

Lessons learned and recommendations of WWF for potential DTP's 3rd call for proposals applicants

DTP Thematic Seminar – 3rd Call for
proposals
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www.interreg-danube.eu/connectgreen

ConnectGREEN. Restoring and managing ecological corridors in mountains as the green infrastructure in the Danube basin

Aims at maintaining and improving the ecological connectivity between natural habitats in the Carpathian ecoregion.

- **Duration:** June 2018 – May 2021
- **11 Partners** from 6 EU countries (ERDF)
- **2 Partners** from Serbia (IPA)
- **10 Associated Strategic Partners** (ASP)
- **Coordinated by:** WWF International Danube-Carpathian Programme - Romania
- **Value:** ~ 2.46 million euros

TRANSGREEN. Integrated Transport and Green Infrastructure Planning in the Danube-Carpathian Region for the Benefit of People and Nature

Aims to contribute to safer and environmentally-friendly road and rail networks in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine

- **Duration:** January 2017 – June 2019
- **11 Partners** from 6 EU countries (ERDF)
- **9 Associated Strategic Partners** (ASP)
- **Coordinated by:** WWF International Danube-Carpathian Programme
- **Value:** ~ 2.48 million euros

Benefits of complex projects:

- High visibility for project partners (PPs)
- Attractiveness for stakeholders involved in project to work and be seen in international context, to share their knowledge
- Issues to be solved are complex, in most cases requiring complex, integrated solutions
- Testing your approaches across different countries makes outputs more generally applicable and project more impactful
- Similar issues due to common history and bio-geographical conditions in Carpathian and Danube countries – likewise similar solutions
- Pooling knowledge, using each other's expertise across countries makes our work more efficient
- Joint work fosters cross-country cooperation and shared understanding of issues and solutions
- DTP requires multinational, complex proposals

Challenges of complex projects:

- Language and culture barriers
- More time and capacity incl. money have to be allocated for project management
- Roles and responsibilities often unclear (compared to single team projects where hierarchies are clear) can lead to miscommunication and delays
- Physical distance and unfamiliarity between different partners increases likelihood of lack of trust in partners' expertise but also lack of awareness about capacity gaps and strengths of involved staff
- Complex projects are more fault prone and have a higher susceptibility for misunderstandings/different interpretations of tasks
- Different partners may use technical terms or approaches differently which can lead to misunderstandings and frustrations when they start working together
- Pro-active approach is needed in large consortiums

ConnectGREEN project development: 2014 – 2017!

1st submission's (LP: Piatra Craiului NP) failures (e.g.):

- “specific territorial needs within the target area could have been better explained”
- “definition of project objectives”
- “logical connection between activities not clear, timing of certain activities and deliverables confusing”
- in partnership: “spatial planning is under-represented”
- “work plan should have been much better detailed”

2nd submission (LP: WWF RO) successful!

- much better reflection of DTP requirements and recommendations into the proposal
- more realistic, clearer, much better planned, partnership restructured

Before developing a proposal, a good concept (including a draft logframe) should be available and circulated among the potential PPs.

Governance (roles, responsibilities, who takes which decision when) needs to be crystal clear; ideal structure:

- project proposal development coordinator (strategy, process)
- if feasible and relevant, project proposal editor (with very good English!)
- experienced reviewer if needed
- national project focal points, facilitating the input of all involved partners
- strong and focused WP leaders (that don't rely on LP to compose sections that are their responsibility)
- ensure that PPs involved in implementation will be involved in the project proposal development (at least to certain degree)

General recommendations:

- Realistic but ambitious roadmap for the proposal development
- Gain a deep understanding of DTP's requirements (level of required details, objectives, strictness of rules, admin, budget, etc.) → be careful with this when designing the roadmap, necessary capacities, etc.
- Do risk assessments, be prepared for PPs' exit strategies, ask potential PPS to step back if needed, dare to say NO to potential partners
- Ensure that the needed staff capacity is adequately evaluated and budgeted
- Sufficient time should be allocated for the project development (ideally 1 year)
- Allocate buffer capacity and time for emergency or unpredicted issues, also consider national holidays in the different countries

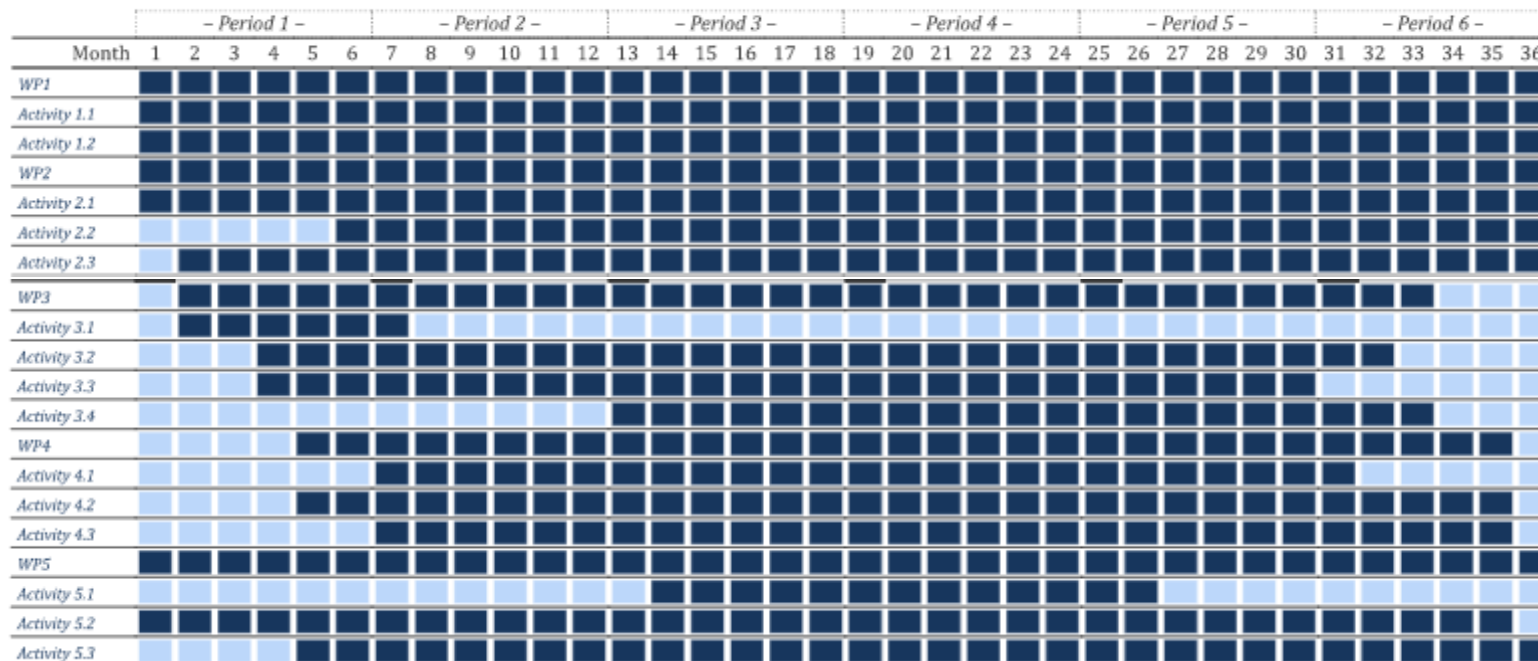
PPs selection and involvement:

- Investigate and consider experience of partners (in particular researchers) in project development and management and analyse PPs background (e.g. relevant projects implemented)
- Ensure an adequate and balanced geographical distribution of partners (i.e. relevant for SO 2.3), avoid redundant partners in one country
- PPs are relevant and fully “into the topic” (conservation vs. spatial planning)
- Embedment of partners in professional networks (e.g. IUCN, IENE)
- PPs have the human and financial capacity (including the co-financing and cash-flow!)
- Presence/ involvement of PPs in the potential pilot areas
- Project partners work with different speed
- PPs don’t read the DTP manuals - they rarely contact their program focal point and all rely on the LP
- Make participation in a project consortium conditional on meeting basic requirements (e.g. providing input, meeting deadlines, etc.)

Content:

- Check the ideas and assumptions with relevant stakeholders before finalising a proposal to ensure what you want to achieve is realistic and relevant
- Relevancy at EU/ international/ transnational level (e.g. compliance with EU strategies, Carpathian Conventions' protocols, etc.)
- Be specific where needed (objectives, target groups, outcomes, outputs, workplan)
- Stay clear and focused (limited length of text)
- “Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar” – let the partners fill in the sections where they are “experts” or they are comfortable with
- Make sure you comply with the programmes' requirements - align the content with the programmes' SO!
- Create a detailed and harmonised work plan, set clear responsibilities and deadlines (incl. harmonisation across WPs)

4.5 Indicative time plan



Vs.

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Budget:

- Make it realistic
- Partners should submit in time budgets with careful analysis (detailed breakdown budgets should be elaborated to back the general budget)
- Plan it accordingly (forecasts/ project periods)
- Set limits (WP leaders vs. regular PPs)
- Balance the budgets across countries and PPs
- Reduce/ adjust the budget(s) as needed (difficult for the technical WPs - 3&4)

**Thank You &
Good Luck!**

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