This programme is funded by the European Union

MOST COMMON MISTAKES OF APPLICANTS
made during the 1st Call for Proposals

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ Read carefully the *evaluation criteria* and compare how your application fulfils the criteria, as these will be used for evaluation of your application to make a funding decision. (Chapter 2.3.1.4).
- ✓ Read carefully the *Instructions for Filling in the Grant Application Form*, which also provide examples and detailed explanations.

Mistakes regarding administrative check

Incompliance with application submission procedure; see Guidelines for Grant Applicants (hereinafter - Guidelines), Chapter 2.2.

- **Submitting application after the deadline**
  Submitting the application after the deadline leads to an immediate rejection (Chapter 2.2.3.).

- **Application envelope not sealed**
  Application must be submitted in one closed and sealed (stamped) envelope with the reference to the Programme and Call for Proposals indicated on the envelope (Chapters 2.2.2 and 2.3.1.1.).

- **Application not sewed**
  The original and a copy of the application (application form + supporting documents) must each be sewed separately according to the instructions given in the Guidelines (Chapter 2.2.2).

- **Declaration by the Applicant, Partnership Statement, Letter of Endorsement by the Associate not properly filled or missing**
  Above-listed documents have to be signed, dated and stamped with the organisation's stamp by the head of the organisation (applicant, partner or associate) or his/her authorised representative.
  RECOMMENDATION: collect all supporting documents from the applicant, partners and associates early in advance. In case the original Partnership Statements are missing on a date of submission, attach at least signed copies, still the originals shall be requested (Chapters 2.2.2. and 2.3.1.1).

- **Pre-feasibility study not provided**
  The Pre-feasibility study must be provided in case if either the Budget Headings 3 "Equipment and supplies" or Budget Heading 6 "Works (Infrastructure)" equals or exceeds EUR 50 000, or they sum equals or exceeds EUR 50 000 (Chapter 2.2.2.).

Mistakes regarding the eligibility check

The requirements set out in the Guidelines, Chapter 2.1 are not followed.

- **Applicant or partner is a profit making organisation**
  Applicants must have a non-profit character, (Chapter 2.1.1.1.).
  Partners must have a non-profit character, with an exception for organisations of partly industrial or commercial character, but established for a specific purpose for meeting needs of general interest.

- **Applicant or partner is not a legal body (registered operating office is indicated as an applicant/partner in the application form, which is not a legal body)**
  In case if an organisation intending to participate in an action as an applicant or a partner does not have its headquarters (central office) in the Programme area, it may participate if it has a registered operating office in the Programme area. In such case the organisation's headquarters having a status of a legal body must be indicated as an applicant or a partner, nevertheless, documents proving existence of the registered operating office must be provided. (Chapter 2.1.1.1.)
  REMARK: The registered operating office should be established in the Programme area one year or longer before the launch of the 2nd Call for Proposals.

Mistakes regarding quality assessment of proposals

The quality of a proposed action does not meet the respective criteria (Chapter 2.3.1.4.).

- **Poor definition of the problem; the problem is detached from objectives, results and activities**
  The problem description is an essential element of the application because it justifies the necessity of the action as such. Without a problem there is no project (action).The problem definition has to disclose the gap between the actual situation and desirable one which should be reached after implementation of the action. To justify the topicality of the problem it is recommended to provide statistical data describing current situation in the area (a region, city, etc.) the action will affect.
  RECOMMENDATION: main aspects to take into account: 1) problem description must be concrete and describe situation in the targeted regions or sector, not in general terms; 2) problem must be relevant for both sides of the border; 3) the cross-border cooperation is needed to solve it; it cannot be solved or properly tackled only on a national or local level; 4) it must rather focus on solving regional issues which can be implemented within the targeted regions, not a national scale problems, e.g., development of national registries; 5) the social groups affected by the problem must be identified.

- **Improperly set objectives of the action**
  The objective should be expressed as a 'desirable situation', whereas the problem is a 'negative situation'. The objective defines the image of an improved situation in the future, once the identified problems are remedied; see *Instructions for Filling in the Grant Application Form*. Please also note that even if your activities might be relevant for the region as such, they might not be relevant for the Programme, thus check how they would contribute to achievement of Programme's objectives via selected Priorities and Measures.
  REMARK: The action should set overall objective to which achievement it will contribute and specific objective which will be reached by the end of the action.

- **Target groups and final beneficiaries defined improperly**
  Action is implemented to improve the situation or solve a particular problem which is topical for your selected target group.
  RECOMMENDATION: 1) choose the target groups strategically bearing in mind action's objective; 2) describe how needs of target groups have been defined: is your action interesting and relevant for them; 3) provide concrete estimation of target groups.

- **Absence of the cross-border effect**
  The potential cross-border effect of the action is one of the assessed criteria. Accordingly, the cross-border cooperation should contribute to the solution of the joint problem. It is essential that there will be results and, if applicable, outputs on the both sides of the border.

- **Novelty of the action is not clear**
  When describing the background, problem, and innovative aspects, it is important to stress the following: 1) activities of the action are not duplicating what already has been done and is available; 2) proposed solutions fill in the gaps or missing links or improve previous achievements. _RECOMMENDATION_: 1) provide links with what has already been done, yet how your action is new in this aspect or indicate what has been missing in previous practice; 2) make sure you know what is happening in the region or selected sector and how your action will bring the added value.

- **Insufficiently detailed description of activities and chaotic description of the activities; the action's logic is not clear**
  Bear in mind that description of activities is the only source of information to be used by assessors to understand the proposed action. Therefore it is important to provide description of activities in a structured way indicating all essential information (e.g. timing, number of participants, chronology, costs, procedures of implementation, etc.).
  RECOMMENDATION: if you think that some information is generally known yet you do not provide it in the application, it will not be considered by assessors. Ask an impartial person to read the application and describe if he/she understood what you have meant.

- **Involvement of partners is not balanced**
  The action is a product of partnership brought together to implement a set of activities to achieve common benefit and cross-border result. Joint ideas and inputs during development will result in active involvement of partners and a sense of ownership.
  RECOMMENDATION: 1) do not forget to describe partners' tasks in groups of activities; 2) make sure that applicant does not take over dominating role in all activities; propose active role and responsibility for partners for the separate groups of activities; 3) describe how each partner will contribute and benefit from the action.

- **Partnership's capacity is insufficiently described**
  Please note that the capacity of applicant and partners is evaluated in the assessment grid under section "Financial and operational capacity" (Chapter 2.3.1.4). Therefore it is important to describe the experience, capacity, human, and financial resources for an applicant and partners in sufficient details. Note that the assessors shall use the information available only in the application, thus even if partners are experienced, but did not describe it, the assessment score will be lowered.

- **Improperly completed Logical Framework**

The Logical Framework is an important tool for effective planning and monitoring of action, therefore it is very important to fill it in properly; see *Instructions for Filling in the Grant Application Form*.

- **Absence of objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) for outputs, results and objectives**
  Outputs, results and objectives need to be objectively verifiable. It means that it should be possible for an impartial evaluator to check and estimate, firstly, what action is promising to achieve (to answer the question if it is possible to know whether what was planned is achieved?) and, secondly, to measure the achievement (are there available sources and means of verification?).
  The main aspect to be taken into account when structuring your action is clear focus on the **result** to be achieved by the set type of activities.

- **Sustainability of results not ensured**
  It is not worth to invest into activities that are not durable and have no clear plan on what will be done after the action is finished.
  EXAMPLE: in case of people to people cooperation it could be describing the future durable cooperation plans; in case of creating new products or investments – foreseeing concrete institutional, financial, political provisions on future plans for maintenance and use.

- **Exaggerated and unjustified costs**
  The ratio between estimated costs and expected outputs and results should be appropriate which means that they represent the value for money. It should be analysed whether the every proposed expense is really necessary for the implementation of the action, in line with Grant Application Form's rationale and whether the proposed costs are realistic and efficient.
  RECOMMENDATION: 1) total budget should be realistic costs' estimate needed to implement the activities, not the maximum available grant; 2) costs should be based on the real market value; 3) sufficiently detailed, providing breakdown in the budget, not the lump sums; 4) cost efficient solutions must be searched, e.g., printing or electronic means; use of already available resources, websites, networks, technical bases, etc. 5) the effective action should answer the question: is the proposed result worth the total amount allocated for the action?

- **Unjustified extensive use of external experts**
  The general rule is that the bulk of an action is to be undertaken by an applicant and its partners. The partnership cannot just act as a mediator receiving grant and contracting other persons for carrying out the action. Therefore, the applicant together with partners themselves has to provide their own contribution to solving the addressed problem using their own resources – staff, expertise, experience etc. In duly justified cases the subcontracting limit does not apply to actions mainly focused on investment activities.

- **External audit is not planned**
  It is requested to have an external audit for an action and the audit costs have to be budgeted under the Budget Heading 5 "Other costs and external services". It is not obligatory to have only one auditor for whole partnership; therefore the action may have separate auditors for partners.

- **Inconsistence of provided information in different parts of the application form and supporting documents**
- **Technical mistakes when filling Grant Application Form**
  The Grant Application Form should be dully filled, meaning that all requested fields are filled in; information in different sections is matching; correct legal titles and translations of organisations are provided; the whole text is visible; paper version matches the electronic version; data in Grant Application Form and supporting documents matches.