Citizen's summary
NWE programme 2016

Calls and allocation of funds

The year 2016 marked the first implementation year of the NWE projects. The Monitoring Committee meetings held in Dusseldorf on 23-25 February 2016 and Mainz on 13-15 September 2016 approved 9 step 2 projects of call 1and 8 projects of call 2. After approval, the call 1 and 2 projects began delivering their actions and investments.

In parallel to the step 2 approval and implementation, the step 1 project development and selection continued, with the call 3 closed on 27 May 2016 and call 4 closed on 18 November 2016. The Mainz MC selected 17 step 1 projects, 5 under Priority 1, 8 under Priority 2 and 4 under Priority 3 for step 2. These projects received substantial development support provided by both the JS project officers and Contact Point network before the step 2 submission.

Programme implementation to date

As far as the Programme output indicator achievements are concerned, they are aligned with the Programme expectations since the first batch of projects approved by the programme has only started their implementation phase. Consequently, no values for fully delivered project outputs. As far as the contracted operations and their planned contribution to the indicator framework are concerned, several conclusions can be drawn when looking at the individual priorities.

- *Priority 1 (Innovation) attracted the highest number of applications in 2016 (46% of the project applications received in call 1 and 49%in call 2). The submitted projects have corresponded mainly to the ToA1 (Building the capacity of regions and territories to improve their innovation performance) or ToA2 (Improving the competitiveness of enterprises). By the end of 2016, the Programme approved 3 projects under ToA1 and 3 projects under ToA2. Despite high applicant interest, no projects were approved under ToA3 (Social innovation) which makes the Priority 1 delivery to date unbalanced.*

- *Priority 2 (Low carbon) received 35% and 29% of applications in calls 1 and 2, however the programme observed a severe drop of more than 50% in calls 3 and 4. Variations per Specific Objective were constant throughout the first calls in all three SOs of the Priority, with the SO4 (Transnational low-carbon solutions in transport systems to reduce GHG emissions) clearly standing out as the weakest, with only 3 submitted projects in call 4. Despite this strong decrease in that call, transport still represents 34 % of all applications received. As far as the other two Specific Objectives are concerned (SO2 – Low-carbon, energy and climate protection strategies to reduce GHG emissions and SO3 – Uptake of low-carbon technologies, products, processes and services in sectors with high energy saving potential), energy efficiency and energy supply projects have been the most common, representing over 40% of the total of projects submitted in this priority. Since two types of actions (ToA5- Implementing combined mitigation and adaptation solutions and ToA8- Implementing solutions for optimised traffic management) had not been addressed by any approved projects, the priority is unbalanced.*

- *Priority 3 was the least popular in 2016 with 18% and 22 % of all applications received in call 1 and 2, with a similar percentage in call 3 and a much lower number in call 4. Projects addressing the reuse of materials (textile, paint, various types of waste) were the most numerous. Until end December 2016, 4 projects were approved under the ToA9 (Implementing new technologies, services, products and processes to improve resource efficiency).*

Programme visibility

The programme organised 12 Info Days in six countries between 16 February and 21 March 2016 to promote call 3, reaching out to almost 1,000 participants. Similarly, call 4 was promoted in 9 events that took place between 30 June and 3 October 2016 in five different countries, reaching 550 potential applicants.

Step 2 transnational networking events (Project Ideas Labs) took place two weeks before the opening of each call. The Project Ideas Lab corresponding to call 3 took place in Frankfurt on 7 April with 158 participants, including 80 newcomers. The second Project Ideas Lab, organised for call 4, was held in Dublin on 6 October 2016 with also 158 attendants, including 80 newcomers. The satisfaction rate was very high for both events.

Communication tools

The Interreg NWE website (www.nweurope.eu) was launched in December 2015. In 2016, 79,082 sessions were opened and 53,8% of the visitors were new. The Programme's social media accounts reached 3,100 followers on Twitter and 1,100 on LinkedIn. The website hosts project web spaces for all approved projects. Nine project web spaces were deployed in June 2016 for projects approved in call 1 and seven in December 2016 for projects approved in call 2.

To enable partner search in each call for proposals, the Interreg NWE website launched a project ideas database. In 2016, 20 project ideas were introduced via this platform. The website also allows users to "register for alerts". To date, 1165 users have registered to receive the Programme's updates.

The Programme also worked on the promotion of the results of projects from the 2007-2013 programming period. Throughout the year, NWE conducted a research on 14 flagship projects from 2007-2013. The results of this research were used to create the section "Our impact" on the Programme's website published in February 2017.

Support

To tackle the issues horizontal to all projects submitted to the Programme and thematic priorities of NWE, the programme reinforced the contents of the Project Idea Labs (for step 1) and the step 2 applicant workshops. Clear information was provided about the definitions and tangible examples of project results and their quantification, change on the territory, long-term-effects and value for money. In addition, each project benefitted from tailored made advice at step 1 and 2 of the application process, via direct contact with the CP network and JS officers as well as workshops held with individual projects in the step 2 applicant events. Moreover, the programme reviewed the application form template to highlight the importance of the project relevance, territorial analysis and the programme indicators and provide more information space for the applicants.

Programme evaluation

The programme established the NWE Evaluation Plan covering the whole 2014-2020 programming period. The plan laid foundations for the Programme approach to evaluation and served as a basis for the evaluation of the two-step approach used by the programme in the project application process.