AQUARIUS

AQUARIUS

The farmer as water manager under changing climatic conditions

Project handbook

September 2009

Purpose

Project handbooks and guides

The purpose of this Project handbook is to give all partners a clear idea about the project processes and procedures for our work together.

Part of the description is as stated by InterReg while other parts just indicate how the project can function in an appropriate way.

It should be stressed that the partnership agreement is the formal document between the lead beneficiary and the partners while this project handbook is a document you can consult when you need to know how to do things on a more practical level.

It should be considered that due to our coming from different kinds of organizations and from different countries it might be necessary to consider elements you don't usually consider. For that reason we have decided to make a rather heavy project handbook which we will try to follow in the project.

Should something turn up which has not been dealt with in the handbook we will update and revise the handbook.

Our project - Aquarius - the way to succeed

Our common project is linked together by the concept "the farmer as water manager". If we are going to succeed with this project it is important to bear this in mind throughout.

The partners all contribute with important elements, which put together create the concept of the farmer as water manager. Only if all bear in mind that the farmer is the key actor for sustainable management of water and his capacity to aggravate or mitigate extreme flows, droughts and water quality we will succeed.

In the project we aim to develop the farmer as water manager able to practice sustainable farming under climatic changes with due respect to environmental protection. We want farmers to play an active role in the positive management of water resources through partnerships with other farmers, water boards, local and national government.

Through coordinated implementation of case-study interventions we will demonstrate the potential opportunities for farmers as water managers across the NSR.

Within this overall goal we aim to:

- Identify common and particular constraints for farmers successfully acting as water managers;

- Develop innovative mixes of technical, financial, institutional approaches to integrated land-water management by farmers;

- Test approaches to participation in the cooperative planning and implementation of land-water management initiatives by agencies and farmers;

- Incorporate state-of-the-art research outcomes into management and policy (particularly from climatic changes, agro-ecology and governance);

- Increase the interaction between land-water stakeholders both locally and across boundaries (local, national and EU) and across sectors (e.g. land, water and recreation);

- Ensure a legacy by creating demonstration sites and stakeholder networks that will continue to encourage further innovation.

Objective

The overall objective of the project is to enable farmers to act successfully as water managers under changing climatic conditions. The project will put in place sustainable measures that will reduce the consequences of flooding, droughts, water shortage and nutrient transport from land to the water environment.

This objective will be based upon the understanding of the current state of the system; the understanding of trends in the future and the opportunities arising from these; the options available to help farmers act as water managers; evaluation of putting these options into practice and disseminating our findings. These are laid out below:

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1. Baseline description of existing land and water management and its impact on the ecosystem in the project areas.

2. Baseline description of direct stakeholders, their socio-economic structures and cultural traditions in the project areas.

3. Identification of future challenges for the farmers and the environment under changing climatic conditions, developed and shared through Stakeholder Platforms for responsible water management.

4. Identification and description of key methods for farmers to deal with increased temperatures, nutrient losses, flooding and droughts in the future.

5. Opportunities for farmers to act as water managers by using new measures and techniques identified and demonstrated at farm and catchment level.

6. Lessons learnt captured in a manual illustrating ways for farmers to act as water managers.

7. Recommendations on future land and water management planning.

Project organisation

What makes a Territorial Cooperation project like AQUARIUS different to traditional national projects?

AQUARIUS involves partners from different types of institutions and organisations with different fields of expertise and organisational cultures. It means that we have different expectations and working methods and these differences need to be managed in order to ensure that the team works together.

> Working with partners from different countries and different organizations involves bringing together different working cultures. This requires good communication throughout the project in order to minimize the misunderstandings.

Remote working within larger partnerships over longer periods of time requires extremely good planning and organization, commitment to the project from all partners and efficient and timely communication in order to achieve the common objectives and avoid isolated outcomes.

Due to the above considerations it's important that we have a clear cooperation structure transnationally and at pilot scale:

The transnational steering group.

The group consists of a representative from each pilot and a communication person from each pilot. The representatives must have local engagement and, of course, have competence to make decisions on behalf of the local pilot groups.

We recommend that the representative from the local pilot participating in the steering group is the same as the person responsible for the local pilot.

Further we suggest that one person from each pilot who will be responsible for communication and involvement joins the steering group in order to secure a constructive dialogue between the various stakeholders.

All in all we will then have a steering group consisting of:

- A Chair from the Lead Partner: Irene Wiborg
- A representative from each pilot (7 pilots)
- A communication person from each pilot (7pilots)
- A secretary from the Lead Partner: Leif Raun

A list of the representatives from the 7 pilots can be found here:
http://wss3.landscentret.dk/websteder/Aquarius/Lead%20partner/Contactlist.doc

Project secretariat

The **project secretariat** consists of:
Project Manager: Irene Wiborg, iaw@landscentret.dk
Financial officer: Thomas Dunker Nielsen, ton@landscentret.dk

Project officer: Leif Raun, lfr@landscentret.dk
Communication: Thyge Hansen, thh@landscentret.dk
Project secretary: Karen Engell Dalsgaard, ked@landscentret.dk

The Pilot Secretariats;

The Danish Pilot group:
Chair: Susy Lauesen, Environmental Centre Aalborg, sulau@aal.mim.dk
Vice chair: Flemming Gertz, Danish Agricultural Advisory Centre, flg@landscentret.dk
Kirsten Broch, Environmental Centre Aalborg, kiebr@aal.mim.dk
Jørgen Bidstrup, Environmental Centre Aalborg, jobid@aal.mim.dk
Irene Wiborg, Danish Agricultural Advisory Centre, iaw@landscentret.dk
Leif Knudsen, Danish Agricultural Advisory Centre, lek@landscentret.dk

Responsibilities of the LP and partners

Definitions
Lead Partner (LP) = Lead beneficiary in the InterReg context
Partner= Beneficiary in the InterReg context

The project managers of the individual pilots are not formally responsible according to InterReg. But in AQUARIUS we want this structure in order to ensure that partners not participating in the Steering Group understand all information from the LP and the Steering Group properly.

What is the Lead Partner?
The Lead Partner should be considered the overall project manager.
The formal responsibilities can be found in Fact Sheet no. 5.

The Individual pilots have their own project managers for ensuring that their share of the activities is delivered but it is the Lead Partner who is responsible for making sure that the activities, timetables and budget for the whole project stay on track and for reporting on them to InterReg.

Secondly, the Lead Partner is generally the only member of the partnership that is in regular contact with programme management bodies.

It should be stressed that the individual member states are ultimately responsible for each partner. This rule is different to the InterReg III B rules.

Who is the Lead Partner?
The Danish Agricultural Advisory Service (DAAS) is a partnership made up of 36 local advisory centres and a national centre. This unique two-level advisory system is both owned and used by Danish farmers. The partnership employs app 3,500 professionals.

DAAS' history dates back to around 1875 when farmers' organisations started to employ their own advisers.
Today, DAAS is one of the leading agricultural advisory services in Europe.

For further information on Lead Partner Organization please look at this page:
http://www.lr.dk/applikationer/kate/viskategori.asp?ID=lr0030000200&fra=menu

What are the responsibilities of the Lead Partner and the partners?

All partners are responsible for fulfilling their own tasks and spending funds solely on the activities agreed in the application.

The split of formal responsibilities between the Lead Partner and partners in the project is defined in the partnership agreement.

InterReg rules

Follow the rules

Managing a project means learning to live with programme rules. These rules are defined in details in the regulations establishing the InterReg programme. They can be frustrating at times but this handbook identifies many ways of minimising the trouble involved. As a general rule:

> Make sure that project documents and systems meet programme requirements before you start work in your regional pilots. Putting problems right later on will involve a lot of extra work and effort (and may result in a loss of funds).

In the partnership agreement and the attached appendices and fact sheets you will find the most important program documents.

Please make sure that you, as a partner, are aware of these formalities.

At pilot level LP recommends that you discuss the rules and the regulations you should be aware of during the project.

The chair of the pilot secretariat is recommended to ask their partners to participate in a meeting where you go through the regulations.

Financial matters

What is de-commitment and what is the n+2 rule?

De-commitment was introduced as a tool to encourage efficient financial management and avoid large amounts of funds being left inactive in programme accounts for many years. At the start of each year (year n), the Commission allocates or 'commits' funds to each programme. These funds have to be spent within three years (by the end of n+2). If they have not been spent they are returned to the Commission or 'de-committed' from the programme.

This means that programmes have to operate efficiently and begin allocating funds as quickly as they can. It has been a very successful tool and has meant that programmes have re-evaluated not just the way funding is allocated but a whole range of management issues from speeding up control work to building project development capacity in programme areas.

InterReg has sometimes struggled to spend the money in time because of the added challenges of building cooperation between different countries, which often delays both programme and project start-up. Despite this, the amounts lost to de-commitment have been lower than anticipated though many programmes avoided de-commitment of funds only through special efforts and by increasing the reporting burden on projects. There is strong Member State support for the rule as a way of ensuring the efficiency of EU funds management. So, even though it has been relaxed for some programmes in the new period (they now operate with n+3 for the first half of the programme), it is extremely unlikely ever to be abolished.

What does it mean for the projects?

One of the main causes of de-commitment problems has been that programmes estimate how much money they will spend each year from the amounts that projects say they will spend. Unfortunately, projects very rarely meet their spending targets and this means that programmes cannot report sufficient expenditure. Indeed, the threat of de-commitment led to the creation of the concept of 'project under-spending' (projects failing to meet the spending targets in their budgets).

Of course the InterReg IVB has safety margins and a small under-spend will not be a problem. The problem has come from badly managed projects that have spent substantially less than they budgeted and action will probably be taken against them in future. This is likely to take the form of grant cuts if budget performance does not improve.

Project managers from each partner need to check programme rules on what action is possible.

How do projects ensure that they do not fall into this group? One main problem in the current programmes has been that projects under-estimate the time needed for project start-up before main implementation can begin.
Plan carefully for what needs to happen and how long this will take and reduce your budget for the first months accordingly. The other main problem is that projects simply over-budget: The safety margins built into the budget are too big and the project does not the need the full grant it has asked for.

In some programmes these difficulties have led to a dangerous misunderstanding: Projects feel that the most important thing is to spend money and there is no need to make cost savings. This is clearly not the case and financial control will continue to demand evidence of value for money actions. If you find that the project is over-budgeted, unnecessary spending is not the answer. Talk to the programme instead and it will generally be possible to find a compromise solution that safeguards both the project and the programme.

Financial Issues to be found in the Fact Sheets:

http://www.northsearegion.eu/files/user/File/IVB%20Document%20Library/Fact_Sheets/IVB%20NSRP%20Fact%20Sheets%20version%2021%20August%202009.pdf

In this Fact Sheet you can find information on how to find exchange rates, which are eligible costs and how these are calculated.

Reporting tools: Timesheet for internal use for documentation of hours used.

A detailed cost overview spreadsheet has been developed which must be used to create the background for filling in Appendix 7 Finance report beneficiaries. The revised finance report and detailed cost overview spreadsheet must be sent by email and surface mail to Lead – no later than three weeks after the project period's expiry.

Tools:
http://wss3.landscentret.dk/websteder/Aquarius/Lead%20partner/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fwebsteder%2fAquarius%2fLead%20partner%2fEconomy%20and%20time%20reporting&FolderCTID=&View=%7bEC0B971A%2d241C%2d432A%2dA207%2d5F2B6F8AACED%7d

This whole process as well as the most important issues conserning 1st level control and financial mattes in the InterReg IV B Northe Sea programme are described in the below PowerPoint presentation from the Kick-Off meeting.

Guidelines etc. can be found in the IVB document Library:

http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/documents/document-library/

Agenda

•Document Library

•Manual – 1st level control

  –The Process

  –Responsibilities

  –Control at Beneficiary level

  –Control at Lead Beneficiary level

  –Audit Trail

•Suggestions/hints

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Document Library

- http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/documents/document-library/

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The Process

•Designation of controllers
•Approval of controllers
•Beneficiary reporting (1st reporting period)
•Execution of 1st level control (1st reporting period)
•Lead Beneficiary reporting (1st reporting period)
•Execution of Lead Beneficiary control (1st reporting period)
•Control at programme level (1st reporting period)

The Process

•Designation of controllers
•Approval of controllers

Flow chart for decentralised system

The Process

For each periodic report the beneficiary must prepare the following documents for the controller:

- A filled in reporting form
- A detailed overview spreadsheet with all costs incurred

The controller carries out his/her control

Within 3 weeks following the end of the reporting period, each beneficiary forwards the above mentioned documents and the controller check list to the Lead Beneficiary

Deadline

Project start   30/9-2009   31/3-2010   30/9-2010   31/3-2011   30/9-2011   31/3-2012

1st reporting period   2nd reporting period   3rd reporting period   4th reporting period   5th reporting period   6th reporting period

How is eligeble costs calculated?

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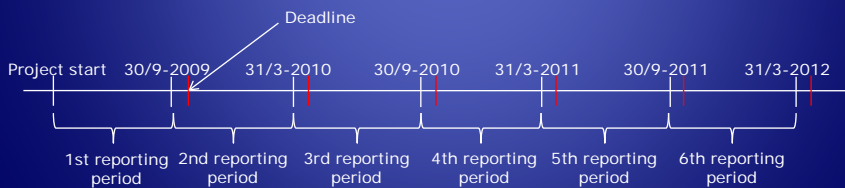
How is eligeble costs calculated?
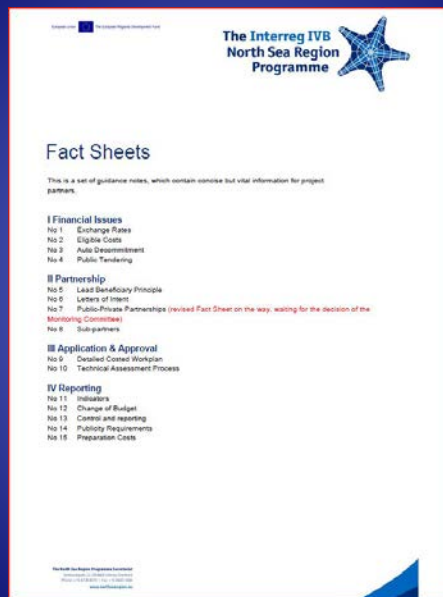
Financial report for Beneficary

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Obligatory spread sheet acording to Article 20
Excample:

3   Permanent staff

Year	WP	Name of Person	Annual gross salary including social security contribution (a)	Annual number of working hours (b)	Time unit rate (c=a/b)	Number of hours assigned to the project (d)	Total (c*d)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total hours
2009	1	Irene Wiborg	70.000	1.644	43	29	1.234,79	12	8	9										29
2009	2	Irene Wiborg	70.000	1.644	43	21	894,16		10	11										21
2009	1	Leif Raun	65.000	1.644	40	34	1.344,28	10	22	2										34
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
						0	0,00													0
Total							3.473,24													

Spread sheet, Excample:

4   Travel

Year	WP	Purpose of travel	Date of travel (dd/mm/yy)	Location (town,country) from/to	Names of persons travelling	Invoice/ receipt N°	Invoice/ receipt Date (dd/mm /yy)	Date of payment (dd/mm/yy)	Total without VAT
2009	2	Car travel, projekt meeting	21.01.09	Ålborg	Irene Wiborg	911011	21.01.09	29.01.09	50,26
Total									50,26

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Spread sheet's showing all costs incured

• Be aware that the sheets will be on WP level
 (exception: "The financial report").

•You will find the spreadsheet and timesheet on share point soon.

• Take the spreadsheet as a tool which help keeping on track.
  – If controll for instance in 2020 it will be easy to find the
    right connections between the financial report, spreadsheet
    and timesheet

Reponsibilities

Project management:
•Goals, strategies and plans of actions are available
•Performance follow-up is carried out
•Organisation of administration to include the necessary financial management, accounting systems and internal controls

•To ensure that accurate and reliable accounts are presented
•To document the that the funds have been applied in accordance with the requirements
•To document that the results that were sought have been achieved

Reponsibilities

Controller:
- To plan and execute control
- Review and assess whether the management has complied with its obligation to ensure reliability and accountability

- Good collaboration between controller and the beneficiary is essential

- Requirements
  - An in depth knowledge of the following programme documents is considered necessary to perform 1st level control checks
    - INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Operational Programme (administrative arrangement)
    - The North Sea Region Programme Fact Sheets (specific rules and procedures)
    - Manual for the 1st level control in the North Sea Region Programme

Control at Beneficiary level

The controller has to verify the following during the control:
1. If the project report is correct (no essential errors or lacks)
2. If the conditions for receiving the grant is fulfilled
3. If the grant is used for the purpose as mentioned in the contract
4. If the information given by the beneficiaries is correct and documented

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Control at Beneficiary level

How to execute control:
- On the spot and cover 100% of expenditure
  - Exception: Sample checks
    - These sample checks have to provide reasonable assurance regarding the entire amount of expenditure
    - The method applied for selection of samples must always be described and justified

How to report:
- Signing of 1st level control check list (appendix 5)

Control at Beneficiary level

1st level control checklist:

Control question	yes	no	N/A	Comments/Follow-up/Documents verified (for sample only)
1. Correctness and completeness				
Is the application for reimbursement complete and all the calculations are correct?				
Have all project related income been deducted from the eligible expenditure reported in this claim?				
Have you verified that the expenditure reported here have not been co-financed from other EU sources and they constitute a claim to the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme only?				
2. Eligibility period				
Is the expenditure related to services contracted, delivered and paid - between the start of eligibility of the project (c.f. the contract) and - by the end of the reporting period in question (for the last report, it is the end of the finalisation month indicated in the Application form)? For info: it is important to check also the date of delivery of the services.				
For preparation costs: Is the expenditure paid and products and services delivered in the period between: - after 1 January 2007but not earlier than 12 months before the start of eligibility of the project and - and the start of eligibility of the project				

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Control at Beneficiary level

1st level control checklist:

Does the accounting system functions properly and prevents double funding of expenditure within this project and between the projects of this beneficiary organisation?			
Are the amounts paid/received accurately recorded in the accounting system?			
Has each reported expenditure been supported by an invoice/timesheet or an accounting document of equivalent probative value? Are the documents complete and accurate in content as well as in accounting terms?			
Has each reported expenditure been supported by a payment proof (usually bank statement/bank transfer confirmations/cash receipts)?			
Can the amount of the reported expenditure/income be entirely reconciled with the supporting documents provided?			
Please quantify the expenditure, which should be/have been deducted from the claim due to the deficiencies of the accounting documents/system.			

Control at Lead Beneficiary level

The Lead Beneficiary controller has to verify
  – The programme templates were used
  – The control statement (checklist) is unqualified
  – The control statement (checklist) is signed by the approved controller
  – The control was carried out on-the-spot and gives reasonable assurance for all incurred expenditure

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Control at Lead Beneficiary level

Unresolved issues
- If 1st level controller checklist is qualified/has critical remarks, issues must be clarified between beneficiary, 1st level controller, Lead Beneficiary and Lead Beneficiary Controller
- Only resolved issues can be included in the compiled claim
- Lead Beneficiary controller has to report on any comments/critical remarks from the 1st level controller (even issues that have been resolved)

$\sum$: Issues should be resolved before 1st level controller signs the checklist

Audit Trail

It is the responsibility of each beneficiary to ensure the existence of and protect the audit trail for all expenditure reported and claimed

Audit Trail

The following list gives an overview of the documents that should be available for financial control and audit purposes and retained until 2023:

- The approved Application Form
- The partnership agreement
- The relevant project correspondence (financial and contractual)
- Periodic reports on activities and finance
- The details on budget by beneficiary, list of declared expenditure by beneficiary
- The beneficiary controllers' confirmations (and checklists/control reports)
- The bank account statements proving the reception and the transfer of EU funds
- All invoices related to the project expenditure
- The bank account statements / proof of payment for each invoice
- The method used by all beneficiaries outside the EURO-zone for converting national currency into EUR
- The staff costs: calculation of hourly rates, information on actual annual working hours, labour con-tracts, payroll documents and time records of personnel working for the project
- The list of subcontracts and copies of all contracts with external experts and/or service providers
- The calculation of administrative costs, including proof and records of costs included in overheads
- All relevant documents relating to public procurement, information and publicity
- The public procurement notes, terms of reference, offers/quotes, order forms, contracts
- The proofs for delivery of services and goods: studies, brochures, newsletters, minutes of meetings, translated letters, participant lists, travel tickets, etc.),
- The record of assets, location and physical availability of equipment purchased in the context of the project.

Practical isues

Make sure that your 1st level controller is familiar with:
- http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/documents/document-library/
  – Manual for the 1st level control + appendices
- Your organization

Set up appointments with your controller in advance

Do not wait until end of reporting period
- to fill in periodic reporting form or
- to make the detailed overview spreadsheet with all costs incurred

Practical issues

- Resolve issues before 1st level controller fills in checklist
  - Any critical remark has to be reported in the Lead Beneficiary checklist

Practical isues, finances

- How and when do you receive EU contribution?
  - If you have send controlled Finance reports in time (3 weeks after end of budget period) you will receive the EU contribution as soon as we as Lead Beneficiary has received money from the InterReg
  - Be aware of that the InterReg paying is delayed due to negotiations in the EU system
- Payment for the role of the Lead Beneficiary will be retained when we send the EU contribution to you, - according to partnership agreement
- Under spending, - be aware that you spend in time due to what you have budgeted in the application (on yearly basis!)

Status activity reports, final reporting, and reporting about changes

When to report?
Reporting will take place twice a year. The first will be on 30 September 2009.

Please note the following reporting dates in your calendar already now:

30 September 2009
31 March 2010
30 September 2010
31 March 2011
30 September 2011

March 2012 Final reporting??

LP will have to report in time and due to that we will ask you to be on time reporting to us. If you identify any problems fulfilling the requirements you should contact LP and tell how you plan to solve the problem. In practice we will have only a few weeks to report. You will have only 3 weeks to report.

If changes
If you plan to change the activity plan or any other things, which you have stated in the application, you should contact LP.

The InterReg office wants to be informed if any changes occur, - and they prefer to know it before changes are going to take place.

Issues to be dealt with;

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- Reporting on Changes

- Reporting on Activities

- Reporting on Work Packages

- Reporting on Transnationality

- Reporting on Links and Innovation

- Reporting on Publicity

- Reporting on Indicators

For further information on the reports please look at this page:

http://www.northsearegion.eu/files/user/File/IVB%20Events/Lead_Beneficiary_Seminars/LB_2_Seminar_Feb_2009/LBS2%202nd%20day%20Content%20Reporting.pdf

How to cooperate in the project - decision-making structures

In addition to defining the project scope, objectives and plan, the partners also need to develop a 'team' structure for implementing and steering the project.

We have decided on a combination of LP and national level coordinators who deal with the respective partners in their pilots and then report back to the LP.

It is very important that these structures operate within the overall framework of cooperation represented by the Lead Partner. The development of independent national sub-projects must be avoided at all costs: Any management divisions within the project should reinforce cooperation and not replace it.

Management structures based on pilot coordinators
The danger of this structure is that you run the risk of partners working in isolation from each other. This has been avoided in AQUARIUS by balancing more national/regional work packages with joint ones, such as methodology development, and ensuring regular exchange between work packages leaders.

Cooperation in the Steering Group
The Steering Group meets every six months in connection to the workshops. In between shorter meetings, conference calls etc. can be arranged when needed.

The Lead Partner is responsible for the management of the project including the overall financial and administrative management (reporting, monitoring etc.). Each partner is equally responsible for providing the Lead Partner with all necessary information, in compliance with the regulations of the Partnership Agreement. All partners accept full responsibility for doing this and consequently accept any actions if they fail to fulfil their obligations.

> *As the Project Steering Group is a decision-making group, it is very important that pilot representatives have the power and the knowledge to make decisions on the issues to be discussed: It is very frustrating to leave meetings with important issues unresolved. This means that the partner preparing the meeting needs to send out papers well in advance so each partner can discuss key issues internally in their organization and reach an opinion.*

How does the Project Steering Group work?
The Steering Group is the decision making body for activities carried out in the project.

Decision-making
 Decision-making is based on consensus.

Who should agree? The one representative from each pilot and the chairman from the Project Steering Group
In case an agreement cannot be reached the chairman will decide.

Meetings

Meetings are organized in the different pilots and in close cooperation with the Lead Partner as described in the Application Form.

Exact dates of the scheduled steering group meetings in connection with the transnational workshops will be discussed with the steering group and will be set on the earlier steering group meeting or at least 4 months prior to the event. Videoconferences and telephone meetings will be set if possible 2 weeks in advance.

If necessary the representative from the pilot group may invite observers to join the meeting in the steering group. The chairman must approve such invitations.

Observers may take part in every session and discussion during the Meetings, unless one or more of the steering group Members objects.

Observers and the communication person cannot vote at steering group Meetings.

Transnational information from steering group to partners

The representatives in the steering group have the responsibility of making sure that the relevant information and dialogues from the steering group is given to all partners in their respective pilots.

Planning and milestones

As stated in the project application a number of activities are going to take place in the project.

> In order to secure optimal planning of activities Lead Partner will use MS Project.
> It is recommended that the national pilots use this system too.

In order to secure that all project outputs are delivered, the local pilots should include project output in the planning.

Progress in delivering the stated outputs should be reported to LP every six months in connection to the reporting according to the InterReg rules. If any problems in fulfilling the requirements occur LP should be informed and a plan for handling the situation should be prepared.

The overall timesheet is presented in draft below and will be continuously updated on SharePoint.

	09												10												11						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ongoing planning and management	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x
Consortium agreement									x																						
Project Handbook,									x																						
Dessiminataion plan					X																										
sharepoint and web-page established	x																														
Intirim and final evaluationstration																															
status activity reports and final reporting									x						x						x						x				
Financial management									x						x						x						x				
communication plan					X																										
local management and planning	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Kick off			x																												
Baseline and barriers	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	X																			
Ecosystems baseline												x																			
Scenarios baseline																															
Sociological baseline												X																			
Economic baseline																															
Identification of challenges																															
Transnational workshop												x																			
Reporting on issue												X																			
Key methods	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								
Technical methods																															
Financial (market and subsidy)																															
Institutional incl. Legal, traditional																															
Transnational workshop														x																	
Transnational workshop															x																

Implement and demonstration

Technical methods	
Advice, participation and communi.	
Transnational workshop	

Synthesis and recommendation

Synthesis and evaluation	
Recommendation incl Manual	
International End Conference	

(version of August 2009)

Detailed planning and milestones

Our pre-application project plan and the above time schedule needs to be further refined in order to develop a more detailed work plan for the project implementation.

We will assign tasks to named staff and set exact start and end times for the activities which will take place in the pilot areas and on transnational level. One month after the Kick-Off meeting the plan should be agreed on by all pilots. Detailed planning should also show the order of what happens when and what tasks need to be completed before the next set of tasks can start.

Concerning phase B we will have to decide who will be responsible for the different activities.

A detailed planning for the project should always be set six months in advance. A high level of detail can only be worked out for shorter periods at a time. In order to prepare later work plans, outcomes of the previous stage need to be reviewed to see if the initial set of work packages has delivered the intended outputs / results.

The definition of milestones (the most important interim results/outputs at certain dates) throughout the work plan improves project monitoring and review and it is also important for partners to see that progress is being achieved and to maintain the team spirit. Milestones are important interim outputs that have to be achieved in order for the project to move on or be completed, such as the development of a methodology, website, etc. for example. Milestones are often the ends of a work package. Keeping the deadlines for milestones is important in order to stay within the overall project timetable. If a milestone is not achieved as scheduled, the work plan needs to be revised to bring the project back on track. In short, detailed project planning is important for a number of reasons:

The following will be discussed when making the more detailed planning for the different phases:

Confirmation of each partner's role in the project activities is to a large extent pre-defined in the application form, but the more detailed outline of the necessary **resources** (time, staff, budget) for achieving outcomes might have to be dealt with in the different work packages.

Identification of **timeframes and deadlines**

Identification of project outputs that mark the critical path of the project (**milestones**)

Definition of the **workflow**, i.e. the sequence or order of tasks and relationships between tasks.

Building a **baseline for project review, evaluation, reporting** and **early identification of risks** as well as **day-to-day project management**

How to create the more detailed plan in practice?

1. List all tasks, sub-tasks and activities which will be in focus the next six months.
Start with the work package break down used for the application and divide each task and sub-task further down into a number of concrete activities.

2. Identify resources
List names of the persons (not just partner institutions) to do the work next to each sub-task or activity. These can be team members or sub-contractors.

3. Highlight relationships

Show dependencies between tasks (not necessarily activities). This is especially important when working with larger partnerships where work has to be coordinated between partners. It helps to show, for example, when the interim outputs of one stage are handed over to the next person to complete activities and tasks.

4. Work out the real time frame
Define the time required for each activity and the start and end-date. The original outline of work packages should give a good indication for this but needs to be broken down further.

Include **time lags** where relevant, for example time between the selection of a tenderer and their actual start for working on the project. Add limited time for delays. Some things will not go as planned but keep safety margins small in order to emphasise that partners must try to keep all deadlines.

5. Identify milestones
Milestones are significant points in the path of the project that have to be achieved for the project to succeed (core outputs) or before the project can proceed. They can also be linked to reporting deadlines. They have to be quantifiable and meaningful so that the project manager can see whether they are achieved or not (there are no half-completed milestones). The number of milestones for a project varies according to the duration of the project, number of partners involved and number/duration of work packages. Partners should work out a reasonable number of milestones together (if you have too many, they become meaningless if you have too few, you can't keep track of progress in between).

Deliverables
A list of deliverables can be found in this spreadsheet: Overview of output and referring indicators, which you will find here:
http://wss3.landscentret.dk/websteder/Aquarius/Lead%20partner/Aquarius%20Project%20Status%20Updates/Aquarius%20project%20status%2013/090420%20Overview%20of%20output%20and%20refering%20indicators.xls

Please note that the spreadsheet contains three tabs – one for activities output, one for output and result indicators, and one for the communication plan.

Establishing a common working culture
The division of roles and responsibilities is necessary in order to involve partners according to their capacity, experience and resources in the project. This process, however, refers to individuals rather than a team. Usually partners will work together on the project for a relatively long period of time and in order to make this process work, a common team working culture needs to be developed.

Various good practices have been identified for achieving this. These include the development of project manuals/guides that clarify roles, processes and structures as well as rules and norms for working together. During the start-up phase after project approval, projects can initiate a number of actions for building a common culture.

Building the team
In this project some of the partners are working together for the first time while others have been working together before. We need to grow into a team, rather than work as a group of individuals. If all partners could do the work individually and achieve the same result as the project aims for, there would be no need for cooperation and no project.

The project team is a new organisation that allows partners to benefit from a wider input of expertise and skills, facilitates individual learning, and leads to higher performance and achievements through the project.

While the project outcomes, structure and responsibilities are defined on a very tangible and technical basis, teamwork involves a lot of 'softer' aspects of human interaction. Not only do teams consist of people with different backgrounds and specializations but also different types and characters, such as leaders, implementers, visionaries, collaborators, etc. A mix of these different roles is very valuable for the project.

In order to ensure that all members have an equal status in the team some **core values for collaboration have been discussed and agreed on at the Kick-Off**:

- Open and honest communication and feedback
- Respecting each other as professionals
- Supporting each other and providing help when needed
- Listening to feedback and ideas
- Having the chance to ask questions at any time
- Sharing information, expertise, skills, etc. within the team
- Pro-active participation of all members in the team
- Open-minded and constructive approach to conflicts

At the Kick-Off meeting we discussed these core values and produced a framework for good collaboration as project partners may have different cultural approaches to common working situations.

- It is not OK to arrive late for a meeting
- It is not OK to talk on the phone during meetings
- It is not OK to miss deadlines

One of the lessons of cooperation is developing understanding and tolerance for these types of differences but it can help to get the most important issues out in the open. What seems like normal behaviour for one partner can be a source of irritation for another and this can have a major effect on their willingness to cooperate.

> It is worth remembering that culture is not just about nationality: Organizations have their own culture as well. Do not assume that cooperation between partners from the same country will be problem-free. For example, public and private or national and local organizations may have very different ways of looking at the world.

Organization of transnational meetings

For the organization of partner meetings in general, it is important to pay special attention to a number of points:

- The organizing pilot should discuss the agenda with the steering group on the former meeting. They should further discuss the agenda and a number of practical matters with the Lead Partner before the steering group meeting making sure that formalities and the overall plan for the project is in line with the plan for the workshop

- Provide partners with all relevant practical details about the meeting, accommodation, travel, etc. well in advance

- Create a working atmosphere where all partners feel comfortable (professional but not too formal)

- Provide sufficient space for smaller break-out groups (for example to have separate discussions with all partners in a work package) rather than having too long sessions in the plenary

- Ensure easy access to all relevant project materials that might be needed (use share point!) as well as technical equipment (internet, printers, copy machine, etc.)

Work out a balanced programme with sufficient breaks and ensure that there is enough time for everyone to ask questions and discuss specific issues

Ask partners for their inputs / discussion points beforehand and add them to the agenda

- Arrange informal social activities, such as a joint dinner, for everyone to get to know each other better (but check programme rules to see whether you can include this type of expenditure as part of the project)

- Ensure that adequate documentation of what was discussed and decided (meeting minutes) is circulated to the partners afterwards – and give them a chance to comment before preparing the final version

- Our project deals with environmental issues. Be responsible and think of the use of resources (way of transportation, what we eat, etc).

Overcoming language barriers
The common language in the project is English. Some of the participants are able to discuss matters in their native languages (for instance Norwegians, Swedes and Danish). It's ok to discuss in native languages but all common materials must be in English and all discussion in the common group must be in English.

Project implementation

Effective partnership working is a major success factor for every cooperation project. The role of project management is to facilitate and enable collaboration and communication throughout the implementation phase when the actual project work is carried out according to the plans that were developed jointly by the partners. However, planning can only be based on (informed) assumptions and estimates. Therefore project management tasks during implementation relate to continuous tracking, monitoring and reporting of project progress in terms of activities and resources in order to be able to adjust the original plan accordingly.
This chapter covers key aspects of project management during the implementation stage.

Keeping track of the project
The original work plan is the main document that helps project managers track progress. It should remain unchanged and be used as a baseline together with the objectives and tasks that were initially defined for the application. The baseline then serves the project manager as a tool for comparison with what is actually being done and achieved during implementation. No matter how good the original plan is there will always be some deviation from it during implementation. This should be anticipated and the aim of project management is to track this deviation, make sure it

stays within the scope of the project, and redirect activities to get back on track. The longer the project proceeds with implementation, the more important it is to track things systematically to avoid drifting too much away from the original outline and falling outside the scope of the project. Remember that many changes will actually be improvements and it is this dynamic aspect of project management and the ability to adapt to change that are likely to ensure ultimate success.

> In order to track the project in a systematic way Lead Partner will use MS-project. The pilots are recommended to do the same.

Nothing goes exactly to plan

The project contains project objectives, a description of the activities for achieving them, and measurable result indicators to show they have been achieved. We should not, however, expect the project to be implemented exactly as planned. It's extremely important that changes are discussed with Lead Partner and the steering group when they are realized in order to make plans for how to tackle them.

Responsibilities of the Lead Partner

The Lead Partner is the decisive figure in this process. An efficient Lead Partner should allow for a smooth information flow from the programme to partner level and vice versa. In terms of reporting the Lead Partner is seen as the practical link between the partnership and programme management.

Throughout the reporting process some important responsibilities of the Lead Partner are:

- Delivering the project
- Reporting according to the programme's timetable
- Ensuring that the expenditure presented by partners is in line with the activities agreed (mind the new rules about the national responsibility)
- Making sure that the activities carried out are in line with the application
- Immediately warning InterReg, if changes occur

The Lead Partner has definite responsibilities to the partnership in terms of:
- Making sure that all information available on programme reporting procedures and reporting templates is passed on to partner level
- Making sure that all programme requirements are passed on to partner level
- Providing clarifications related to the information/requirements
- Making sure that the partners provide the right information in order to produce the project report
- Making sure that any feedback from the reports reaches the partners (especially if some of the information is directly related to a specific partner)
- Funnelling partner questions to InterReg

What factors help smooth and effective reporting?

Decentralised reporting (where each pilot reports to the Lead Partner). This decentralized management structure means that the pilot groups carry out some management functions.

This can significantly facilitate the reporting burden on the Lead Partner as the coordinator can collect forms/information from the partners he/she is responsible for and consolidate this information before passing it on to the LP who puts together the report for the whole project.

Changes to activities, budgets, partnerships

One important question related to monitoring is to see whether the initial activity plan is still realistic for delivering the promised outcomes. In AQUARIUS it is likely that changes might arise in order to reflect information that was unknown or conditions that have changed since the start of the project. Monitoring project changes and making sure that these changes stay within acceptable limits is an important task for the Lead Partner.

Changes to the project plan

Project changes and programme reactions vary according to the type of change requested:

- *Activity changes – Generally accepted if main outcomes are unaffected. Budget implications should be considered*
- *Roles change – When considering a redistribution of tasks in the project programmes make sure that joint implementation is not threatened and that all partners continue to play a strong role*
- *Partnership changes – Tend to be taken very seriously by InterReg.*
- Changes in deliverables – *Changes in results imply a change in objectives and will be questioned.*
- *Changes in outputs also need to well-argued but should be approved if projects can demonstrate they are delivering a better alternative.*
- *Changes in project timetable – be aware of de-commitment rules. Requests for timetable changes should be based on evidence that delaying factors have been discovered and put right.*
- *Budget changes – there is a flexibility up to a certain limit of the budget. After this the procedures become more complex.*

    One of the most common changes requested is to move money between different budget lines (for example from staff to events) because money has run out in part of the budget. Always inform the Lead Partner before you overspend on any budget line. If the amount budgeted has already been exceeded by the time the project makes a request for a change, it will suggest that the project's financial monitoring is weak.

> No matter how small changes you plan make sure that you inform Lead Partner. We will then discuss if the change should be reported to InterReg immediately or if it is ok to wait to the next report.
> **Inform well in advance if possible – better safe than sorry!**

Project changes checklist

If a partner foresees a project change he should contact Lead Partner and provide Lead Partner with the below information. Lead Partner will communicate this to InterReg. Please be aware that project changes usually require approval from InterReg. In order to help InterReg officers make an informed and timely decision regarding the requested change it is best to provide information on:
- The nature of the change (activity, partnership, etc.)
- Who does it affect – one partner/ the whole partnership?
- Does it have an effect on the project budget?
- Does it have an effect on the project timeframe?
- Is there a danger that the project will not deliver all or part of its activities?

Is the change related to working methods and procedures or objectives and deliverables?

Outline alternative solutions; justify them in terms of complying with the original application (if they do not significantly change the original plan)

Activity changes

Consider which of the following scenarios applies to your case:
- The activity is changed – the deliverables are the same
- The activity is changed – the delivery is changed – the objective is unchanged
- The activity is changed – the delivery is changed – there is a need to adjust the objective.

Budget changes

Consider which of the following scenarios applies to your case:
- Do you have the flexibility to undertake the change on your own (e.g. there might be a % set per budget line under which you can carry the change on your own though InterReg should still be informed)
- Many changes require InterReg approval - contact the Lead Partner who will contact the InterReg office.

Partnership changes

Consider which of the following applies to your case:
- Has a replacement already been found?
  Has a partner dropped out in your pilot? This can have serious implications: Is this one of the main partners? Can you continue the project in the pilot? Is there a possible replacement? Is the new organisation from the same country as the partner? (if not this can pose serious concerns about the balance of the project) Can you still carry out the same activities and deliver the same objectives?

> Lead Partner is the one to discuss changes with InterReg.

Information and communication

Project handbook

This project handbook stresses how to communicate internally.

Communication group

If questions turn up concerning how to communicate internally and externally the issue must be dealt with by the communication group. The group is part of the steering group and decisions are finally made by the steering group.

Communication strategy

A common communication strategy was written in the application. This strategy will be adjusted accordingly.
A more detailed communication plan should be in place for each pilot in May this year.
The plans should correspond to the common communication plan.
The people responsible for communication in the steering group will secure that this is considered and they will secure that the communication strategy is implemented in the national pilots.

Branding

It is of vital importance that AQUARIUS has one common brand and not 7 different "pilot brands". In order to secure this common baseline a number of common branding activities will be decided on by the Communication group and the steering group.

SharePoint

All project documents must be uploaded on SharePoint. This is the internal project communication platform.

Website

We have a common website called: www.aquarius-nsr.eu. This site consists of a common page in English and special sites for the different pilots in native languages.
The page must be updated continuously. Each pilot must have a person who is responsible for communication. This person is responsible the information on the pilot website and responsible for sending information to Lead Partner about results, events and stories which should be uploaded to the common page.

Logo

Only if the requirements of the right EU-logo, InterReg logo etc are met the deliverable is accepted by InterReg. The specific logo for AQUARIUS should further be included on all deliverables.

Newsletters

We will produce common Newsletters in English according to the communication strategy. All pilots will be asked to send information about news for the Newsletter.

Considerations concerning communication which should be dealt with at pilot level and at project level

Does your project have an impact? Do other people know about your work? Project publicity and communication are activities that may be overlooked by some projects; however, these prove to be vital project ingredients especially if support and raising awareness for the work carried out are main operational goals. That is why it is important that serious consideration is given as to what type of communication activities should be undertaken right from the project start and why provisions should be made to make it part of the project plan. Even though publicity and communication may be seen the same thing they do have a different purpose, emphasis in time, and coverage.

Communication

Connecting with your target audience;
Obtaining feedback and follow up on the impact from your activities;
More targeted;
Carried out throughout the lifetime of the project.

Publicity Getting the information about your project out there;
Usually one way – little room for feedback;
Wider audiences;
Mainly carried out at implementation and especially at project close phase.
As main project activities communication and publicity accompany the whole project lifecycle.
It is characteristic, however, that as the project goes through different phases of development and implementation so do the communication and publicity activities.

Regular and open communication **at all stages** and **with all project stakeholders** either virtually, via phone/e-mail or project meetings is essential to monitor project progress, to identify problems and solutions, to disseminate results, and perhaps most importantly to maintain team-spirit and remind individual project teams that they are part of a wider effort.

The four main target groups to involve are:

Project partners:
To share information on project progress and any issues that need to be addressed by all partners

Programme officers (and national funding bodies):
To discuss the problems and needs of the project, in particular repeated problems (e.g. with procedures, tools, etc.) to which the programme management might offer "standard solutions". Communicating project outcomes to the programme is also the key to keeping them informed about progress and to using them as a wider outreach body for dissemination

External stakeholders:
To maintain and increase political backing, receive expert input and feedback for the project, and create links with other projects or initiatives

Stakeholder analysis
One of the most frequent problems in current INTERREG projects has been the failure to gain the support of important stakeholders. Large partnerships in many projects mean that a wide range of stakeholders need to be targeted and each has inter-related but different needs. The situation in Territorial Cooperation projects therefore creates two key requirements. Firstly, a systematic approach to stakeholders is needed if communication is to be targeted effectively. Secondly, Lead Partner needs to play a coordinating role in the communication work of the other partners if the whole process is not to descend into chaos. These two steps are the key to winning stakeholder-backing right from the development stage.

A stakeholder analysis is basically a two-stage process. Firstly the relevant categories of stakeholders are identified. Then specific people within each category need to be identified along with contact information so they can be contacted.

When defining categories, stakeholders can usefully be divided into **internal and external groups**. Most obviously internal stakeholders include everyone who is working directly on the project. It is important, however, that the internal group is not limited to these people. Two common project problems illustrate the need for a more thorough analysis of the internal stakeholder group. On the one hand, projects often experience administrative problems in their own organizations when they have to implement InterReg rules.

Problems range from difficulties in securing the necessary staff and other resources to conflicts between financial systems and all of these difficulties can delay a project. The other common problem is to do with the mainstreaming of project results.

The following is a breakdown of some of the groups that should be considered as internal stakeholders. It is not exhaustive and every project will have to consider its own situation when conducting its own analysis. It is also important to stress that not everyone needs to be told about every aspect of your project and some of the stakeholders you identify may never receive any communication from you.

The purpose of the analysis is to ensure that nobody is forgotten and to give you an overview of your different communication needs and possibilities. You also need to remember that every partner will have a different list. Partners should, however, share the contents of these lists both to allow the Lead Partner to develop a master list and to ensure that there are no overlaps. Because partners

may provide useful ideas for further categories of stakeholders or better contact information within a targeted organisation.

Internal communication
When teams are working together over long distances between different countries, good communication flows are important. *'Good'* in this context means that they involve all partners and are concrete, clear and timely. Insufficient communication can easily lead to conflicts and problems. Too much information or irrelevant information may on the other hand confuse or lead to a drop in interest in project communications. Therefore it is important to be clear in advance about:

What needs to be communicated and to what level of detail?
Who needs to be informed?
When and how often they need to be informed?
How they should be informed? What is the most appropriate medium?

The main reasons for communication within the project team are:
Sharing information that partners need in order to work together, information about project progress to identify and react to problems and successes, information about decisions and changes within the project and externally (the programme) to ensure all partners have the latest information.

A number of ground rules for all communication with regard to the complex multinational and long-distance environment of InterReg projects should also be kept in mind:

Use **simple, clear language** that is easy to understand for non-native speakers.
Be as **concrete** as possible – vague messages that can be interpreted in different ways can easily lead to confusion or conflicts.

When using technology, ensure that all partners have **technical access/ capacity and the skills** to use these tools without creating extra work for others.

External Stakeholders

Project meetings
Communication through project meetings is a basic pillar for effective management and coordination. There are differing views as to what is the "ideal" frequency of meetings. Some projects find it appropriate to meet every three, others every six months and this depends to a great extent on the size of the project in terms of funding (i.e. whether enough funding is available for frequent meetings) and on the size in terms of partners. Regarding the latter, a common paradox is that although large partnerships benefit from more frequent meetings in order to communicate on a "face to face" basis, it is difficult to arrange for a large number of people to be available on a certain date.

Overall, there is consensus that meetings once a year are not enough but the frequency has to be decided by the partners depending on the availability of resources and the project needs. These aspects should be decided early on, preferably during budget preparation to be able to calculate for a reasonable number of meetings. Different types of meetings include the kick-off meeting (see previous chapter), interim meetings (to discuss progress, reporting, work plan) and the final meeting (to evaluate outputs and initiate project closure).
The results of meetings need to be documented and communicated to all partners as minutes and specific decisions taken to address issues/problems.

Update of the handbook

This handbook will always be available in the latest version on SharePoint.

The Lead Partner with the assistance of the communication group has the responsibility for securing the needed revision of this handbook.
And they must make sure that the project handbook is in line with the rules of InterReg, the cooperation agreement and the application.

Revisions must be accepted by the Steering Group.

Signatures:

Danish Agricultural Advisory Service,
National Centre

Signature	Date

Official stamp

Danish Ministry of the Environment,
Environment Centre Aalborg

_____   _____

Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

_____

Official stamp

Landwirtschaftskammer Niedersachsen

_____   _____
Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

_____
Official stamp

Landwirtschaftskammer Niedersachsen has the following sub-partner, bound by the same rules and obligations as the full project partners.

Von-Thuenen-Institute

Signature (*Name and function)*

Date

Official stamp

Provincie Drenthe

_____

Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

_____

Official stamp

Signature (*Name and function)*

Date

Official stamp

County Governor of Østfold

Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

Official stamp

Bioforsk Institute
(Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and
Environmental Research)

Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

Official stamp

Aberdeenshire Council

_____ | _____
Signature (*Name and function)* | Date

_____
Official stamp

Aberdeenshire Council has the following sub-partner, bound by the same rules and obligations as the full project partners:

Grampian FWAG

Macaulay Institute

_____

Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

_____

Official stamp

County administration of Halland

Signature (*Name and function)*

Date

Official stamp

Halmstad University

Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

Official stamp

Rural Economy and Agricultural Society of Halland

_____

Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

_____

Official stamp

Municipality of Laholm

Signature (*Name and function)*   Date

Official stamp

Regional Development Council

Signature (*Name and function)*

Date

Official stamp