10th Call for Applications Guidance Note

Extension on communications for approved IVB programme projects
Background, development guidance and FAQ

The 10th call for project applications will be launched early 2014. This call will be based on re-allocated funds. The budgets available are therefore limited and there will be some uncertainty about the precise amounts available right up to the launch of the call. This means that there will be strict conditions on the types of project that will be considered and also that potential applicants should stay in touch with the programme secretariat and the National Contact Points to ensure that they receive the latest information on the developing situation. This paper outlines the main requirements for extensions and the timeline for the call.

Rationale

The new call takes the high number of good results achieved by the projects in the current period into account and encourages them to continue building on them, and to promote them towards a relevant North Sea Region Programme audience. The on-going evaluation of the programme recommends that the communication of success stories and the presentation of project outputs within the North Sea Region Programme should be further developed. A lot of inspiration can be drawn from good experience made in projects and clusters in the recent programme. There are some key findings which should be considered when developing an extension:

- Focus on one main result.

- Create added value: What has happened with your main result so far and how is it (going to) being used beyond the lifetime of project completion? How have you been communicating/disseminating so far and what measures have been used to widely promote especially outside the current partnership?

- It is not about just extending your ongoing communication and dissemination work, but to focus on making use of your main result after the end of project closure.

- Enlarge your reach to your target group on a North Sea Region level (increase your impact).

- Pass your success story on to the relevant target groups, including hands-on material of high practical value.

- Extended use of social media channels may enhance dissemination of your story. [Remember not to exclude anyone by making information available only through social media as stakeholders cannot be required to become a member of such a channel.]

- If appropriate you might want to transfer your one single main result to telling the story concept (see links below).

- If applicable for your project consider how to communicate potential transferable stories between different EU programmes and/or EU stakeholders.

- Taking experiences from other projects / programmes into account might encourage the development of new perspectives on your main result. Transferability and application of solutions beyond the original challenges should be the motivation of such an attempt. It should make the approach towards decision-makers easier and greatly improve the chances of identifying strategic messages to be taken up at national and European policy levels.

The 10th call encourages the type of extensions that will be able to exploit these kinds of benefits.

Extensions of projects

Given the limited funds available, the aim is to make the application process as simple as possible. Wherever projects are still running, they will apply through a project extension. Projects that are already closed will have to submit a new application using the simple small projects application form. For both types of projects there are limits and requirements. These are outlined below in the section 'Framework for communications extensions'. It should be stressed however that this difference is for purely practical reasons and these projects will be considered in the same way regardless of how they have applied: Both extensions and small project applications must work towards communicating their main result by providing their story towards an enlarged of the North Sea Region audience.

Project extensions: Where projects have an end date of 30 June 2014 or later, it will be possible to apply for an extension in the usual way. Projects taking this route can edit their existing application form to add new activities and additional budget. They will not therefore have to submit a new application. It is essential that these extensions add new communications activities (in line with the suggested activities below) and that they represent a clear added value compared to the original application. It will also be possible to add beneficiaries – including beneficiaries who are new to the programme and beneficiaries from other projects including projects that have already closed. If you plan to submit an extension application, **you must inform the secretariat in advance** because this is the only way to get your application form opened for editing.

Small communications projects: Projects that have already finished by 30 June 2014 will not be able to submit an extension and will instead have to submit a new application.

Extended communication activities

The over-arching objective for the extensions is that they should develop a story about their main project result to reach a relevant and considerably large audience around the North Sea Region. This means making the best possible use of communication channels and methods to position results beyond the lifetime of the project. It is essential to note that this does not mean just extending current communication activities but to come up with a convincing concept to add-on.

Extensions would be expected to analyse which aspects of their communication activities applied most strongly to the North Sea Region and to assess which actions could be effectively implemented.

Expected outcomes

The 10[h] call extensions aim to maximise the benefits of the work that has already been done from a communications perspective. Focusing on the main existing result of the project and providing its story should be the starting point of every application. The application should clearly outline what will be done to communicate this result according to the existing communication work package in the original application and what will be added by the extension. There are various ways that results could be addressed to achieve this effect:

- Communication to a wider audience. Applications focused on this aspect should include an analysis of the most important target groups reached so far and the new stakeholders who will be targeted by your extension. Applications would also need to explain how messages would be adapted to ensure greater success and what precisely the (measurable) objective of this communication would be. Baselines for indicators should be taken from the achieved scores of the original projects. Applications which simply offer a continuation of existing dissemination actions and/or new actions without clearly defined and updated objectives and target groups will receive a negative assessment.

- Transferability: The story of the project takes as its starting point the concrete challenges being faced by the partners and may need to be adapted to fit other parts of the North Sea Region. Applications may address this issue of extending the usefulness of their main result. Such applications will typically focus on implementation aspects beyond the lifetime of their project, the experiences made so far by different partners/users, potentials to make use of their result in new contexts etc. Applications will be expected to clearly state how they will combine transferability with communications, and the expected concrete outcomes of this new communications work.

- Partnerships: All new projects are encouraged to take on new partners where these can add to the quality of the communication work being done but some 10th call projects may choose to focus on this issue. Extensions addressing this aspect would introduce their relevant North Sea Region project result to stakeholders who have not previously been involved in the programme but whose activities fall within the themes addressed by the programme. The aims would be to encourage take up of the result and also to encourage these new stakeholders to take an active role in making use of it beyond the lifetime of the project. Such applications would be expected to build on a detailed stakeholder analysis and would need to demonstrate the willingness of some of the key groups to be engaged. This engagement should be carefully managed so that it targets sectors across the North Sea Region rather than overly varied individual organisations.

- Telling the policy story: These extensions would focus on communicating result stories towards recent developments in European and relevant national policies and practices. They would be expected to analyse and explain how their individual main result provides a contribution to the latest policy goals, where there is the greatest potential for long term achievements, and where there are serious gaps to close. It would be very important not to limit their thinking to European Territorial Cooperation and also include a consideration of what has been and will be achieved under the most relevant other European and national funds.

Extensions are in no sense limited to one of these approaches but successful applications will be expected to demonstrate focus and a real ability to maximise benefits on the issues they choose to work with. Limited investments are possible but they will have to demonstrate a transnational benefit and form an essential part of achieving one or more of the outcomes covered above.

Framework for communications extensions

A number of conditions will apply for all communications extensions whether they are using an extension or submitting a new application. These are:

- The maximum budget should be approximately €350.000 (€175.000 ERDF and Norwegian equivalent). This reflects the limited funding available. Projects are funded 50% ERDF and 50% co-financing. In well-justified cases the budget might exceed the maximum of €350.000.
- All extensions must finish activities by 30 June 2015. This is essential in order to ensure that all project reporting and closure is completed before the programme closure deadline. An end

date and an extension of activities towards after 30 June 2015 will not be possible. It will be very important to complete all project closure activities in time. Failure to do so may result in a reduction or cancelation of payment.

- The Lead Beneficiary of a small project building on a closed project must be the former lead beneficiary or a beneficiary of that project. A beneficiary can only take over the lead beneficiary role in agreement with the former lead beneficiary.
- Extensions are open to all beneficiaries, including the possibility to include new partners who are not yet involved in any project activities but who can make a clear contribution to the project, including possibly (in well-justified cases) partners outside the programme area.
- Applications must include as a minimum 3 beneficiaries from 3 countries. This is the minimum criterion and applications with this kind of limited participation will be expected to demonstrate their benefit to the wider North Sea Region.
- Extensions will apply under the same priority as the original project.
- The main report for extensions of already closed projects will be the final project report. Project extensions of ongoing projects will of course follow the normal project reporting timelines.

Funding available

The funding available in each priority at the time of writing will allow for at least four projects each in priorities 1 and 2 and one project each in priorities 3 and 4. If you are planning to submit an extension, **please get in touch with the secretariat to get updated about your individual funding possibilities.**

Norwegian beneficiaries

The total funding available for Norwegian beneficiaries is €89,000 at the time of writing. The Norwegian funds available are separate from the ERDF and **projects wishing to include Norwegian partners must therefore contact the secretariat to hear how much Norwegian funding is available for the priority concerned.**

Timeline for the 10th call and assistance available

- Deadline for submission of ideas to secretariat for feedback Friday 31 January 2014 (feedback will be provided in a telephone conference)
- Call for applications opens Monday 17 February 2014
- Call closes Monday 17 March 2014
- Decisions on applications May 2014
- Projects must be finished by 30 June 2015

Project ideas

The project ideas section on the programme website has already been reactivated to allow projects to publicise their proposals and start searching for partners. In addition, projects may submit an idea to the secretariat for feedback until the end of January 2014. Due to the time limits for this call, there will be no written feedback from the secretariat. Project idea holders will be invited for a telephone conference instead.

Assessment criteria

Communications extensions will be assessed against a shortened list of the standard programme selection criteria. The criteria are listed below with a brief explanation of how they will be interpreted during the assessment.

Core selection criteria (C1 – C7)

	Criteria	Description
	Programme	
C1	Contribution to transnational regional development	Extensions must demonstrate the importance of taking a transnational approach to the topic addressed. What will be the significance of activities for the development of the wider North Sea region? Projects must also convincingly argue how their activities can be expected to have a long-term impact beyond the participating organisations. How to: Demonstrate why the approach chosen will be relevant for the wider North Sea Region and state clearly how the story generated within the partnership will be transferred to the wider North Sea Region and to what extent other regions/organisations can be expected to make use of the project's main result.
C2	Contribution to the joint transnational strategy	The joint transnational strategy was developed from an analysis of the opportunities and challenges for the North Sea Region and is in chapter three of the Operational Programme. Extensions should have clear links to the strategy and should show how they draw conclusions from the current period and what input this could provide for future perspectives. How to: Demonstrate how the extension should be able to achieve a significant contribution in terms of one of the programme's main objectives.
	Partnership	
C3	Horizontal and/or vertical coordination and cooperation	The extension has to consider the relevant actors on local, regional and (trans-) national level. On the horizontal level actors from different relevant sectors should be considered, e.g. politicians, administrations, institutions (e.g. research, chambers of commerce), NGOs, companies (SMEs). On the vertical level, the process of decision-making relevant for the long term achievements has to be considered together with a concept for how and why this process will have an impact on project communications. How to: The application must show how and why relevant actors will be actively addressed and where appropriate actively involved and how this will be coordinated.
C4	Relevant and viable partnership	Partners will be expected to demonstrate capacity to manage the extension. New partners are possible if they will add significantly to the work. How to: Applications should outline what each partner will contribute to the extension.
	Output	

C5	Project will demonstrate added value and deliver tangible and measurable results	Extensions have to provide a clear add-on to the activities described in the original application and have to make a difference. It is important to demonstrate realistic plans for how a wide impact across the North Sea Region can be achieved. It must be clearly demonstrated how they develop on from the activities of the original project and how they differ both from other related initiatives and the normal activities of the participating organisations. How to: Extensions have to demonstrate clearly that the activities carried out and the results will make a change in comparison to the current situation and that they are additional to what is being done already.
C6	Project will demonstrate value for money	The extension's budget should be proportionate to the results aimed for. In addition extensions will have to demonstrate cost-effectiveness. How to: This will be demonstrated in the detailed costed workplan in the application.
	Indicators	
C7	Information on core indicators complete	The application form contains a set of indicators for measuring progress and success. Extensions of already closed projects should of course fill in the most relevant indicators from this section including the indicators for the priority you are applying for. Extensions of ongoing projects should add indicators where and if appropriate and extend the existing ones where relevant. How to: If necessary, define your own indicators to reflect your ambitions and what it can realistically achieve.

Priority Considerations (P1 – P5)

	Criteria	Description
	Approach	
P1.	Description of problem to be tackled and the solution	Extensions that provide a clear description of how communications and in particular story-telling can contribute to explain the link between the problem the original project deals with and the contribution provided to its solution will be prioritised. This should relate not to the theme in general (e.g. climate change) but to the specific aspects addressed by the project (e.g. lack of industry knowledge about energy efficient construction techniques). Extensions should consider the following: - A clear analysis of the main stakeholder groups to be targeted and the messages they will be given (who will you try to influence and what do you hope they will do?) - Communication on the international, national, regional and local level aiming at ensuring wide take-up of project results - Communication methods selected to target the most-used information sources of different stakeholder groups (presentations, media, advertising, direct mail, printed newsletter, e-mail newsletter, website, RSS feeds, blog, pod-casting, text messaging, social networking sites etc.) Remember to comment on the value of cooperation in achieving results.
P2.	Concrete implementation of project results towards European policies	Implementation activities which clearly make a contribution to the aims of relevant and related on-going European policies will be prioritised. This includes synergies with activities being funded under other European programmes.
	Transnationality	
P3.	Transnational approach	Activities which are clearly transnational will be prioritised. There should be a truly transnational incentive.
P4.	Transnational partnership	The minimum criteria are 3 partners and 3 countries involved. Partnerships should however reflect the desire to impact large parts of the programme area. Organisations do not have to be included as full partners but if they are not, their role and links to the project should be explained.
	Knowledge transfer	
P5.	Links to other programmes and projects	Clear activity-based links to other programmes and projects relating to the extension activities will be an advantage.

Formal requirements and Letters of Intent

You can take a number of simple steps to minimise problems during formal checks of your application:

- If any of your partners are located outside the eligible programme area, you will need to provide additional information. Please see section 5.2.2.3 of the Operational Programme for more information and contact the programme if you have any questions
- Check that the application is correctly and consistently signed, stamped and dated
- The same for the Letters of Intent. A template for the text of the Letter of Intent can be found in Fact Sheet 6 (**http://www.northsearegion.eu/files/user/File/IVB%20Document%20Library/Fact_Sheets/Single_Fact_Sheets/Fact%20Sheet%206%20Letter%20of%20Intent.pdf** **You must use this text and must not change it in any way** apart from deleting the optional sections if these do not apply

FAQ

Is this a new kind of project?

The wording communications extension signals the sort of activities that will be expected. In practical terms these projects are an add-on to the communications activities and allow for project extensions of ongoing and already closed projects. Simplified application criteria based on those for smaller projects will be used.

How should we tackle the indicator section?

Indicators still need to be based on the standard indicators so we can measure the project's contribution to programme targets. However, please use only those indicators which will provide valuable information about the expected progress of the new project. Do not feel that you have to set a target for all or even most of the indicators – even the compulsory indicators can be filled in with a target of zero if they do not fit the new project's plans.

To help you with completing this section of the application quickly but accurately:

- Do not feel that you have to report something for every output – just include the most important activities you intend to deliver so we can monitor the value for money of your proposal and your basic progress when you report. We would not expect these projects to deliver a very wide range of activities.
- Please focus on the result and impact indicators to try and give a real flavour of your wishes for your extension.

Is it a good idea to try and involve projects from other programme areas and other EU funds?

It could be a very good idea but this does not necessarily mean that partners from outside the programme area should be included as full partners in the project. Note that the requirement for minimum 3 countries to be involved means that at least 3 *North Sea* countries should be represented.

Can we claim preparation costs?

No. Preparation costs are not eligible for these projects.

Where to find relevant information about story telling?

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/telling-the-story/agenda.cfm
Presentations and material from the recent conference on communicating European structural and investment funds 2014-2020 - Telling the Story.

http://admin.interact-eu.net/downloads/5529/INTERACT_Tips_Tips_on_story_telling_what_and_how_to_do_09_2012.pdf
Notes from INTERACT event on story telling in Lisbon 2012

http://tonylbxl.wordpress.com/tag/storytelling/
Blog about the use of digital media to improve policymaking.