity building necessary for the preparation of local development strategies and the animation of the territory.

MEASURES

are a set of operations contributing to the implementation of an axis. Managing Authorities propose at national or regional level, their rural development programs choosing those measures that best suit the needs of their rural areas and which take account of the priorities and strategies chosen in the national strategic plans on rural development.

MONITORING

this activity is carried out during the implementation of each RDP, under the responsibility of the Managing Authority and each Member States Monitoring Committee, in order to monitor programme implementation.

MANAGING AUTHORITIES (MA)

are in charge of the management of the rural development programmes, whether at National or Regional levels.

NRN

or National Rural Network has been established in each Member State under Article 66(3) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698 /2005 and Article 68: Article 39. Their main aims and duties are: To group the organisations and administrations involved in rural development To facilitate at Member State level an exchange of expertise and support implementation and evaluation of the rural development policy and to secure and coordinate the information flow between the local, national and European level. To have an action plan which provides for: a transfer of knowledge (identification and analysis of good transferable practices and provision of information about them, the organisation of exchanges of experience and know-how); training (the preparation of training programmes for Local Action Groups in the process of formation); and technical assistance for inter territorial and trans-national cooperation."

RDP

or Rural Development Program forms the basis for rural development policy. It is a strategic approach defining the EU's priorities for rural development for the period 2007-2013. These priorities provide the framework on the basis of the community's strategic guidelines according to which Member States have prepared their National Rural Development Programs. For this purpose the Rural Development policy (EAFRD) focuses on three commonly agreed core policy objectives or axes: improving the competitiveness of agricultural and forestry sector; supporting land management and improving the environment; and improving quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy. These three thematic axes are complemented by a "methodological" axis dedicated to the Leader approach.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

(abbreviated to RDP) designed by Member States or Regions and approved by the Commission, represent the means through which Rural Development Policy is

implemented throughout the EU, according to Regulation (EC) n. 1698/2005. There are over 90 RDP's for the 2007 to 2013 programming period.

TNC

or Transnational Cooperation means cooperation between one or more Local Action Groups from at least two Member States among which at least one is selected from the Leader Axis. TNC can also include cooperation of Local Action Groups from the EU-27 with similar groups in third countries following a similar or Leader-like approach.

TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION (TNC) GUIDE

is an "Integrated European Cooperation Guide" which aims to promote and assist transnational cooperation during the 2007-2013 programming period. The "guide" provides practical information at project level, including a description of the programming rules. As such it is a support for the beneficiaries (LAGs) and is a complement to the existing administrative guide "Guide for the implementation of the measures cooperation under the Leader Axis of rural development programmes 2007-2013".

4. Rules and procedures

Each RDP has its own requirements regarding TNC project proposals and implementation. For those rural stakeholders implementing TNC projects it is very important to be aware of the rules regarding their own RDP, as well as the rules affecting their partners' TNC actions. More information will be made available soon.

5. Programming

Here you can find the list of the National Rural Development Programmes of all Member States. These can be consulted directly via the electronic version of this guide on the EN RD website.

National Rural Development Programmes		
Member State	Region/State	Language
<u>Austria</u>		DE
Belgium	<u>Flanders</u>	NL
	<u>Wallonia</u>	FR
<u>Bulgaria</u>		BG/EN
<u>Czech Republic</u>		CZ
<u>Cyprus</u>		EL
<u>Denmark</u>		DA/EN
<u>Estonia</u>		ET/EN
Finland	<u>Mainland Finland</u>	FI/EN
	<u>Region of Åland</u>	EN
France	<u>Hexagone</u>	FR
	<u>Corsica</u>	FR
	<u>Guadeloupe</u>	FR
	<u>Guiana</u>	FR
	<u>Martinique</u>	FR
	<u>Reunion</u>	FR
Germany	<u>Basic National Regulation</u>	DE
	<u>Baden-Württemberg</u>	DE
	<u>Bavaria</u>	DE
	<u>Brandenburg</u>	DE
	<u>Hamburg</u>	DE
	<u>Hesse</u>	DE
	<u>Lower Saxony and Bremen</u>	DE
	<u>Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania</u>	DE

National Rural Development Programmes		
Member State	Region/State	Language
	<u>North Rhine-Westphalia</u>	DE
	Rhineland-Palatinate	DE
	<u>Saarland</u>	DE
	<u>Saxony</u>	DE
	<u>Saxony-Anhalt</u>	DE
	<u>Schleswig-Holstein</u>	DE
	<u>Thuringia</u>	DE
<u>Greece</u>		EL
<u>Hungary</u>		HU/EN
<u>Ireland</u>		EN
Italy	<u>Abruzzo</u>	IT
	<u>Aosta Valley</u>	IT
	<u>Apulia</u>	IT
	<u>Basilicata</u>	IT
	<u>Bolzano</u>	IT
	<u>Calabria</u>	IT
	<u>Campania</u>	IT
	<u>Emilia-Romagna</u>	IT
	<u>Friuli-Venezia Giulia</u>	IT
	<u>Latium</u>	IT
	<u>Liguria</u>	IT
	<u>Lombardy</u>	IT
	<u>Marche</u>	IT
	<u>Molise</u>	IT
	<u>Piedmont</u>	IT
	<u>Sardinia</u>	IT
	<u>Sicily</u>	IT
	<u>Trento</u>	IT

National Rural Development Programmes		
Member State	Region/State	Language
	<u>Tuscany</u>	IT
	<u>Umbria</u>	IT
	<u>Veneto</u>	IT
<u>Latvia</u>		LV/EN
<u>Lithuania</u>		LT/EN
<u>Luxembourg</u>		FR
<u>Malta</u>		MT/EN
<u>Netherlands</u>		NL/EN
<u>Poland</u>		PL/EN
Portugal	<u>Mainland</u>	PT/EN
	<u>Madeira</u>	PT
	<u>Azores</u>	PT
<u>Romania</u>		RO/EN
<u>Slovakia</u>		SK/EN
<u>Slovenia</u>		SL/EN
Spain	<u>National</u>	ES
	<u>Andalusia</u>	ES
	<u>Aragon</u>	ES
	<u>Principality of Asturias</u>	ES
	<u>Balearic Islands</u>	ES
	<u>Basque Country</u>	ES
	<u>Canary Islands</u>	ES
	<u>Cantabria</u>	ES
	<u>Castille and Leon</u>	ES
	<u>Castille-La Mancha</u>	ES
	<u>Catalonia</u>	ES
	<u>Extremadura</u>	ES
	<u>Galicia</u>	ES

National Rural Development Programmes		
Member State	Region/State	Language
	<u>Madrid</u>	ES
	<u>Murcia</u>	ES
	<u>Navarre</u>	ES
	<u>Rioja</u>	ES
	<u>Valencia</u>	ES
<u>Sweden</u>		SV/EN
UK	<u>England</u>	EN
	<u>Wales</u>	EN
	<u>Scotland</u>	EN
	<u>Northern Ireland</u>	EN

6. List of Annexes

Annex 1: Questions which can help you define your cooperation strategy

Annex 2: Internal or external support: pros and cons, terms of reference and selection criteria for external technical assistance

Annex 3: Organise the cooperation ideas into a hierarchy.

Annex 4: Template of a cooperation ad

Annex 5: Find a partner

Annex 6: Check list 'What to think about the first meeting with your partners?

Annex 7: How to present your territory to your partner?

Annex 8: Template for a letter of intent

Annex 9: Selection grid for cooperation projects

Annex 10: Roadmap for cooperation project management

Annex 11: Possible legal structures to support the cooperation project

Annex 12: Cooperation agreement template

Annex 13: Publicity toolkit