



# farnet

**G U I D E #2**



## ***Working together for EU fisheries areas***

*Guide to starting Cooperation between  
Fisheries Local Action Groups*



European Commission  
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

EN

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# 1. Introduction

## What is the purpose of this guide?

Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) includes a provision to support inter-regional and transnational cooperation between fisheries areas. This aspect of Axis 4 aims to encourage Fisheries Local Actions Groups (FLAGs) to share ideas and experiences and to engage in cooperative projects and initiatives that contribute to the sustainable development of fisheries areas.

This guide is intended to assist FLAGs and managing authorities in implementing this aspect of Axis 4. Specifically, it aims to explain what is meant by cooperation in the context of Axis 4, the potential benefits for FLAGs and their areas, and how support for cooperation can best be organised and administered at national, regional and local level. The guide should prove particularly useful for the FLAGs that want to use **cooperation to acquire practical knowledge that helps in the early stages of managing their partnership** and implementing their local strategy.

More detailed information on the types of cooperation projects that can be considered under Axis 4 is provided in six stand-alone sections, which focus on the needs for a rapid transfer of experience between experienced and less experienced groups. These six sections cover: *study visits* from one fisheries area to another; *mentoring* arrangements between the staff and members of experienced and less experienced FLAGs; *placements and traineeships*; *twinning* arrangements; *thematic workshops or conferences*; and an introduction to *more advanced cooperation projects*.



## What is cooperation – and what is it not?

Cooperation is generally understood to mean two or more parties working together to achieve common goals. This is in contrast to competition, where two or more parties work against each other in order to achieve individual goals at the expense of the other. However, elements of cooperation and competition can co-exist at different levels – such as in case of competitive team sports, where team members cooperate with each other, but at the same time, they collectively compete with another team.

Similarly, the local partnership is often described as a form of cooperation between local actors where, once internal cooperation has been established, the partnership has to decide whether it positions itself in a competitive stance in relation to other actors and areas or whether it forms broader, external alliances in order to cooperate on issues of common importance.

It is quite clear that fisheries areas and communities do compete with each other in different ways (for example, in terms of access to fishing resources or tourism, and – in the case of groups from the same country – they may compete for Axis 4 funds). These conflicts should not be brushed under the carpet because, if they are, they can become the “hidden agendas” which prevent fisheries areas from coming together to address common threats and opportunities. Being clear and open about the differences is often the first step to exploring the surprisingly large number of issues on which fisheries areas find they can cooperate.

Cooperation has always been a key concept in the vocabulary of the European Union. In a sense, the Union itself is based on the value added of Member States working together in different fields and in different ways. However, the value added is often difficult to calculate in quantitative material terms and this sometimes rings alarm bells with both politicians and auditors. The great fear is that cooperation is simply used for expensive “tourism” or “junkets”, with few real benefits for local people, other than those directly involved. Clearly this is not what cooperation should be about.

The genuine and legitimate concern to prevent abuse and to maximise both the local and broader policy impact of cooperation has led to some very useful recommendations and guidelines for carrying out cooperation. Unfortunately, however, some of the remedies have been worse than the potential illness, leading to a series of excessively bureaucratic constraints and very artificial “products” that greatly reduce the real value of cooperation on the ground. The recommendations for cooperation within Axis 4 take account of this experience and try to create transparent procedures which are also sufficiently flexible to allow fisheries areas to use the full power of cooperation to deal with the challenges they face.

### **Why should fisheries areas cooperate ?**

Fisheries areas across the EU face many similar challenges: the need to ensure a more sustainable management of fisheries resources; the need to create new economic development and employment opportunities; and the need to better integrate the fisheries sector into local and regional development processes.

The territorial approach to development supported by Axis 4 of the EFF provides the opportunity for stakeholders in different areas to devise and implement local responses to these challenges. One of the key advantages of this approach is that it mobilises local people and local resources, thereby unleashing a wealth of new ideas, innovations and experimentation that greatly enrich the entire development process.

Cooperation provides an opportunity for fisheries areas to share these ideas and experiences, in particular those that prove successful, allowing for cross-fertilisation and the transfer of good practices. In some cases, such exchanges can also lead to the development of joint projects that seek to exploit synergies or complementarity.

Fisheries areas can, therefore, benefit from cooperation in a number of different ways:

1. It can be a source of new ideas and methods, which contribute to the implementation of certain aspects of the local development strategy ;
2. It can provide an opportunity to expand existing projects or develop new projects by pooling skills and resources and/or opening up new markets or business development opportunities.

Less tangible benefits also include the greater sense of motivation that often results when individuals and communities recognise that they are not alone in addressing the challenges they confront. Cooperation also leads to the development of a greater sense of a shared European identity.

Because the territorial approach taken by Axis 4 is new to many local actors and managing authorities (MAs), cooperation could be a very powerful tool in helping to build capacity and develop a sense of common purpose. In some parts of the EU, the establishment of FLAGs is taking longer than was originally envisaged and there is clearly a need for capacity building at all levels; elsewhere, groups and MAs have already accumulated considerable experience or used existing capacities and structures (e.g. from initiatives such as Leader). Exchanges between groups at these different stages can benefit all parties.

Paradoxically, the very newness and lack of experience of territorial development within fisheries areas also opens up an important opportunity. We will see below that the EFF Regulation is relatively open about the nature of cooperation between fisheries areas and that there is a margin for manoeuvre within the procedures of most MAs. In this context, it is possible to learn from past experience and develop a series of recommendations and guidelines for cooperation which can make it a powerful tool for tackling the challenges mentioned above.

### The scope of cooperation in Axis 4

We live in a knowledge society, where one of the main sources of value is the identification of relevant bits of information and their transformation into forms that can be used in different contexts. It follows that one of the main added values of cooperation between fisheries areas will also involve intangible aspects related to knowledge transfer, rather than physical outputs.

Particularly in the early stages, it is vital that cooperation helps FLAGs to identify relevant methods and tools from the existing “stock” of experience available across Europe, and assists in their structured transfer and adaptation to the needs of specific fisheries areas. If this is not actively encouraged, there is a risk that groups will waste a lot of time in isolated and costly experiments which simply “reinvent the wheel”.

The Vademecum on the EFF includes a recommendation (based on the earlier Leader programme) that cooperation should “include the implementation of a **joint project** and not consist simply of an exchange of experience”. Under Axis 4, it is important to clarify that “joint projects” can include a wide range of intangible activities at different stages of the project “cycle”. These include:

- › A structured transfer of knowledge from one fisheries area to another and its assimilation and/or adaptation to the new circumstances. These activities are particularly important in the early stages of a programme and are the subject of most of the remaining guidelines<sup>1</sup>;
- › Joint studies or research and development activities;
- › Joint design; this might refer to IT applications, promotional material and/or products and services produced locally;
- › The development of norms and standards which can either be used in quality labels or as proposals for legal or regulatory standards at national or EU level; and
- › Joint promotion and marketing of common or similar products and/or assets (including cultural events, publicity campaigns, joint territorial marketing...).

It is generally far harder, but not impossible, for fisheries areas to cooperate in the *production of tangible products* – for example, by taking different roles within the supply chain of particular products. This kind of cooperation is generally easier when there is some sort of physical or geographical connection (for example, waymarked routes and paths along a particular coastline, river, mountain chain or product trail).

<sup>1</sup> Broadening the definition of “joint projects” in this way brings Axis 4 in line with other cooperation programmes like URBACT and Interreg IVB. Rather than create an artificial distinction between exchange, transfer and cooperation, the idea is to insist that there can be equally rigorous and valuable “joint projects” for all three.



### Beneficiaries and participants in cooperation projects

The EFF Regulation states that support for the sustainable development of fisheries areas may be granted for “promoting inter-regional and transnational cooperation among **groups in fisheries areas**, mainly through networking and the dissemination of best practice” (Article 44.1).

It is clear, therefore, that while the main *participants* in the cooperation may well be other local actors such as fishing organisations, private firms or community organisations, the formal *beneficiaries and partners* of the cooperation must be the FLAGs. The FLAGs must decide on the cooperation project and the organisations or actors that will participate.

The EFF Regulation (Articles 43.3 and 43.4) simply states that fisheries areas should be limited in size and, as a general rule, be smaller than NUTS 3<sup>2</sup>. The priority areas for assistance can either have a low population density, a fishing sector in decline, or have small fisheries communities. They should also be sufficiently coherent from a geographical, economic and social point of view.

From the Regulation, therefore, it appears that Axis 4 should support cooperation between FLAGs in these types of fisheries areas. However, where it is proved to be beneficial, *FLAGs funded by Axis 4 could also cooperate with “Axis 4 or Leader-like” groups<sup>3</sup> in fisheries areas which fulfil the conditions above but have not actually been selected for Axis 4*. In this case, Axis 4 would only fund the actions corresponding to the groups and areas that have been selected under Axis 4.

### Partners in cooperation projects

One of the most important lessons of cooperation is that the partners do not always have to have the same objectives (although their objectives must be complementary) and do not all have to have the same level of experience. The essential ingredient for success is to be clear about what each partner expects to contribute and to gain from the cooperation, and what experience or other resources they intend to bring to it. The division of roles within the partnership must reflect this situation. This allows for a whole range of types of arrangements between partners:

- › A reciprocal transfer between all partners;
- › One or more experienced partners plays the role of mentor and transfers knowledge to the others;
- › All partners support each other in identifying certain needs which are met from a source outside the partnership. For example, the joint project could be a research or training project with a university or training centre.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/nuts/basicnuts\\_regions\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/nuts/basicnuts_regions_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> *Broad-based local private-public partnerships, which aim to improve the long-term potential of their local areas and that have the ability to define and implement development strategies for these areas.*



### **Inter-regional and transnational cooperation**

The EFF Regulation allows for both inter-regional cooperation between groups in the same Member State and transnational cooperation between groups in two or more Member States.

The concept of inter-regional cooperation was first introduced in the Leader+ programme, to prevent groups from making unrealistic leaps, from building the local partnership to forming transnational partnerships with actors thousands of miles away, without first exploring the scope for collaboration with actors in their own region or country.

The greater physical and cultural proximity of groups involved in inter-regional cooperation opens up more possibilities for jointly adding value to common natural and cultural assets, such as mountain ranges, rivers, coasts, cultural products and so on. There are numerous

examples of successful projects involving the development of routes and itineraries, interpretation centres, events, and associated promotional activities. A general recommendation for Axis 4 groups would be to first consider inter-regional cooperation, and then, building on this experience, to look at the potential added value of transnational cooperation.

Inter-regional cooperation also opens up the opportunity for national or regional managing authorities to identify certain strategic assets (for example, natural parks, marine reserves, lakes, etc) or themes and to provide incentives for groups to develop cooperation projects around these. In regions such as Aragon, in Spain, for example, this kind of cooperation has developed into permanent thematic networks across Europe (e.g. the European Geoparks Network). This kind of approach could work well for FLAGs along the same sea basin.



## 2. Guidelines for more effective cooperation in Axis 4



### Decentralised decision making

Local projects supported in FLAG strategies usually have to pass through a series of assessments, involving eligibility checks, viability studies, the obtaining of legal permits and licenses and so on. Cooperation projects are, by definition, more complex as they may involve several legal, administrative and cultural contexts. Unless the procedures are streamlined and coordinated there is a real risk that the bureaucratic burden of cooperation projects becomes overwhelming. A classic case is a partnership of five groups where each managing authority has slightly different rules for eligibility, different selection schedules and each requires the approval of the others before making their own decision on whether or not to approve funding.

Therefore, the central recommendation for Axis 4 cooperation is to *keep it simple and leave decision making to the groups where possible*. Following are some suggestions on how to achieve this:

- › *Decentralised budgets*: where possible the budget for cooperation projects should be managed by local groups, similarly to other projects. The groups would then ask for signed commitments from their partners and on this basis approve the projects. Managing authorities could then carry out their own eligibility checks, without waiting for the decisions of other MAs.

According to the EFF Regulation, the groups' proposals for cooperation should be described separately from those dealing with the local strategy<sup>4</sup>. Ideally, the cooperation activities (and budget) should be included in the group's overall proposal in a way that is clearly distinguished from (the budget for) the local development strategy, rather than requiring a separate approval process.

- › *Open calls*: where the budget for cooperation is held centrally by managing authorities, they should keep the call open for the duration of the programme, and ensure decisions on proposals are taken within a guaranteed timeframe after receiving applications. It is recommended that managing authorities should not ask for signed commitments from the other partners of the cooperation project but approve subject to approval by the other managing authorities.
- › *Clearing house*: working through the FARNET Support Unit, managing authorities should provide groups from other countries/regions with information on projects looking for partners, as well as on their calls for proposals. They should also provide a copy, in English, of any additional eligibility rules and procedures for cooperation.

### Technical assistance for pre-development of projects

Where the cooperation budget under axis 4 has been allocated to the groups, it is unlikely that ideas for cooperation will have been developed in detail. Therefore, there may be a need for a preparatory phase, which should be supported within this allocation. The managing authorities will also be able to provide further technical support using Axis 5.

Where the cooperation budget is held centrally, and is allocated separately via specific calls for tender, it is likely that projects presented for funding will be fully developed. To help the preparation of such projects, however, the managing authorities will again be able to provide specific grants using Axis 5 (see table below on the budgetary source and rates of funding for cooperation).

### Aid intensity

In terms of aid intensity, it is recommended that the preparatory phases of cooperation financed by Axis 4 or 5 should be treated like any other non-productive project and be funded 100% from public sources (EU, national, regional or local).

When cooperation reaches the actual implementation stage, normal rules on aid intensity apply, depending on the type of operation undertaken:

- › Cooperation projects can be funded 100% from public sources if they are non-productive projects ;
- › If a cooperation project involves the private sector and productive investment the appropriate aid intensity (below 100%) will need to be defined according to the nature of the project<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The EFF Regulation (Article 43) specifies that support can be provided for the groups for a) implementing local development strategies, covering all measures except cooperation and b) implementing inter regional and transnational cooperation among the groups of fisheries areas.

<sup>5</sup> See Annex II of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006R1198:EN:NOT>) of 27 July 2006 on the European Fisheries Fund.

**Table 1:** Budgetary source and rates of funding for cooperation

	Type of project	Preparatory phase of project		Main phase of project		
		financed from	aid intensity	financed from	aid intensity	
Cooperation budget managed by FLAG	transfer of experience	Axis 4 cooperation, or Axis 5	100%	Axis 4 cooperation, or Axis 5	100%	
	more advanced	Axis 4 cooperation, or Axis 5	100%	Axis 4 cooperation, or Axis 4 implementation of strategies	project does not involve private sector and productive activity: 100%	project involves productive activity and private sector: less than 100%
Cooperation budget held centrally (regional or national level)	transfer of experience	Axis 5	100%	Axis 4 cooperation, or Axis 5	100%	
	more advanced	Axis 5	100%	Axis 4 cooperation	project does not involve private sector and productive activity: 100%	project involves productive activity and private sector: less than 100%

### 3. Types of cooperation envisaged under Axis 4

#### Introduction

For FLAGs considering a cooperation project, a number of different types of cooperation are possible. In this guide we focus mostly on those which are more relevant for groups at the early stage of development. These include:

- › **Study visits** from one fisheries area to another (this can involve local stakeholders);
- › **Mentoring** arrangements between the staff or members of an experienced group and a less experienced group;
- › **Placements and traineeships**, with participant coming from one FLAG area and being hosted by another;
- › **Twinning** arrangements between FLAGs;
- › **Thematic workshops or conferences**;
- › **More advanced cooperation projects**, which we only briefly review here as this is covered in more detail in other guides. This involves a more long term commitment to pool skills and resources in pursuit of a common project.

These potential areas of cooperation are all dealt with in more detail in the following chapters. The prerequisite for supporting these kinds of activities through cooperation budgets is that they should be based on:



- › A clear analysis of the needs of the partners (the demand for knowledge);
- › A clear description of the experience and skills available among the partners (the supply of knowledge);
- › An analysis showing that knowledge available can meet the needs identified, and also identifying any gaps and how these can be filled by external sources;
- › A clear calendar and work programme, specifying clearly who does what and the expected results of each action;
- › A description of who will be involved locally and what action might be taken as a result.

## 3.1 Study visits



### What is a study visit ?

In the context of Axis 4 cooperation projects, a study visit refers to a visit by one or more representatives of a FLAG or fisheries area to one or more other fisheries areas in order to undertake activities designed to familiarise the visitors with certain projects and initiatives in the host area. The study visit is normally jointly organised by the FLAGs from the visiting and host areas.

The duration of a study visit can vary from one or two days up to a week or longer, depending on the range of activities to be included in the programme. However, normally visits of two to three days allow enough time for a good first exchange, without being too demanding on the time and resources of visitors or hosts.

### What is the purpose of a study visit ?

The purpose of a study visit is to learn more about particular issues, projects and activities in the host area by meeting the people involved, observing and hearing about their work, and by having the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues directly.

Some study visits have very specific objectives, such as to learn more about a particular technology or methodology, or the way in which a shared issue has been addressed. Others are much more general in nature, having the objective of learning more about FLAG operations and activities across a number of themes or sectors.

A study visit should be preceded by an exchange of information between the participating FLAGs. This can help to ascertain and confirm the appropriateness of the visit, narrow down the range of activities to be included in the study programme, and to inform those involved of the different possibilities and expectations.

### Who participates in a study visit ?

The participants in the study visit normally include staff and/or members of the FLAG and, depending on the purpose of the visit, may also include other actors from the fisheries area concerned. For example, if the purpose of the study visit is to learn more about tourism development in another fisheries area, then the participation of local tourism operators might be expected.



The number of participants can vary from one or two people, which might be the case if the visit has a very specific purpose (e.g. to learn about a specific project, technology or methodology), up to 20 or 25 people. For groups above this size, the demands in terms of the cost, logistics and coordination of the visit may be prohibitive. In such cases, an alternative option, such as a thematic workshop or conference (see page 24) might be more appropriate.

In deciding who will participate in a study visit, it is important to consider who has most to contribute and to gain from the visit, who definitely needs to participate from the FLAG, and what other issues, such as language skills, etc.. need to be considered.

### How is a study visit organised ?

In general, the staff of the respective FLAGs will organise and participate in the study visit and a strong dialogue between the relevant people in each FLAG should be established and maintained. The organisation of a study visit usually involves the following sequence of steps:

1. The FLAG **identifies a need or opportunity** which is best addressed through a study visit and then outlines the reasons for the visit. The specific objectives and desired outcomes are developed and the characteristics of the ideal study area are defined ;
2. With input from the national network and/or the FARNET Support Unit, the FLAG then identifies a **shortlist of possible host areas** that fit this profile ;
3. The FLAG makes contact with the potential host areas and explores the possibilities of organising a study visit ;
4. The FLAG then makes a **decision on which, if any, of these areas are considered suitable**. Although most visits focus on one area there can also be benefits in visiting more than one fisheries area in the same region or country. However, it is crucially important that the added value of visiting different areas is given sufficient consideration. If not, considerable time, money and goodwill can be wasted ;
5. Once the host area(s) is identified, a discussion normally takes place between the visiting and host FLAGs during which information is exchanged and **a common understanding of the project** is developed ;
6. Based on these discussions, the **objectives of the visit** will be revised, if necessary, and agreed. Agreement will also be reached on the duration of the visit and the number and profile of the participants ;
7. The host FLAG will then prepare a **draft programme**, which could also include proposals for cultural and leisure activities. Such activities contribute to the overall experience and also help to avoid problems of “meeting fatigue”, which can sometimes arise during a study visit. In agreeing the programme, it is also important to remember that the learning and exchange should not all be one-way. The visitors should also provide input ; presenting their area and their activities and sharing their experiences with the host community. Where relevant, the need for professional language interpretation should also be considered (language issues are often underestimated and the benefits of study visits can be undermined if language barriers exist) ;
8. Once the programme is agreed, the FLAGs, and in particular the visiting FLAG, will need to **identify the source of funding** (see below) ;
9. If and when the funding is secured, the participating FLAGs will have to agree on how best to manage the **logistical arrangements**. In general, the visiting FLAG organises the flights, while the host FLAG organises local accommodation, transport and possibly one evening of cultural activities, as well as arranging the meetings and other appointments included in the programme. However, there are no hard and fast rules on this and other arrangements are also possible.





**Useful tip:** to avoid misunderstandings or disappointment it is important to ensure that practical aspects of the visit are given adequate consideration. In particular, attention should be paid to:

- › The standard of accommodation or catering expected by the visitors;
- › Whether participants wish to share rooms or not;
- › Who pays for restaurants and accommodation and what is the budget;
- › Any special dietary or mobility requirements.

*In general, it is advisable that the host FLAG visits hotels, restaurants and meeting areas before the visit in order to ensure that standards are acceptable.*

## Before the visit

In advance of study trip, the visiting FLAG should provide all participants with information on the practical aspects of the visit, including:

- › The departure dates and arrangements;
- › The full list of participants;
- › A copy of the draft programme;
- › Details of accommodation in the host area (including contact details, etc.);
- › The accommodation rooming list (if people are sharing);
- › Information on the local area and any cultural issues they need to be aware of;
- › Any special clothing or other requirements.

It is also advisable to organise a briefing meeting for all the participants, either prior to departure or immediately after arrival. This could be used to provide background information on the host area and the organisations being visited, as well as providing an opportunity for participants to get to know each other better and to learn about each others activities and expectations of the visit.

## During the visit

Once the visitors have arrived in the host area it is recommended that the visiting and host coordinators arrange to meet to review final changes to the programme and to discuss any other issues of relevance. This close contact between the coordinators should be maintained throughout the visit (be sure to schedule regular meetings or other communication).

It is also advisable that the visiting group makes time to meet among themselves at the end of each day (this could be arranged in the evening, at the hotel), to reflect on the days activities, to consider the lessons learned and to address any problems or issues that might arise. A summing-up session at the end of the visit is also recommended. Although, if the visit is short (2 to 3 days) this might substitute for the evening meetings.

Other issues to consider during the visit include:

- › Providing an updated programme to all the participants, which should also include information on breaks and the timing of meals;
- › Checking again if participants have any specific dietary requirements or allergies so these can be provided to caterers in advance;
- › Providing name badges to the participants;
- › Making sure that adequate time is allowed in the schedule for travel, taking account of traffic and other unforeseen situations;
- › Providing transport companies with route plans in order to ensure they know where to go.

#### After the visit

Shortly after the visit, the FLAGs involved should provide feedback to each other and should try to ensure follow-up on any relevant issues. This might involve:

- › Inviting participants to provide individual feedback on the visit;
- › Exploring the possibility of follow-up activities or projects with the host FLAG;
- › Disseminating the results of the visit and the experience gained as widely as possible (at FLAG, community, regional, national levels);
- › Writing an article for the FLAG webpage, local newspaper or other forum;
- › Sending a message of thanks to the participants in the host area.

A month or two after the visit, the visiting FLAG should also consider organising a meeting of all those who participated in the visit in order to maintain the contacts and to assess what benefits have arisen from the visit.

This kind of follow-up meeting can also help to strengthen networking between the participants, which can also have added benefits for the area concerned. Very often a study visit brings together people that don't know each other well (e.g. tourist providers from different parts of a FLAG area; or managers from several FLAGs, as this is also a possible option) and gives them the opportunity to form links in a very informal setting, which can sometimes lead to new projects or initiatives.

#### Seeking financial support

Financial support for cooperation may already be allocated within the FLAG budget. If so, a proposal can be prepared and presented directly to the FLAG. If the cooperation budget is managed centrally, by the regional or national managing authority, for example, then the FLAGs involved will have to present the proposal to these bodies.

In the latter situation, it is important to clarify with the relevant body what kinds of actions are eligible for support, what is the application procedure, and what are the criteria for project selection.

#### Some useful sources of information

*Handbook for organisers of study visits for education and vocational training specialists – [http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/assets/upload/study/Publication/2009\\_handbookEN.pdf](http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/assets/upload/study/Publication/2009_handbookEN.pdf)*

## 3.2 Mentoring



### What is mentoring?

The word *mentor* is generally understood to mean someone experienced in a particular field, who provides guidance to someone who has no or less experience. The main value of the mentor's support is in the fact that they have practical experience in a similar field to that of the *mentee* and, therefore, both parties can understand each other more easily (which is not always the case, for example, with external experts or consultants).

Mentoring is the process whereby a mentor shares their knowledge and experience with a mentee, thereby nurturing the mentee's development, and building their confidence and capacity to assume a certain role or responsibility. In general, mentoring involves:

- › A reactive approach, whereby the mentor and mentee deal with issues or problems as they arise, rather than planning each topic in advance;
- › A long term relationship between the mentor and mentee;
- › The mentor guiding the mentee;
- › A focus on the overall development of the mentee, rather than just focusing on specific skills (e.g. sometimes personal issues are also discussed);
- › The mentor listening, offering advice and making suggestions;
- › An informal and less structured interaction – meetings take place as and when the mentee needs guidance, and sometimes telephone or e-mail communication substitutes for face to face meetings.

Importantly, it is not the place of the mentor to substitute for the mentee. A mentor is not a consultant and will not carry out specific assignments on behalf of the mentee. Their role is simply to share their knowledge and experience of similar or comparable situations, developing the skills and capabilities of the mentee, and then allowing the mentee to use their own judgement and make their own decisions. In this way, the mentee develops the confidence and capacity to function independently, seeing the mentor more as a role model, rather than someone on whom they become dependant.

In local development circles, many Leader LAGs and other local development agencies have established mentoring programmes as a business support tool, to support owners or managers of new or developing businesses. In this situation, the mentor is generally someone with significant business experience, which they share with a less experienced business owner or manager.

### How can a mentor help with the implementation of Axis 4 ?

In the context of the Leader programme, experienced LAG members and staff have acted as mentors to less experienced counterparts in other LAGs. This was particularly important during the changeover between generations of the programme (Leader 1 to Leader II, Leader II to Leader+, and most recently, in mainstreaming Leader), when new LAGs were being established.

New EFF Axis 4 FLAGs may similarly benefit by developing staff and member capacity through mentoring. Mentors could come from other, more experienced local groups, or from groups in other areas. Either way, this process could help to fast-track the mentees development, potentially avoiding costly and time-consuming mistakes.

Some areas where the guidance of a mentor could be particularly useful include:

#### **For FLAG members:**

- › Helping to clarify members roles and responsibilities;
- › Strengthening the input and contribution of individual FLAG members;
- › Effective delegation to sub-committees and to employees or contractors;
- › Consensus building and effective decision-making within FLAGs;
- › Conflict resolution and negotiation;
- › Problem solving;
- › Identifying good practices and pitfalls;
- › Recruiting and managing a manager and staff;
- › Monitoring, evaluation and strategic planning;
- › Consulting with the community.

#### **For FLAG staff:**

- › Managing public funds, including internal management and reporting procedures;
- › Project evaluation procedures;
- › Working effectively with the FLAG board and sub-committees;
- › Communicating effectively with target groups;
- › Building effective networks (local, regional, national and transnational);
- › Internal review and evaluation procedures;
- › Managing staff;
- › Problem solving;
- › Project development;
- › Separation of project development and decision making roles;
- › Working with the managing authority.

## What to consider when identifying a suitable mentor?

### Identifying needs

To find the right mentor and to make the best use of their time, it is important that the FLAG is first clear about its specific needs with regard to mentoring. This should involve identifying areas where the FLAG members or staff are experiencing difficulties or areas of perceived weakness where problems might be anticipated. It is advisable, therefore, that the person appointed to conduct this needs assessment is familiar with these issues.

In conducting the needs assessment, it is important to be realistic in terms of expectations. A mentor is not a consultant and will not, for example, undertake research, carry-out extensive assessments, or draw up procedures or methodologies. However, a mentor will be able to informally discuss different issues of concern, passing on the benefit of their experience in dealing with similar situations.

### Finding the right mentor

Once the FLAG is clear about its needs, the next step is to find the right mentor or mentors. The objective here is to find someone who has relevant knowledge and experience in the areas identified by the FLAG and who is both willing and able to communicate and transfer this. The FLAG's needs may be very general, in which case the potential pool of mentors could be large, or they could be more specific, in which case a more targeted search is required.

In either case, it would help to first prepare a profile of the person being sought. This should include the desired knowledge and experience, as well as other important considerations such as language and communication skills, knowledge or appreciation of local culture, etc.

The regional or national networks and the FARNET Support Unit could help to circulate this profile (via their websites, newsletters, etc.) and, through their knowledge of the wider networks, they may even be able to recommend relevant and willing contacts.

While the search for a mentor is specifically targeted at a person, it may help to focus in the first instance on particular areas, FLAGs, LAGs or other organisations that are known to have had similar challenges in the past. The search could then focus on specific people, skill sets or organisations that fit the profile required.



**Useful tip:** as in any situation where people work closely together, personality is important. Try to find a mentor whose personality is compatible with that of the mentee. This will allow for a relationship of trust and mutual respect to develop.

### Planning a mentoring assignment

Once a suitable mentor has been identified, the next step is to work out the best way to fund the project. Designing a joint cooperation project can be a good way to do this. The format of the project proposal will depend on the requirements of the relevant managing authority (or authorities), but it should describe the mentoring assignment and should, as a minimum, include the following information:

- › Background information on the host FLAG;
- › A short profile of the mentee (this could be an individual or a group) and a description of their role within the organisation;
- › The needs of the mentee and the objectives of the mentoring assignment;
- › A profile of the mentor, explaining how they were selected and highlighting their experience relating to the needs of the mentee;
- › The actions to be undertaken, including the nature, duration, objectives and any milestones of the cooperation project;
- › Procedures for review and evaluation;
- › A breakdown of the costs involved.

### Seeking financial support

Financial support for cooperation may already be allocated within the FLAG budget. If so, then the project can be presented directly to the FLAG for approval. If the cooperation budget is managed centrally, by the regional or national managing authority, for example, then the project proposal will have to be presented to this body by the FLAG.

In the latter situation, it is important that the FLAG first clarifies what kinds of actions are eligible for support, what is the application procedure, and what are the criteria for project selection.

### Some useful sources of information

*Good practice in mentoring: European guidelines* – [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/products/sup/pro-029.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/products/sup/pro-029.pdf)

*The international standards for mentoring programmes in employment (ISMPE)* – <http://www.clutterbuckassociates.co.uk/downloadfile.aspx?ID=136>



## 3.3 Placements and traineeship



### What is a placement or traineeship ?

In the context of Axis 4 cooperation projects, a placement or traineeship involves a person from one fisheries area spending a period of time acquiring new knowledge or skills by working with and learning from counterparts in another fisheries area.

A placement usually involves learning on-the-job, where the participant is assigned a suitable temporary position within the host organisation. A traineeship normally includes a combination of learning on-the-job as well as some structured training or instruction at certain intervals. In general, organising a traineeship is more complex and may require the input of external trainers. Therefore, it may be more realistic for FLAGs to focus on placements, perhaps involving some informal instruction or coaching.

The duration of a placement or traineeship can vary, depending on the objectives and the situation of the participants. However, given the demands on staff time and resources within FLAGs, placements or traineeships of longer than two to three months will be difficult to facilitate, and are probably unnecessary.

### Who participates in a placement or traineeship ?

A placement or a traineeship can be undertaken by an employee or member of a FLAG, or another stakeholder from a FLAG area. If it is a FLAG employee or member, then the objective is usually to build capacity within the FLAG, focusing on specific tasks, roles or responsibilities.

This could, for example, involve an administrator within a FLAG undertaking a traineeship in another FLAG to learn about procedures for financial reporting or other administrative tasks. Alternatively, the approach could be more general, perhaps involving a FLAG manager or project officer undertaking a placement in order to learn about different aspects of the work of their counterpart in another FLAG.

Where the placement or traineeships is undertaken by another stakeholder from a FLAG area, then the objective is usually to develop the capacity of this person to undertake some task within the fisheries area (e.g. within a project, a local business, a voluntary organisation, etc.), which indirectly benefits the wider community and contributes in some way to the implementation of the FLAG strategy. In this case, the placement or traineeship could be part of a bigger project being supported by the FLAG.

With any placement or traineeship, it is important to ensure that the language skills of the participant are appropriate to the working language of the host organisation. If language problems are anticipated, then an alternative host organisation or some language training might need to be considered.

#### **How is a placement or traineeship organised ?**

Similarly to other types of cooperation projects, the first step should be to assess the specific needs of the participant, clearly identifying what new skills or experience they need to acquire and also to decide if a placement or traineeship is the most appropriate course of action. This will inform and help to facilitate the search for a suitable host organisation. The national networks and the FARNET Support Unit will be able to assist with this search.

Once a suitable host area or organisation has been identified, then the parties involved should work together to better define the project. This dialogue should culminate in a placement or training programme agreement, which describes:

1. The participant's profile and training or learning needs;
2. The host organisation, its experience or knowledge in the areas of interest, and the key personnel concerned;

3. Who in the host organisation will supervise the trainee/placement, review and evaluate progress, and ensure that the programme is being implemented as foreseen;
4. The nature of the placement or traineeship. In the case of a placement, this should include a job description and specify how this will help to meet the learning needs of the participant. For a traineeship, it should also explain what training will be provided, by who, at what intervals and for what duration;
5. The specific objective of the placement or the traineeship, the expected outcomes and what, if any, certification will be provided;
6. The division of responsibilities between the participating organisations (including the allocation of costs, the provision of equipment, living arrangements, insurance, travel, etc..).

#### **A placement or trainee exchange**

In some cases it may be appropriate to organise an exchange, whereby both participating fisheries areas host placements or trainees from the other area on a form of reciprocal basis. This has the advantage of ensuring that both areas benefit from the cooperation. Furthermore, the placements or traineeships do not have to occur simultaneously, but can be planned at different times. This type of reciprocal exchange is not compulsory, however, so where it does occur it is important that it is justified and that each placement or traineeship addresses real needs.

#### **Preparing for the placement or traineeship**

In most cases, the host FLAG or host organisation organises the local accommodation and arranges a welcome and induction for the trainee or placement. The trainee/ placement or their FLAG, parent or other sponsoring organisation will usually organise any flights and other travel arrangements.

Before departure, it is advisable that the trainee/ placement conducts some research on the host area and organisation and establishes initial contact by telephone or e-mail.

Once in the host area, it is important that the training or placement supervisor takes responsibility for ensuring the trainee or placement is made to feel welcome and that the agreed programme of activities is respected. This is an important responsibility for the host organisation and should be taken seriously. Sufficient provision of resources, in particular time, must be made available. It is not acceptable for trainees or placements to be assigned solely to repetitive or boring tasks, or to tasks that are unrelated to their learning objectives.

Similarly, the trainee/ placement must also take their responsibilities seriously. This includes respecting the rules and regulations of the host and sponsor organisations, as well as ensuring that commitments given in the traineeship/ placement agreement are fulfilled.

Regular monitoring and review of the placement or traineeship is essential to ensuring that the objectives are being met and that any emerging problems or issues are promptly resolved.

At the end of the placement or traineeship, the host organisation and the participant should jointly prepare a report, outlining what has been achieved, what progress was made in terms of the learning objectives, what issues or problems arose and how they were resolved, and what further training or development needs were identified.

A presentation of this report to the host and sponsor organisation is normally expected. There may also be a specific reporting requirement as a condition of support or sponsorship.

#### **Seeking financial support**

Financial support for cooperation may already be allocated within the FLAG budget. If so, then the project proposal can be presented directly to the FLAG concerned for approval. If the cooperation budget is managed centrally, by a regional or national managing authority, for example, then the proposal will need to be presented to this body by the FLAG.

## 3.4 Twinning

### What is twinning ?

Twinning is an arrangement whereby two FLAGs from the same or from different Member States agree to establish a long term relationship in order to support wider cooperation between their organisations and communities. This relationship is formalised in a twinning agreement, which is signed by both parties.

In the framework of Axis 4, only twinning arrangements between FLAG managers and boards are supported. However, twinning projects supported under Axis 4 could also lead to other twinning arrangements within the FLAG areas, which could be supported by other funding programmes.

### Who participates in a twinning project ?

As twinning is about developing a relationship between two FLAGs, the main target participants are FLAG managers and board members. However, since the main objective of twinning is to create the conditions for other types of cooperation, other actors from the fisheries areas concerned may also have an indirect involvement.



### What are the key steps involved ?

#### 1. Identifying the need or opportunity

Before engaging in a twinning arrangement, it is important to identify the needs or opportunities that such an arrangement could address. These needs or opportunities should relate specifically to the FLAG's local development strategy. This first step should allow the FLAG to draw up some preliminary objectives for the twinning project.

## **2. Finding the right partner**

Finding the right partner is the most important step in any twinning arrangement. Paradoxically, this involves finding a partner that is similar but also different. Similar, in the sense that both FLAGs have common or shared interests and concerns, and different in the sense that they still have something new to learn from and share with each other.

A FLAG could, for example, look for a partner coming from an area with a similar profile, but culturally different and with a different approach to tackling challenges or exploiting opportunities.

To facilitate the partner search, FLAGs should prepare a short proposal which could include a profile of their area, a description of the main challenges and opportunities, and their aspirations and objectives for the twinning project. This could be circulated to the wider network, via the national networks and the FARNET Support Unit.

FLAGs considering twinning should spend time with the representatives of prospective partner FLAGs, discussing their ideas and expectations and ensuring that they have the same understanding and aspirations before committing to a long term twinning arrangement.

## **3. Defining common objectives**

Once the twinning partner has been identified, both partners should then work together to define or refine the objectives of the twinning project and the types of activities they wish to engage in. These can then be incorporated into a twinning agreement which should be signed by both parties.

The early stages of a twinning relationship are mainly concerned with the partners getting to know each other better, developing a better understanding of each others culture and traditions, and generally building trust and friendship. Projects undertaken during this period tend to be based around cultural events and exchanges, conferences and other short duration actions. As the relationship between the two communities develops, more ambitious and longer term projects could be considered.

## **4. Creating a support structure**

A dedicated team in each partner area is essential to the success of any twinning arrangement. A small but active team or twinning committee in each area can help to maintain contact, develop and review twinning objectives, coordinate twinning actions, seek financing, and ensure that the wider community is regularly informed of developments.

## **5. Planning for the long term**

In order to reap the real benefits of twinning, the twinning arrangement must be able to stand the test of time. True friendship and trust between individuals and organisations can only be developed over time, but once established, this creates opportunities for many projects and initiatives that would not be possible in the context of a shorter term relationship. It is important, therefore, that the partners involved plan for the long term and foresee structures and arrangements that will endure.

## **Twinning as a platform for other forms of cooperation**

A successful twinning relationship will usually create a common or shared context in which other forms of cooperation can develop. Exchanges of experience, study visits, placements and traineeships, joint conferences and events and more advanced cooperation projects can all emerge within the context of a twinning arrangement. In fact, the potential for communities to progress from simple exchanges to more advanced cooperation projects is greatly enhanced in the context of a twinning arrangement, where the structures exist to support ongoing cooperation.

## **Reviewing the relationship**

Twinning is a long term commitment and it is vital, therefore, to ensure that the twinning agreement is regularly reviewed by the partners to ensure its continued relevance to the FLAGs and communities involved.





#### Seeking financial support

Financial support for cooperation may already be allocated within the FLAG budget. If so, a proposal could be prepared and a decision taken by the FLAG itself. If the cooperation budget is managed centrally, by a regional or national managing authority, for example, then the FLAG must present the proposal to this body.

In the latter situation, it is important to clarify with the relevant body what kinds of actions are eligible for support, what is the application procedure, and what are the criteria for project selection.

Besides the EFF, there are also other sources of EU funding for twinning, including the *EU Citizenship Programme 2007-2013* ([http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programme/about\\_citizenship\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programme/about_citizenship_en.php)), which provides support for twinning between EU municipalities.

#### Some useful sources of information

Council of European Municipalities and Regions guide to *European Twinning* – <http://www.twinning.org/en/page/enter-our-universe-of-twinning.html>



## 3.5 Thematic workshops or conferences



Even within these broad themes, more specific sub-themes where FLAGs have a common interest could also be expected to emerge. Product branding, tourism marketing, marine pollution, wave energy, or creating opportunities for young people or women in fisheries areas are examples of fields that are likely to be of interest to many FLAGs.

In this context, organising a thematic workshop or conference could be an efficient means of bringing a number of FLAGs or actors together to share ideas and experiences, or to benefit from expert input. This type of wider cooperation or exchange, involving large numbers of actors from many different areas, can sometimes lead to the establishment of platforms or networks and is often a catalyst for other types of cooperation between participants.

### What is a thematic workshop or conference ?

Fisheries areas across the EU face similar challenges and often have similar potential and opportunities. It is inevitable, therefore, that common themes will emerge in FLAG development strategies. Adding value to fisheries products, diversification of economic activities, for example, through pesca tourism or renewable energy, environmental protection and community development are some of the broad themes that are relevant in most fisheries areas.

### What is the purpose of a thematic workshop or conference ?

The main reasons why FLAGs might organise a thematic workshop or conference include:

- › To share experiences of what is being proposed or what has been done in different areas ;
- › To identify good or best practices that can inspire or guide action in fisheries areas ;
- › To jointly benefit from the input of experts on the subject or topic in question ;
- › To establish links between areas with a shared interest in a particular theme or subject ;
- › To provide feedback or guidance for policymakers.

## **Who participates in thematic workshops or conferences ?**

As with any cooperation project, the starting point is usually the identification of a need or opportunity. Often this will emerge from discussions with local actors but it may fall to the FLAG to take the lead in developing the project. However, the participation of relevant local actors from the very beginning is important to ensuring that real needs are being met and that there is real community ownership of the project. This could be facilitated by means of an organising committee, which could include representation from the FLAG as well as the local groups or sectors that will participate in and benefit from the workshop or conference.

## **How is a thematic workshop or conference organised ?**

Much information is available on organising workshops or conferences, which we will not repeat here. However, in relation to organising a thematic workshop or conference as a cooperation project in the context of Axis 4, there are a number of specific issues that need to be considered. These include:

### ***1. Developing the theme and objectives***

The first step in organising a thematic workshop or conference is to develop the theme (and sub-themes) and the objectives. The theme of the event should be directly related to the local need or opportunity identified. It must be focused enough to ensure that it tackles specific issues of concern to the FLAG promoting the idea, but it should also be general enough that it interests a number of other fisheries areas. If not, it will not attract sufficient interest to justify a workshop or conference (in which case another type of cooperation project might be more relevant).

### ***2. Finding the right partners***

Once the overall theme and objectives of the event have been established, the search for partners can begin. As with all cooperation projects, the objective should be to find partners that have a shared interest in the theme proposed, but also have complimentary skills and experience to bring to the project. While there is no upper limit on the number of partners, the complexities of managing the partnership and ensuring the event remains focused generally means that a very large partnership is not desirable. Remember, FLAGs and other stakeholders can still be invited to contribute to the event (as speakers, exhibitors or participants) without being partners.

The FARNET Support Unit and the national networks can help with the search for partners. However, FLAGs should also make good use of tools, information sources and networking opportunities to learn more about other FLAGs and their areas. This will help greatly when it comes to identifying potential cooperation partners.

### ***3. Developing the programme***

Once the partners have been identified, the project proposal will need to be further developed. The theme and objectives will need to be discussed again, this time involving all the partners. The programme for the event will then need to be developed, which will require discussion and decisions on a range of issues, including: the structure of the event (break-out sessions, plenary, etc.), the topics to be covered, the speakers, moderators, rapporteurs, chairpersons, as well as the venue, catering, interpretation, and, not least, the date of the event. In setting the date, be sure to allow enough time for the organisation. International events of this nature generally take around four months to organise.

A preliminary event notice should be circulated as soon as the general theme and the date have been agreed. This will ensure potential participants have sufficient time to arrange their diary.

Another important issue to consider at this stage is the language of the event. The language skills of the speakers and participants need to be carefully considered and if necessary, interpretation and translated texts may need to be provided.

#### **4. Agreeing the budget**

An important preliminary task for the partners is to agree on a budget. As much as possible, this should be based on actual quotations or price estimates from suppliers or service providers. Once the budget is agreed, the contribution of each partner should also be discussed and agreed.

#### **5. Coordinating the logistical aspects**

Organising an event can be a challenging task, so it is important that responsibilities are clearly defined and that one of the partners assumes the role of coordinator. The coordinator will need to oversee the logical distribution of tasks and ensure that each task is carried out as agreed. The main tasks will include:

- › Finding a suitable venue and liaising with the venue managers;
- › Finding and organising suitable accommodation for participants and contributors;
- › Promoting the event, including organising workshop/conference material and a webpage or website;
- › Managing registrations and bookings;
- › Contacting and liaising with speakers and exhibitors;
- › Organising project or site visits;
- › Managing registrations at the venue;
- › Media relations; and
- › Dissemination of results/conclusions.

#### **6. Networking**

Thematic workshops and conferences provide an excellent opportunity for networking and this should be catered for in the planning of the event. Sufficient time should be allowed in the programme for informal contact between participants (lunch and coffee breaks, open space sessions, etc..) and networking or meeting areas should be designated within the venue (exhibition or networking area).

A popular approach to facilitating networking is to organise a reception for participants the evening before the event, when many participants will be arriving. In this situation, it is a good idea to encourage participants to register before the reception and to issue name badges.

The layout of the reception room is also important (i.e. standing rather than seating encourages people to mingle) and the presence of the workshop/conference organisers can also help to facilitate introductions and to generally animate the reception.

#### **7. Workshop or conference exhibition**

An exhibition is another good way to promote networking and will also allow contributors and participants to present additional information on projects or initiatives of relevance to the conference theme. Potential exhibitors could be invited to submit details of their project or initiative before a decision is taken on the allocation of space.

The availability of display boards and stands will need to be checked with the venue managers and the specifications and criteria communicated to the exhibitors well in advance of the event.

### 8. Project or site visits

Project or site visits can be a good way to show, first-hand, some of the actions or projects that were discussed in the workshop or conference. This can also help to broaden and deepen participants' understanding of the area and the issues discussed during the workshop/conference, as well as providing a welcome break from the more intense discussions.

### 9. Media relations

A workshop or conference, especially those with international participants, can provide a very good opportunity for the host FLAG to raise its profile locally, or even regionally or nationally. Contact with the media should be established as early as possible and should be maintained before, during and after the event. Press-releases, photos and other promotional material should also be made available.



**Useful tip:** be sure to inform the European Commission, the FARNET Support Unit and your national network about any workshops or conference you plan to organise. This will help to promote the event and to ensure that the knowledge and information generated permeates the wider network.

### Capitalising on the results

While an event in itself can be very productive, the follow up activities can also help to extend the benefits, for both the participants and for a wider audience. Possible follow-up activities could include:

- › Publication of presentations and conclusions on the event website;
- › Publication of event proceedings;
- › A follow-up conference in one of the other partner areas (to further develop the theme in question or on a different but related theme);
- › The establishment of a more permanent relationship between the project partners in the form of a network or platform, possibly also inviting other partners;
- › Follow-up cooperation projects by the partners or by some of the workshop/conference participants.

### Seeking financial support

Financial support for cooperation may already be allocated within the FLAG budget. If so, a decision on funding can be taken by the FLAG. If the cooperation budget is managed centrally, by the regional or national managing authority, for example, then the FLAG will have to present the proposal to these bodies.

### Some useful sources of information

*Guide to organising a seminar or conference* published by the EU LIFE programme communications team (2009) – [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/comtools/resources/documents/organising\\_sem\\_confer\\_lifepius.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/comtools/resources/documents/organising_sem_confer_lifepius.pdf)

## 3.6 Advanced cooperation projects



### Who participates in advanced cooperation projects?

Advanced cooperation projects are generally developed by the FLAG but can include the participation of other individuals or organisations from within the FLAG area. Projects can also involve partners from fisheries areas that do not have a FLAG, although the activities of these partners cannot be funded under Axis 4. While projects must involve partners from at least two different areas, the experience from other programmes is that such projects often involve partners from three or more different areas.

### What is an advanced cooperation project?

Study visits, mentoring, placements and traineeships, twinning, and thematic workshops or conferences often provide a platform for more advanced cooperation projects. This is where the partners involved agree to go beyond the exchange of ideas and information to jointly invest in developing and exploiting a product, technique, tool or service.

As with other types of cooperation projects, the partners in advanced projects can come from within the same country (inter-regional cooperation) and/or from different countries (transnational cooperation). In general, however, there are more opportunities for advanced cooperation, and projects are often easier to manage, when partner areas are located in close proximity or are highly complimentary in a particular field.

### What types of actions could be considered?

Advanced cooperation projects must be consistent with the local development strategies of the participating FLAGs and should contribute to helping the partners achieve identified strategic objectives within their fisheries areas.

These projects should also allow FLAGs to undertake actions or achieve objectives that would not be possible if the FLAGs were to act independently. They might, for example, allow for the development of a more complete product (e.g. a coastal walking route crossing a number of FLAG areas), or for the pooling of human or financial resources (e.g. for the development of a processing facility or other resource intensive projects).

Alternatively, they could help to achieve greater scale (e.g. for the development of an international marketing initiative, possibly involving fisheries areas from several countries) or critical mass (e.g. for the establishment of an international training or education project). There are many possibilities, the important thing is that projects add value to, rather than divert resources away from the implementation of the local strategy.



## What are the steps involved?

Outlined below is an overview of the main steps involved in developing an advanced cooperation project. However, more detailed information on each of these steps, as well as other aspects of advanced cooperation, including project management and implementation, can be found in the many excellent guides produced for Leader and other EU programmes (see below):

1. *Identifying the need or opportunity*: what specific need or opportunity does an advanced cooperation project address, and what is the benefit or added value which justifies the added complexity of working with partners from other areas?
2. *Developing the project idea*: once the need or opportunity has been identified, the project idea should be developed. This should also include a description of what input is expected from a potential partner or partners, and an indication of the results they could expect to achieve.
3. *Finding a suitable partner or partners*: finding the right partners is critically important. The FARNET Support Unit and the national networks can assist with this process. Meetings and conferences are also a good opportunity to network and seek out suitable partners.
4. *Responding to a partner search*: FLAGs will also invariably receive information or requests from other fisheries areas on advanced cooperation projects. Some of these may seem inviting: the topic might be interesting or you may find the area attractive, but be careful! Advanced cooperation projects involve a serious commitment of time and resources. As a general rule, if a cooperation proposal does not fit with your local strategic objectives and provide sufficient added value then it is not something you should be pursuing.
5. *Preparing the cooperation proposal*: once the partners have been identified and agreed in principle to cooperate, the next step is to develop the cooperation proposal. During this process, the partners need to be flexible with their ideas and must be prepared to listen, negotiate and compromise – otherwise it will not be a genuine partnership. At a minimum, the project proposal should include:
  - a. A presentation of the structure and organisation of the partnership;
  - b. A description of the lead partner's and other partners' territories;
  - c. Common and individual objectives;
  - d. Proposed actions (common and individual actions);
  - e. Details of the implementation structure (will the project be implemented by the partners or will a new structure be established?) and the location of project actions;
  - f. An explanation of the specific roles of the partners;
  - g. Financial projections and sources of funding;
  - h. A projected timeline for project delivery;
  - i. A communication strategy (targeting internal and external groups);
  - j. Expected results and added value;
  - k. A monitoring and evaluation framework.

Normally, a meeting of the partners is required to conclude this proposal, which means that some upfront costs need to be foreseen.
6. *Concluding a cooperation agreement*: experience from Leader highlights the importance of agreeing, from the beginning of the project, how management, administration, communication and financial responsibilities are to be shared between the partners. This is particularly important in situations where there is no shared structure and where responsibility for project implementation is divided between the partners.





**Useful tip:** a clear and common basis of understanding is critical to project development and management. Language and cultural differences can present important challenges for cooperation projects. Therefore, good professional interpretation is essential if there are language differences, and detailed minutes, highlighting decisions and assigned responsibilities, should be circulated as soon as possible after all meetings.

## Seeking financial support

Financial support for cooperation may already be allocated within the FLAG budget. If so, a decision on funding can be taken by the FLAG. If the cooperation budget is managed centrally, by the regional or national managing authority, for example, then the FLAGs will have to present the proposal to these bodies.

Advanced cooperation projects sometimes have a productive element and therefore, some proportion of private match funding may be required. The percentage of match funding required will depend on the types of actions to be undertaken, the area in which the project is to be implemented, the distribution of benefits of the project, the budget of the FLAG and other factors that might be specific to the FLAG area.

Promoters of advanced cooperation projects could also look at other sources of EU funding for cooperation, such as the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the EU Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), the EU LIFE+ programme and others. These programmes all have their own priorities and procedures which would need to be consulted.

## Some useful sources of information

*Integrated European Cooperation Guide and Tool kit*, published by the Contact Point of the European Network for Rural Development (2010) – [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader/2007-2013/tnc-guide/en/tnc-guide\\_home\\_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader/2007-2013/tnc-guide/en/tnc-guide_home_en.cfm)

*Cooperation in LEADER+: the actual benefits for the local areas*, published by the LEADER+ Contact Point (2007) – [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/pdf/library/cooperation/duguet\\_cooperation.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/pdf/library/cooperation/duguet_cooperation.pdf)

*Practical Guide: How to setup and implement your project for territorial cooperation*, published by the French Leader+ National Network Unit (NNU) – <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/pdf/library/cooperation/territorialcooperation.pdf>

*Transnational Cooperation between Rural Areas: A methodological guide*, published by LEADER II European Observatory / AEIDL – <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leader2/rural-en/coop/coop1.pdf>

*Transnational cooperation under LeaderII: Lessons from the past, tools for the future*, published by the LEADER II European Observatory / AEIDL (2001) – <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leader2/rural-en/biblio/cooperation/cooperation.pdf>

*Territorial Cooperation Project Management Handbook*, published by Interact (2007) – [http://www.northernperiphery.eu/files/archive/Downloads/Project\\_Management\\_Guidance/Territorial\\_Cooperation\\_Project\\_Management\\_Handbook\\_INTERACT.pdf](http://www.northernperiphery.eu/files/archive/Downloads/Project_Management_Guidance/Territorial_Cooperation_Project_Management_Handbook_INTERACT.pdf)

*The EQUAL Guide on Transnationality*, published by the European Commission (2001) – [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/data/document/transnatguide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/data/document/transnatguide_en.pdf)



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