

Procedures to include project partners from outside the Programme area (first call for applications for project platforms)(update 24.10.2017)

According to the Programme rules there are certain requirements to be fulfilled to obtain the official support for involvement of project partners (PP) from outside the Programme area in the Programme.

There are obligations during the application phase – mainly the legal status and eligibility check of the potential PP, and those to be fulfilled during the contracting phase of the project – signature of a specific Agreement on Management, Audit and Control responsibilities. The latter will have to be signed between the country of origin of the PP from outside the Programme area and the IB.SH acting as Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat (MA/JS) of Interreg Baltic Sea Region. In both cases an authority responsible for transnational cooperation (Interreg/ ETC) in this external country has to be involved.

Several steps are to be taken into account (reference is made to the Programme Manual of Interreg Baltic Sea Region, chapter C.1.4). The main points are as follows:

Prior the project selection = during the application phase:

- Already prior the submission of the application by the lead applicant to the Programme the potential PP needs to identify and contact the national authority responsible for transnational cooperation/Interreg programmes in its country of origin¹. The respective contact information shall be made available to the MA/JS by the projects for further procedures, unless it covers the Netherlands or Great Britain as agreements have been established already. **There is no possibility to include partners from Austria as regular PPs.**
- After the submission of the application a confirmation of the PP's eligibility, i.e. the result of the legal status and eligibility check has to be submitted to the MA/JS of the Programme. This will have to be signed by the national responsible authority of the potential PP's country of origin.
- The request for the legal status and eligibility check will be provided by MA/JS to the national authority, together with a template for the country declaration on the PP's eligibility. This will be done upon finalisation of the admissibility check of submitted project applications, hence approximately 2-3 weeks after the submission deadline. For the first call for project platforms this will be in mid-March 2018 based on a submission deadline for applications in late February 2018.
- There might be national requirements to carry out this legal status and eligibility check – this will be identified by the national authority directly towards the PP.

¹ Identification of national authorities or institutions responsible for European territorial cooperation programmes in countries outside the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme area is possible via:

- Contacts provided at EU level (by Interact or the European Commission, ask Interact for details, see contact information at www.interact-eu.net)
- Contacts of MA/JS established during the current or former programme period (ask MA/JS)

- The legal status and eligibility check includes, if aware of, an indication of difficulties related to organisational and financial capacity of the potential PP(s) by the country of origin, e.g. with reference to undertakings in difficulties (Programme Manual chapter C.1.2) or previous implementing difficulties in funding programmes.
 - The country declaration/confirmation has to be returned by the PP or the national authority to the MA/JS in due time for the project assessment prior the distinctive Monitoring Committee's (MC) meeting for project selection. For the first call for project platforms the submission deadline for country declarations will be 11 April 2018.
 - For each potential external PP this legal status check has to be carried out. However, in case of several potential external PPs from one country of origin per call for applications the confirmation could be provided by the national authority as a joint document per country directly to the Programme's MA/JS.
- ➔ Signing the country declaration based on legal status and eligibility checks by the specific country is obligatory before projects can be selected including these external partners.
- ➔ **It is the partner's responsibility to follow up on the procedures with the national authority to obtain the signed country declaration or to ensure its delivery to the MA/JS directly from the national authority.**

After project selection = during the contracting phase:

- In order to grant the external PP EU funding within the Programme, the PP's country of origin will have to sign a specific Agreement on Management, Audit and Control responsibilities by the by the end of the contracting phase (approx. 3 months after project selection, for the 1st call for project platforms this would be in late Sep 2018).
 - Upon project selection this agreement will be provided to the national responsible authority by the MA/JS. For the 1st call for project platforms this will be done in mid-June 2018.
 - If the agreement is signed by the national authority according to plan and returned to the MA/JS (either via the PP or directly) the external PP can participate in the project and receive funds alongside the regular PPs (from countries within the Programme area).
 - However, in case this agreement will not be signed in due time by the PP's country of origin no Programme funding can be granted to this PP and the PP will either be excluded from the project or be involved as an associated organisation only. Should such a situation occur, the lead partner has to initiate a change procedure for the said partner organisation.
- ➔ Only one such agreement per country is needed, hence several PPs from one country outside the Programme area will benefit from an initial signature. No further action is needed for PPs from the Netherlands and from Great Britain as the specific agreements have been signed already linked to previous calls.
- ➔ Signing the agreement by the specific country is obligatory before a payment from the Programme can be made to the external partner.
- ➔ **It is the partner's responsibility to follow up on the signing of the agreement by the national responsible authority of its country of origin. The document shall be returned to the MA/JS directly from the national authority.**