COMPENDIUM OF EXISTING TOOLS DEVELOPED FOR TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION IN LEADER+

A study carried out by the Leader+ Observatory Contact Point

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Abbreviations

TNC	Transnational Cooperation
NNU	National Networking Unit
Leader+ CP	Leader+ *Contact Point*
LAG	Local Action Group

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this compendium is to:

- systematise TNC-related information from Leader+

- assess these tools in form of a SWOT (which addresses also – as far as possible – idiomatic differences and socio-cultural backgrounds)

- investigate the applicability of these tools at European level in particular with a view to new member states

The use of the word 'tool' in this instance is not meant in a strictly technical sense, but rather as meaning a device, action or method of reaching solutions and objectives in TNC.

1.2 Method

The major work steps in compilation of this Compendium were:

- Screening of the main Leader websites in EU-15

- As a next step brief phone interview/email contact with National Networking Units were carried out – the main aim of the enquiry was to get an overview on tools which are not visible on the websites as well as to get a feedback on actual demand for some of the tools

A first meeting with the Leader+ *Contact Point* was held on March 2, 2005 to harmonise the view on purpose, proceedings and outcomes of the work. Following the website/interview/e-mail survey, a data sheet was completed for each country. These data sheets, were then followed by an assessment of the most interesting/applicable tools, which are now described in the body of this report.

The final step, following a consideration of the Leader context, was the identification of next steps in the shape of proposals for future strategies: these appear at the end of the report.

1.3 Current Work Programme of Leader+ *Contact Point* regarding TNC

According to the current work programme the Leader+ *Contact Point* envisages the following steps to promote TNC:

- cooperation fair in June 2005

- the eventual setting-up of a library for documents/materials

- LAG and Cooperation Database

- revision of existing partner search tool (developed by Sweden)

- summary of programmes on website

- presentation of best practice

- country specific information fiches on administrative rules for TNC

2.   TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION IN LEADER+

The Guidelines for Leader+ indicate the importance of co-operation in general. Cooperation in the broad sense of the term is a fundamental component of Leader+:

Leader+ *should support the opening of rural areas to other territories by the exchange and transfer of experience and through the creation of networks (Commission Guidelines for Leader+, Art. 1)*[1]

But the text of the Guidelines refers also to the challenges which are particularly relevant in case of Transnational Cooperation (TNC). Because such projects have often led to the creation of fragile partnerships and this might happen in particular when roles are poorly defined or through the accumulation of disparate procedures.

Action 2 in Leader+ supports interterritorial and transnational cooperation with two main aims, i.e.

■   achieving the critical mass necessary for a joint project to be viable

■   encouraging complementary actions

Cooperation will consist in pooling the know-how and/or human and financial resources and the actions have to be based on thematic guidelines clearly defined by the LAGs. Funding will be granted under this action for joint projects and for upstream expenditure on technical assistance for cooperation. It is important that TNC projects in Leader+ have to be clearly oriented towards joint results: The cooperation shall not consist simply of exchanges of experience but must include the implementation of a joint project if possible supported by a common structure.

There are three ways of implementing Action 2 and the practice differs between the Member States

■   LAGs get pre-allocated appropriations from Action 2 (e.g. in Finland)

■   cooperation action is implemented through Calls for Tenders

■   or continuous administrative implementation of Action 2 (e.g. in Austria)

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[1]   Commission notice to the Member States of 14 April 2000 laying down guidelines for the community initiative for rural development (Leader+)

Network Organisation Units which are financed from Action 3 provide technical assistance for transnational cooperation. Experience from LeaderII has shown that projects could not be carried out without technical assistance.

3.   CHALLENGES IN TNC

3.1   General tendencies

Since geographical distance and language barriers are seen as major obstacles in partnership-building, most NNUs concentrate their promotional activities in terms of contact fairs and open space events on neighbouring countries. A rather common pattern across the EU is that only experienced LAGs undertake TNC projects. This is generally regarded as a positive trend among the NNUs.

TNC in Leader II had shown a strong focus on tourism and food and agricultural products. Most projects referred to early stages of the product life cycle, i.e. especially in development of design, exchange and assistance. Only a few projects have led to concrete steps in promotion and commercialisation.

In the current period projects related to tourism are still representing a significant part of the approved transnational cooperation projects, but tend to become more diversified. The tendency to focus on early steps of product development prevails.

Graph 1: **TNC in Leader II**
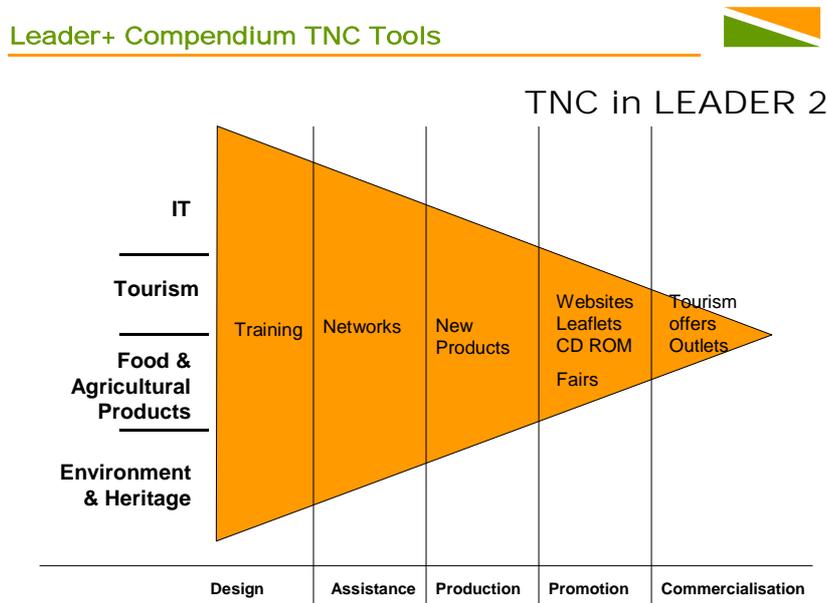
3.2 Key findings regarding motivation and major obstacles for TNC

The following overview on challenges related to TNC in Leader has been derived from a series of questionnaires which were administered in the course of the Ex-post evaluation of Leader II.

Motivation	Obstacles
Similar interests	Difficult application procedures
New experience and learning, themes (tourism and food products)	Time constraints (often relatively tight deadlines for application as well as tight schedules for implementation compared to the development period)
Existing cooperation and partnerships	
Curiosity	Communication problems (no common language and different professional background)
Complementary qualities	Costs (translation of documents)
Financial means	Difficulties to mobilise local actors, availability and lack of prioritisation and interest.
Exchange of feasible and tested project ideas	
Support for partners search from the Observatory	Difficulties to define projects and joint objectives
	Lack of methods and day-to-day management skills
Wider focus on local development	Mentalities related to socio-cultural sphere
Focusing local development	Trade-off in objectives between project initiators and implementing groups
New perspectives for remote and insular areas	Public status as hindrance for international financial management
	Lack of harmonisation in procedures between member states
	Financial means
	Fear of competition on local markets

Source: Background Materials for the Ex-Post Evaluation of Leader II

The challenges related to TNC have also been systematised in the Guide 'Leader II and Cooperation –Lessons from The Past – Tools for the Future'. This guide has identified the following key challenges:

Internal challenges in project generation and implementation

■ **Partnership:** most significant challenges stem from **language barriers**. Both options: either to translation and interpretation support; or joint decision for a common working language; might lead to conflicts due to the dominance of one language or persons with particular language skills and command. Continuous translation slows processes and hampers the building of trust and relationships. **Cultural and nationality** differences, stereotypes and prejudices combined, might reinforce the impact of language barriers. **Differing expectations and level of involvement** are a further factor which might endanger progress in partnership building. Depending on the personalities involved in the project it often takes time until the context and expectations linked to the transnational partnership are entirely clear for all participants. In fact it is also often difficult to come to a **mutual agreement regarding task division**. If one part contributes the majority of content with the other part only

copying a successful initiative tensions and conflicts will soon surface. Consultation of external experts such as the NNU's experts might be helpful to prevent such situations.

■ **Project Content:** the efforts to establish a set of realistic **objectives** which satisfies the expectations of both sides are often underestimated. Initial euphoria and eventual attitudes or agenda of one group member often leads to quick posting of over-ambitious goals which later on cannot be met by the project. High-flying goals might lead to definition of actions which are beyond the scope and capacity of one partner. These challenges become even more pressing due to the fact that project generation often faces time pressure. Here again consultation of persons who are not directly involved in the process is a major help.

■ **Project Management:** LAGs with rather informal management structures and strong focus on ad-hoc meetings might face severe difficulties to develop and adjust their routines to the trans-national cooperation sphere. The 'purchase' of **external management expertise** might lead to dysfunctional relationships between content management and technical-financial management. The actual partnership might become highly dependent on the technical communication of this external resource. The establishment of sound **progress monitoring** systems in order to have a continuous overview about the state of the project is a crucial pre-condition for larger TNC projects. Besides the continuous monitoring a major task of the project management is to emphasise and maintain a significant level of **local involvement**. This also includes a harmonised plan on marketing of the project at the local level.

External challenges in project generation

■ **Procedures:** Differences in national funding mechanisms and long communication process have been additional challenges for many LAGs. Also setting-up the support structures for TNC at national level took time since local Leader projects had been prioritised.

■ **Legal Constraints:** to set up territorial quality labels had led, in some cases, to very specific legal implications with regard to the establishment of trans-national associations and networks.

Through a broad range of guides the following key success factors for TNC in Leader have been identified:

Key success factors in TNC

■ **encouragement in the initial phase:** also our phone survey has clearly revealed that external encouragement and support is most needed in the orientation and preparation phase of the project. Targeted external advice is needed to prevent discouragement due to long development periods

■ **experienced project management:** this has proved to be the key element for the successful and smooth implementation of such projects. The previous outline of challenges underpins the fact that this is not a mere technical function but a holistic task which requires a broad ranges of skills and ample work experience in a trans-national context. The project manager is also needed to reserve sufficient time for clarification of priorities, objectives and resources in the initial phase.

■ **regular face-to-face contact:** in order to avoid dysfunctional relations between technical management and content development, it is important to foresee regular opportunities for a direct exchange between the key local actors.

■ **continuous contact at management level:** for obvious reasons a TNC project requires coordinated communication from joint management to the national partners. Technical systems such as: joint work platforms on the web; financial progress monitoring etc., are just instruments which cannot replace joint strategic guidance of the project.

4. SWOT-ANALYSIS OF TNC TOOLS

4.1 Types of TNC tools

Tools involving 'face-to-face' aspects are more expensive than web-based tools and information services such as partner search engines and downloads.

Tools as understood in this compendium can only help to overcome some of the major obstacles encountered. The tools serve mainly to bridge language barriers and to encourage LAGs to enter TNC. In particular the harmonisation and simplification of procedures within Member States and across the EU, being an additional burden for TNC projects, clearly exceeds the scope of the tools covered in this compendium.

4.1.1 TNC Agents at level of NNUs as the backbone

The backbone of TNC promotion throughout all countries is the network of **TNC Agents** at the level of NNUs or in some cases even at a more decentralised level. The most decentralised example we have seen is in Finland where the TNC coordinators work at the level of the LAG management.

These TNC agents are the persons who decide in most cases about the key strategies in TNC:

- in particular about the format and design of contact fairs and networking meetings;
- about TNC related content on the websites as the main repository of public information;
- about key incentives which go beyond mere information offers.

4.1.2 Three Phases in TNC

The discussion of tools should distinguish between three major phases:

- **Orientation:** the stage before concrete steps towards a project are being taken, the phase when a rough picture of other (neighbouring countries) is being developed or when, based on an existing partnership, funding options are being checked;

- **Preparation:** is the key phase – due to long development times and rather demanding management tasks many ideas fail at that stage. Many LAGs are discouraged due to the long development time;

- **Implementation:** what the Irish NNU calls 'working the plan'.

Table 1: **Key Purpose of TNC Tools in the 3 Phases**

	Orientation	**Preparation**	**Implementation**
Key purpose of Tools in Support of TNC	– Motivation – Short information on general situation in other countries	– Motivation – Partner search – Mediating functions to bridge language gap – Mediating function to bridge different procedures	– Advice on financial and management issues

4.1.3 Supporting Tools

This is an outline of the basic additional tools which we have found during our survey. Since the first steps towards TNC are crucial and normally also the most difficult ones the tools focus strongly on the orientation as well as the preparation phase. Several NNUs have reported that once the initial hurdles have been taken, the need for direct advisory services decreases significantly.

Orientation Phase:

■ networking and Contact Seminars

■ facilitation of initial meetings

■ the transnational partner search engine

■ screen shots on good practice

■ newsletters

■ overview of country, LAGs and themes provided in English

■ contact lists in particular for the new member states and MEDA countries

Preparation Phase:

■ direct advisory support

■ financial incentives for initial meetings (FR, BE-Wallonia)

■ facilitation of meetings

■ comprehensive guides for a step-by-step approach towards TNC

■ guidelines, case studies/documentation of previous activities

Implementation Phase:

■   Direct advisory support

The following outline of the SWOT for basic types of support tools for TNC focuses in particular on the effectiveness regarding key obstacles to TNC such as

■   language barriers

■   socio-cultural differences

Table 2: **SWOT for Basic Types of Supportive TNC Tools**

Tool	Major Strengths	Major Weakness
Transnational Partner Search Engine (practically all websites link to it)	– Easy and anonymous facility – Links in all websites of NNUs – May assist in a more targeted search when contacting other NNUs	– Cannot bridge the language gap completely – many persons hesitate to enter data in an anonymous engine
Contact fairs and networking seminars (practically in all countries)	– main opportunity to get in personal touch with potential partners – easy to focus on topics and to encourage partnership for topics	– resource intensive – attracts mainly the most active networkers – format often information-driven instead of leaving 'open space'
Contact lists as downloads (practically in all countries)	– encourages to get in touch (important additional hint is the language command)	– Up-date requires continuous efforts – English as lingua franca is less common in some parts of Europe
Brief profile of the country and LAGs in English (FI)	– Good orientation for LAGs from other countries	– In order to help LAGs from many countries it has to be offered in several foreign languages – English as lingua franca is less common in some parts of Europe
Financial incentives for initial meetings (BE, FR)	– application helps to sharpen project idea and intent	– might support project tourism – procedure might lengthen preparation phase
Facilitation of initial meetings (AT)	– experienced facilitators help to bridge language and socio-cultural gaps – no strong push to success against all odds	– facilitators might get a disproportionate weight in the critical first step
Comprehensive Guides on Steps to TNC (e.g. DE, FR, IE, UK, NL)	– good orientation for newcomers in particular if illustrated with practical examples	– attract rather persons with a management focus than broad motivation of LAGs

Tool	Major Strengths	Major Weakness
Training and seminars on topics such as management, procedures and TNC content (e.g. LU, IT, IE, UK)	– Tailored to needs of a group	– Often difficult to strike the balance between quick reaction to immediate needs and properly prepared events for larger groups
Direct advisory services (offered in all countries) in some cases by TNC-dedicated full-time staff (e.g. DE, IE)	– Tailored to the needs of the person – Direct personal interaction	– If biased it might lead to unfair competition – The extent depends on size of country and capacity of NNU
Inclusion of trans-national items in regular newsletters (e.g. IE, UK, DK, NL and most other Countries)	– Reinforcement of TNC as a mainstream activity – Dissemination of success stories	– To present projects in an interesting way is quite demanding for NNUs in terms of information collection – A frequent weakness is that useful hints on solutions to initial drawbacks are not included

5. SITUATION IN EU 15 – OVERVIEW

The following section provides a brief summary on the situation in EU-15. It seeks to outline the most important elements related to TNC promotion. The section is mainly based on the interviews and/or e-mail responses from the representatives of NNUs, and on the available material. The information itself is more or less detailed according to the response our survey received from the NNUs.

A common strategic pattern has become visible across all NNUs: language is the major obstacle in transnational cooperation. Thus the first cooperation with countries where the same language is spoken is being sought. This marks most of the events which seek to promote TNC and broaden its base. In a second phase most NNUs go more for dedicated and targeted actions focusing on certain themes.

5.1 Austria

The experience from Leader II was that nearly all LAGs have participated in transnational projects and LAG managers have been the driving force. Given the size of the country the NNU is in direct contact with all LAGs active in TNC projects. The major impetus from the NNU has been an open space event for Swiss, German and Austrian LAGs which has led to three projects (current total about 10 projects).

Generally speaking, broad promotion of TNC is no longer a key strategy given the budgetary constraints for the LAGs. The website is interesting since it actively addresses the language issue – the website offers basic materials in several languages, also the transnational partner search engine offers choice between several languages. An interesting approach is the offer for facilitation of initial workshops (for more details see section 'Good Practice Elements').

In Austria the NNU uses 5-10 days per year for direct support of TNC.

5.2 Belgium

5.2.1 Wallonia

First of all, it is necessary to say that the National Network Unit was set up on January 12th 2004 and resulted in an agreement between the Flemish and Walloon regions. Tr@me, a consultancy specialized in territorial development, was given the responsibility of creating this national unit. Parallel with this, Tr@me is also representing the "cellule d'animation du réseau

(CAR)", being the Walloon regional unit. The NNU is in charge of methodological advice to LAGs. Direct advisory service for LAGs in TNC affairs is in the responsibility of the Fondation Rural de Wallonie (FRW).

The, FRW is in charge of TNC support. Due to the size of the region, personal contact and direct advice to LAGs have a high priority. Most questions relate to procedural issues such as how to get the seed-financing option for initial project development steps (see also section on 'good practice' elements).

5.2.2 Flanders

The regional unit was also created on June 8th 2004. It is the Activeringscel which is in charge of identifying the LAG's needs and also transmitting the cooperation proposals. The internal cooperation routines between the NNU and Activeringscel are currently being developed. TNC is a completely new topic to Flemish LAGs, and it is launched as a 'call for proposals.' The LAGs have until the end of the summer 2005 to prepare the applications, thus the interest in procedural advice is quite high.

5.3 Denmark

The Danish NNU is run by the Danish Centre for Rural Research and Development. The website links to the Leader+ transnational partner search through a page from the website of DG Agriculture and Rural Development. The main TNC information concerns the results and recommendations of a 100-participant transnational conference held on the island of Romo, Denmark in the autumn of 2003.

5.4 Finland

The Finnish NNU is the 'Association of Villages'. The Finnish approach is marked by the fact that so-called TNC coordinators at LAG level have been nominated. Since Finland is a small country this personalised approach has been very successful. The NNU is active in networking between the central administration and the LAGs. Given the satisfactory level of NTC engagement across Finland broad promotion of TNC is no longer a priority for the NNU. Now a series of targeted events might be envisaged (see the recent example in April 2005 on ICT in rural areas). Information on Leader+ can be found on several websites. The website of the NNU has also an English section which gives a good first orientation.

The NNU has about 0.3 full time employed staff working on TNC.

5.5   France

The NNU is placing a strong emphasis on TNC. The UNA is organised as a guidance network together with the Réseaux interrégionaux d'animation (RIA), interregional representatives and the CNASEA (Centre national pour l'aménagement des structures de exploitations agricoles). UNA and the network partners meet quarterly and have a phone contact every 3 months as well, meaning that the partners have a contact every 1.5 months.

France provides seed-financing for project development in TNC.. The procedure to receive this money means being clear about the project idea at an early stage. The NNU organises cooperation seminars. Due to the size of the network, the NNU is developing an internal information system on TNC projects in order to establish a two way communication. Furthermore a comprehensive guide on funding options for LAGs will be prepared. TNC with new member states as well as MEDA countries is an important issue.

The website of the NNU includes comprehensive information on TNC focusing in particular on proceedings for the 'seed-financing of TNC'. The website is in French only. The NNU employs 1.5 persons fulltime on TNC.

5.6   Germany

The German NNU is faced with a heterogeneous situation across the German Länder. In some of the Länder the LAGs are very advanced in TNC whereas in others, spending on Action 2 is lagging behind. Thus broad promotion of TNC is still an important topic. So called 'Open Space Events' are regarded as a particular important tool. These events leave ample room for facilitated or open contact-making meetings between the participants. A strategic focus on Austria and Switzerland in order to minimise the language barriers has characterised 2002 and 2003. Due to different proceedings in the Länder for project application and approval, the NNU has an important mediating role. Mediating is also important between the decision-making bodies of the countries involved in a TNC project.

Given the size of the country it is impossible to have regular direct contact with all LAGs engaged in TNC. Thus a TNC-related needs assessment has been recently carried out among the LAGs. It has shown major interest in targeted partner search focusing on specific topics. The website offers basic information on Action 2, important links, information on New Member States. The service section includes two comprehensive documents on TNC which can be ordered from NNU. The website is in German only.

The person in charge of TNC is working full-time in this field and on interterritorial cooperation.

5.7   Greece

Lamans SA management services runs the Greek NNU. Part of its remit commits the NNU to:

- support and encourage bilateral co-operation on a local and international level with respect to the transfer of innovative practices, which could be applied at a local, national and European level, in order to increase the effectiveness of rural development actions.

- Communication, and constant and bilateral contact with the European Observatory, for the transfer of experience and practices from other member-states to Greece and vice-versa.

These objectives are pursued through the provision of specialised services (internally referred to as project packages), including dissemination actions, services to LAGs and programme management as well as setting-up a database and maintenance of the website. The services to LAGs and programme management comprise seminars, working meetings, ad-hoc advice as well as mentoring for less experienced LAGs through focused exchange activities.

The NNU is also committed to cooperation with the Leader+ European Observatory or other relevant structures.

5.8   Ireland

The Irish NNU (also know as the Irish Leader Support Unit) is based at the Tipperary Institute and was the last of the national units to be established in December 2004.

With regard to TNC, the Irish Unit

- publishes a transnational section of its newsletter

- holds TNC workshops at conferences and seminars

- facilitates field trips

- has published Transnational Guidelines for Leader companies (LAGs)

- attends conferences on behalf of Leader companies

The step-by-step TNC guidance, developed with the assistance of Niamh Kenny of Exodea Europe, is currently available in hard copy and is to be made available digitally in the near future.

The Unit is also collaborating in a tripartite initiative with the UK NNU and the Dutch NNU, arising originally from a UK 'east/west' initiative between the UK and Ireland, complementing the 'north/south' Irish activity promoted under the 'Good Friday Agreement'.

The Irish NNU has one full time employee dedicated to support of LAGs in all aspects of planning and developing transnational partnerships and has an operational budget of approximately EUR 20 000 per year.

5.9   Italy

The NNU is a consortium of the public institute INEA and the consultancy Agriconsult. TNC is an important issue for the NNU and direct support to LAGs is a key issue for the staff. The support ranges from advisory support to financial incentives, i.e. an option for reimbursement of fees as an encouragement to enter TNC projects. The amount of the grant depends on the regional authorities. The NNU has organised a national day for questions regarding TNC and a current plan is to set up a round table with LAGs and the Ministry to tackle technical aspects of TNC.

The Italian website (www.reteleader.it) is very comprehensive in terms of TNC. A specific section is dedicated to it. There is also a special section that is still being developed and that would allow LAGs to get information on the several aspects of TNC projects.

Two persons from INEA are responsible for TNC but several other persons assist in providing advisory services. On an average three people work 80% of their time on TNC and another three work 40-50% of their time on it.

5.10 Luxembourg

The NNU is currently building up the tools for TNC. A brochure on TNC should be ready by April when the existing website will be replaced. Also a transnational seminar inviting participants from Belgium, France and Germany will be held in April 2005. Due to the size of the country personal contact with LAGs is the major means of assistance. Also a series of trainings has been organised and will be continued. The NNU is run by one person who devotes approximately half of her working time to TNC.

5.11 The Netherlands

In 2003 the Dutch NNU has published a guide for transnational cooperation, 'Let's KISS (Keep It Smart and Simple). The publication is available on the Dutch Leader website in pdf-format, in Dutch.

However, most of the support given by the NNU consists of answering direct questions, directing people to the right contacts, and advising on specific project issues.

In addition the unit organises workshops and invites groups to work together on the TNC theme. For example, LAG coordinators have recently responded to an invitation to take part in a cooperation partnership with several LAGs in Ireland and the UK, and to suggest projects or initiatives.

The unit also provides direct advisory support to LAGs. This is the first year that there has been a budgetary provision to spend time on supporting TNC. In 2005 the Dutch NNU expects to spend approximately 40 days on TNC support.

5.12 Portugal

The Portuguese NNU operates discretely within the Managing Authority. While it is known that the unit has developed tools on TNC, this survey had not received the information at the time of writing. The only TNC reference on the Portuguese website concerns the transnational partner search tool. That this 'market place' developed by the Swedish Leader team should include Brazil in its locations is testament to the Portuguese TNC objective to link Leader+ groups with other development actors in the Portuguese-speaking world.

5.13 Spain

The Spanish NNU is combined with the Managing Authority, and is backed by an experienced technical team. For TNC, in addition to the general partner search tool, the NNU website contains a separate national database which covers both Leader+ and the domestic rural development programme PRODER 2. This database contains TNC projects.

The NNU also provides a database of cooperation projects which were completed under LeaderII.

5.14 Sweden

The Swedish NNU, run by the HUSH consultancy, originated the 'Market Place' transnational partner search now used by Leader+ throughout the EU. The main thrust of its TNC momentum now appears to be in the activity of the Swedish Leader Youth Network. An example is given of a Swedish/Scottish conference hosted in Sweden, with the aim of showing how young people can make use of the Leader+ programme.

5.15 United Kingdom

The UK NNU, operated by Local and Regional Development Planning Ltd, who was also responsible for LEADER II network unit. It reports to four: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to make up the United Kingdom.

The time allocated by the NNU for TNC has been reduced in 2005 following the arrival of the Leader+ Observatory *Contact Point*. However NNU staff remains in contact with LAGs on a regular basis and directly help them with contacts or pass their queries onto the Observatory.

Any cooperation ideas sent by LAGs / Network Units are regularly posted as 'News items' (under the services tab) on the website.

There is a considerable amount of transnational literature available for download from the website, including a 'How to Guide on Transnational Cooperation' and a checklist provided by a LAG practitioner. Also available on the site are copies of newsletters produced by other Member States' NNU's.

One particular innovation of the UK NNU is the creation of a register of TNC 'Mentors': practitioners and consultants available to assist in the planning and execution of transnational projects. Currently the register contains 8 names, from several EU states.

There is no formal allocation of NNU staff time to TNC, though one person expects to spend 15 days on cooperation in the current year, with support as required from other team members. A recent NNU initiative is an east/west and north/south cooperation with LAGs in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands. This is aimed to encourage LAGs without Action 2 projects to meet on a monthly basis and to help develop a project by the end of the summer 2005.

6. GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENTS

In the following section we include a selection of good practice in terms of operational tools which have been developed by the NNUs in support of TNC.

Table 3: **Overview on selected good practice elements**

Country	Tools	Type of Tool
Support for the orientation and preparation phase		
SE – EU	Transnational Partner Search Engine	Data base
AT	Facilitation of initial workshops	Provision of expert or financing of expert for a one day workshop
BE – Wallonia	EUR 3000. seed financing for project preparation	100% grant – financial incentive
DE, IE, UK	Comprehensive guide for steps towards co-operation	Documents, (and powerpoint IE)
DE	TNC support needs assessment among LAGs	Queries
FI	Short profiles of LAGs	Document
FI	TNC coordinators at LAG level	LAG Managers as TNC experts
FR	EUR 3000. seed financing for project preparation	100% grant – financial incentive
UK	Register of TNC mentors	Contact list of experienced practitioners and consultants available to facilitate TNC project plans
UK	NNU initiative for non-TNC LAGs	Process of meetings for project identification and development
Strengthening NNUs capacities		
FR	Internal infomation system on TNC projects	Management information system
NL	Proposals for NNU/MA collaborations on TNC	Joint initiative

6.1 Transnational tool – partner search tool

The Transnational Partner Search Tool has been online since 2003. It was developed by the Swedish NNU in cooperation with several other NNUs.

This is an important tool since it is the major link between all websites of NNUs across the EU. In many countries such as Germany current transnational partner search activities are also posted prominently on the front page. LAGs can register there and enter their search profiles into the database. For example, in January 2004 about 170 entries had been registered. In March 2005 about 250 entries have been reported.

A key factor which is not included on all NNU websites is that this database cannot tackle the language problem.

6.2   Austria – facilitation of workshops in the first phase

To begin the process of TNC, it is important to take into account the necessary intercultural considerations when preparing the project.

The Austrian NNU can provide a facilitator for an initial workshop, either proposed from a group of experts by the NNU or one proposed by the interested applicant. This is provides upon request without any formal procedures. The maximum grant (100% financed by NNU) amounts to EUR 800 for a one day workshop.

Theoretically assistance for such workshops could also be obtained through the regular application procedure but this would mean completing an application for and involve comparatively time-consuming formal procedures.

The rationale behind this approach is to facilitate the most difficult step in cooperation. Many potential applicants are hesitant to manage such a first meeting in an international context. The experienced facilitator helps to overcome this situation. One has to be aware of the fact that it is often not only language barriers and socio-cultural differences which can hamper discussion: but also differing professional backgrounds might lead to misunderstandings in defining joint objectives and strategies.

6.3   Belgium – Wallonia – 3000 Euros as seed-financing for TNC

The procedure is similar to the French approach.

The LAG intending to start a TNC project must fill out a form that will have to be accepted by a selection committee (composed of the DRI – Direction générale des relations internationales de la Région Wallonne – and the DGA – Direction générale de l'Agriculture de la Région Wallonne). Once the file is accepted by the selection committee and the Région Wallonne, the LAG can start the preparatory phase of the TNC project.

When this phase is completed, the LAG fills out a reimbursement form ("déclaration de créance") with the copies of the bills to be refunded. There is no document available neither on the NNU website nor on the Interface Leader+ website.

6.4   Finland – first orientation

The Finnish NNU, the Association of Villages, has a website which is also partly also in English. This is not the main Leader+ website but due to its language options it is the entry gate for 'foreigners' to get an overview of the situation in Finland.

The website contains some English documents in 'pdf' format which allow for a quick general understanding about the situation in Finland. One document 'LAG work in Finland in a nutshell' explains briefly the key players in Leader+ in Finland as well as the decision-making process and the situation of LAGs regarding funding of TNC projects. The second document is a brief description of Finish LAGs (up to one page per LAG) including contact persons.

The particular strength of this tool is that it can be produced relatively easily and that it is perfect for a first introduction to a country. The obvious challenge is for larger countries such as Germany and Spain, since it can be managed easily for 58 LAGs but in larger countries organisation and up-dating requires significant efforts.

6.5   Finland – TNC coordinators at LAG level

The key success factor of TNC in Finland is due to two people who have strong links to other networks. Also the network of Carrefours has strongly supported TNC.

The main strengths of TNC in Finland are so called 'trans-national coordinators'. In many cases these are the LAG managers themselves. Practically every Finnish LAG has a TNC-networking specialist. Some LAGs also share this function.

Petri Rinne is working as TNC Coordination and during a telephone interview he highlighted the following facts:

■   *According to Mr. Rinne the key element is to encourage LAGs to enter TNC relations. Thus his work focus is on encouragement in the orientation and preparation phases.*

■   *Due to the fact that Finnish is a minority language , knowledge of English is widespread in Finland and so the language barrier is less of a problem for entering into TNC.*

■   *Finland as a small country is strongly based on personal networks. The TNC coordinator also helps to select target groups to steer and guide project meetings. In addition the TNC coordinator also facilitates and organises any translation required.*

■   *The TNC coordinators have formed a network which organises regular meetings. Representatives of LAGs are invited to participate. The TNC coordinators present*

examples of TNC projects in order to encourage less active LAGs to participate in such projects.

◾ *Technical advice during the project implementation is not an important aspect of work for TNC coordinators. Most LAGs which run a TNC project have already established sound and operational management systems. Only in some cases (in particular when it comes to managing joint costs, e.g. for a website) is he asked for practical advice.*

6.6   France – EUR 3000 as seed-financing for TNC

The national unit has created a specific unit that is in charge of Action 2 of Leader+ (Comité de sélection "Volet 2 coopération"). This unit meets quarterly to select new projects; it also helps in the partner search and assists in defining the cooperation projects more accurately.

It is the French MA who has decided to provide seed-financing for transnational cooperation. Interested LAGs can apply for this offer. Based on a brief presentation on the intended cooperation a commission then decides about the application. The grant applies to individual LAGs.

*The website includes ample guidance on the procedures to receive these funds. This grant is allocated to the LAG as a reimbursement of the expenses made during the first phase of the project. Only five types of expenses are accepted: travel costs; accommodation; restaurants; light technical assistance (not more than 30%); and translation. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss the joint draft project. The website includes detailed guidance on the procedures to follow to be reimbursed. The applicant LAG must fill out a form called "Coopération transnationale de l'idée au projet ('EUR 3 000) Application form. The document written in French is divided into five sections: the **contact fiche** (contact details), **list of partners** (and letters of intent), the **project description,** the **detailed budget and allocation request** (breakdown of costs and information about the budget for further implementation of the project) and **additional supporting documents.***

When this document has been accepted by the committee (formed by DATAR, CNASEA and UNA) and the first meeting has taken place, the LAG must then fill out a second document in order to be refunded..

Pourquoi mon dossier de coopération n'a pas été retenu

There is also a section called 'Why did my application fail?' It gives answers to FAQ and explains the right procedure to adopt in order to have better chances for a TNC project to be accepted. The whole sub-section is mainly devoted to procedural questions.

The demand for this incentive has been slow in the beginning. It seems that even such direct financial support needs additional support and promotion to be used. The French NNU has introduced a 'Call' system in order to emphasis the driving force of this tool.

6.7   France – internal information system on TNC projects

In NNUs of the larger countries, which are actually a network in themselves, the internal information flows on TNC projects become crucial in providing easy access to recent information for all persons involved in management and coordination.

The French NNU is currently working on a co-operation template (tableau de bord coopération) where information on the selected projects, progress status of projects as well as ideas and leads will be compiled. The aim of this information network is to provide an easy access to key information. The information system will be integrated in a two-way communication flow: either bottom-up or top-down. This mapping or status reporting is especially important in the field of partner search.

6.8   Germany – comprehensive guide on first steps in cooperation

The German NNU has developed a comprehensive Guide on 'First Steps in Cooperation between Rural Areas'.

The document written in German details the key steps from partner search to project implementation. It gives detailed guides to the application procedures and checklists for application. The major strength of the document is the inclusion of a broad range of examples which illustrate success factors, bottlenecks but also the important possible mistakes. The latter point is of particular interest since not only are success stories important to learn but also the reasons for failure, which can help to understand important issues.

The document hints at major points which might be forgotten when designing a project, such as, the internal organisation and structure of LAGs, and the role of LAG manager etc.

This guide is particularly attractive to newcomers in this field who are in need of comprehensive information. For some target groups the product in its current form might look a bit too scientific. Nevertheless the information included touches the heart of cooperation. The development of such a product requires considerable time since the stories from the ground, based on reports from practitioners, take time to be collected.

Similar guides have been developed/published in English in both Ireland and the United Kingdom. (Both English Language)

6.9 Germany – TNC needs assessment among the LAGs

Some LAGs intend to go for TNC projects while others are already there. The needs for TNC-related support will differ strongly between the LAGs according to their previous experiences in TNC. The German NNU has launched a needs assessment among the LAGs.

Recently a needs assessment among the LAGs has been carried out. It has shown the major interest of LAGs in targeted contacts which are focused on themes. In addition the needs assessment has strengthened the contacts between NNU and LAGs.

6.10 UK – register of TNC mentors

The purpose of this tool is to develop a register of Leader-experienced practitioners and consultants who can facilitate the efforts of LAGs and groups of LAGs (UK/EU) seeking to develop transnational projects.

The idea of this register is simply to enable LAGs to find a specialist suited to their needs. The NNU is not responsible for the relationship between LAG and mentor.

Given that the Leader approach will be mainstreamed as an axis in the rural development pillar of the CAP 2007-2013, there may be extra merit in developing a specialist pan-EU database of advisers and facilitators who have hands-on experience of planning, implementation and evaluation of TNC actions within the Leader method.

6.11 UK – initiative for non-TNC LAGs

Partially prompted by the MA, the UK NNU took an initiative to engage LAGs which had not, so far, had any TNC activity.

The lead UK Managing Authority had suggested that TNC until the end of the Leader programme might concentrate on 'East/West' cooperation – meaning UK/Ireland, in the framework of the 'Good Friday Agreement'. The NNU proposed that there would also be a benefit if another Member State were involved – ideally able to work readily in English: hence the involvement of the Netherlands. The NNUs agreed that they would take the opportunity to

invite LAGs with no prior experience of TNC, to engage in a process of project identification and development.

6.12 Netherlands – TNC through joint NNU actions

Concerns – and proposals – about TNC

In 2004, Dutch Leader practitioner Peter Laan and NNU member Marga de Jong voiced concerns about the lack of an overall impetus in and support for the field of TNC in Leader+.

Their paper 'Impulse for Transnational Cooperation', written in April 2004 and revised some months later put forward five concrete proposals to give a 'pull' factor to TNC activity:

" ...we propose the following procedure to make this initiative operational and to provide useful trans-national cooperation linkages:

1.   A selected national group consisting of representatives from the National Networks, the Managing Authorities and (if appropriate) the Ministry is formed

2.   The groups of the different EU-countries ("Steering group") come together to develop a number of relevant project themes and make a first outline of the themes;

3.   All national groups present the outlined themes in their own country via their National Networks;

4.   Interested LAGs reply to their National Networks with their detailed needs and offers

5.   The coordination and help in both project development and interlinking initiatives between countries and LAGs is facilitated (consultancy).

Let us combine efforts to engage in more European wide transnational projects within the remaining Leader period! A well designed transnational effort, under the flag of Leader, could add more value to already existing regional initiatives and projects reflecting the rich variety of European Rural Culture. But as we all have experienced, to realise useful transnational cooperation linkages, additional efforts from the National Network Units and Management Authorities are required."

7. SUMMARY AND STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

7.1 Challenges

7.1.1 Time pressure

A serious effort to give impetus to TNC has to face considerable time pressure. Given the fact that projects should be closed by end of 2007 or mid of 2008 early 2006 is probably the last chance to launch a series of TNC projects. In addition we have to consider that in the majority of cases such projects take considerable time to develop. In a few marginal cases project application will be closed at the end of 2005.

7.1.2 Competition from INTERREG

TNC-projects in Leader+, in particular in the field of tourism, could also be INTERREG IIIA/IIIC projects and vice versa. For example, in some parts of Austria and Germany the same players are active in both programmes. In the case of TNC it has to be clearly stated that support structures in INTERREG are specialised on cross-border and transnational cooperation whereas for Leader+ support structures in TNC are often not a top priority.

7.1.3 Different views and approaches of National Networking Units (NNUs) towards TNC Policy

Our survey has revealed that there are rather diverging positions of NNUs regarding their strategies to assist in TNC:

■ several NNUs provide massive incentives to promote TNC; this ranges from continuous contact meetings and motivation of LAGs to direct financial incentives – among this group we would see for example, Belgium, France or Italy;

■ in some countries, the NNUs see the current situation as rather satisfactory and have no plans for strong engagement in broad promotional activities in support of TNC; of course interesting and sound ideas will be supported but there are no more large-scale investments in awareness-raising planned. Among this group we see Finland or Austria

This in turn significantly influences the general interest in Tools or TNC. For NNUs which are still interested to significantly broaden TNC it is of major interest to engage in networks and to actively build bridges to other countries. In the second group the interest is rather in providing offers which deepen existing project and promote 'excellence' at the European level.

It seems that the current work programme of the Leader+ *Contact Point* rather reflects the interest of those countries which intend to further broaden their base in TNC. Deepening the exchange of experience and theme-related learning across successful projects is currently less important.

7.1.4 Languages remain a key topic

The language issue has been the most frequently mentioned obstacle to interest LAGs for TNC. Also our review of websites has shown that information in languages other than the native languages is either restricted to a small part of information or does not exist at all. Thus the websites address primarily, and often exclusively, the national applicants or stakeholders.

Currently only a few websites encourage interested people from other countries to conduct a first investigation regarding the situation in other countries. We have seen positive examples in Finland, Austria, Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark, where we found websites which offered at least basic information in other languages. The UK NNU offers downloads from other, non-English, sites.

7.1.5 TNC is not a prominent item in many cases

For understandable reasons TNC is not an item which can be easily found on most of the websites. The reasons are obvious: first of all the main ideas and procedures are of interest, in the case of cooperation, interregional cooperation is much more important than TNC. There is also something of a feeling that TNC is less important as the Leader+ initiative enters its final phase, added to a feeling that TNC is really the concern of the Leader+ Observatory *Contact Point*.

7.2 Proposals for Strategies

This is a first set of proposals for actions which might be launched by the Leader+ Observatory *Contact Point* in close co-operation with NNUs.

7.2.1 Branding of TNC in Leader+

It would be of great help if TNC in Leader+ would have a simple unified branding, a logo or colour, which could mark out relevant information on the national websites. This would assist in the search for information related to TNC when searching in other languages.

7.2.2 Special issue of the European Leader+ Magazine

With the Conference in June and the recent series of studies a final awareness-raising initiative at European level could be launched. One element could be a comprehensive volume of the European Leader+ Magazine dedicated to TNC.

7.2.3 Study tours for NNU management

Study tours to new Member States as well as MEDA countries might on the one hand help to understand structures and perspectives in these countries better, besides the obvious fact that face-to face contacts always help to establish information flows. On the other hand they might stimulate and strengthen networking among NNU managers.

7.2.4 Exchange meetings for NNUs

Also the exchange and networking among NNUs might have an important incubator function for TNC across the enlarged Europe. TNC managers of NNUs are last but not least main interfaces between the Member States in initiating TNC projects.

7.2.5 Management tool box for NNUs and project managers

One of the outcomes of such structured exchange meetings might be a tailored toolbox. This toolbox could comprise management techniques and good practice elements for support of TNC projects. Examples could be:

■ Checklists for the participants of first meetings to evaluate the first impressions regarding crucial projects elements such as joint objectives etc.

■ Intelligent and vivid formats of meetings which encourage a broad participation actively addressing the challenge of intercultural learning – facilitation techniques etc.

■ Intelligent sequencing and cascading of meetings such as first small meetings to brainstorm effectively about common interests and subsequent individual ranking of priorities at partner level as an intermediary step. Then the first larger-scale meeting can be fine-tuned based on the results of the partner's priorities.

■ Intelligent examples for the management design of TNC projects such as small executive groups reporting regularly to a broader Steering Group etc.

7.2.6 Exchange for decision-making bodies

Also, for the people who work in the MAs and implementing bodies of the programmes, exchange events could help to bridge the language gaps and to overcome hesitant attitudes. Improved contacts between these bodies could significantly improve and accelerate the procedures.

7.2.7 Expertise and excellence in certain topics

With a series of important events until the end of 2005 the need for large-scale general cooperation fairs and workshops should be covered. Now there is a proposal to stimulate focused exchange of experience in certain topics through cooperation at level of national networks. This might take the form of thematic groups of regions and experts.

7.2.8 Contacts lists for new member states, candidate countries, MEDA and TACIS countries

A standard set of information sheets in several languages which is regularly up-dated might be an interesting feature. This information seems to be available on many websites and efforts to up-date the information could be shared.

ANNEX 1
GUIDANCE FOR THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH NNUS

Experts:

Chris Allinson

Bernhard Schausberger

Rationale

Our phone survey will be based on this guidance which will be harmonised with the intentions of the Leader+ Observatory *Contact Point.*.

In our view it is important to go beyond the published tools (in particular the website, and to some extent also printed documents) since we expect that direct advisory services from NNUs to lead LAGs are a major point in support to Transnational Cooperation (TNC).

Our survey will be done after a thorough screening of the websites and the Leader II Archive.

Interview Guidance

We propose to ask the following range of questions:

Are there any additional tools in support of TNC which are not shown on the website?

- E.g. facilitation of meetings

Do you provide direct advisory support to LAGs which want/are involved in TNC

- What are the main topics requested by LAGs

Demand for existing tools

- Do you have any indication about the actual demand for existing tools?

Tool development

- Do you intend to develop additional tools
- Are there tools which you would think could be meaningfully used but you do not have the resources to develop them?

Estimation of the resource allocation to TNC

- Could you give an estimate for the resources needed to support TNC?

ANNEX 2
COUNTRY SHEETS FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES

The Country sheets provide an overview on the range of tools available in each country with a particular emphasis on the NNU's websites. Please note that we have compiled this type of information only for those countries where it provides significant added value to the brief country overviews included in the main report.

This annex includes the following countries:

AT   –   Austria

BE   –   Belgium

DE   –   Germany

FI   –   Finland

FR   –   France

IE   –   Ireland

IT   –   Italy

NL   –   Netherlands

UK   –   United Kingdom

COUNTRY: AUSTRIA

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www.leader-austria.at

NNU's Website structure related to TNC

- As an interesting feature for the frames several languages – including also those of new member states – can be chosen; for the contents practically all EU-15 languages are offered

- Transnational event in June 2005 (Brussels) on front page

Section cooperation	Downloads, subsection cooperation	Events
Transnational partner search engine	Interest in cooperation and exchange – result of a survey among Austrian LAGs	Dates and topic of meetings
	Partner search of German LAGs	
	Leader regions in Hungary and Czech Republic	
	New Member States: contact persons	
	Cooperation projects in Leader regions	

Overview on Tools (Austria)

Tools	Information Source	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weakness
Orientation Phase					
Search engine	Website	Transnational Partner Search Tool	Quick orientation on options	Anonymous and easy to handle	Cannot bridge language gaps
Overview on CZ, HU	Website	Presentation of LAGs, objectives and contacts in CZ and HU	Situation in HU and CZ in a nutshell	Simple and easy to be produced provided that routines for up-dates work	
Contacts New Member States	Website	Contact persons at national level as well as for some regions	First orientation		Without indication of language command no major help for hesitant persons
					Needs continuous up-date
Networking and Contact Seminars	Interview	Particular successful format has been open space CH-AT-DE	3 out of about 10 TNC projects of Austrian LAGs have been a consequence of this workshop	The format as genuine open space has contributed to a very relaxed atmosphere	In current situation- due to budgetary constraints – no more a strategic priority
Screenshots on good practice	Website	Presentation held in course of a seminar – Project Eurovillages	Presentation of tangible and visible results	Helps to develop ideas	Supports tendency towards copy and paste in project ides
Preparation Phase					
Guide on procedures	Website	Brief orientation on administrative procedures	Gives an orientation for Austrian applicants in German	Brief orientation about specifics of TNC projects	For persons who have already ample experience with regular TNC projects
Facilitation of initial meetings	Interview	Provision of experienced facilitators for initial meetings	Helps to bridge language gap and socio-cultural differences	Facilitator might have disproportionate weight in critical first steps	
Direct Advice	Interview	E.g. information about particularly interesting projects to LAGs which work on similar topics	Targeted advice	Targeted advice tailored to personal needs	If biased it might be considered unfair competition
Implementation Phase					
Direct Advice	Interview	In touch with all LAGs which have gone for TNC projects	Two-ways communication which allows to develop targeted events etc.	Targeted and tailored help	NNU-TNC manager might become a bottleneck in larger countries

COUNTRY: BELGIUM – FLANDERS

Contacts:

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 + 32 2 543 76 02, leader@vlm.be

www.leadervlaanderen.be

NNUs Website Structure Related to TNC

- The website is only in Flemish

Documents

- Power Point demonstraties contactdag 8 oktober – Powerpoint Presentation about Contact Day on October 8, 2004.
- Vergelijking project fiches – Project data sheets
- Let's KISS. Een praktische gids over het hoe en waarom van grensoverschrijdende samenwerking in het kader van Leader+. Leader+ Netwerk Nederland – Let's KISS – Practical Guide on trans-national co-operation in the frame of Leader+ in the Netherlands
- Contactgegevens Leadernetwerken – contact details for Leader networks
- Zoekmachine samenwerkingsprojecten – search engine for TNC projects
- Administratieve tenuitvoerlegging – administrative requirements

Overview on Tools (Belgium / Flanders)

General remark: there is no real tool provided by the website but only general information

Tools	Information Source	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weakness
Orientation Phase					
Search engine	Website	Direct link to www.leaderplus.org	Quick orientation on options	Anonymous and easy to handle	Cannot bridge language gaps
Networking and Contact Seminars	Website	There is one semestrial newsletter	Info on TNC can be found as well as the different fairs organised		As it is issued twice a year the info is quite out of date
Screenshots on good practice	Website	Let's Kiss: a practical guide to TNC in the Netherlands with projects that have been implemented	Gives a clear vision of what is being implemented in TNC	Shows the success of TNC projects	TNC in Flanders has not yet started – thus examples from NL
Preparation Phase					
Direct Advice		Contact details			

COUNTRY: BELGIUM – WALLONIA

Contacts:

Mr. Xavier Delmon: Leader+ Wallonie
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Mrs. Marie Bourgeois: Interface Leader+
(in charge of technical assistance for TNC)
+ 3281 23 40 72

www.unleader.be

NNU's Website Structure Related to TNC

- www.leaderwallonie.be has a short description of the NNU in French, English, Dutch and German but when it comes to Wallonia specifically it is in French. The website of the Interface Leader+ (http://www.frw.be/html/mission02.html#Leader) is only in French

Documents

www.leaderwallonie.be

- Trucs & Ficelles 8: La coopération de A à Z – *Tips and Tricks 8 – Cooperation from A to Z*

- Le rôle des autorités locales et régionales dans la coopération transnationale en matière de développement régional et d'aménagement du territoire (not available on website but at regional unit)- *Role of local and regional authorities in TNC and spatial and regional development*

- Coopération transnationale entre territoires ruraux (AEIDL) – *Transnational cooperation between rural areas*

- La coopération transnationale dans le cadre de Leader II: Leçons du passé, outils pour le futur (AEIDL) – TNC in Leader II : *Lessons from the past, learning for the future*

- Cap sur la coopération (UNA France) – *Heading for cooperation*

Interface Leader+

- L'initiative communautaire Leader+ – *Community Initiative Leader+*

- Services de l'Interface à destination des GALs – *Services of the Interface for LAGs*

- Service de l'Interface à destination de l'administration – *Services of the Interface for the administration*

Overview on Tools (Belgium / Wallonia)

General remark: There is no direct link to TNC on the two websites. Therefore, the LAG needs to search the website or call to have clearer information

Tools	Information Source	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weakness
Orientation Phase					
Networking and Contact Seminars	Websites	Through the Agenda section and the three newsletters, it gives the upcoming seminars and the links to the previous reports and potential TNC project		Quite comprehensive	The reports are not easy to find The information is not up-to-date in the Interface Newsletter
Report	Website	Gives European and French reports			
Preparation Phase					
Guide on procedures	Trucs & Ficelles: La coopération de A à Z	Gives the details of the different phases for the preparation of a TNC project	It is a summary of the major steps to follow	Easy to follow and quite comprehensive	
Direct Advice	Interview	Each case is examined and only then the LAG receives an advice	It is a "tailor made" solution		No hints on general advice except for the general procedure to follow to start a TNC project.
Search engine	Trucs & Ficelles: La coopération de A à Z	Gives the different links to European and national website			Not on the general website.
Implementation Phase					
Direct Advice	Contact details				No information addressing the needs of the LAGs except the long and very administrative official documents

COUNTRY: GERMANY

Contact:

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www.leaderplus.de

NNU's website structure regarding TNC:

Section News	Section networking, subsection cooperation	Section Europe, subsection Leader+ Europe
Posting of partner search enquiries – coming from Flashnews	Includes contacts, dates of international events	Link to partner search engine
	General hints on principles of Action 2 and general eligibility criteria	Information on Leader-like activities in new Member States plus contact persons
	Application Form (Annex of EC Guideline) which has been confirmed by the German Länder	
	Link to EC Guidelines for Administrative Implementation of Cooperation Projects	
	Link to corresponding programme in Switzerland	
	Link to transnational partner search engine	
	Links to NNUs	
	Information on Leader-like initiatives in New Member States plus contact persons	

Overview on Tools (Germany)

Tools	Information Source	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weakness
Orientation Phase					
Search engine	Website	Transnational Partner Search Tool	Quick orientation on options	Anonymous and easy to handle	Cannot bridge language gaps
Information and contact to Leader-like initiatives in New MS	Website	Brief summary on available programmes and contact persons	Quick orientation	Concise information in German	
Networking and Contact Seminars	Interview	E.g. German, Swiss and Austrian contact fairs	Opportunity for first contact without formalities	Visibility of events compared to technical devices Face-to-face contact as key incentive to enter cooperation	High resource allocations Consumes significant resources in NNus
NNU-representative as ambassadors to initiate cooperation	Website + Interview	Representatives of NNU 'transport' cooperation intents of LAGs to transnational meetings	Might assist to bridge time constraints	Easy to handle for the applicants Quick way to test the interest in a topic	Might replace applicants own efforts thus increased risk of failure when first real problems appear
Preparation Phase					
Guide on First Steps in Cooperation	Website – order as hard copy	Step-by-step explanation of critical phase from idea to application	Comprehensive information for newcomers	Illustrated with a broad range of practical examples, also critical reviews	Hard to be found Might appear at a first glance as rather scientific
Needs assessment among LAGs	Interview	Queries among LAGs	Clear perspective on need for support in TNC	Helps to plan further interventions	
Direct Advice	Interviews	Mediating function between programme administrations of the countries involved	Facilitation and acceleration of approval process	Prevents risk of discouragement due to failure in application procedure	

COUNTRY: FINLAND

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www.maaseutuplus.net

General Remark

The information on Leader+ is spread over several websites in Finland. This reflects also the fact that the LAG approach is anchored in several programmes in Finland: besides Leader* these programmes are POMO (national programme for local initiatives), ALMA (Regional Rural Development Programme) and the Objective 1 Programme.

NNU's Website Structure Related to TNC

The English version of the Village Association's website provides a general outline on the LAG work in Finland. A sub-section of the Networking Unit offers several English documents as downloads:

Documents (in English):

■ LAG contact information

■ LAG work in Finland in a nutshell

■ TNC in Leader+ (EC Document)

■ TNC in Leader II

Country Profile on Administrative Implementation of TNC (Questionnaire of the Leader+ Observatory *Contact Point*..

Overview on Tools (Finland)

Tools	Information Source	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weakness
Orientation Phase					
TNC Coordinator	NNU and TNC Coordinator	Direct contact and encouragement	Reliable first-hand experience of successful projects, tailored answer to immediate questions	Encouragement and experience-based credible advice to pass the critical initial phase	Capacity constraints of actors in case of large countries
Contact Information for LAGs	Website	PDF including: Contacts of LAGs Brief description of Region Theme in brief Languages spoken	Quick overview	Intelligent structure including themes and language command	Continuous up-date necessary
LAG work in Finland in a Nutshell	Website	Excellent summary on background and options of LAGs in TNC in Finland	Quick overview	Pragmatic character encourages to get in touch	
Networking and Contact Seminars	NNU	Mainly networking between LAGs and administration to promote mutual understanding – TNC is less prominent in these events	Face-to-face contacts accelerate administrative procedures	LAG work in several programmes is acknowledged from the administration and exchange between practitioners and the administration takes place.	Capacity constraints of actors in case of large countries
Country Profile on Administrative Implementation of TNC	Website	Questionnaire disseminated by Leader+ CP	Quick and precise overview on options and procedures in TNC	Enables experienced LAG managers for targeted action in project preparation	Purely technical information which might deter certain clients
Screenshots on good practice	TNC-Coordinator	TNC-Coordinator's network uses examples to motivate other LAGs to enter TNC	Face-to-face exchange in the framework of networking meetings	Direct and personal exchange of views and perspectives	Capacity constraints of actors in case of large countries
Preparation Phase					
Direct Advice	TNC Coordinator	TNC-Coordinators offer advice	The emphasis on the start phase from the part of TNC coordinators normally leads to a smooth implementation	Tailored response to technical problems	
Implementation Phase					
Direct Advice		See above			

COUNTRY: FRANCE

Contact:

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+33 1 45 15 89 61; l.delcayrou@rct-territoires.com

www.una-leader.org

NNU's Website Structure Related to TNC

- The French website (www.una-leader.org) is very well organised. A specific section is dedicated to co-operation.

- This website is only in French!

Pourquoi coopérer? – Why cooperate?	Comment coopérer? – How to co-operate?	Avec qui coopérer? – With whom to co-operate ?	Les projets de coopération en cours – Running cooperation projects
The section gives a short description of the general reason to cooperate then a link (7 raisons de coopérer – 7 reasons to co-operate) explains in details the advantages of TNC. On the right section of the page gives the opportunity to read related documents and other publications. There are several other documents among which one giving an overview of co-operation in other European programmes: INTERREG and EQUAL, another on the overview of all Action 2 that was published in the newsletter Pilote, a third one shows a Power Point presentation of Leader+ Action 2 and the last one explaining co-operation in Leader II	The section shows the whole procedure the LAGs have to follow to conduct a TNC project. There again, several documents are available to understand the whole procedure. First of all, the whole procedure is explained in details. One incentive is given to LAGs who which to go from idea to the project by granting them EUR 3 000.. In this section a large number of documents can be downloaded to have more information on Action 2 and TNC. The UNA has also compiled a brochure explaining the whole co-operation procedure in Leader+. The series of documents on the right section of the page gives explanation on some specific parts of the procedure, e.g. how to prepare the file to receive the EUR 3 000 incentive (Quelques conseils pour deposer un dossier "EUR 3000 "), the decentralised co-operation, expenses eligibility in terms of cooperation. One last document seems to be very informative as it explains the potential reasons why the project submitted was not selected.	The section gives all eligible regions with which to take part in a TNC project. Moreover a number of additional documents give some more information on these eligibility questions, an overview of the map of potential partner countries. It is also possible to download an excel sheet that would help the LAG to structure and define more accurately its project. Once this accomplished, the LAG can directly go to the partner search section. It is divided into two sub-sections, one for inter-territorial co-operation (this section is provided by the UNA) and one for trans-national co-operation (this section links to www.Leaderplus.org website)	This section shows all selected projects (national and international) as well as the members of the specific unit (Comité de sélection).

Overview on Documents

- 7 bonnes raisons de coopérer!

- La coopération dans les autres programmes européens: INTERREG et EQUAL

- Présentation du Volet 2 coopération Leader+

- Leader II: les ouvrages clés de la coopération entre territoires

- Procédure: Comment monter votre dossier de coopération ?

- Le Guide de la coopération Leader+

- Le Cahier Ressource Internet

- Quelques conseils pour monter votre dossier « 3000 euros »

- La coopération décentralisée en région

- Eligibilité des dépenses en matière de coopération

- Pourquoi mon dossier de coopération n'a pas été retenu ?

- Le Cahier des annonces de coopération (interrégionale et transnationale : offres françaises)

- Carte des pays de la coopération transnationale

- Fiche annonce « projet de coopération »

- Base de recherche de partenaires

- Pays éligibles pour la coopération transnationale (fiche par pays) – UE – MEDA – PHARE – TACIS

- Description des projets de coopération sélectionnés.

Overview on Tools (France)

Tools	Information Source	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weakness
Orientation Phase					
Search engine	Website	Gives direct a to www.leaderplus.org for TNC For interregional cooperation, there is a French search engine There is also an overview of the different cooperation projects by countries	Quick overview on partnership options	Very comprehensive with contact details of the relevant NNU	
Contacts New Member States and MEDA Countries	Website	Fiches per countries	Gives a short overview of TNC in other MS		Frequent Up-Dates needed
Networking and Contact Seminars	Interview	Announced in the Website's agenda section. There are also reports on previous seminars The NNU has concrete plans for large-scale events	In a proper format such events are the major opportunity for first contacts	Allows for face-to-face contacts. Allows for clever pooling of players with similar interests	Very resource intensive, might block smaller NNUs for a considerable time
Screenshots on good practice	Website	One section shows the projects being implemented: it gives the name of the French LAG plus partners, a description of the project and the contact details	Helps to understand the nature of TNC projects	Helps to develop ideas	Risk that ideas are copied and translated to less suitable regions
TNC Information Board	Interview	Internal information system on TNC projects	Quality of information for larger NNUs	Helps to develop and tailor strategies in TNC support	Considerable efforts needed to establish it Continuous maintenance needs discipline and time
Newsletter	Website	Information for LAGs on TNC projects	Continuous awareness-raising	Helps also to improve internal information flow in larger organisations	Managing staff receives many of these products To maintain continuous quality standard requires significant efforts
Preparation Phase					
Guide on procedures	Website	Brief orientation on eligible items and procedures	Newcomers in LAG management can easily obtain comprehensive technical information	Very comprehensive	The number of documents might deter persons to go for this option
Direct Advice	Interview	Typical FAQs from persons who need personal contact	Allows to get a feeling for the person working in the system	Quick and tailored assistance	If biased it might lead to unfair competition
Implementation Phase					
Direct Advice	Website	Guidance is needed – many project-owners have no detailed knowledge about procedures	Obvious	Quick and tailored assistance	In case of smaller NNUs this might become a bottleneck

COUNTRY: IRELAND

Leader+ tools for TNC, Leader+ website: www.ilsu.ie

NNU Contact: Paul Keating; +353 50428101; pkeating@tippinst.ie

Tool	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weaknesses
Leader Partner search for Transnational co-operation	11 language standardised form for partner search in member states, candidate countries, Switzerland and Brazil(?)	Common to all NNUs, giving easily an recognised and understandable device for the use of L+ practitioners	standardised effective multilingual easy-to-use	
Notice Board with non IE groups seeking partners	Currently 17 notices from France, Sweden, Finland, UK	Enables searchers to read brief details of partner offers	Accessible digest format	Some offers stale? Not classified by theme
Presentation 'Developing Transnational Partnerships'	18 slide Powerpoint presentation by Niamh Kenny of EXODEA Europe	Gives a step-by-step guide to the rationale and process of TNC in Leader+	Comprehensive Clear Practical Gives examples	En only
One employee working full time with Leader companies on developing Transnational partnerships.	The role is to be actively supportive of LAGs in all aspects of planning and developing Transnational partnerships. There is also an operational budget of EUR 20k pa	Leader companies have the support and services of a national specialist officer dedicated to TNC		
Specific TNC initiative with UK & NL NNUs	In the framework of the UK/IE east/west cooperation, involving LAGs without TNC track record	Broadens UK/IE dialogue into EU context Includes more LAGs in TNC	involves groups without other TNC experience	Monolingual
Other activity				
Attendance at conferences on behalf of Leader companies				
Facilitation of field trips				

COUNTRY: ITALY

Contact:

Mrs. Catia Zumpano:
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www.reteleader.it,

NNU's Website structure related to TNC

General remark: The website is only in Italian

The Italian website (www.reteLeader.it) is very comprehensive in terms of TNC. A specific section is dedicated to it.

In this section you can have access to

- A short description of TNC procedure as well as advice on how to read TNC announcements

- The procedure to follow in order to start a TNC project.

- A newsletter that also gives information on TNC actions and events

- An agenda giving all the details of the TNC seminars organised across Italy and the rest of Europe

There is also a special section that is still being developed and that would allow LAGs to get information on the several aspects of TNC projects. You can also find links to the different National Units across Europe and a link to the Leader+ Observatory *Contact Point*.. There is also one link to more specific documentation such as the official national, European documents related to Leader+ and its implementation. The website offer also a link to a list of TNC project (linking directly to www.leaderplus.org) . The Site also provides in full detail all reports related to previous seminars and colloquiums that have been organised across Europe and Italy.

Documents

- Accordo e forme di partenariato nei progetti di cooperazione – Alcuni quesiti e relative risposte

- Repertorio delle spese ammissibili nella sezione II e classificazione delle aree di intervento

- Repertorio annunci di cooperazione transnazionale – Annual Report on TNC

- Repertorio PRL e CdP

- Relazione del Forum sulla cooperazione transnazionale ad Aviles (29-30 sett e 1 ott 2004)

- Relazione del Forum sulla cooperazione transnazionale a Fleurance (5-6 ott 2004)

- Relazione del Forum sulla cooperazione transnazionale a Melgaço (17-19 nov 2004)

- Progetti di cooperazione transnazionale. Annunci verso i GAL italiani (Aviles e Fleurance)

- Raccolta degli annunci di cooperazione per il FORUM spagnolo

- Indirizzi per l'attuazione della cooperazione

- Comunicazione agli Stati Membri del 14 aprile 2000 recante gli orientamenti per l'iniziativa comunitaria in materia di sviluppo rurale (Leader+) (2000/C 139/05)

- Commissione Europea Iniziativa Comunitaria Leader+

Overview on Tools (Italy)

Tools	Information Source	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weakness
Orientation Phase					
Search engine	Website	It allows to find documents related to Leader+ in general	Gives easy access to official documents	Easy to find	
Networking and Contact Seminars	Website	The Agenda and the Newsletter give an overview of what is going on in TNC across Italy and Europe.	Gives the opportunity to have a first overview on the types of TNC projects.		
		A downloadable file is available for announcements of TNC project from Italy to abroad (EN and IT) and from abroad to Italy (in IT only)	It gives information on Leader+ in other European countries		
		There is also a special section dedicated to the European Network			
Seminars on Specific Topics at National Level	NNU	National days on legal issues and questions related TNC, but also a seminar on methodology for NNU, LAGs and administration …	Awareness-raising for complex questions, networking opportunity	Immediate response to pressing questions	Organisational work might soon lead to capacity constraints in other fields
Report	Website	A large number of reports are available as downloads: reports from seminars, reports on the TNC procedure, official documents related to Leader+	Very comprehensive documentation	Allows for a first orientation	If not properly structured it might be less attractive for a targeted search activity
Preparation Phase					
Guide on procedures	Website	A guide with the procedure to start a TNC project	Overview on the process		
Facilitation of initial meetings	Interview	The NNU helps the LAGs to organise their first meeting but only when there are several LAGs concerned	Experienced managers assist in communication	Support for the key step towards TNC projects	Might lead to dependence on external actor
Direct Advice	Website	Full contact details			
Implementation Phase					
Direct Advice	Website	Full contact details			

COUNTRY: THE NETHERLANDS

Leader+ Tools for TNC, Leader+ website: www.Leaderplus.nl

NNU Contact: Marieke Blom; +31 33 432 60 90; m.blom@etcnl.nl

www.leaderplus.nl

Tool	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weaknesses
Leader+ Partner search for Transnational co-operation	11 language standardised form for partner search in member states, candidate countries, Switzerland and Brazil	Common to all NNUs, giving easily an recognised and understandable device for the use of L+ practitioners	standardised effective multilingual easy-to-use	
Guidebook 'Let's Kiss' (Keep It Smart and Simple)	Downloadable publication	Offers comprehensive coverage of the TNC process in Leader	systematic approach to TNC advice-giving	available only in Dutch
Impulse for Transnational Cooperation	Downloadable document (See strategy proposals later)	Promotes and supports the TNC ethic Offers action plan for TNC	Rare think-piece/proposal on bringing central units together to benefit the TNC process	
40 days TNC support for Dutch LAGs in 2005	Direct advice and support; information giving and signposting	LAGs have access to specialised NNU advice and support on TNC		
Specific TNC initiative with UK & IE NNUs	In the framework of the UK/IE east/west cooperation, involving LAGs without TNC track record	Broadens UK/IE dialogue into EU context Includes more LAGs in TNC	involves groups without other TNC experience	Monolingual

COUNTRY: UNITED KINGDOM

Leader+ Tools for TNC, Leader+ website: www.uk.leader.org.uk

NNU Contact: Jenny Turner, Lucy Gaskin ; +44 20 78 03 31 60; info@ukleader.org.uk

Tool	Features	Benefits	Strengths	Weaknesses
Leader Partner search for Transnational co-operation	11 language standardised form for partner search in member states, candidate countries, Switzerland and Brazil	Common to all NNUs, giving easily an recognised and understandable device for the use of L+ practitioners	standardised effective multilingual easy-to-use	
A Guide to Practical Approaches: Transnational Cooperation in Leader+	Downloadable publication on TNC project development cycle	Offers comprehensive coverage of the TNC process in Leader	clear systematic addresses monitoring and evaluation	available only in English
Transnational items on the NNU website	Regular news item postings on TNC issues Other NNU newsletters downloadable	Provides a varied range of information on TNC facts and issues	reinforces EU context promotes exchange of ideas and inspiration	language limitations too complex web-site
Register of TNC Mentors	A growing list of EU consultants and practitioners experienced in TNC projects	LAGs can view CVs and contract directly with proven experts on TNC projects	Focuses body of knowledge and practice in the realm of bottom-up rural development Begins to establish cadre of experts in the Leader approach Can help LAGS shortcut project development time	
Specific TNC initiative with IE & NL NNUs	In the framework of the UK/IE east/west cooperation, involving LAGs without TNC track record	Broadens UK/IE dialogue into EU context Includes more LAGs in TNC	involves groups without other TNC experience	Monolingual