Applicants Manual

for the period 2014-2020

Version 1

PART 6: GUIDANCE ON HOW TO DEVELOP A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

edited by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat

Budapest, Hungary, 2015

Disclaimer

This document was endorsed by the Danube Programming Committee on 14th August 2015. However, please note that it is still subject to final approval by the Monitoring Committee to be established within three months of the date of notification of the European Commission decision adopting the Cooperation Programme.

PART 6: GUIDANCE ON HOW TO DEVELOP A SUCCESFUL PROJECT

I. Project generation and support from the programme

Project generation

Development of a transnational project is a demanding and challenging process which starts from the need to produce a change in a certain field.

- After the project idea is formed:
  - The funding instrument is to be searched (and not vice versa – first finding the financing instrument and then developing of the idea based on its objectives)
  - The link with the programme specific objectives needs to be checked
  - The added value that transnational cooperation brings to solving the identified problem is to be checked as well
  - The programme requirements in terms of eligibility need to be checked in order to understand if the project has potential to fulfil them

The programme recommends that the results of the previous programming period are taken into consideration in order to build on existing results and/ or avoid duplication. Therefore, results of the projects financed from SEE and other EU programmes should be checked before going further with the development of the project idea.

- In order to build a strong partnership, the network of National Contact Points should be used. They can offer first hand support in project development, besides advising on potential interested and committed partners in their countries.
- The project idea is presented then to the identified project partners and further elaborated to include their feedback and input while observing Programme rules and guidelines. It is therefore recommended to **follow the structure of application forms** (i.e. EoI and AF) to get an idea of the information to be requested and not to miss out any relevant issues.

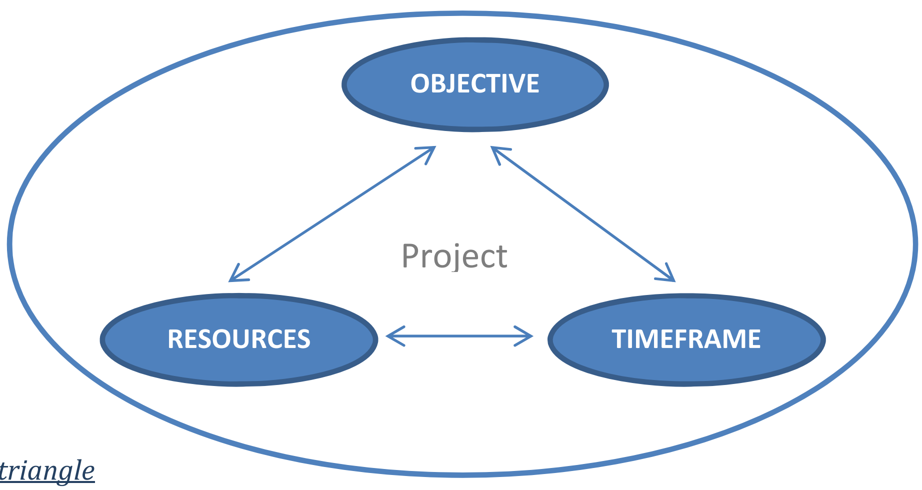
Please be aware that in order to have the full commitment of all partners their involvement in the project development is crucial since they have the ownership of results.

- The Lead Partner of the project should be agreed at an early stage and should be a common decision of the partnership. The LP will be the one steering the project development and will prepare and submit the application form.
- Last but not least, the Joint Secretariat can be consulted during project development in order to have a first feedback on the project idea.

When developing the project idea into an Application Form please have in mind:

- ***Territorial analysis*** is not only the first step to be made but also one of the most important ones. In order to establish most coherent and comprehensive objectives, you need to clearly define the main characteristics of the territory in question, which your competences and expertise are, which the general context in the specific field is, what has been done so far, are there any on-going projects.

- Set a ***limited number of specific objectives***, which have to be on one side, clearly linked to the programme specific objectives, and on the other side realistic and achievable in the project timeframe.
- Building on already existing project results is very much appreciated (as highlighted also above) as well as finding synergies with other on-going projects and initiatives, but attachment of an ***innovative character*** to your project is essential in order to strengthen the impact of activities and avoid duplication of efforts and production of almost similar results.
- In order to accomplish planned results, you need to define necessities in terms of both ***human and financial resources***. Depending on the planned activities and envisaged results, working teams covering both management and content expert positions have to be set up as well as a realistic budget in strict compliance with project activities, duration and eligibility rules.
- ***Duration of the project and calendar of actions*** are to be set in close relation to project activities and other external factors, if the case (e.g. seasonal works, appropriate measurements times etc.)
- ***Durability*** of the results needs to be ensured. Transnational cooperation should have a leverage effect, meaning that is has to give the possibility to multiply its results, but also a kick-off effect (for further developments and improvements).



Project triangle

Support from the programme

The DTP shall assist and support potential applicants throughout the development of project proposals and submission of EoI/ AF.

During the **project proposal development phase**, the Joint Secretariat (JS) with the support of National Contact Points (NCPs) shall:

- Organise thematic workshops during the annual conferences related to Programme's priorities to disseminate information on funding opportunities, objectives, indicative activities to be financed, allocated budgets
- Provide constant information, on specific Calls for Proposals, including specificities thereof (type of call, submission procedure and deadlines, available budget and co-financing rates, eligible applicants and partners, contact details for additional information and support)
- Provide individual consultations to get initial feedback on the project idea and advice to be considered when preparing the application
- Provide useful tools to facilitate partner search/ organise partner search events
- Provide guidance for project generation

During the **Application Form submission phase** the Joint Secretariat (JS) shall:

- Organise training seminars for Lead Applicants in order to introduce them into the details of the electronic submission of the Application Form
- Offer applicants technical assistance and support

Throughout the two phases, the DTP shall ensure full transparency and non-discriminatory access to same information to interested parties regardless of their location.

II. How to set up the partnership

Setting up a relevant and solid partnership is an indispensable precondition both for successful project application and implementation. Getting competent, reliable and committed partners on board is a challenging and time-consuming core-task of project preparation. It is strongly recommended to actively involve project partners already into project development and to establish direct and personal links among them at that early stage. Further to that – and the legal obligations outlined in section II.2 – the following critical factors should be considered for setting up a DTP project partnership.

General characteristics of a successful partnership

The quality of a project depends largely on an integrated composition of its partnership. A good partnership should pool all competences and capacities needed to address the project objectives and to achieve the set outputs and results. Thus, a partnership should comply with the following basic characteristics:

- The project partnership should be **set up in a strategic manner** and well adapted to its purpose

- The composition of partners should be **closely linked to the project objectives** and all partners should be **relevant for reaching the project outputs and results**
- The partnership should be **balanced** regarding the number of actors involved per country, distribution of project activities and responsibilities as well as related budgets
- **Policy relevance**: decision makers (e.g. ministries, etc.) should be either directly included in the partnership or involved as ASPs, or project partners should have the capacity to create strong links to relevant policy drivers
- The **partnership size** shall reflect the **transnational character** of the DTP, yet having a large partnership shall not be the ultimate goal. Too large, a partnership might cause significant organisational, communication and coordination problems and thus be cost inefficient, thus the **size of the partnership should be manageable**.
- **Multi-level governance**: In order to apply integrated territorial approach the partnership should not only consist of organisations from one sector (e.g. environmental associations) or one administrative level (e.g. local). The project should build on effective linkages across sectors (e.g. triple/quadruple helix approach) and governance levels (vertical cooperation)

Lead Partner ideal profile

Lead Partners are the drivers of a project. Though both the development as well as implementation of a project is substantially based on team work, the performance of a project very often directly links to the one of the Lead Partner. Lead Partners have to cope with this challenge. Therefore, Lead Partners should have the following profile:

- Solid **experience in the management of EU funded projects**; experience in the management of transnational cooperation projects is recommended
- Sound **institutional capacity, sufficient financial and human resources**; awareness of the high administrative burden which implies the Lead Partner role
- In-depth **knowledge of the DTP Programme rules**
- **High level of commitment** of both Lead Partner organisation (note that a Lead Partner cannot be changed between the first and second step of an application procedure!) and project management team
- **Intercultural sensitivity and pro-active management approach** of the project management team
- **Thematic expertise** with regard to the project topic
- Professional **experience in the Danube area**

Most of the above mentioned requirements are also applicable to project partners.

Requirements for Project Partners

Though project partners should be generally involved in a balanced way, the concrete role of a partner can vary depending on scope and kind of activities assigned (e.g. partners can act as work packages leaders), their capacity and/or level of experience. Before joining a partnership the following should be taken into account:

- Project partners should be committed to the project implementation and this can be considered the main asset when deciding to involve a certain institution as project partner
- Project partners have to be **acquainted with DTP rules**. They shall have an **in-depth understanding of the project** they intend to be part of, ideally by having been involved in its development
- Each project partner should be fully **aware of the specific role** within the project and the **institutional, managerial and administrative capacity** needed to fulfil this role. Staff involved has to be able to speak and to write in English
- Since no pre-financing is provided, project partners should have the **adequate financial capacity** to pre-finance their implementing activities, keeping in mind the time-lapse between the payment of project costs and the reimbursement of these costs through the DTP
- **Newcomers** are recommended to contact the respective DTP National Contact Points before joining a partnership and to consider partnerships with an experienced Lead Partner and/or project partners for doing their “first steps”
- The **involvement of permanent staff** of the participating organisations helps the network to stay operational after closure of project activities. It also ensures that knowledge gained during the project implementation remains within the organisations
- The **involvement of external expertise** should be considered to complement and bridge thematic gaps, technical constraints or administrative / managerial bottlenecks. External experts can play an important supportive role – especially for project partners still missing experience in transnational projects

III. How to develop the intervention logic

The core principle of Danube Transnational Programme is result-orientation, the basis for the result-orientation approach being the **“change”.** Therefore, all the projects that will be approved and implemented need to embrace the same principle. The intervention logic should reflect the path of the project and the necessary steps that will lead to change. It should be clear, simple and easy to monitor and implement.

The coherence of the project intervention logic (projects main and specific objectives, activities, outputs and results) with the programme intervention logic (specific objectives, outputs and results) is a pre-condition for a project to be funded under DTP. Projects not showing a clear link to a programme specific objective and/ or not contributing to the respective programme results will not be funded in the programme's framework.

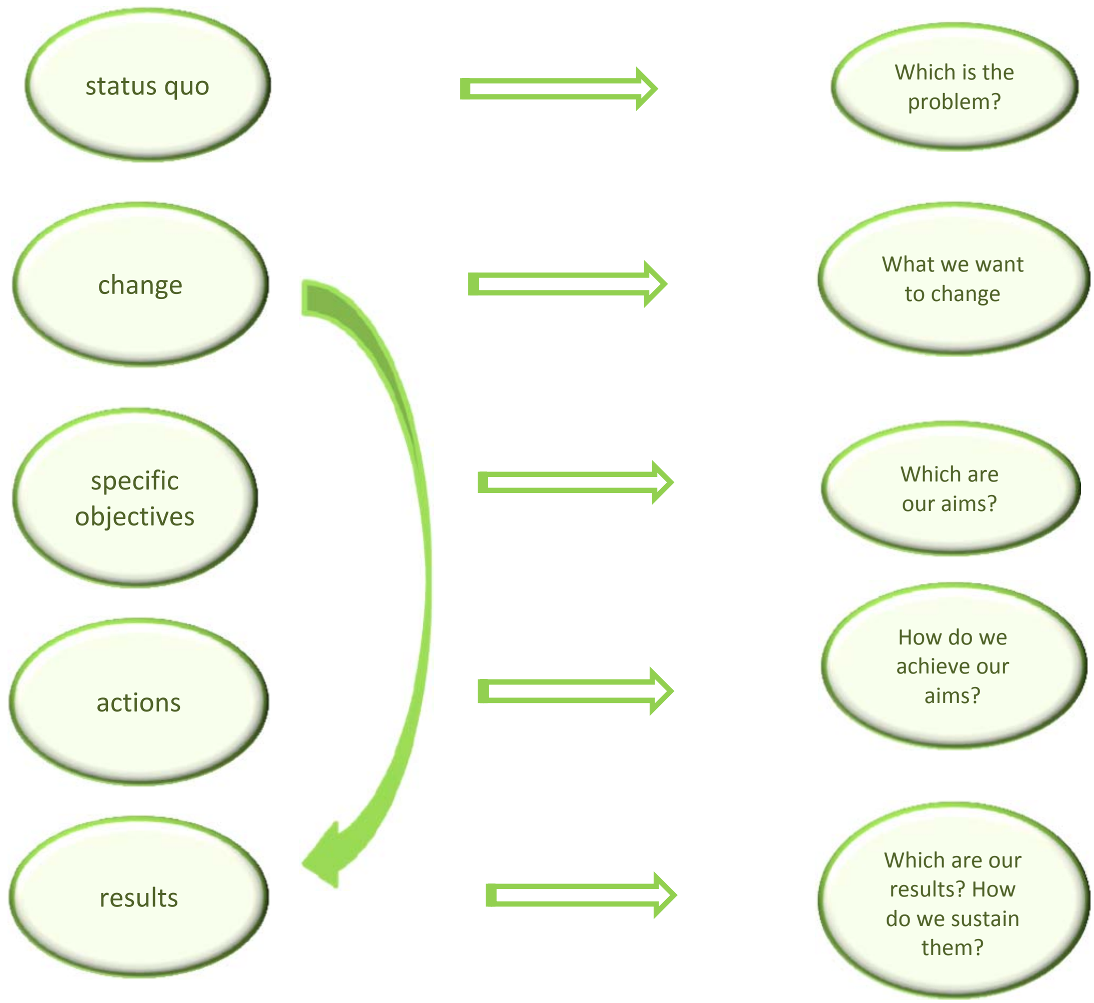
ATTENTION: Projects can choose maximum 5 programme output indicators to which they can contribute to.

Projects have to contribute to at least two programme outputs indicators to be considered eligible.

The project intervention logic is a tool that needs to show how the change will be achieved, therefore it should define:

- A clear status quo related to the project context (What is the problem?), including the causes that influence it
- The change that the project wants to achieve
- The specific objectives
- The actions and the outputs that are needed in order to achieve the change, including the definition of stakeholders and target groups
- The results and their durability

Project intervention logic:



When developing to project intervention logic the first question that should be answered is: “what positive change the implementation of my project will bring?” The answer to this question should give the project direction, based on which the specific objectives and the results can be defined. As the project specific objectives and results should be in line with the programme ones, the applicants should choose one Programme specific objective and its corresponding result to which their project is contributing the most. Only projects contributing to the programme objectives and results will be funded by Danube Transnational Programme.

How to build the project intervention logic?

Define project overall objective and result and link them to the programme intervention logic

- Specify project overall objective and project result.
- Choose a programme priority specific objective to which the project contributes and describe how it will contribute. It is important to secure consistency between project objectives and programme specific objective.
- Choose a programme result indicator corresponding to the chosen programme priority specific objective to which the project will contribute. A quantification of the projects' contribution to the programme result indicators is not required - the programme result indicator shall not relate only to programme beneficiaries, but to the whole target population. It's also not feasible, because results often materialise only after the project closure. However the project shall demonstrate the direct link between programme and project result, possibly also indicating to what extent it will contribute to the programme result.

Define project specific objectives

- The project should specify up to three specific objectives to stay focused.
- The project specific objectives need to show direct contribution to the project overall objective.
- It should be possible, at least to some extent, to measure achievement of project specific objectives with project main outputs. Ideally direct link should be established.

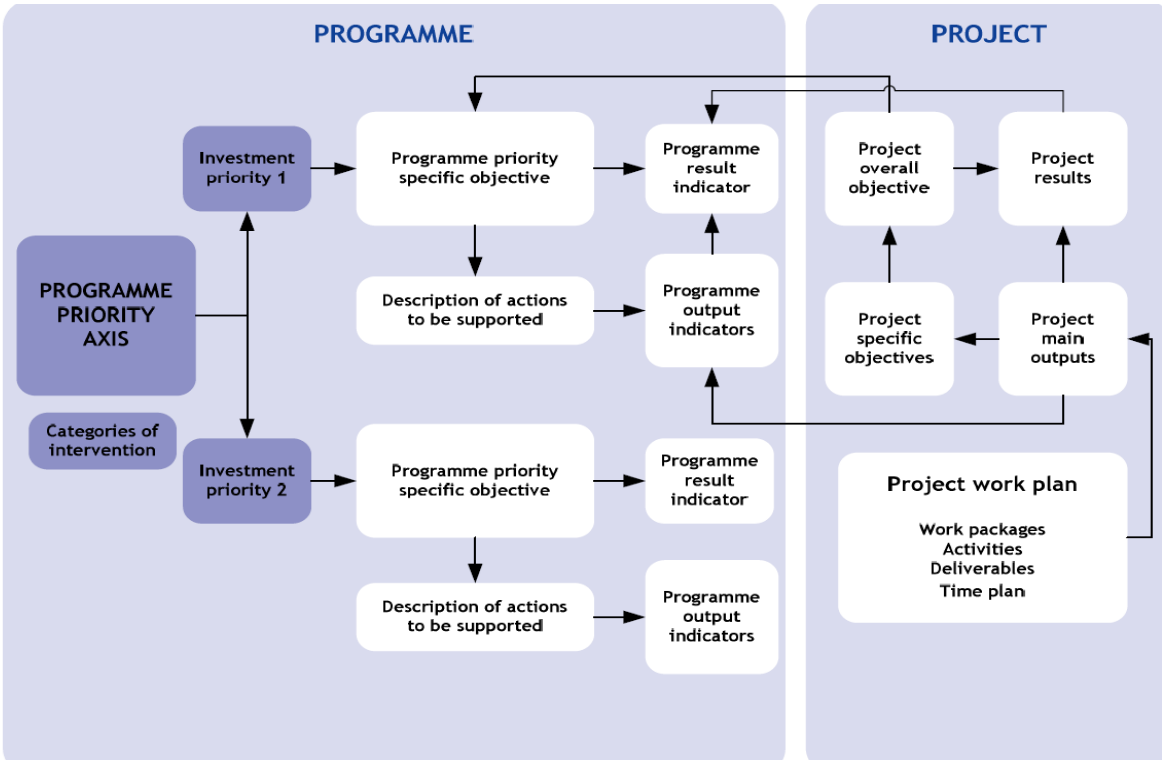
Define project outputs and link them to the programme output indicators

- Project outputs are defined in the workplan and only then linked to objectives, therefore first the workplan must be drafted. Not every work package must have a/several main outputs (in fact, a project may have only one main output).
- A project output is one that can be captured by a programme output indicator and that directly contributes to the achievement of the project result. ***Project output and programme output indicator need to have the same measurement unit to be able to aggregate them***.
- An aggregation of project outputs based on programme output indicators is essential for the achievement of output targets set on the programme level. Project specific output indicators are not accepted, because they fall out of programme intervention logic and therefore don't contribute to the achievement of programme objectives and indicators.

Develop work plan

- Project objectives, results and outputs have to be logically linked to project work plan (work packages, activities, time plan). The project work plan shall explain what needs to be done to deliver project outputs and achieve project specific objectives.
- The work plan is divided in several work packages, which are broken down into activities. The number of work packages should be limited to five to encourage projects to be focused. The number of activities, however, is unlimited.
- A side-product of the project that contributes to the development of a project output can be listed as a deliverable of an activity in the work package, however not every activity has to have a deliverable.

Programme and project intervention logic



Project intervention logic glossary

Term	Definition
Project overall objective	Describes the strategic and long term change that the project seeks to achieve for the benefit of the target groups.
Project specific objective	Describes the specific and immediate effects of the project and it can be realistically achieved within the implementation period.
Project result	Constitutes the immediate advantage of carrying out the project, telling us about the benefit of using the project main outputs. It should indicate the change the project is aiming for.
Project output	It tells us what has actually been produced for the money given to the project. It can be captured by a programme output indicator, and directly contributes to the achievement of the project results.
Project work package	Represents a group of related project activities required to produce project main outputs.
Project activity	Describes specific task performed for which resources are used. It is a work package component which may or may not result in a deliverable or an output.
Project deliverable	Is a side-product or service of the project that contributes to the development of a project's main output.

Programme intervention logic terminology is explained in the relevant EC regulations and guidance papers.

IV. How to contribute to the programme output indicators

The Programme achievements will be measured by result indicators in terms of intensity of cooperation of the Programme's target groups, as well as by output indicators quantifying products of the projects and relevant target groups. The information about the output indicators will be collected directly from the projects. Therefore, **the project output indicators must be linked to the programme output indicators.** Project specific output indicators are not accepted, because they fall out of programme intervention logic and therefore don't contribute to the achievement of programme objectives and indicators.

Horizontal output indicator:

The cross-cutting element of the DTP is increased institutional knowledge. Therefore, a horizontal indicator that captures the progress that the projects are contributing to in this area, was created: **"documented learning interactions".** The term "documented learning interactions" can be defined as the process of acquiring/ enhancing institutional knowledge in transnational cooperation context through joint work aimed at a practical solution, transfer of know-how, capacity building, exchange of experience, peer-reviews or any other type of learning processes.

Please note: It is **expected** that each project develops, implements and documents three joint learning interactions.

The indicator is mandatory; therefore each project has to contribute to it and will have to define its own target.

What is a 'documented learning interaction'?

DTP is a programme strongly supporting capacity building, knowledge transfer and learning. The way in which the indicator is formulated, the 'learning interactions' stands for a process of acquiring institutional knowledge in the transnational context through joint testing, piloting or any other type of demonstration activities related to newly developed, transferred or adapted services, products, structures, processes or strategic documents. Whereas 'documented' means that physical proofs that such a learning process has been implemented have to be in place and available to any interested party. In the application, applicants have to describe their planned learning interaction in a similar way to the example below. **The project must define a minimum of one learning interaction.**

Examples:

- *A project is developing an action plan for the implementation of a strategy in the field of valorisation of cultural heritage sites. The activity implies, among other activities, also the* *training of the target groups in implementing the action plan. The training represents the documented learning interaction.*

- *A project is developing an e-learning platform which is a tool. When delivering the actual training or e-courses through the platform then the learning interaction takes place.*
- *A project is developing a new service to be introduced on the market. The service itself represents a tool and the testing of the service represents a pilot. However, if inside the pilot there is a transfer of knowledge of the results of the testing then the activity should be considered learning interaction.*

Specific programme output indicators

In order to allow an aggregation of outputs at programme level and monitoring of the programme achievements, the Danube Transnational Programme has developed a typology for main project outputs based on the mission of the programme and the main actions that are going to be financed, according to the Cooperation Programme

Type of outputs	
Strategy	In the context of transnational cooperation, defining a strategy should have as starting point, a **definition of joint problems/ challenges** of the participating countries/ regions. The strategy should set up clear mid and long term objectives and priorities reflecting also the common vision of the Danube Region in the specific field. The involvement of the relevant stakeholders is crucial, since the strategy should be a reflection of their needs and ensure its sustainability and future implementation. **Strategies should aim at policy integration** in the Danube area in the selected fields and act as policy drivers below EU level but above national level. An **action plan** should break down the strategy goals and objectives into specific actions. It should include the sequence of steps to be taken, or activities that must be performed, for a strategy to succeed. Therefore, it should include a time line, the financial resources and a definition of the responsible actors. This type of output can relate either to the development of new or further improvement, revision and/or update of existing strategies/policies/ action plans as well as their subsequent implementation. Each developed strategy/action plan, whether implemented or not, should be only counted once under the respective output indicator. Project management and communication-related strategies such as e.g. the project communication strategy should not be considered under this output indicator. *Example: A project is developing a transnational strategy in the field of innovation networks. In this respect, each partner has to deliver a country report. The country reports represent the deliverables (or intermediate steps) necessary in order to develop the strategy (the output).*

Type of outputs	
Tools	A tool is to be understood as the **means for achieving a specific task**. Tools should be jointly developed at transnational level and be innovative. Tools can be **tangible** (physical or technical objects) and **intangible** (methods, concepts or services). They comprise amongst others of analytical tools, management tools, technical tools, software tools, monitoring tools, decision support tools etc. To be effective, a tool must be tailored to end users' needs and the respective framework conditions and has to be comprehensive and durable. This type of output relates either to the joint development of new or further improvement and/or adaptation of existing durable tools as well as their subsequent operational implementation. Each developed tool, whether implemented or not, should be only counted once under the respective output indicator. Project management-related tools internal communication platforms and templates should not be considered under this output indicator. *Example of tools: data bases, financing schemes, innovative platforms, ICT tools, management concepts, guidelines etc.*
Pilot actions	A pilot action is to be understood as a **practical implementation of newly developed solutions** (e.g. services, tools, methods or approaches, even an investment). A pilot action has an experimental nature which aims at testing, evaluating and/or demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of a scheme. Therefore, it covers either the testing of innovative solutions or demonstrating the application of existing solutions to a certain territory/sector. The results and practices of pilot actions should be exploited on and transferred to other institutions and territories. A pilot action is limited in its scope (area, duration, scale etc.) and must be unprecedented in a comparable environment. *Examples of pilot actions: pilot implementation of innovative management models, pilot implementation of schemes, pilot application/ testing of new technologies, services etc.*

Example on how to link the project intervention logic to the programme intervention logic

Programme Specific Objective

S.O. 2.2 Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage

Project main Objective

- Improve the effectiveness of heritage sites management as a lever for development

Project Specific Objectives

- Employing an innovative holistic approach capable of valorising the Danube cultural heritage
- Advancing institutional capacity in managing and promoting cultural heritage
- Increasing tourist attractiveness of targeted sited including income generation

Programme Result Indicator

Intensity of cooperation of key actors in the programme area in order to strengthen sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources (survey based composite indicator)

Project Result

- Improved management of the cultural heritage sites

Programme Output Indicators

- No. of documented learning interactions in finalised operations

Project Outputs

- e-learning course for site-managers and stakeholders: 1
- Study visits to relevant pilot sites: 4

- Number of strategies for preserving and management of natural and cultural heritage and resources developed and/or implemented

- Actions plans for site management: 4 (for 4 pilot sites)

Number of tools for preserving and management of natural and cultural heritage and resources developed and/or implemented

Project Outputs

- Data base for cultural heritage sites: 1
- Innovative management plan for the 4 pilot sites: 4
- ICT tool for increasing the visibility and attractiveness of heritage sites: 1

- Number of pilot actions for preserving and management of natural and cultural heritage and resources developed and/or implemented

Project Outputs

- Pilot implementation of innovative management models for historic sites: 4

V. How to set up an efficient project coordination

Management structure:

Setting up an efficient project coordination is mainly related to internal project organisation in terms of structure, assignment of responsibilities and clear decision making procedures so that smooth implementation of the project is ensured.

In defining the management structure of the project, the Lead Partner principle is to be considered meaning that one institution is designated as Lead Partner (LP) in accordance with Programme's requirements. The LP will act as an interface between the Programme (MA, JS) and the partnership. Besides its responsibilities with regard to the implementation of content related project activities, the LP is also responsible for establishing and maintaining a sound management and implementation of the project (depending on the capacities of the LP this can be externalised or organised in house). The LP is the one signing the Subsidy Contract with the MA on behalf of ERDF and IPA partners.

The document governing the legal aspects agreed by partners is the Partnership Agreement which has to be signed by all partners beforehand and submitted together with the AF and which lays down the relations of the LP with the project partners, such as responsibilities and contributions to the work plan and activities, reporting requirements, financial provisions and others. The Partnership Agreement enters into force and produces legal consequences only once the Subsidy Contract is signed. The DTP will make a Partnership Agreement template available before the launch of the call for proposals.

Size and composition of the **management team** can vary, yet the following three key positions shall ensure a proper implementation of the project:

- Project Manager (PM): in charge with the overall management and coordination of the project implementation, daily monitoring of project progress with the support of Work Package Leaders and Activity Leaders, compilation of the content parts of the Progress Reports and timely submission thereof, achievement of project objectives within the planned period of time and quality control of delivered outputs. He/ she also acts as an interface between Joint Secretariat and the partners
- Financial Manager (FM): responsible for permanent monitoring of all financial aspects, including internal management of funds, expenditures, spending rates, budget shifts, financial reporting, public procurements, collection of documents for the Controllers
- Communication Manager (CM): responsible for developing and implementing project communication strategy, defining communication objectives, approaches, activities and key messages to be sent out, preparation of information materials and promotion items, preparation and distribution of newsletters and press releases to identified stakeholders. The Communication Manager will also coordinate communication within the partnership by setting up internal communication rules and monitoring tools, updating the information on the project section in the DTP website etc.

The core management team will also act as permanent contact for external actors.

Similar positions as the ones mentioned above should also exist at partner level so that specific issues can be dealt with in a more efficient way.

Decision making structure

In order to establish a clear decision making structure, a **Steering Committee** needs to be established from the beginning of the project.

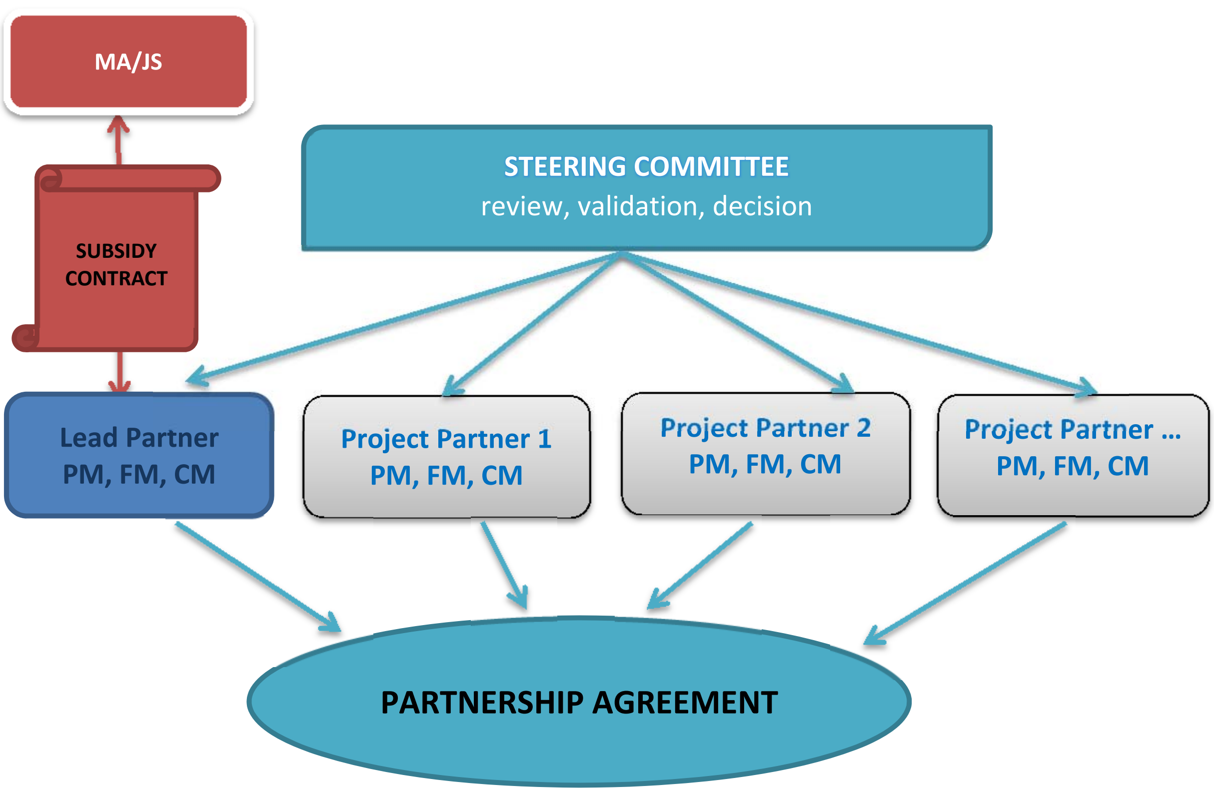
The Steering Committee will monitor, steer and take strategic decisions with regard to project adjustments in case of unforeseen situations. All project partners are represented in the Steering Committee which meets regularly (e.g. once/ twice a year).

Main tasks of the Steering Committee include:

- Checking if project implementation is in line with the activities and outputs foreseen in the AF
- Validating the progress towards the achievement of project outputs
- Review project performance in terms of implemented activities against spending
- Take decisions with regard to project modifications (e.g. content, partnership, budget, duration), if applicable, approval for which will be requested from relevant Programme bodies

For the Steering Committee to act in accordance with its tasks, rules of procedure have to be established and agreed from the beginning of the project implementation.

In its activity, the Steering Committee will be supported by the management team able to provide details on specific issues so that the decision making process is facilitated.



Quality management structure:

The success of a project relies heavily on its internal quality management which is a sine qua non condition for the delivery of qualitative and sustainable outputs. Quality management procedures should be established already in the application phase and they must include:

- Setting up an internal quality management structure consisting of designated individual(s) in charge with proofreading, analysing and reviewing project outputs from the qualitative point of view and submission of quality reports (as part of the regular progress reports), especially related to main outputs of the project (for further details on this topic, please refer to *Part 7 – Reporting* of the Applicants Manual)

- Additionally, external written validation of project outputs (e.g. by EUSDR PACs, relevant professional organisations or associations, expert working groups etc.), besides being considered a plus, might also be requested by the JS following analysis of the respective output

VI. Project communication strategy: key for the success of a project

In order to complement and strengthen the measures set up in the programme Communication Strategy, an important role will be played by the projects themselves. Communication activities are an important and integral part of the project implementation, and thus require a good planning as well as adequate financial and human resources. Already at the application stage, projects are expected to demonstrate how communication will help to implement the project successfully.

When developing project communication objectives it is important to consider that these objectives have to be linked to the specific project objectives. When deciding on which communication objectives to choose, projects will first have to identify their key target groups. Once the project communication objectives and target groups are clearly defined, it becomes important to think about how the project communication will achieve its goal and through which activities.

In their proposals, applicants are expected to describe the general goal and objectives for their project's communication, the target groups to be addressed, the main communication activities to be implemented, the related budget, as well as how the project partners will coordinate, communicate and share the tasks among themselves. All activities foreseen in the project communication strategy must be consistent with the other project activities and they should be a useful tool for the partnership to reach the main project goal(s) and for ultimately informing in all the partner regions about their successes and achievements.

The rules and recommendations included in this chapter aim to help projects plan and implement their communication successfully. Only the relevant information for the application phase has been included. Once the project is approved, the Joint Secretariat (JS) will provide communication training, a toolkit and templates for projects as support for their communication.

Project Communication Plan

The Communication Plan aims to coordinate the effective implementation of the communication activities and to support the achievement of project objectives. Therefore a Communications Plan must be developed by the projects once approved in order to have standardised project communication practices, and use them effectively throughout the whole project implementation. Thinking about the Communication Plan already in the application phase will help to have a more realistic approach on how to carry out the project communication and will facilitate its smooth implementation once the project is approved.

The project's Communication Plan needs to be developed in close cooperation with the project coordinator and project partners. Communication is an essential element of a successful project, so all partners must be involved and committed in the communication activities.

In developing the project Communication Plan, it is important to decide what communication tools and methods would be appropriate for specific project and communication objectives and for specific target groups.

It must include at least the following sections:

- **Project communication main goal and objectives**: What to achieve with the communication activities?
- **Target group(s)**: The success of project communication depends on establishing and developing continuous relations with the key audience (target groups previously selected) during the whole project duration, engaging some of them to contribute to the project implementation and reaching all of them when informing about the project achievements
- **Main messages** of the project to be communicated through the communication activities and to be tailored for different target groups
- **Tools and methods** to achieve the objectives: explanation of the foreseen communication activities, the **time plan** and which activities will be tailored to different target groups' needs
- **Evaluation measures**: Regularly checking whether – and to what extent - the activities are reaching the communication objectives, allowing revision and readjustment if necessary
- **Budget**: reasonable financial resources to be committed for the project communication activities and to be planned already in the application phase (thinking for instance whether, for some activities, the expertise of an external service provider is needed)

Responsibilities

The obligations of beneficiaries regarding information and communication measures for the public are included in: Annex XII, section 2.2 of EC Regulation 1303/2013: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0320:0469:EN:PDF

All information and communication measures provided by the beneficiary shall acknowledge and promote the EU support received from the Danube Transnational Programme by displaying the DTP logo, together with a reference to the Fund/s supporting the operation.

Each project partner has to plan enough staff and resources for the implementation of the communication activities. To ensure consistency, the Lead Partner should appoint a **communication manager**. The communication manager should be a qualified person in charge of the planning, coordination and implementation of the project's Communication Plan and distribution and involvement of all partners in communication activities. This person will be as well the liaison with the Joint Secretariat on project communication issues.

Internal communication

The communication within the partnership should be planned and budgeted from the start of the project to ensure engagement of all partners and the smooth implementation of the project. The internal communication needs to support the management of the project with measures to ensure fluent communication among partners.

The success of programme communication depends both on good project results and good cooperation between the projects and the MA/JS. The JS will be in contact with the appointed communication manager regularly, and it expects projects to actively participate in programme's communication initiatives by delivering content and photos for digital and print materials and involving the JS in major communication events.

Project acronym

We recommend using project names that are short, easy to pronounce and associated with the project's theme (using already existing brands and trademarks if not directly linked with the proposal should be avoided). They should be able to be clearly communicated to the general public and easily displayed on the project communication material. A longer explanatory name can be used for certain communication purposes.

Project websites within the programme website

The Danube Transnational Programme website will include and host one website per project. The integrated system of programme and project websites will facilitate the monitoring of project activities and it will save financial and human resources. No costs will be needed for creating and maintaining the project website since these services will be offered by the programme free of charge.

The Joint Secretariat will give projects access information (username and password) and guidance on how to produce and upload content to their webpages. The project webpages will have the same structure for all projects allowing some flexibility to create new sub-sections according to the projects' requests. All projects need to update their webpages regularly with content designed to attract new visitors during the whole project implementation.

The micro-sites will include:

- Pre-filled information fields with data from the application form: partnership, budget, etc.
- Dynamic information to be filled in manually by projects: project summary, project results, news and events, etc.

Projects might still develop a separate website for tools or products with a life reaching beyond the project and being a project output itself and not a simple communication tool. The development of such a separate website will be subject to approval during the assessment of the project and a specific justification will be required. In the event that this separate website is approved, the project will be required to follow the programme's corporate design.

Beyond the basic website, the programme encourages the projects to develop their presence online through social media and to use digital communication tools, when relevant to their communication objectives, target groups and the Communication Plan in general.

Logos and visual identity

The Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (Annex XII, Article 2.2) requires all beneficiaries to follow a number of rules regarding the use of the logo of the European Union and the respective fund. The logo must always be visible in a prominent place and of a comparable size to other logos used. The Danube Transnational Programme logo already respects all the programme requirements, and all approved projects are obliged to use it on all their communication materials (both hard copy and electronic as well as to display it in events).

DTP projects are not allowed to develop their own project logo. Developing a logo is costly, it has a limited lifetime and so many logos bring confusion to the audience. For this reason and in order to limit costs, projects will share the programme's brand just adding the project acronym below in the colours of the priority each project belongs to.

A specific logo might exceptionally be considered for an output/result with a lifetime going beyond the project if well justified in the application form and approved by the Joint Secretariat.

The DTP will provide a visual identity manual with rules and related templates for different materials to be followed by all projects. These documents will be downloadable from the DTP website. The JS will help the projects in fulfilling these rules and support them constantly in all their communication activities.

Poster

Within six months after the approval of the project, each project partner has to place at least one poster with information about the project (minimum size A3), including the financial support from the EU, at a location visible to the public, such as the entrance area of a building (Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Annex XII Article 2.2 paragraph 2.b).

The poster needs to stay visible for the whole duration of the project. The production costs of the poster need to be budgeted.

Events

At least two major events must be organised by the project to create awareness and disseminate the project results. A kick-off event should be organised within two months after the beginning of the project implementation and a final dissemination event should be organised at the end of the implementation period.

To these events, not only project partners but key stakeholders/final beneficiaries/decision-makers should attend and the audience should be as wide as possible. Some tips for a better organisation of the events will be included in the Communication Toolkit addressed to the approved projects. During the events, projects are encouraged to place the EU flag and ensure visibility of the programme logos.

Other activities/events can be organised by the project or the partners can decide to participate in an activity organised by someone else if relevant for the project implementation.
Projects are encouraged to think about the capitalisation opportunities with other projects and the related costs already in the application phase (joint publications, joint events, etc.). The DTP Capitalisation Strategy is aimed to promote synergies between projects on similar topics and increase the visibility and impact of their results.

The DTP encourages project partners to incorporate several other activities organised by the programme in their budget planning (an average participation of two-three events per year is to be budgeted). Events may include:

- Lead partner seminar (only once after the project's approval)
- Annual DTP events (once per year)
- Communication training (once per year according to the needs)
- Thematic capitalisation events (from 2017 once per year)

VII. Environmental sustainability

The total sets of greenhouse gas emissions caused by an organisation, event, product or person define their carbon footprint.

Changes in our lifestyles, attitudes and behaviours towards more environmentally sound choices will provide a contribution to reverse this situation.

The Danube Transnational Programme, covering a wide area of 14 countries and over 114 million of inhabitants that agreed to interact and work together for the next years, has a considerable potential carbon footprint. However, in line with Art 8 of Regulation (EU) No

1303/2013[1], the DTP would like to attempt to reduce any potential increase of carbon dioxide derived from the implementation of the DTP.

Experience of transnational programme implementation showed that two main factors, among others, directly contribute to increasing the carbon footprint of a programme: 1. excessive use of printed documents either for formal or informal use; and 2. extensive travels of the involved actors.

The actions planned to decrease the carbon footprint of the DTP are twofold. On one hand, a reduction of the printed paper needed for the implementation of the DTP and, on the other hand offsetting the CO_2 emitted during the travels of all actors involved in the DTP implementation.

Reduce – reuse – recycle principle

The first step towards a greener direction should be taken during the procuring process: whenever procuring for activities which will produce documents and publications in general, a clear request of using only recycled paper should be indicated in the related ToRs.

Considering the significant number of events planned and expected to be organised throughout the project duration, it is strongly recommended to avoid distributing paper copy of materials used during the events (e.g. agenda, printout of PPTs, discussion documents in general) and make appropriate use of the electronic support.

The DTP ensures a considerable reduction of request of paper documents from the projects in all steps of implementation.

1. Application phase: expressions of interest, application forms and all supporting documents will be requested in electronic format only. The signed paper version will be requested only for the signature of the subsidy contracts of approved proposals.

2. Reporting phase: progress reports and declarations of validations will be requested in electronic format only. Applications for reimbursement will only need to be sent in the signed paper version. Copies of deliverables will be requested in electronic format only.

We encourage using best practice procedures that stress the reduction of the used paper, its reuse and the recycling through appropriate recycling bins.

Reduce:

- The circulation of printed documents should be reduced by using email wherever possible

- It is advised to always use both sides of paper. Printers and photocopiers should be set to copy double-sided as default

[1] *"The objectives of the ESI Funds shall be pursued in line with the principle of sustainable development and with the Union's promotion of the aim of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment, as set out in Article 11 and Article 191(1) TFEU, taking into account the polluter pays principle.[…]"*

Reuse:

- Waste paper should be used and assembled into notepads
- It is advised to use designated containers to collect part-used waste paper. This can then be fed back through faxes/printers or used for rough working

Recycle:

- Confidential documents should be shred and sent for recycling
- All other used paper should be sent for recycling where possible

Carbon offset

According to a rough estimation that considered the experience of the past programming period, a minimum of 9,400 travels are expected during the Danube Transnational programme and project implementation. Therefore, it can be expected that travelling for programme/project purposes will substantially increase the carbon footprint.

The DTP strongly suggests the project partners to previously assess the need for travel and to explore the alternative options, such as conference calls, online meetings, etc.

As often travels cannot be avoided, the DTP proposes to first trying to reduce the impact of the travel by combining events together (e.g. project steering committee meeting with working group meeting and kick-off event) and/or by selecting the venue taking into consideration its accessibility (e.g. location easily reachable by train).

Another option that the DTP offers is the offsetting of the carbon emissions produced by the programme actors (programme bodies and project partners) when flying.

Carbon offsets are achieved through financial support of projects carried out by organisations that act as service providers of CO_2 compensation that reduce the emission of greenhouse gases in the short- or long-term.

Costs for compensating the CO_2 emissions are eligible for co-financing at programme level. Project actors are advised to read carefully the chapter on the eligibility of expenditures to make sure that programme rules are followed when purchasing carbon offsetting.