

# Interreg IVB NW Europe 2014-20

## A MANIFESTO

### *For the improved functioning of the CP – JS Network*

*To be underwritten by the Managing Authority and the Member States.*

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## 1. Context.

The NWE Programme has two implementing bodies which need to reinforce one another: the Joint Secretariat (JS) and the Contact Points (CPs).

Both bodies are steered by the Monitoring Committee (MC) and the Managing Authority (MA). The Strategic steering is done by the MC (long term planning, approval of budgets and annual work plans) and the day-to-day implementation is the responsibility of the MA.

The National Authorities (NA) of the 7 Member States (MS) of NWE arrange the hosting of the CP(s) within their countries. Member States delegate to the MA part of the day-to-day implementation responsibility for the CP network, whilst the hosting of the CPs for employment issues rest with MSs or a public authority designated by them.

Whilst the joint network of CPs and JTS in the IVB period has led to some very effective work, there have also been shortcomings in the functioning of the network. These problems were identified by the Mid-Term Evaluation (2012), which noted that "Issues with the working relationship between the CPs and the JTS are evident and need to be resolved."

The purpose of this 'Manifesto', therefore, is for the CPs and JS to jointly express their commitment to deliver such improvements, with the intention of providing a service which is more useful and accessible for our users; that is potential project promoters and project partners. It is a document which has been developed jointly by both groups, and reflects a shared wish for an improved network in 2014-20.

## 2. Missions.

Where both bodies serve mainly Project Partners, the MS and the MA, the emphasis for each group is different.

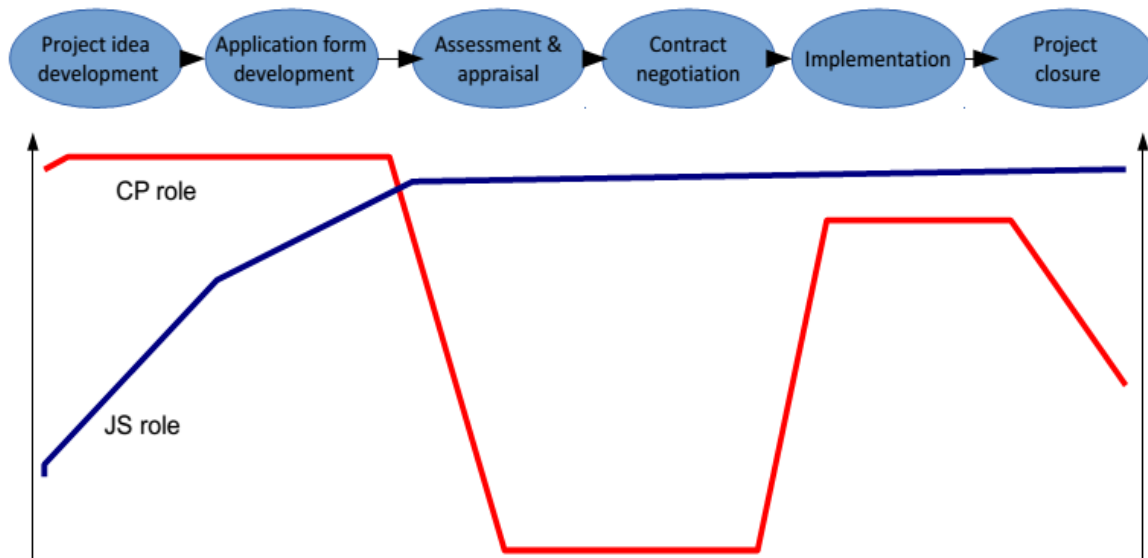
The JS performs tasks on behalf of the Managing Authority, such as the MA tasks related to project development, assessment and preparation of the decisions by the MC and supports the MA regarding its responsibility for the implementation activities on Programme level and the related TA-budget.

The CPs complement these MA functions, and are more the 'front-office' of the Programme, close to its customers and with knowledge of the local, regional and national context, with the capability to undertake project development and outreach work. The network should work as 'brokers' of ideas and as a source for partner-search, and provide detailed project development support, turning raw ideas into workable project ideas. The JS will be involved also in project development, but usually this is at a later stage than the CPs, when project ideas are better developed and closer to the application stage.

Both groups have a responsibility to guard the interest on Programme level, the transnational cooperation element, although the JS have particular responsibilities during implementation to ensure the value for money of the whole project, monitoring the implementation according to the contract between the project and the Programme and provides more the knowledge on the (North West) European level.

The CPs would make sure the project (-ideas) fit within the policy context of their countries.

In terms of an ideal **project development cycle**, one would expect that the role of CPs diminishes during the life of a project, whilst the role of the JS will increase:



However, the life of projects does not always follow this idealised cycle, and the key to effective JS-CP cooperation is flexibility and a willingness to communicate constantly during the projects' life.

Fundamental to the success of this shared network, and described in more detail below, are:

1. A clearer (but not necessarily longer) SLA, to which all parties show commitment
2. An improved joint work planning process
3. Improved day-to-day liaison and communication
4. More effective and timely reporting

### 3. Group competences of CPs and JS staff.

A full set of competences for all members of Programme bodies is under development for NWE on this moment. For members of both implementation bodies some key knowledge attitudes and skills are the same:

- A commitment to the aim of Transnational Cooperation and the OP.
- A Good understanding of Cohesion Policy, particularly Territorial Cohesion.
- Training and/or experience in a field of territorial, sustainable or economical development.
- A good standard of working English, and other Programme languages as necessary.

- Competence in IT skills and relevant office programs.

On top of these common competences you could describe the main features for each body as follows:

Ideally, a CP would be a person who will make contact easily, who sees solutions rather than problems, who is not afraid to travel and work outside office hours. They would be a 'self starter', able to work without close supervision or admin support, able to set and deliver objectives, manage time effectively and flexible about tasks according to need of circumstance. The language of the area the CP serves should be mastered very well. Furthermore (s)he should have a sound knowledge of the principal themes covered by NWE, and have access to relevant contacts at national, regional and local levels. A 'good' CP would be a broker of ideas and a matchmaker of partners, and a skilled facilitator or animator of groups.

A JS Project Officer (both Content and Finance functions) would have understanding of transnational co-operation, experience of partnership working, good knowledge and some experience of project and risk management and has sound knowledge on supra national level of at least one of the 3 themes of NWE.

A JS officer would be service oriented to the main customers of NWE: the project partners and result-focussed. In the mean time (s)he would also serve the needs of the MS and the MA. A JS officer is an expert in program rules and regulations and trained / skilled in the use of all program tools.

A 'good' JS Officer should be skilled in relationship management, motivated to find solutions in all phases of the project, from project development until closure, and have some conflict resolution skills. (S)he should be interested in and motivated to capture the results of the project in their portfolio and to make sure the projects and beyond are active on the uptake on these results, even after the project ends. And at the same time (s)he should be very clear with projects on what the Programme expects it should be delivering. S/he enjoys travel and working in a diverse team.

#### **4. Harmonised HR management of the CP-network.**

Supporting the recruitment of CPs and JS with a set of competences, the CP-link officer should participate in the recruitment of CPs on behalf of the MA.

MSs should also involve the CP-liaison officer on behalf of the MA when undertaking a regular staff appraisal.

Training needs should be identified by the MS line manager of each CP in the Programme, but there should be a strong commitment to joint Programme specific training activities which will be identified by the JS-CP network as a whole.

It is not possible nor desirable to completely harmonise salaries between countries with very different pay scales and tax arrangements. However, CPs should be recruited to a comparable level (or procurement for external CP services should be set at a comparable level); that is, a level appropriate for a public service function with high levels of autonomy and responsibility.

## 5. Reinforcing the network

The CP network should be seen as another unit of the joint implementation. The network coordinator will be the CP-link person at the JS. This leader will take responsibility for:

- Coordinating and chairing the regular cycle of CP-JS meetings
- Identifying the training needs of the JS-CP group.
- Overseeing the development of new or adapted internal communication tools and systems to improve the network
- Development of the joint annual workplan

Improved day-to-day coordination is fundamental to the success of the network. There is a constant need for CPs and JS members to communicate: to share intelligence and information about projects, to share documents, to develop pieces of work together. This is currently a variable area, with some examples of very effective joint work, but with many examples of information which has not been passed on, or a sense that 'we don't know what *they* are doing'. The members of both teams are responsible for these improvements.

Improving the communication flow will derive from a number of changes:

- Building an enhanced level of trust, and a commitment to greater sharing of information
- Joint training activity on Programme specific issues, and opportunities to understand better each other's working environment This could include job shadowing (to enable JS to spend time observing the work of CPs and vice-versa)
- Better use of CP-JS meetings, with more coordination and dialogue about the agenda for each meeting , more advance preparation and development of ideas and papers, and a greater variety of meeting styles, such as, thematic working groups etc
- Developing improved tools, such as basecamp-type or other readily available software, an improved filestore, shared events calendars, shared outlook calendars between all individuals of both groups etc.

The individual CPs should reserve time for the creation and maintenance of the network. This will include:

- Timely and mutual collaboration with all CPs (and even those from other transnational Programmes) in core tasks, such as partner-search and project-development.
- Shared planning of regular liaison meetings between the network, so that these dates can be prioritised and aligned with the programme cycle
- A commitment to updating information systems.

## 6. Improved coordination: 'CP-Liaison-officer' at the JS.

In order to improve the functioning of the shared network, a new part-time post would be created within the JS structure. This officer should coordinate the

network, follow the individual CPs, and make sure any developments in the JS office that affect the work of CPs are brought to their knowledge, and similarly bring to the attention of JS staff any changes or developments in the CP network.

The CP liaison person will be an enhanced role compared the previous programme period, where CP coordination was a part of an existing full role. The new role will provide a greater resource for supporting the work of the CPs, with an enhanced status. This individual will have time within his/her role to instigate and facilitate this planning process, work with the CPs on new initiatives, and have time to 'think the big thoughts' which is not currently possible within the tight resource constraints of the present CP liaison role.

It is recognised that the individual occupying that role would need to have a consensual management style, and be capable of facilitating, supporting, and managing relationships in a complex and remotely dispersed team. The members of this team work in different cultural and formal settings. It was not however agreed whether the post should carry management authority over the CPs. However the post will not be the planning and information 'secretary' of the CP network either.

It may be appropriate for CPs to be involved in the recruitment of that individual, and in his/her subsequent work appraisal or assessment, in some way.

It is not necessary that this is a full-time position; 0.4 – 0.6 FTE may be sufficient to undertake effectively this role.

## **7. How to set priorities and deadlines**

A Joint improved planning system within the network and between the JS and the network should be developed within the framework of the Programme management by MA and MS in the Monitoring Committee (MC).

The fundamental long term plan allocating capacity and TA-budget to tasks will be subject to a MC decision at the start of the new Programme. This long term plan can be adapted only through a MC decision. The implementation of this long term plan will be subject to an annual or six-monthly reporting back schedule, which provides information to the MC to make adaptations.

Currently, CPs are required as part of their contract to submit an annual workplan. In recent years, attempts have been made to integrate these workplans into one CP-network plan, and to align them more closely with the JS workplan. In future, it is proposed that the CP liaison person in the JS takes responsibility for a planning process at which forthcoming priorities and actions can be set as a single, whole-network plan.

The timescale for this plan could either a) match the timescale of calls (twice yearly, under the proposed two-step approach), or b) annually, in line with staff appraisal and review. The plan should be SMART, with clear targets (not necessarily numerical ones) and indicative allocations of capacities to allow for effective review and monitoring.

By this approach, joint tasks are to be developed together. Joint tasks are dependent on the participation of all involved. Individual participants to a joint task are supposed to be loyal to a reached consensus and perform the tasks within the agreed deadlines.

If, on particular issues, no consensus can be reached the CP liaison officer should agree with MA and the relevant MS about a working way, which would then be the decided one.

## **8. Accountability**

The reporting system should satisfy the requirements of accountability and audit, in demonstrating effective use of public funds, and therefore should yield useful information that is not out of date when received, and in a format which is not onerous for the CPs completing it, or for the JS officers reading it.

The minimum requirements that should be met are that:

- realisations (accounts) should be comparable to plans (level of detail and timeframe); and
- the Programme should be able to judge whether it 'gets what it pays for'.

In case of a CP hired through a public procurement, the contract is set at the start of the appointment, as can often be specific, and therefore less flexible, with reduced scope to amend or negotiate additional, unforeseen activities. In case of a CP which is part of a public (hosting) entity, the requirements are more flexible.

With these requirements in mind it is suggested that:

- A simple monthly activity report, in English, ideally on no more than a single side of A4, detailing key events against the SLA headings (projects supported, events held, meetings attended) should be submitted as soon as practicable after the month's end
- A six monthly financial report will match the timescale and the level of detail of the work planning process.
- There should be no need for the financial report to include all receipts and invoices, as these have already been 100% checked by national authorities

A new SLA is developed which codifies this improved relationship. In particular, the SLA should clarify the precise nature of 'network coordination', and should also be clear about the role which CPs can and cannot play in project assessment and decision-making (that is, to inform PSC members when requested, but not to influence decisions). The SLA must have Member States' input at drafting stage to ensure that it reflects their needs on the ground from CPs. MC needs to approve the SLA.

## **9. Conflict of Interest**

Both the JS and the CPs shall avoid situations of potential conflict of interest.

Staff paid by the Programme shall not provide paid services to any of the NWE projects or NWE project partners. In case any member of staff finds itself in a situation of potential conflict of interest, they shall inform their hierarchy immediately.