

PROGRAMMING PERIOD 2007-2013

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE OF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION (TNC) UNDER LEADER AXIS

SECTION A: **COUNTRY SPECIFIC DETAILS**

1. Name of the programme:

Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, Ireland

2. Number of Local Action Groups (LAGs):

36

3. Axes covered by LAGs:

Measures under Axis 4 as per Axis 3 and also for innovative and experimental approaches to promote joint ventures addressing common issues. Axis 3 measures will be delivered through the LEADER methodology.

4. Axes covered by Transnational Cooperation (TNC) projects:

Support will be available for projects falling under Axis 3 and also for innovative and experimental approaches to promote joint ventures addressing common issues. All measures under this axis which are implemented in this programme: 311, 312, 313, 321, 322, 323, 331, 341.

5. Total RDP budget for all the four axes (including EU+ public+ private expenditure):

EUR 4,515,753,800

Total budget for Axis 3 and the Leader axis

(Axis 3 measures are to be implemented using the Leader approach):

EUR 564,455,000

Of which:

a. EU Funding: EUR 234,000,250

b. Public funding: EUR 191,454,750

c. Private funding: EUR 139,000,000

SECTION B: PROGRAMMING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJECTS

1. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

<p>Budget for TNC projects (Total public funding: EU + public)</p>	<p>The total budget allocated for measure 421 is EUR 10,700,000. This is 2.52 % of the axis 4 public funding and 0.25% of the total public RDP budget. This amount includes funding both for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation. Each LAG had to reserve a minimum of 3% of its annual public funding allocation for measure 421.</p> <p>The cooperation budget per LAG differs and can be between minimum of EUR 95,000 (public funding) and maximum of EUR 625,000 (public funding).</p>
<p>Responsibility for the management of the Budget (MAs or LAGs)</p>	<p>LAGs have a pre-allocated budget for TNC which is managed by them. Each LAG shall apportion its budget on a yearly basis over the life of the programme.</p> <p>LAGs act as intermediate bodies for the disbursement of the national portion of public programme funding to successful project applicants. This function is delegated to the LAGs by the Paying Agency. When eligible projects are completed and documentation submitted, LAGs can apply to the Paying Agency for reimbursement of the EU –funded portion of the project cost already paid out by them.</p>
<p>Special budget for the preparatory technical support of TNC projects</p>	<p>Preparatory activity, co-ordination and animation costs in respect of inter-territorial projects may be eligible for funding. Such costs must relate to specific activities and are capped at a maximum of EUR 7,500 per activity.</p> <p>Pre-development costs are for trans-national and cross-border projects allowable at 100% but may only be attributed to the relevant project. These costs must be included in the project summary. Pre-development costs do not require the prior approval of the MA.</p>

2. PROGRAMMING ASPECTS

<p>Local Development Strategies and TNC</p>	<p>The co-operation methodology must be integrated in the Local Development Strategy (LDS) plans of the LAGs at the outset of the Programme. However they do not have to specify project ideas or potential co-operation partners. It is always possible for LAGs to apply for a TNC project, even if it has not been included in the LDS.</p>
<p>Way of selecting cooperation projects</p>	<p>Inter-territorial and trans-national co-operation projects are selected at LAG level. The process is the same as for other projects, i.e. through the project selection is subject to an Evaluation Committee process: all formal recommendations for LEADER assistance must be submitted by the Evaluation Committee to the Board for decision within a fixed timescale, e.g. 3 months of date of receipt. Applicants must be informed in writing of the decision of the Board.</p> <p>A valid commitment of grant aid exists only when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Board has made its decision and • a detailed letter of offer or contract was issued to the applicant and • the offer or contract has been accepted in writing by the applicant within a period specified by the LAG – 14 days from the date of the offer is suggested.
<p>Main topics of TNC proposed for the 2007-2013 programming period</p>	<p>This is not yet known as the RD Programme is only in operation since early 2009.</p>

Cooperation with third countries	<p>Funding will normally be made available under this measure for co-operation projects involving partners in EU Member States, EU candidate states and EEA states.</p> <p>For projects involving partners outside these countries the prior written approval of Rural Development Division must be obtained. Where the prior written approval of the Department is not obtained, the project shall be deemed ineligible and decommitted.</p>
Maximum/minimum number of TNC projects per LAG	-

3. COMMON PROVISIONS FOR TNC PROJECT APPROVAL

Information about procedures of approval and implementation of TNC projects	The full procedures of approval and implementation of TNC projects have been developed already and issued to all LAGs.
Eligibility criteria for cooperation projects	<p>LAGs must consider the following in determining the eligibility of a project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal is consistent with the objectives of the RD Programme, EU and National regulatory requirements and the relevant section(s) of the Rules. • Can the promoter provide appropriate assurance that deadweight does not arise? • It should be noted that funded activities do not need to be identical to activities already in existence to result in displacement. In this regard, it may be possible for an innovative approach to result in displacement. Such activities shall not be eligible for funding. • Availability of funding from other Government Departments, state agencies etc. • All projects shall be proofed/ assessed for viability. • Proposal is consistent with the LAG's LDS. • That the 'de minimis' rule is respected. • Evidence of title/leasehold must be provided where works of a capital nature are being carried out by the promoter.
Selection criteria for cooperation projects	The selection and approval of co-operation projects must be carried out to the same extent as for other projects. The value added benefit of all projects must be clearly demonstrated and apparent.
Eligible activities of measure 421 Cooperation	<p>Innovation in products and processes must be continuously sought with needs and solutions identified at a local level. There is also a major emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic activity and enterprise, including diversification into non-agricultural activities; • The creation of new and the expansion of existing enterprises; • Job creation and sustaining of existing jobs; • The generation of additional and alternative incomes in rural areas; • the encouragement of tourism activities and; • the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural heritage.
Typical examples of eligible costs for TNC projects	Pre-development costs and costs appropriate to the measure under which a particular project is undertaken.
Specific documents concerning the cooperation partners required from LAGs	No additional documents are needed to those mentioned in the 'Guide for the implementation of the measure Cooperation under the Leader axis of rural development programmes 2007-2013' (RD12/10/2008 rev. 3).

The approval process
of TNC applications

The selection and approval of projects must be carried out to the same extent as for other projects. The LAGs approve cooperation projects, except for cross-border projects and projects involving partners outside of EU member and candidate states and EEA states in which cases it is the MA.

Transnational and inter-territorial co-operation:

All formal recommendations must be submitted by the Evaluation Committee to the Board for decision (including refusal of aid) within a fixed timescale, e.g. 3 months of date of receipt. Applicants must be informed in writing of the decision of the Board.

Each LAG must formally notify the relevant County Enterprise Board(s), in writing, of the projects it is evaluating for grant aid on a monthly basis.

Each LAG shall submit details of approved projects to the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs on a monthly basis.

Each LAG should impose an expiry date on all commitments/contracts. The period allowed, e.g. 12 months, is a matter for the LAG itself but the progress of all projects should be kept under review. The purpose of the time limit is to prevent funds being needlessly tied up in projects that are not proceeding.

Cross-border co-operation:

All cross-border projects involving LAGs must be submitted to the relevant Managing Authority for assessment and agreement i.e:

- to Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and;
- the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland.

The Cross-border Steering Group for Rural Development will make the final decision on Cross-Border co-operation projects.

List of abbreviations:

EU: European Union
 LAG: Local Action Group
 LDS: Local Development Strategy
 MA: Managing Authority
 MS: Member State
 PA: Paying Authority
 TNC: Transnational Cooperation
 RDP: Rural Development Programme