

Success Factors, Myths & Facts and Partner Search for Cross-Border Projects

What makes cooperation across the border succeed – with a checklist for project start and development

Cross-border projects are no rocket science – but they follow rules of their own. This infosheet bundles the most important success factors from practice, dispels widespread myths, shows step by step how to find suitable project partners, and provides a checklist for project start and development in the annex. It is aimed at associations, municipalities, church-based and social providers and educational institutions in the Com(p)AGE environment – from the first project to the well-rehearsed consortium.

Part A · Eight success factors for cross-border projects

From the experience of many Interreg, Erasmus+ and CERV projects – and from Com(p)AGE practice – eight conditions for success can be distilled:

1. A genuine shared need

The project answers a problem that both sides really have – not one that merely fits the call. Thinking from the need (intervention logic: need → objectives → activities → impact) produces better applications and more durable partnerships.

2. A balanced partnership at eye level

Both countries are equally represented in roles, budget, visibility and decisions. Imbalances – for instance when content comes predominantly from one country – endanger impact and evaluation; clear tasks and measurable contributions per partner prevent this.

3. Trust through personal encounter

Digital tools only carry what has been personally founded: an on-site kick-off, meeting places alternating between both sides of the border, shared meals, job shadowing. Trust is the real currency of cross-border work.

4. Organising language consciously

Multilingualism can be planned: agree on a working language, budget for language mediation and proofreading, keep central documents bilingual. Even a few words in the partner's language open doors.

5. Clear governance and a strong lead partner

Who decides what, who reports to whom, by when? A lead partner with capacity, binding internal deadlines per partner and a simple escalation path carry the project through difficult phases as well.

6. Making impact measurable

Define indicators with baseline and target values from the start (participation, registrations, collaborations, reach) and document continuously – this convinces funders and your own organisation.

7. Sustainability from day one

The operating model, core group and cooperation agreement belong in the application phase, not in the final report. Clarifying early who carries what after the project prevents the "project graveyard" syndrome.

8. Taking visibility and funding rules seriously

EU logos, publicity rules and reporting duties are not harassment but part of the contract – implementing them cleanly from the start (logo sizes!) saves correction loops and strengthens your credibility.

Part B · Myths & facts about cross-border cooperation

Six sentences you often hear – and what is really true:

Myth: „Cross-border projects are only for large organisations."

Fact: Small-scale Partnerships (Erasmus+ KA210 with lump sums of €30,000/€60,000), EYF pilot activities or the Alps-Adriatic Alliance are built precisely for small providers. In addition, umbrella organisations or a diocese can "take along" small associations as an accredited coordinator.

Myth: „It won't work without perfect foreign-language skills."

Fact: English as a working language is usually enough; translation and interpreting are eligible costs. What matters is the willingness to communicate – not the grammar.

Myth: „Bureaucracy eats up the benefit."

Fact: Lump-sum funding, simplified cost options and Erasmus accreditation have reduced the burden considerably. Administration is plannable if you treat it as its own work package with a named responsible person from the start – and national agencies and secretariats actively help.

Myth: „People on the other side of the border tick completely differently – it can't work."

Fact: The differences are precisely the added value: different solutions, different structures, mutual learning. The big challenges – ageing, loneliness, care – are the same on both sides of the border.

Myth: „EU funding means pre-financing we cannot afford."

Fact: Partly justified – and solvable: lump sums flow faster, advances are possible depending on the programme, the AAA can cover preparation costs, and a realistic liquidity plan per partner is part of every good application anyway.

Myth: „Nothing remains after the project ends anyway."

Fact: Only if sustainability was never planned. Cooperation agreements, core groups, continuously operated platforms and regular network meetings – as in the Com(p)AGE sustainability concept – carry results far beyond the funding period.

Part C · How do I find suitable project partners?

Partner search is not a lottery but a four-step process:

Step 1 · Clarify your own profile

- What do we bring (competencies, target groups, spaces, networks)? What are we missing?
- Create a one-page partner profile (EN/DE) with project idea, roles sought and contact details – it is your business card for all channels.

Step 2 · Activate existing relationships

- Town twinnings, parish and diocesan contacts, LEADER regions, economic and social partners: the best partner is often just one phone call away.
- Use the Com(p)AGE platform: browse organisational profiles in the neighbouring country and make direct contact.

Step 3 · Use platforms and events

- Official partner searches: EU Funding & Tenders Portal (at the respective call), Interreg partner databases (Jems), Otlas/SALTO for the youth field.
- Advice and matchmaking: national agencies (OeAD, Tempus Public Foundation), Enterprise Europe Network, AAA TCPs and Contact Points.
- Meet in person: info days, b2match brokerage events, Erasmus+ Partnership Building Activities (PBA/TCA).

Step 4 · Check the fit and make it binding

- Fit check: complementary competencies, sufficient capacity, shared understanding of goals, reliable communication, balanced roles.
- First a video call, then a personal meeting; a small joint piece of preparatory work (e.g. a concept sketch) shows how the cooperation really works.
- Create commitment: a Letter of Intent for the application, a partnership agreement after approval.

→ EU Funding & Tenders Portal – Partner Search:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/>

→ Otlas – youth partner finding (SALTO): <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/otlas-partner-finding/>

→ Com(p)AGE platform: <https://www.compage.eu>

→ Interreg Austria-Hungary: <https://www.interreg-athu.eu>

Annex · Checklist for project start & development

To tick off in the initiation and application phase – the earlier, the better:

Idea & need

- ☐ Shared need named on both sides of the border and substantiated with figures/examples
- ☐ Intervention logic sketched: need → target groups → objectives → activities → outputs → impact
- ☐ Cross-border added value formulated in one sentence ("Why can't this be done nationally?")

Programme & deadline

- ☐ Suitable programme identified (see Infosheet 2) and call documents read
- ☐ Deadline, budget range, co-financing rate and eligible costs clarified
- ☐ Access to the submission portal (Jems or Funding & Tenders) set up in good time

Partnership

- ☐ Partner profile created and partners approached via networks/platforms
- ☐ Roles, lead partner and budget distribution agreed in a balanced way
- ☐ Letters of Intent obtained; draft partnership agreement prepared

Implementation & quality

- ☐ Indicators defined with baseline and target values
- ☐ Timeline created with milestones and internal reporting deadlines per partner
- ☐ Language rules agreed (working language, translation budget, proofreading)
- ☐ Communication planned: EU publicity rules, logos, channels, testimonials

Finances & sustainability

- ☐ Liquidity plan drawn up per partner (pre-financing, payment rhythm)
- ☐ Own funds or co-financing secured (check AAA for preparation costs if applicable)
- ☐ Sustainability concept sketched: who carries what after the project?
- ☐ Risks and data protection (GDPR, consent for photos/videos) considered

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