EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND INTERREG IIIB
Community Initiative concerning Transnational Co-operation on Spatial Development 2000 – 2006

Interreg North Sea Region

North Sea Programme Application Guide

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This document contains essential information for the project applicant of the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme. It is the most practical level of the documentation needed for a successful submission of a project in this ERDF programme.

The general outline of the Programme can be found in the Community Initiative Programme document (CIP) as approved by the European Commission on 13 December 2001. That document provides the strategy of the programme, the rationale and SWOT analysis that form the basis for it, information on the content of the Priorities and Measures in the programme as well as information on the administrative arrangements of the programme. Also it provides the budget of the Programme on Priority level.

The strategy of the programme is inspired by the European Spatial Development Perspective, the Trans-European Networks policy and the NorVision document. The General Regulations for the ERDF funding period 2000-2006 are published as Commission Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999.

The Programme Complement contains information on the fields of intervention, the project selection criteria, examples of activities and outputs of projects and other general information regarding this programme.

This Application Guide aims to give practical information to project applicants to the Interreg IIIB North Sea programme. It gives information about the application procedure, the project selection criteria, the decision procedure, the reporting system and some practical financial guidance. This document is complemented by Fact Sheets with specific information on a number of issues.

All documents mentioned and presented here can be found on the Internet website of the Interreg North Sea Programme: http://www.InterregNorthSea.org

Chapter 2 Application Procedure

A partnership that is in the process of developing an Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme application is advised to contact the Joint Secretariat and the contact point in the country of the Lead Partner at an early stage. They can find help in developing their project according to the strategy of the programme, on finding a partnership and on how to make a detailed costed workplan. When the details of the project idea have been clarified and all organisations have expressed their commitment to the project, an Application Form may be filled out. Please note that the Application Form should be in the Secretariat before the deadline of the call for proposals. It is envisaged that there will be two scheduled calls for proposals each year.

Upon arrival of the application in the Secretariat, the Lead Partner and the national authority of the lead applicant will be sent a notification of the arrival of the application. All projects will first be assessed on the eligibility check. If the project fails the eligibility check, the Lead Partner will receive a letter from the Secretariat explaining on what grounds the project application failed to meet the eligibility check. The Steering Committee will be notified of all projects that failed to meet the eligibility check.

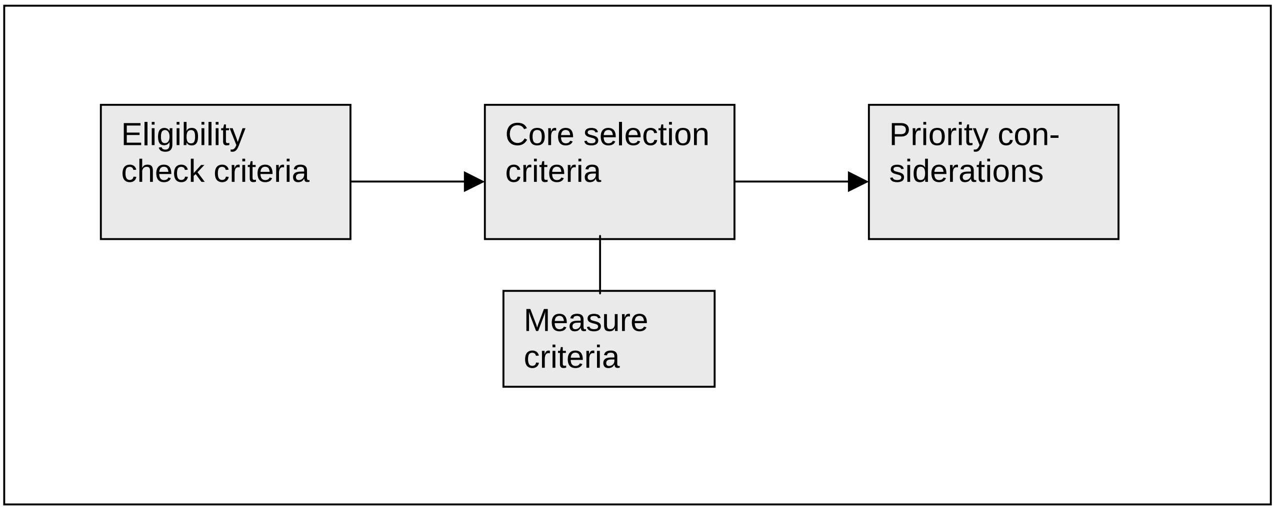
When a project meets the requirements from the eligibility check, it will come to the next stage of assessment and will be tabled at the Steering Committee meeting. The Secretariat will do an assessment on the application applying the core criteria and the priority considerations. Based on the assessment and the Application Form, the Steering Committee will take a decision. After the Steering Committee meeting, the lead applicant will be informed about the decision. When an application is approved, the Joint Secretariat will draw up the Grant Offer Letter on behalf of the national authorities of the Lead Partner organisation. When the Steering Committee rejects the project, a refusal letter will be sent to the Lead Partner. The Lead Partner is responsible for communication with the other partners in the project.

Chapter 3 Project Selection Criteria

Project applications submitted for funding under the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme will be required to meet the minimum criteria for approval. They consist of the eligibility check and the core criteria. Also, priority considerations will play a role in the assessment and selection of projects. Only projects that pass the eligibility check will be considered by the Steering Committee. The selection of projects will be guided by the core selection criteria and priority considerations. Only projects that pass all core selection criteria, including the relevant Measure Criteria, will be approved by the Steering Committee. When the Steering Committee has to choose between projects, the priority considerations will guide them.

The Joint Secretariat will carry out the technical assessment of the projects, according to the approved procedure and criteria. The Steering Committee approves or rejects projects. It is important to emphasise that it will be possible until 2006 to put forward project proposals.

A more detailed description of the criteria can be found in the Programme Complement.



Eligibility Check Criteria

1. The eligible area

2. Transnationality

3. Evidence of match funding

4. Completed Application Form

5. Projects will complete all eligible activities before 30 June 2008

6. The Lead Partner is a public or a public-similar organisation

7. Compliance with the eligibility rules

Core Selection Criteria

1. Projects will contribute to spatial development

2. Projects will contribute to the joint transnational strategy of the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme

3. Cross-sectoral co-ordination and co-operation

4. Sustainable approach

5. Projects will promote the transfer of knowledge

6. Projects will demonstrate added value

7. Projects will demonstrate value for money

8. Projects will comply with national and EU law and policy

9. The application contains the relevant indicator information

10. Fit the relevant Measure of the Programme

11. Viability of the partnership

Measure Criteria

The Measure Criteria are listed in section 2.4. of the Programme Complement

Priority Considerations

1. Tangible and measurable results

2. Leverage of extra investment

3. Innovative solutions

4. A broad scope of integrated activities

5. Synergy with other funds

6. Transnational partnerships

7. Build on experiences from earlier ERDF projects

8. Concrete implementation of ESDP/NorVision/TEN

9. Vertical co-ordination

Chapter 4 Guidance Notes to the Application Form

The following information is meant to help you fill in the Application Form. The numbers refer to the sections of the form.

When you fill in the form, please remain inside the boxes indicated. If you need to provide more information it is possible to extend the box concerned, but remember that the boxes should <u>in no case be larger than one third of a page</u>. Any information that is in excess of a third of a page will be discarded. <u>Only section 3.5, activities, may be extended up to one page if needed</u>. If any further information needs to be given, this may be done in an appendix to the application of up to 10 pages. Please remember that <u>only</u> the Application Form itself is guaranteed to be considered by the members of the Steering Committee. It is therefore essential to provide all the important information in the form itself.

0.1 Don't fill this in. This is the file number of the project. It will be filled in by the Secretariat.

0.2 The registration date will also be filled in by the Secretariat. The registration date is the day the fully completed, dated, stamped and signed Application Form together with the Letters of Commitment from all partners arrive at the Secretariat. Both the Application Form and the Letters of Commitment should be physical documents that arrive at the Secretariat before the deadline announced at the call for proposals. In addition a copy of the completed Application Form should be sent in as a digital document by e-mail.

1. Title of the Project

1.1 State the official full title of the project.

1.2 Give a short name or acronym to which the project can be referred. The use of an acronym or short name is necessary for efficient communication and administration.

2. Organisation(s) Submitting Application and Undertaking Project

2.1 The Lead Partner is, as final beneficiary, responsible for the implementation of the entire project. This organisation will be responsible for reporting to the Secretariat after approval of the project. More information on Lead Partnership can be found on the Fact Sheet on the Lead Partner Principle. The Lead Partner must be a public or public-similar organisation. This issue is elaborated in more detail in the Fact Sheet on Funding Plans. For the Lead Partner organisation both the name of the director responsible and the project manager are requested. For other partners one contact name will suffice.

If there are more than seven partners involved in the project, remember to fill in boxes for these organisations too. Either copy the section within the form or ask the Secretariat for a form that allows for your number of partners.

N.B: When giving information about the partners in the Application Form, please, make sure that the number of the partner always refers to the same partner. That is, that information on Partner 2 always refers to the partner stated as no 2 in this section; "Organisations submitting application and undertaking project", that the same goes for Partner 3 etc.

2.2 Amount of the grant applied for. Here the total amount of ERDF support, or Norwegian ERDF equivalent, sought should be stated. Please note that this must match exactly with the funding plan of section 7. No more than 50% of eligible project spending from each partner can be matched by ERDF support or Norwegian ERDF equivalent.

2.3 State all funding involved in your project which does not come from official project partners. Remember that this funding can not generate ERDF funds. Also organisations involved without a financial contribution should be stated here.

2.4 If this project has sought funding from other sources prior to the Interreg IIIB application, this should be stated here. Also if the Interreg project is part of a combined funding scheme, this should be explained here.

2.5 If the project builds on any of the Interreg IIC North Sea Programme projects it should be stated here. Links to any other EU-financed programmes should also be indicated here. Please indicate what the common issues and the differences are between your project and these other projects and/or programmes.

3. Project Description

3.1 Tick off the appropriate box for the one Measure that fits your application best. To find out the appropriate Measure, you are advised to read the text in Chapter 4 of the CIP and the examples listed in chapter 5 of the Programme Complement.

3.2 If your project has an impact on more Measures than the main Measure stated in section 3.1, you should mention them here. Please choose among the same Measures as in section 3.1.

3.3 The aim of the project is the impact that the project wishes to achieve or contribute to. In some cases it helps to think of the problem or problems you wish to resolve when formulating the aim of the project. The relationship between the aim, objectives and activities of the project should link to each other. The activities carried out and the objectives pursued should all contribute to the overall aim of the project. For example, the construction of a new sewage system can be the activity conducted within the project, its finalisation can be the objective (to be finished when the project is finished), while clean water and a cleaner environment in the area is the aim.

3.4 Objectives are chosen by the project partners as the planned immediate short-term effects to be achieved by implementing the project. They represent the outputs and/or results that will be achieved during the course of the project. Generally it is possible for the partnership of the project to ensure the achievement of the projected objectives by carrying out the planned activities of the project.

3.5 Activities to be carried out in the project. Fill in the activities planned to achieve the objectives set out in 3.4. They link with the detailed costed workplan due to be filled in in section 7.1. Make sure that the funding plan and the phased activities fit.

3.6A State where the activities carried out within or in connection to the project will be located or have an impact.

3.6B Indicate which of the following classifications applies to the location of the activities of the project.
Urban: most of the activities and most of the impact of the project is expected to take place in urban areas.
Rural: most of the activities and most of the impact of the project is expected to take place in rural areas.
Not geographically delimited: the activities of the project and the impact of the project is expected not to be limited to urban or rural areas. They might take place in both or in other areas (the sea for example).

3.7 Give an explanation as to why the activities and objectives mentioned in 3.5 and 3.4 have been chosen and why they are appropriate for the aim, described in 3.3. This is the section where you justify the approach taken in your project.

3.8 Describe the outputs of the different phases of the project. Each project should consist of at least 3 phases. (Only very small projects could have less than 3 phases.) Give details of the outputs of the phases of the project here, and make sure that this links to the phasing of your budget. Phasing is necessary for appropriate monitoring of the progress of the projects. The starting and completion date of each phase should be filled in in section 8.3.

3.9 Essential information on the project that is not covered elsewhere in the form could be written down here.

4. Contribution to the Transnational Strategy of the Programme

All projects in the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme must comply with the strategy set out in the CIP document. This can be demonstrated by explaining the projected contribution of this project to the aims of the programme. Explain briefly how your project will contribute to the aims listed here.

4.1 Please explain here how your project ensures cross-sectoral integration. This means that you have to demonstrate that the project applies an integrated approach to the issue concerned. Co-operation with relevant organisations in different sectors is key to this issue.

4.2 Explain how environmental, social and economic concerns are integrated in your project. Pay special attention to the impacts on the environment of the project activities. If it is possible to report on the environmental impact of the project by using an environmental impact indicator, then this indicator should be listed in section 6.4.

4.3 Economic and social cohesion are important features of balanced development of the North Sea region. The contribution of your project to this aim should be explained here.

4.4 Describe the contribution of your project to spatial development. For inspiration you can refer to the NorVision document, the ESDP (European Spatial Development Perspective) or the Trans-European Networks policy. Describe the consequences of your activities to the territorial structure. The contribution of your project to the spatial integration of the North Sea Region should be described here to.

4.5 Transnational co-operation involves joint implementation of activities. Explain here how the transnational and interregional co-operation will be carried out. Which of the activities listed are carried out together with the transnational partnership?

4.6A Explain in what way the project contributes to the promotion of equal opportunities. This can be done, for example, by involving bodies responsible for the promotion of equal opportunities in your partnership or by achieving balanced participation of women, men and ethnic minorities in working groups.

4.6B Please, indicate which of the following classifications applies to the project:
The project has equal opportunities as its main focus, the project is positive in terms of equal opportunities, the project is neutral in terms of equal opportunities.

4.7A Indicate in which way this project is expected to affect the environment.

4.7B Please, indicate which of the following classifications applies to the project:
The project has the environment as its main focus, the project is environment-friendly, the project is neutral in terms of the environment.

5. Follow-up Actions

Applicants who already at this initial stage of the project know what follow-up actions will be made after the completion of the project, are asked to state them here. What these actions are will depend strongly on your project. We will list some suggestions here: another project or other projects following the experiences or findings of this project; how will the results be implemented?; what organisations are expected to implement findings of the project?; indicate what will happen to the partnership after the closure of the project; state what investments the project will generate and what investors you have contacted or expect to contact.

6. Project Indicators

To be able to measure the project's progress on implementation, the project should report on a set of appropriate indicators. At least four indicators related to project operation should be used and at least one output indicator, one result indicator and one impact indicator should be used. Please remember that these numbers are minimum requirements, you are free to report on a higher number of indicators. Indicators represent quantified data which can change over time and give an indication of progress or development. An indicator must always be defined carefully to make sure that the appropriate item is measured and that data are comparable over time. The indicator unit defines the indicator to ensure that everyone involved understands the indicator in the same way.

The baseline figure should state the situation at the beginning of the project. In general, output indicators have a baseline figure of zero, because no output has been produced before the start-up of the project. The target is the figure expected after the successful completion of the project.

In the intermediate and final reports of the project, the indicators chosen must be stated and the relevant figure at the end of the time period concerned must be produced as 'actual' figure. Budget and expenditure are input indicators. They are not covered in this section of the Application Form, because this information is requested in the financial sections of the Application Form.

For a more detailed explanation on the indicators you are advised to consult chapter 6 in the Programme Complement and the general overview given in chapter 6 of the CIP document.

6.1.1 Here the number of organisations involved with the project at the start of the project should be stated. If you aim to involve more organisations during the course of the project, list the total number you aim for as target.

6.1.2 Here the number of people involved from the beginning and the number of people expected to be involved throughout the entire project should be stated as baseline and target respectively.

6.1.3 Normally at the beginning of the project this figure (the baseline) is zero. In most cases publications are planned as part of the project (target) or press coverage is expected. You can use different indicators for the different types of publicity (brochures, reports, newspaper articles, Internet sites, and the like), as you think appropriate for your project.

6.1.4 At least a fourth indicator related to the activities of the project must be presented on your Application Form. The list in Chapter 6.1.1 of the CIP could be used to find one or more appropriate indicators.

6.2 The indicators produced in this section cover the outputs of the project. They can relate to physical outputs like small-scale infrastructure, for example the establishment of an installation to produce sustainable energy, or to other outputs like research programmes completed or new shipping links established. At least one output indicator, which is clearly relevant for measuring the output of the project, must be presented. Section 6.1.2 of the CIP can be used to find examples. The indicator or indicators should report on items produced by the project.

6.3 The result indicators produced in this section cover the direct and immediate effects of the project. An example of such a result could be 'increased share of sustainable energy in total (local) energy consumption'. At least one indicator, which is clearly relevant for measuring the result of the project, must be presented. Section 6.1.2 of the CIP can be used to find further examples. The indicator or indicators should report on items that are directly influenced by the project. An explanation on the difference between output, result and impact can be found in chapter 3 of the Programme Complement.

6.4 The impact indicators produced in this section cover the long-term effects of the project. At least one indicator which is clearly relevant for measuring the achievement of the project in this regard must be presented. Section 6.1.2 of the CIP can be used to find examples. The indicator or indicators should relate to items that are influenced by the project. However, if a measurable environmental impact is to be expected, the impact indicator that you are required to report on should be an *environmental impact indicator*, but you may still also report on other impact indicators related to your project. An example of an environmental impact indicator is the local CO2 level.

In some cases the positive effect (impact) of your project will only appear some years after the completion of the project. It could also be that you know that your project influences a certain aim (e.g. a cleaner river, increased employment opportunities, higher GDP in a region), but that it is impossible to say what effect your project has on the figure. Please report on such a context indicator if you can not find an appropriate impact indicator (where the figure measured is directly related to the achievements of your project). This could for instance be CO2 levels, GDP or risk of flooding.

6.5 Explain here why the chosen indicators are relevant to your project and how they link to the aim, objectives and activities of the project.

7. Project Finances

7.1 This section is a part of the Detailed Costed Workplan which is required as part of the project application and you are asked to state how the total amount of expenditure will apportion itself on the different fields of expenditure (budget lines). This information has to be stated for each partner. Please note that due to Norway’s status as a non-member state, the total expenditure for Norwegian partners as a general rule cannot be changed.

A specific set of rules applies for expenditure under budget lines 2-3. Consult the Detailed Costed Workplan Fact Sheet for further information.

If a project involves investments in infrastructure, supplementary information is required . This information must be given as an appendix to the application form.

All infrastructure investments must be posted under budget line 8: Material investments. This budget line contains at an aggregate level all financial information regarding infrastructure. In addition to this aggregate information the project application must contain an appendix in which the individual infrastructure investments at sub-project level must be described. The sub-projects must be described in a uniform way that enables a comparison of sub-projects. The sub-project description must contain information about the nature of the individual sub-project as well as on the amounts set aside for the purchase of land – if relevant for the project. The programme Secretariat may require further information on specific matters regarding infrastructure investments if needed.

Only costs directly related to the project are eligible. This means that even though certain types of expenditure can be included in the project as a whole, they may not be eligible for ERDF assistance or they may have special grant rates. Please consult the Fact Sheet on Eligible Costs for detailed information on specific types of expenditure.

The total expenditure divided on partner is stated in budget line 14. Beneath budget line 14, the funding plan for the project must be stated. The funding plan consists of a line for ERDF assistance per partner, a line for own funding and a line stating the total funding. This last line and budget line 14 must be equivalent.

The apportionment of expenditure on budget lines and the funding plan will dictate the format of future financial reports.

7.2 State the distribution of funding between the project partners. You are asked to account for own funds committed by each partner and ERDF funds (also referring to the ERDF similar funding from Norway), which together will add up to the total funding committed to each of the partners, total amount of own funding per partner and ERDF (or ERDF similar) funding, and the total amount of funds committed to the project as a whole.

7.3 As commitment of assistance is granted on an annual basis you are asked to break down the estimated expenditure for each partner annually. Expenditure must be legally committed to projects by 31 December 2006, but payments may be made until 31 December 2008. Estimate the expenditures to the nearest thousand Euro.

Please note that assistance from the North Sea Programme reflects commitment of funds per year and is subject to the “de-commitment” rule. Please consult the Fact Sheet on Auto Decommitment for further information.

8. Timetable for Project

8.1 State what date the project is estimated to start.

8.2 State what date the project is planned to end. Note that as commitment of assistance is subject to the “de-commitment” rule the project completion date can, as a general rule, not be changed.

8.3 Indicate the estimated starting and completion dates of the phases that you stated in section 3.8 Phases.

9. Publicity

9.1 In order to make the project known to the world outside the project, both the project and the project’s output and result should have a publicity or marketing strategy to facilitate its dissemination. Indicate what tools will be used and what type of material will be produced. Do also make sure that the costs related to publicity, marketing and dissemination are included in the financial plans for the project and thereby accounted for in chapter 7 Project finances. In case the project has someone specifically responsible for publicity issues, you could state that person’s name or the project partner responsible for publicity.

9.2 In this section the target groups of the publicity, marketing and dissemination strategy should be stated. It should include who will benefit from the project and it might also include other target groups such as authorities on different levels, enterprises, NGOs, other projects concerning the same issues as your project, the general public and the media.

10. Bank Information

10.1 Write the name and address of the bank of the Lead Partner.

10.2 Fill in the bank account number of the bank of the Lead Partner to which the assistance from ERDF/Norway should be transferred.

10.3 Fill in the bank code.

10.4 If a SWIFT code is used, fill in the code here.

10.5 If an internal reference is requested, state the person's name here.

10.6 State the name of the account holder(s).

11. Certification and Submission

The application needs to be signed by an authorised person on behalf of the Lead Partner and it should have the official stamp of the Lead Partner. The name of the person signing should be clarified using capital letters and the position of the person should be specified. State the date the Application Form is submitted to the North Sea Programme Joint Secretariat.

List of Appendices

If you need to add any further information related to the Project Application it should be added in an appendix to the Application Form. Please remember that only the Application Form itself is guaranteed to be considered by the members of the Steering Committee. It is therefore essential to provide all the important information in the form itself.