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How to write a successful ENPI CBC proposal? Belarus Focus

This paper is an attempt to bring together a number of useful hints and tips: suggestions and concepts on what makes a good CBC project. The text, struggling to provide ready to use know-how, sticks to the standard ENPI CBC application form and follows its structure in sections and headings in line with so called PRAG (Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EC External Actions). The publication constitutes an essential part of the project: *PPT/3/2009/W/52 Trans-border cooperation for biodiversity and sustainable development of environmentally sensitive/protected* areas implemented within Trans-border Partnership Programme by Local Tourist Organization Wet-land's Gate, Poland in partnership with PEIPSI, Tartu, Estonia and Ecoproject, Minsk, Belarus and was presented in August 2010 during CBC Summer School in Varska, Estonia (seminar: Approaching ENPI CBC



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project). The project was supported by Norway Grants and Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Republic of Poland, being managed by the Association Eastern European Democratic Centre, Warsaw, Poland.

APPROACHING ENPI CBC PROPOSAL

Guidelines

The first and most obvious thing to do is to read carefully so-called guidelines published by Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) for each of the programmes. The guidelines should be searched for identification of right priority and measure (P&M), that fits your project idea. The choice of P&M is critical for successful application. The link or relation between chosen P&M and your project must be clear and self-evident: the project should address M&S in totality. Actually, what tends to be a definite strength is to employ or use the same wording (in description or even in the title of your project) as provided under chosen P&M. Similarly, the planned activities (the things you what to do within the project) should at least partly overlap with the indicative list of activities, repeating them modified, extending or blending some components from the list. The reviewers do not like to see entirely new concepts: ground breaking innovations in approach, methods or activities must be tempered by EC attitude, rooted in the guidelines. A doze of routine and low-risk policy tend to be a good credo. Additionally, the guidelines should be consulted for project jargon: the project vocabulary, entailing some key terms (like direct beneficiaries, target groups, scope of the action or



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deliberating about the general ideas (the assessors know them very well, being fed-up seeing the same thing for a tenth time in a row). The project is no more than your idea of how to effectively and sustainably solve a defined problem or addressed an identified need. The problems to be addressed are routinely stated in the guidelines under each P&M, though you should always provide your understatement of the issue, emphasizing the background: factors behind it, that cause the problem persists. The proposed methodology and activities should be consisted with your definition of the problem. The idea should be sold in persuasive and personal way. Try to be possibly positive (convey liveliness and enthusiasm in your proposal), while keeping in touch with the reality.

4. Make sure that the summary chart (limited to 1 page) is well done and could stand alone as a fully-fledged resume of the entire project. Assume that assessors will get no further than the first page.

5. Before filling each row of the application form read carefully the instructions or questions provided before. Your “answer” should only address the questions you are asked to provided in given chart. Follow the instructions and your proposal will unfold well structured.

6. Wish-list is not enough. There should be significant and insightful substance to the proposal. A handful of methodology remarks is also a useful idea; while the method description does not mean complicated and confusing narrative. Remember, that peer learning, know-how or capacities polling or sharing, good practices dissemination, co-ordination, institutional partnership or twinning,



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networking, or just training are all recognized METHODS.

7. Invent intelligibly when you are unable to provide the necessary details. In principle nobody will be in position to verify your story, except the general, widely known phenomenon's. Be aware, that all your statements are considered as a promise to be kept.

Relevance of the Action: Needs Assessment and Your Local Insight.

Success of your proposal depends largely on your ability to provide as many details about the problem in micro scale as possible, offering in-depth insight into the issue from “people perspective”. Persuasive, detailed local insight can win you a heart of the assessors. When collecting data and filling “relevance of the action” chart you ought to bear in mind that:

1. Your problem must be tangible and real, or at least should be presented in a way, that makes a reader feel a part of story, compelling his attention (lamenting is not a good solution). The best way to achieve it is to explain the needs following an average person perspective (step by step: showing needs unfolding in a process – as a chain of connected issues), emphasizing institutional, legal or socio-economic “obstacles” (barriers, factors or parts of the larger cross- border problem issue), focusing on those you want to address within your project. Remember: you must skillfully and cleverly prove, that on the one hand your problem is the most important “obstacle” to solve larger cross- border problem issue, while on the other hand you are able to do it: the problem is not

overwhelming, you have enough of resources and expertise etc. to manage it, additionally a joint cross-border approach (co-operation or partnership of institutions from neighboring regions) is the best possible solution (as the problem has a cross-border character: it affects all parties engaged).

2. Check the overlaps (other project in the domain/area) and show off about your in-depth local knowledge. Learn about projects focused on similar or same problem, or implemented in the same area. The projects supported by the EC are the priority; the EC and other donors' founded projects can be searched at:

<http://www.ncu.kiev.ua/index/a61/b/lua/Search-Projects> NCU's project database should be considered as a reference point for all actions. Studying the project fiches a good lesson can be learned on how to define objectives, describe activities and present products and results.

<http://www.cba.org.ua/About.aspx> for local perspective

http://ec.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/projects/list_of_projects/projects_en.htm

<http://www.pbu.wppwp.gov.pl/> for ENPI CBC PL -BY- UA

Search in the internet and make some phone calls, it will be good enough. Try to highlight the weak aspects of the past/other projects (for hints on common weakness of EC assistance consult discussion reports for Ukraine, to be search at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/organes/d-ua/d-ua_meetinglist.htm), always explaining why their were not wholly successful (concentrate on items you are able to improve, because either you know more about the problem or you are better placed to deal with it). Keep in mind that critics can not be very harsh: it would mean the task is hard and probably you would also



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fail to deliver results. Smartly distinguish your project from all other activities or actions already implemented (key words to be used: complementarily and added value) .

3. Complementarily: What more you should know about other projects or initiatives to pretend to be the EC “benefactor” ?

The assessors would appreciate your project constituting a complement or extension of other projects, undertakings, policies or wider objectives, especially those supported by the EU. You should smartly justify, that the proposed activities are in line and complementary to things already done. You should show that your project “connect” to new legal (e.g. new laws, being adopted within so-called *acquis approximation* i.e. approximation to EU standards), institutional or socio-economic developments, making them effectively observed or adding to their implementation effort.

4. Narrow focus is always rewarded. Most of the problems are multi-faced and complex, therefore it’s impossible to solve them at once within just one project. You must focus on ONE ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM. When narrowing your issue try to determine: nodes (key issues or needs: “obstacles”) within the larger problem and pick one that:

- You are able to influence, delivering tangible outcomes. Results of the project must be easy to figure out and presented in a credible way. For telling example of tangible results see e.g. *Короткому викладі Проекту at <http://www.ecbsea.org/ua/>*
- Represent an added value versus other projects or initiatives, especially those founded by the EC.



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Complementarily remains a key issue.

c. Have a clear cross-border dimension; for a handful of good ideas see: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/>

d. Stand eligible for support under chosen P&M: being explicitly named in the guidelines.

5. Description should resemble a thorough guide (like a tourist guide with the same poetic) of the institution, issue or process you want to deal with. Your story should take the assessor for a trip, pointing and explaining all facts influencing the problem.

6. Even obvious and trivial facts, observations are worth to be mentioned. Showing off your local knowledge is win- win opportunity for you, as the assessors in principle have no or very limited idea about the process and problems behind the general country level trends.

7. Be honest in presenting the issue. Do not hide the truth about the problem, even it tends to be embarrassing, awkward or just ridiculous.

8. Check the competitors. Possibly learn about the proposals are to be submitted under your P&M by all other organizations, especially from your region. Always try to be positively different, looking for added value you are able to offer.

Looking for your feedbacks!



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