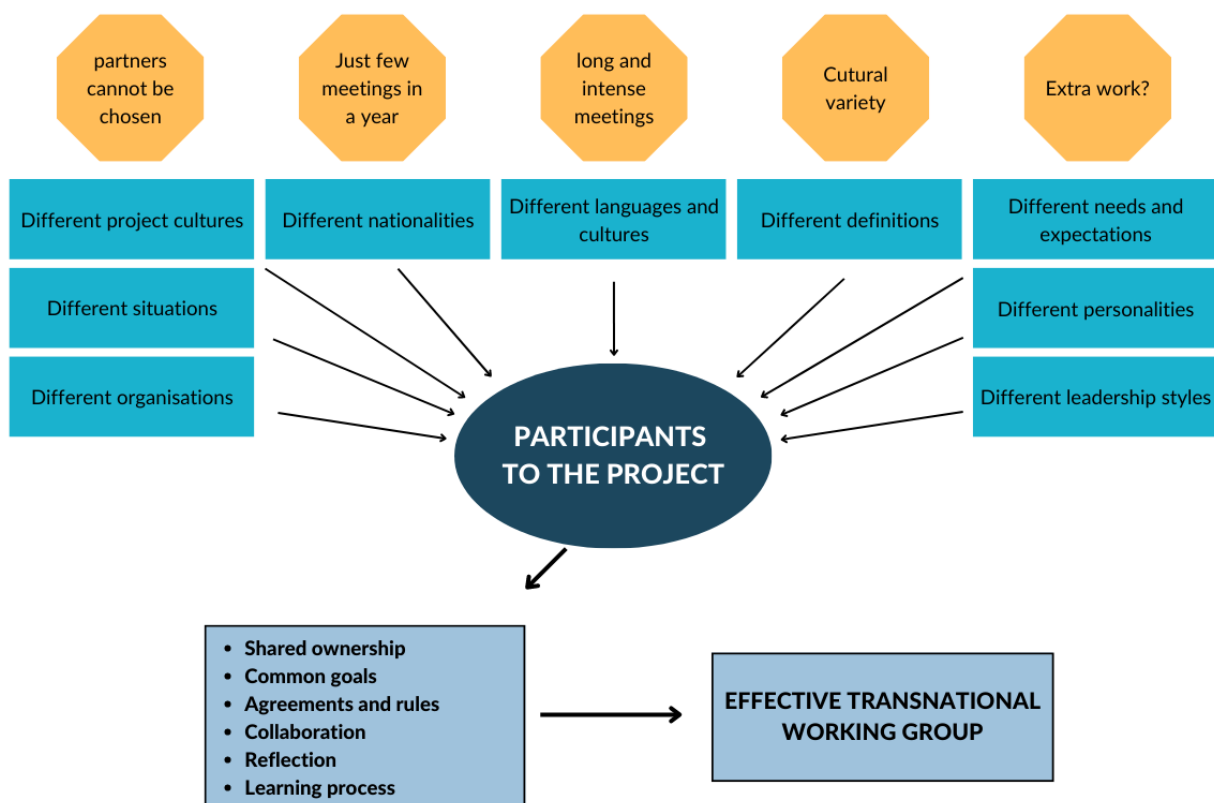

E-MANUAL

GUIDE TO PLANNING EU PROJECTS IN THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL HEALTH SECTOR

3.4 TRANSNATIONAL WORKING GROUPS

It is important for the coordinator to consider theories for transnational project management, with the understanding that European projects have certain specific characteristics:

1. When defining the project and forming the working group, it may be impossible to choose the members of the group.
2. Group members have the opportunity to meet (personally) only once, twice or three times during the course of the project.
3. The meetings are very intense and usually last only a few days.
4. In transnational projects, cultural backgrounds can be very heterogeneous.
5. A European project usually means extra work on top of the normal workload.



Often transnational cooperation is built on unstable foundations, and achieving adequate mutual understanding is difficult. It is essential to consolidate the foundations of the project, its operating culture and team spirit so as to trigger among the different people involved a process of reflection and training in

effective, creative and constantly learning teamwork.

The characteristics of effective groups:
they have clear common goals and share related responsibilities
they measure progress against the goals
they present the necessary mixture of skills and roles, which are agreed upon and assigned with appropriate assignments
they have the resources necessary to do the work
they have agreed on basic rules and operating procedures for working together
they promote mutual support through listening and constructive and helpful responses
they recognize the achievements of the individual and the group
they deal with disagreements constructively and openly
they spend time getting to know individual members and understanding cultural diversity
they frequently reflect on their own operating style and all the factors mentioned above

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROJECT WORK AND GROUP WORK

Work in a project is more technical and focused, focusing on assigning tasks and producing outcomes. The term project management is used to describe project leadership, and the project coordinator is called the project manager.

Group work, on the other hand, emphasizes the human dimension, and is more process-oriented and focuses on experience-based learning. Leadership is used to describe the direction of the group, and the coordinator is the leader of the group.

Ideally, a transnational project takes both concepts into account. The coordinator should pay special attention to the availability of sufficient space and time for real group work: to share and benefit from different experiences and to create something new together.

BEFORE YOU START: MOTIVATION AND BENEFITS

The success of teamwork depends on the motivation of the people involved, which in turn depends on the benefits each partner expects for themselves, their institution/organization and their clients.

A transnational project is not part of normal day-to-day activities of the organization and its staff. Usually, people involved in the project still have to carry on normal daily routines, and to feel empowered towards the project they need to receive the full support of superiors and colleagues in their respective institutions. On the other hand, participation in a transnational project is very interesting on a professional and personal level. The work itself presents new ideas and challenges to participants and their respective organizations.

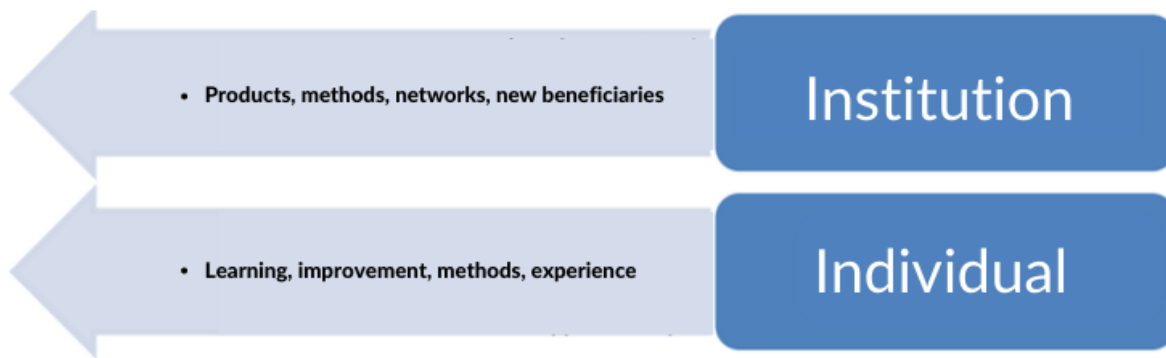
It is important to carefully calculate the resources to be involved in the funded project, to understand whether the existing staff is sufficient (with adequate involvement of the hours dedicated to the project as budgeted), or whether it is necessary to hire new people to cope with the tasks in the implementation plan.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO A PROJECT

Staff involvement in a project occurs on two levels, corresponding to the involvement of the organization as such (professional level) and the involvement of people who are already part of a team or who will be specifically involved in the implementation of specific tasks (personal level):



WHAT WE CAN OBTAIN FROM THE PROJECT



HOW TO IMPROVE GROUP WORK

In-group work, tasks are identified and assigned, working effectively and producing concrete outcomes. Analytical work on activities already carried out is done in order to learn from the processes, draw conclusions and develop theories to work more effectively and creatively.

Analytical work in European projects is often neglected due to lack of time, which is why many groups fail. Time set aside and devoted to reflection is as important as time devoted to active and productive work.

TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT MEETINGS

Transnational meetings are very important components in the development process of the working group in international projects, as they are the only opportunity to get to meet all project participants. During these meetings, misunderstandings can be clarified, questions can be asked, and problems can be discussed until consensus is reached.

The kick-off meeting, specifically, is a crucial time for the whole project, not only because of the many substantive and administrative issues to be defined, but also because a specific group feeling is created. The meeting results in a series of

group-building activities, which will then continue in a conscious and continuous process of development.

Through real work and the achievement of goals, the group itself is consolidated, which is why meetings provide an opportunity to plan new tasks, to evaluate work already completed, and to identify common solutions to any critical issues. Working methods may vary from time to time and depending on the activity, but breaking the group into smaller mixed units often proves to be very efficient.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE GROUP

Given the large physical distances and the time elapsed between meetings, communication is a major component of European cooperative projects. Communication, thanks in part to the use of IT tools, should ensure the continuation of the project between physical meetings. In a project, IT tools help keep the group in place by facilitating (i) communication among partners; (ii) collaboration to achieve shared goals; (iii) coordination and monitoring; and (iv) a sense of commonality.