



## The important role of Political Representatives and Senior Officials in transnational projects

*"I feel that in many European projects there is a whole lot of energy and expertise which is not turned into real outcomes or results."*

My personal observation is that participants of European meetings are mainly technicians and civil servants. I have participated in many meetings and found a lot of preparation, a lot of debate and a lot of expertise. However, there is a missing link, namely the politicians. I met very few of them in these meetings.

In many European projects there is a whole lot of energy and expertise which is not turned into real outcomes or results regionally or locally. The reason is that the politicians did not know the project... were uninformed about its potential or simply were afraid to do their share of the work.

[Mayor of Avelgem, Belgium]



## Contact information

More information about the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme 2007–2013 as well as the IIIB North Sea Programme 2000–2006 and its 70 projects can be found on the Programme website.

On the website there are also videos about strategic projects and key issues for the Programme.

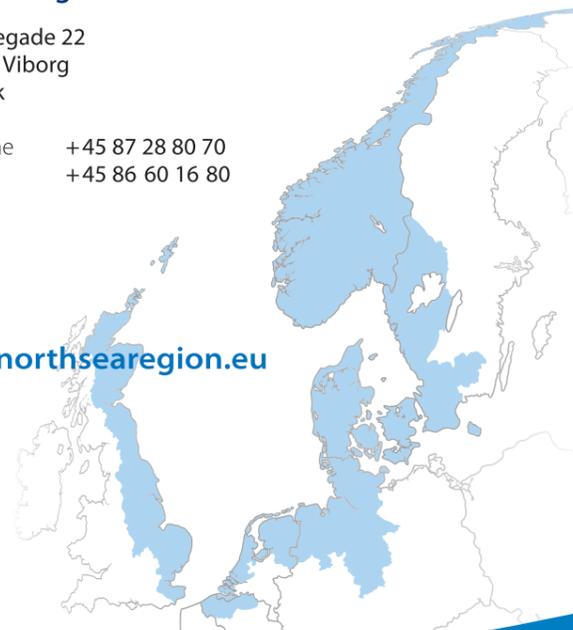
Do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat if you have any questions regarding the Programme, any of its projects or the content of this leaflet.

### Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme

Jernbanegade 22  
DK-8800 Viborg  
Denmark

Telephone +45 87 28 80 70  
Fax +45 86 60 16 80

[www.northsearegion.eu](http://www.northsearegion.eu)



## The Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme



## Making Transnational Projects Really Count

A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE



*Investing in the future  
by working together for a  
sustainable and competitive region*



## How to create a lasting legacy

Political backing is a key success factor

Bring politicians onboard as ambassadors

Projects without legacy are a waste of money

*“Experience shows that the most successful projects... were those that understood the importance of political and institutional backing right from the start.”*

The Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme is well under way. The first projects are beginning their work. One of the big questions is “How can the new generation of Programme projects achieve a lasting legacy?”

Involving political representatives from local, regional, national and European levels, as well as senior officials from the partner organisations in a project, is an important step.

Creating a political reference group from the early stages of project preparation or getting senior politicians to engage themselves in a project as ambassadors will help facilitate this.

Experience shows that the most successful and impactful projects from previous programme periods were those that understood the importance of political and institutional backing right from the start.

### Institutional backing a key factor

The current Structural Funds period, which will run from 2007–2013, is in many ways a test for all the transnational programmes as they need to demonstrate precisely what it is that they can deliver that is over and above the work of the other strands of Interreg. Full political and institutional backing for a project will be a key factor for success.

Incorporating the support of political representatives and senior officials can help to integrate the project and its outcomes into the organisation and assist towards making a lasting legacy for the work.

If projects fail in achieving a lasting impact through policy influence and securing funding after the project period is over, important know-how and valuable advances in transnational knowledge is lost.

## How to involve Politicians and Senior Executives

Make clear the key role that senior officials and politicians have to promote the project

Secure top level commitment from the start of the project

Connect the European policy questions to the local issues

*“Recognise the key role of politicians and the need to work together with other local interest groups in successful Interreg projects.”*

It is important that each participating region in a project approaches its politicians and senior executives to enlist their full support.

Here is some advice from experienced project managers on how to best do this:

- Provide a good briefing on the strategic points. Senior people do not need to know all the details
- Brief new council members, especially if the political composition of a council has changed after elections
- Secure their commitment at the start of the project. Being awarded European funding indicates interest from an international and transnational level
- Establish simple direct contact and information lines
- Make clear what role the politician or senior executive has in order to secure a sense of ownership and active participation
- Set up a board or political reference group so that the politicians from all partner regions can meet regularly to discuss the project and its direction
- Raise their interest when the project results start coming through and media interest is secured
- Encourage politicians and senior executives to accompany the officials on visits to other partners and see for themselves the good ideas and how they work
- Put the project forward for awards that will help to raise interest in the local area

Advice from the politicians themselves on how to secure commitment from decision makers and senior politicians:

- Be clear about political priorities in relation to European activities
- Develop systems to ensure greater local involvement in EU programmes
- Measure success and share good practice between regional politicians

## How Politicians can make a big contribution to the impact of your project

Projects need to benefit the local community

Projects need to have potential policy level influence

Politicians on different levels can network

*“Through networking and support politicians and senior stakeholders can prompt others to take up or build on the results of successful projects.”*

The success of projects depends on communication, leadership, political support, resources, vision, preparation and flexibility. Many of these issues are interdependent. For example, political support depends on communication, vision and leadership, which in turn influence issues such as allocation of resources.

[Province Councillor, Province of Overijssel, Netherlands]

Generating lasting results is a key aim of all projects approved under the North Sea Region Programme. In order to be of interest in the first place to project promoters, the projects must generate outcomes that are of benefit to the local community.

Politicians and senior executives can help to focus the project outcomes on what will best meet the local community needs. They are also best placed to take a strategic view of what project outcomes can achieve and be built on for the longer term.

To adequately resource and raise match funding for a project is challenging and it is essential to get top level decisions to back the project and secure the smooth running of a project.

### Commitment from many levels is needed

Initiating and running a successful Interreg project requires commitment from many levels of government, organisations and people. Politicians and senior officials can use their networking and representational skills to promote the project and secure the contribution and support of key stakeholders and local communities.

Through networking and support politicians and senior stakeholders can prompt others to take up or build on the results of successful projects, taking key development decisions and attracting further investment. Some local and regional authorities have done this by adapting long-term development strategies or investment policies triggered by Interreg results.

Several projects have been successful by using key political representatives as figureheads for the project to front for the media.