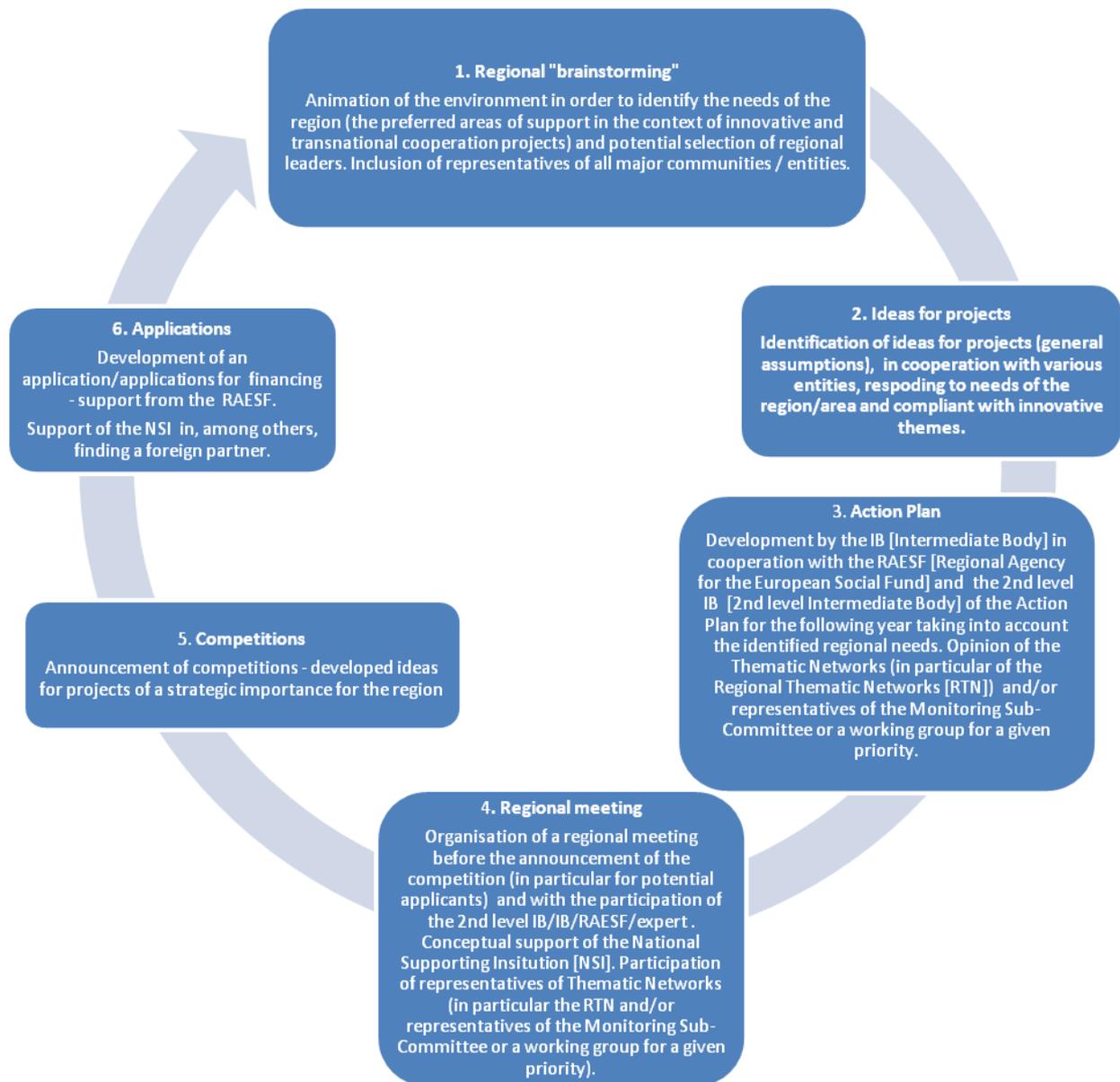


Model of strategic approach to the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects under the OP HC at the regional level

- recommendations of the National Supporting Institution of the CEP (**the Center of European Projects**) on the development of Action Plans.

Fig. 1



Introduction

As a result of the analysis of previous implementations of innovative and transnational cooperation projects under the OP HC, the NSI of the CEP recommends a strategic and comprehensive approach to the process of selection and implementation of such projects, along with the involvement of and cooperation with institutional partners (IB, 2nd level IB, RAESF, Thematic Networks, **representatives of the Monitoring Sub-Committee or working groups for a given priority**), key entities of the region and regional community, including local communities (i.e. representatives of towns, communes, districts), aiming at identification of problems important from the perspective of a given region or area (e.g. education, social integration) that could result in emergence of solutions (innovative products), which, after a successful validation, could be applied in practice in other units (horizontal mainstreaming) and/or be incorporated into mainstream policies (vertical mainstreaming). The described model is based on the proposed the bottom-up approach to the problem of selecting applications for financing in accordance with the assumption that innovative ideas (projects) stem from needs identified at their source, as well as from commitment and optimism resulting from the perception of an idea/project in the context of an opportunity of changing the situation in a given area/region. Such approach is also consistent with the presented in the Innovation & Mainstreaming Community of Practice forum approach to innovation, which provides for defining demand for innovation by identification of policy priorities and “gaps to be filled in” by innovation, as well as for selection and promotion of certain type of innovation by specifying requirements in documents (e.g. call for proposals documents) and selection criteria for the purpose of ensuring innovation in operational programmes.

Cooperation in regions for innovative initiatives and transnational cooperation



Status of the document

This document is a recommendation of the NSI as the institution supporting the process of implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects under the OP HC, which means that its application is not mandatory. Suggestions presented in the document may be applied in their entirety or selectively, depending on relevant needs, approach of a given IB to

the process of planning of innovative and transnational activities in the region, as well as adequately to the progress of works on the Action Plan and its consultation process.

This documents has been consulted with the Managing Authority of the OP HC.

Model of strategic approach to the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects under the OP HC at the regional level will be supplemented by recommendations of the NSI on informational and promotional activities for the abovementioned types of projects and by the Handbook on promotion and mainstreaming.

I. General notes:

Coordination of the planning process – Intermediary Bodies

It would be reasonable that works related to the coordination of the planning process are performed by IBs due to their role in the process of planning and implementation of activities, as well as to the annual obligation to prepare the Action Plan. The coordination function includes in particular the preparation of an appropriate work schedule for individual years (planning cycles), so as to enable the implementation of particular stages of the proposed model, as well as consulting the schedule with all institutions involved in the implementation of the planning process. The coordinator for the process should initiate a meeting and supervise all performed works.

Basic steps for the application of the abovementioned approach are presented in the model in fig. 1.

Framework assumptions:

- 1) Exploitation of the potential of key entities/institutions and communities in the region,
- 2) Exploitation of the available potential of institutions involved in the OP HC implementation process,
- 3) Enhancement of information flow and coordination of processes relating to the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects in the region,
- 4) Exploitation of the potential of the RAESF in the region,
- 5) Combination of the bottom-up approach with the approach assuming strong cooperation at every level with entities with potential for promotion of products or those that can provide effective mainstreaming (e.g. entities responsible for creating policies in given areas, competent for determining existing deficits and directions of changes, as well as entities specialising in supporting specific target groups).

Expected results:

- 1) Better quality and potential of the implemented innovative and transnational cooperation projects, among others owing to the implementation of projects with strategic importance for the region, including projects implemented in the partnership project formula¹,
- 2) Adequacy – the implemented project will reflect the actual needs in the region,
- 3) Increased involvement of regional communities and the group of indirect recipients of projects using products developed under such projects,
- 4) Achieving the synergy effect – by development of call for proposals/project assumptions in partnership with other entities,

¹ Partnership projects within the meaning of Article 28a, section 1 of the Act of 6 December 2006 on Development Policy (consolidated text: Dz. U. [Journal of Laws] 2009, No 84, item 712).

- 5) More effective promotion of products at the project implementation stage through involvement of various entities and institutions from the very beginning of the project,
- 6) Increased likelihood of developing products with potential of being applied in practice or in the mainstream policies,
- 7) Effective and reasonable use of available allocation for innovative and transnational cooperation projects,
- 8) Development of a democratic cooperation model at a regional level (representatives of various institutions and communities) for the development of regional policies

and, as a result of the above, increased financing of the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects.

II. Step by step description of the model implementation

1) Regional “brainstorming”, animation of cooperation in the region

The first stage of works under the model should include the organisation (cooperation of all RACESFs in the region recommended) of a meeting with the participation of representatives of regional community and major entities. The meetings may be financed with the funds of the IB in the RAESF (approx. 15% of the budget of each RAESF is available to the IB, which determines allocation of such funds). The task of the RAESF at this stage should be to support/animate the cooperation of entities of the region, in particular for the purpose of developing Action Plans for a given year with respect to innovative and transnational cooperation projects, as well as providing support for the selection of regional leaders and creating conditions for the potential establishment of partnerships for the implementation of partnership projects. Particular attention should be paid to the method of animating the environment by the RACESF with respect to cooperation in the region in the area of equal treatment of all regional entities.

a) Participants of the meeting

The meetings should be open to all interested parties. Tasks of the RACESF include ensuring that the meeting is attended by representatives of various environments, which may be of importance in the context of the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects (also with respect to promotion and mainstreaming of products being results of such projects), including representatives of government administration, local and regional authorities, third sector, regional entrepreneurs, representatives of the so-called areas of support, e.g. school education, social integration. The RAESF is also responsible for ensuring that the meeting is attended by entities being or having potential to be regional leaders, i.e. potential future project (including partnership projects) leaders. Invitations for the meetings should also be sent to the members of the Regional Thematic Networks and/or members of the Monitoring Sub-Committee or a working group for a given priority, as well as to representatives of the National Thematic Networks for the purpose of ensuring an adequate flow of information between the regional and central level.

At the same time, all institutions involved in the process should engage in the animation in such manner as to demonstrate the importance and value of the meeting for the region, encourage key entities to participate and ensure that the information about the meeting is provided to all interested parties.

b) Subject of the discussion

The discussion should aim to identify preferred areas of support under the OP HC for the purpose of developing the Action Plan for the following year. The discussion should be based on the available data on the overall situation in the region with respect to the needs of intervention under the OP HC. The discussion should focus on a preliminary diagnosis of the regional situation carried out on the basis of, among others, the following documents: strategy of regional development, regional innovation strategy, data on the situation in the region at the disposal of the RAESF and any research/analyses and existing experience of entities specialising in the field. Such documents, analyses and studies would allow the inclusion of such areas, with respect to which the existing support proved ineffective or which lack new solutions for identified areas or specific target groups. The diagnosis should also be supplemented by the description of the initial situation at the level of other regions and the central component of the OP HC, given the need to ensure complementarity and coordination between innovative projects for the central and regional Priorities, which will result in an increased area of impact of projects. Invitations to the meetings should be provided to experts with knowledge on areas to which the selected projects may possibly belong. The participation of such experts in the meeting may be financed from the funds of the IB or the RAESF.

In addition, the meeting moderator (e.g. representative of the RAESF) should note that the areas of support should be a response to actual needs of the region and must be compliant with the detailed objectives of individual Priorities. At the same time, the discussion, in respect of innovative projects, should be limited to Innovative Themes, as provided for in the *Guidelines of the Minister of Regional Development on implementing innovative and transnational cooperation projects under the Operating Programme Human Capital*. It means that the result of the discussion may not be a “wish list” without any reference to the scope of the ESF support, programme documents and binding guidelines and recommendation in this area.

c) Moderation

During the meetings, their participants should be encouraged to implement projects of strategic importance for the region or area. A large quantity does not always mean good quality, in particular when it comes to difficult and long-term projects, which definitely include innovative and transnational cooperation projects. Additionally, allocations greater than in case of standard projects are required for the implementation of transnational projects, for example due to costs of meetings or flights. The implementation of partnership projects should also be considered, if there is such need and potential in this regard in the region. In the event of implementation of such project, the need to take into account the provisions of Article 28 (a) of the Act on development policy making, which sets out methods of selecting partnership projects, should be considered. At this stage it is possible to carry out a preliminary assessment of interest among the present institutions/entities in implementing this type of projects. It is important that after the meeting, its participants are aware of benefits of cooperation of entities of the region for the implementation of projects with a strategic importance for the region (concentration of efforts and resources on one/several objectives, synergy, easier promotion and mainstreaming by participation of/support for the project form representatives of various environments and decision-makers, establishing rules and the atmosphere of cooperation).

d) Summary

Following the discussion with the participation of the moderator, it is suggested that several preferred areas of support for innovative and transnational cooperation projects of the largest

importance for the region are selected for the purpose of developing the Action Plan and taking into account the above assumptions.

2) Ideas for projects

The preferred areas of support in a given region selected during the discussions are a basis for determining assumptions of potential projects. At this stage general assumptions of ideas for projects² may be selected (in line with the assumptions of the priority/action and in case of innovative projects – compliant with Innovative Themes). With respect to selected transnational cooperation projects and projects involving a transnational component, it should be considered, in which areas of a significant importance for the region the cooperation with a foreign partner provides the most tangible results in the context of regional development. It should also be noted that the Detailed Description of the Priorities of the OP HC offers the possibility of implementing projects with the participation of a transnational component, which must be borne in mind when developing Action Plans taking into account the needs of the region.

3) Action Plan

To actively allocate funds earmarked for the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects and improving the quality of the implemented projects, depending of the previous actions and the status of contracting and/or expenditure within a given priority, it is, for example, possible to:

- abolish restrictions on the maximum value of the project,
- allocate to the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects in a given year (or in a given call for proposals) of a maximum amount of funds permitted to be allocated for the implementation of such projects (i.e. at least 4% of the allocation),

An allocation to a call for proposals announced within one priority would, therefore, involve the total available allocation earmarked for the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects in the programming period 2007-2013 (at least 4% of the allocation for a given priority axis in the period 2007-2013),

- concentrate resources on the areas of support identified as the most strategic for the region and corresponding to its actual needs,
- in case of transnational cooperation projects, due to the process of searching for foreign partners being very time-consuming, the extension of the call for proposals in order to provide the applicants with sufficient time for finding a partner,
- due to the nature of innovative and transnational cooperation projects and frequent lack of adequate research or logistics capacities, as well as due to little experience in the promotion/mainstreaming of “small” entities, taking into account high costs of transnational cooperation projects, the implementation of the project as a partnership should be considered, e.g. as a strategic criterion.

² This should be understood as general assumptions/concepts of innovative and transnational cooperation projects, which may be the basis for developing an optimal Action Plan adequate to the needs of the project.

The Regional Thematic Networks and/or members of the Monitoring Sub-Committee or a working group for a given priority should participate in giving opinion on the final draft of the Action Plan.

4) Regional meeting before the announcement of the call for proposals

a) Participants

The regional meetings should be attended by representatives of all institutions involved in the process of planning and implementing the innovative and transnational cooperation projects in the region, i.e. the IB, 2nd level IBs, RAESF. Representatives of the Regional Thematic Networks and/or members of the Monitoring Sub-Committee or a working group for a given priority, and in particular potential applicants should be invited to participate in the meetings. The participation of other interested parties in the meeting should not, however, be excluded. The meeting should also be attended by the representative of the NSI (the so-called “guardian of the region”).

b) The form and organisation of meetings

The regional meeting should take the form of an informational and promotional meeting. At the same time, an expert support should be ensured adequately to the needs of potential applicants with regard to proper preparation of project assumptions and application for financing. The agenda of the meeting may also include a discussion on good and bad practices on the basis of currently implemented projects.

The coordinator of the planning process should be responsible for the logistics of the meeting (room, catering, inviting representatives of the 2nd level IB, RAESF, Regional Thematic Networks and/or members of the Monitoring Sub-Committee or a working group for a given priority). Potential applicants and other interested institutions/entities should be invited to participate in the meeting. The NSI may provide horizontal expert support (nature of innovative and transnational cooperation projects).

5) Call for proposals

a) Planning

In planning call for proposals, both with respect to innovative projects and transnational cooperation projects, the deadline for submission of applications should be given a thorough consideration. In relation to transnational cooperation projects, the sufficient period of call for proposals is required for finding a foreign partner, while in case of innovative projects, this issue is also very important as such projects are generally very ambitious and complex and, therefore, require more time than standard projects for preparation of accurate diagnosis of initial situation and selecting potential innovative product. Alternatively, it is possible to announce an open call for proposals, but then the risk associated with the selection of projects of “inferior” quality has to be taken into account (project submitted earlier are not necessarily of the best quality, yet the projects are selected on the basis of order of submission of applications).

b) Applications for financing

The Implementation Institution provides assistance to potential applicants in terms of discussing the call for proposals documentation (during the meeting). The employees of RAESF (trained by the NSI on the nature of innovative and transnational cooperation projects) provide expert support in preparation of the application for financing. If the support of an area expert in preparation of the application for financing is required, the RAESF mediate in finding such an expert. If necessary, the NSI provides support in finding a foreign partner.

Table presenting stages of works in the strategic planning cycle

Stage of works	Institution	Task
1) Regional “brainstorming”	RAESF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisation of a meeting, dissemination of information about the meeting, attempt at providing information to all potentially interested parties, ensuring the participation of representatives of various environments (“the full spectrum of the region”) • moderation of the meeting • preparation/collection of materials for discussion • preparation of conclusions from the discussion for the IB (preferred support areas of a strategic importance for the region) for the purpose of developing the Action Plan for the following year.
	2nd level IB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active participation in the discussion and meeting
	IB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active participation in the discussion and meeting
	NSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possible participation in the meeting (“guardian of the region”)
	RTN and/or members of the Monitoring Sub-Committee or workings groups for a given priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation in the meeting.
2) Ideas for projects	RAESF in cooperation in the IB and the 2nd level IB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selection of ideas for projects (general assumptions) • verification in terms of programme assumptions (range of intervention - priority - action – Innovative Themes)
3) Action Plan	RAESF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cooperation in the development of the Action Plan in terms of compliance with the preferred areas of support selected during the meetings

	IB, 2nd level IB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of the Action Plan taking into account the results of the discussion
	NSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expert support with respect to the development of the Action Plan
	RTN and/or members of the Monitoring Sub-Committee or working group of a given priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing opinion of the final draft of the Action Plan
4) Regional meeting	IB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisation of the regional meeting in terms of logistics and agenda, invitation of representatives of the 2nd level IB/ RAESF, experts, etc.
	2nd level IB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation in the meeting of persons involved in the implementation of innovative and transnational cooperation projects. Expert support on information on call for proposals documentation
	RAESF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assistance in the organisation of the meeting: invitation of participants, including potential applicants • dissemination of information on the meeting in the region • initial promotion and mainstreaming by referring to good practices/experience with the already implemented projects.
	NSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • horizontal support with respect to the nature of innovative and transnational cooperation projects; possible participation in the meeting of the representative of the NSI – “the guardian of the region”
	RTN and/or members of the Monitoring Sub-Committee or workings groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation in the meeting and discussion

	for a given priority	
5) Call for proposals	2nd level IB/IB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • announcement of the call for proposals
6) Conclusions	RAESF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assistance in developing the application for project financing, possible assistance in finding an area expert
	NSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possible support in finding a transnational partner