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TOPIC 4: PLANNING

What do we have in mind? In the process of planning that constitutes the second stage of the project cycle, we ask ourselves *What do we need in order to turn an idea into a project proposal?* During the planning process, we primarily deal with the feasibility of our idea, analysing all the necessary assumptions and environmental conditions, external factors and risks, and the necessary means, i.e. resources (human and financial) that we have at our disposal, and that we need to employ. During the planning stage, the following action algorithm is proposed:

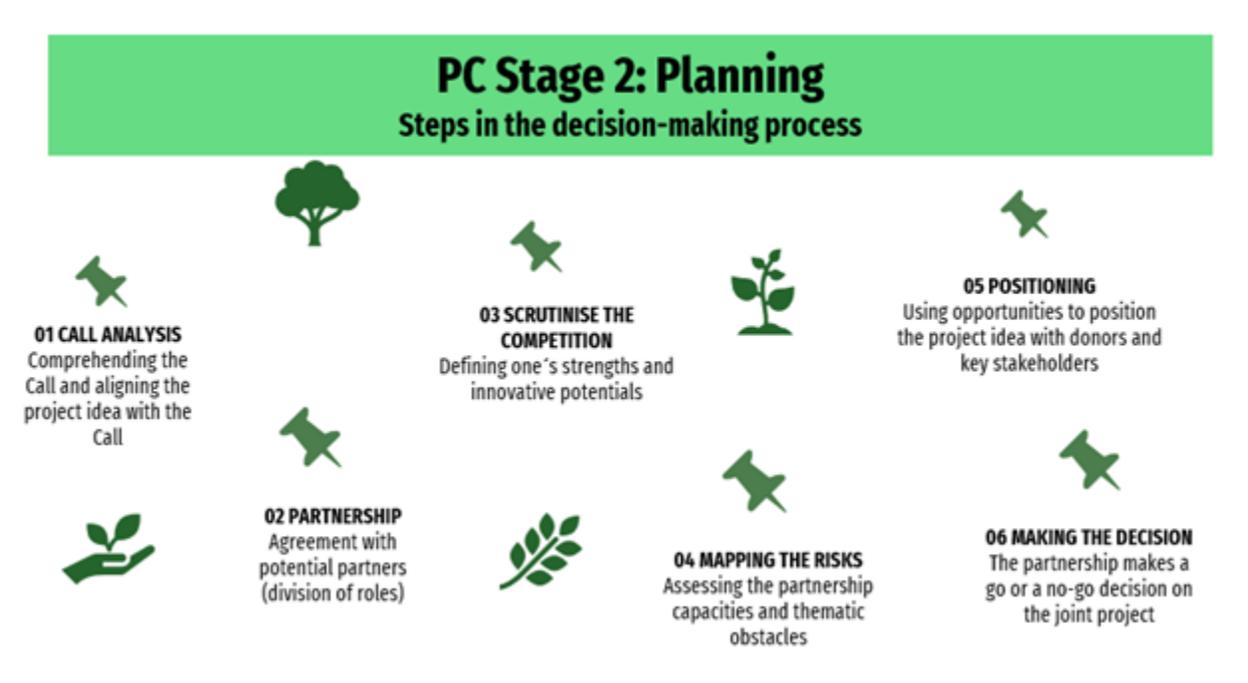


Figure 6: Planning

The skills we need during this stage of the project cycle include the following:

- Organisational skills

- Interpersonal skills
- Negotiation skills
- Analytical skills – assessment of the scope and costs of the conceptual intervention
- Comprehension of the read calls for project proposals.

Discussion The action algorithm in the planning process comprises five steps, and a series of sub-steps that precede the decision to initiate the next stage of the PC - designing the project, i.e. formulating the project, or the decision not to initiate that process. The basic steps in the planning process are as follows:

1. We find and then analyse an adequate open call/competition for the submission of project proposals,
2. We contact potential partners to share the project idea and agree on roles and expectations,
3. We consider the competition and map our own potential for innovation by understanding comparative advantages of our consortium,
4. We map the key risks relative to both theme and capacities (of an organisational and technical nature),
5. If opportunities have been recognised, we carry out strategic positioning according to key actors and donors, and test the idea.

After finalising all previous steps, the consortium decides to initiate the preparation of the project proposal, i.e. the project design/formulation stage or to abandon the project idea waiting for a more adequate call, or a better partnership (go/no-go decision).

Although our initial idea may be good, it is now put into the context of the funding source - if we agree that our idea cannot be financed from a given source, the planning process is concluded. If, however, there is a possibility that the idea can be slightly

adjusted to the call, or that it fully corresponds to it, we continue with the planning process. The call analysis is the first step in the planning process, and during this activity we deal with structural issues relating to planning and scrutinise all elements of the description of the project intervention (defined problems, target groups and beneficiaries, importance for the sector, goals, activities, methodology, potential partners, time frame, logic matrix, risks and assumptions, impact and sustainability, budget), as well as technical aspects of the preparation - analysis of the form (usually the narrative part, budget and logic matrix prepared by the donor), and additional documentation (administrative documentation, e.g. extract from the register) which needs to be prepared and filled in within the given deadline.

Table 3: Call analysis

In the text of the call we seek answers to questions:	We bear in mind...	We decide whether to continue with the planning
Who?	Who announced the call for proposals and what is important for that particular donor - we read the described context of the call, the so-called <i>Background</i> which is the basis of the call.	
For whom? With whom?	For whom is the call intended, i.e. who can apply? Is the call intended for a consortium of partners; how many institutions can form a consortium and what are the legal requirements (what type of organisations, how many organisations, etc.); we look at the call criteria (<i>Eligibility criteria</i>); we consider partners without which we cannot submit the application.	<i>Elimination part! The possibility of making a no-go decision!</i>
What?	The call precisely states the segments being financed, priorities and goals, and the sectors to which it refers; sometimes it precisely states the expected results; this also refers to the part relating to costs.	<i>Elimination part! The possibility of changing or adapting the idea to</i>

the call or making a no-go decision

How? The application process should be reviewed in order to get a clear idea of the required preparation time - the use of donors' e-platforms is increasingly common, but some calls also require the printing of project applications and sending them by mail.

Why/for whom? One gains understanding by becoming familiar with the call background, as well as with precisely specified target groups; this segment is important for describing the project relevance, which is often overlooked; we also consider why we are the ones who should carry the project according to the call criteria - referring to our earlier references.

The possibility of including a new target group relative to the call!

How much? The question refers to the percentage of grants and parts of the project that we may have to co-finance ourselves; in most cases we also need to make sure that we have the financial capacity corroborated by the experience of managing similar budgets before.

Elimination part! The possibility of changing the project manager or making a no-go decision

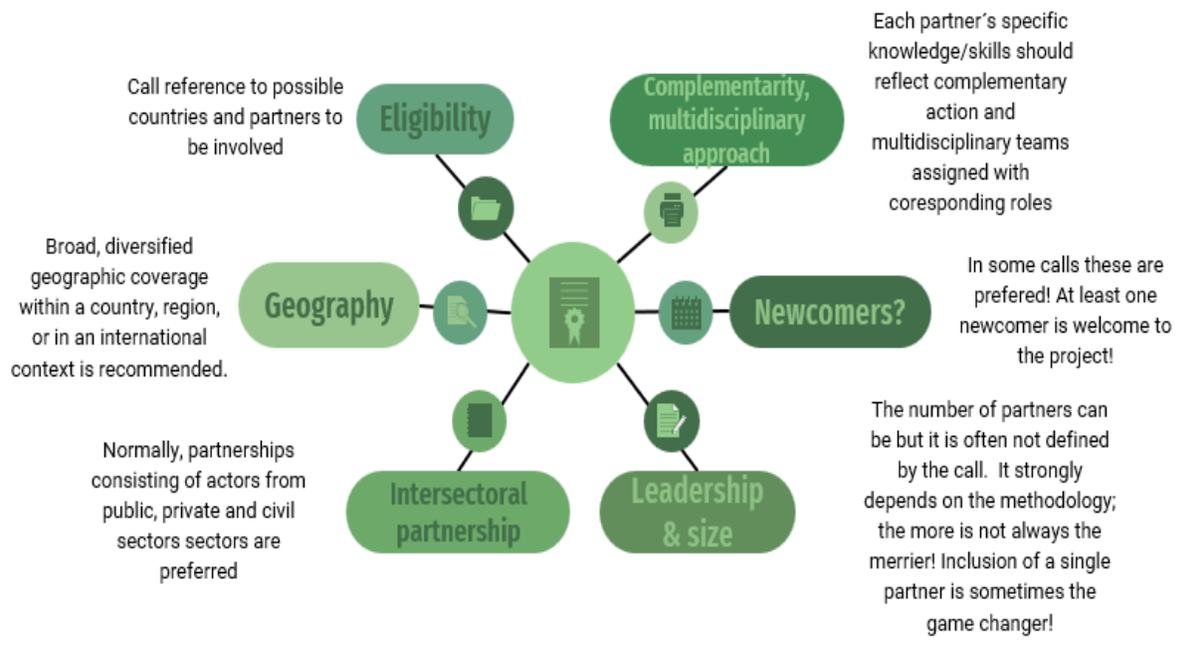
The largest number of competitions/open calls, though not all, do not concern individual applicants, but require setting up a partnership between two or more organisations at the local, national, or international level.

If we estimate that the call may be adequate for our idea, we move to the second step of the planning process which implies contacting potential partners to exchange opinions relative to the call – to share different standpoints and perceptions. We agree on the division of roles and negotiate the budget distribution.

Creating a winning consortium is not always a simple task, but it can be of crucial importance for obtaining project funds. When considering which partner would be

good for the project, as well as which partners would satisfy the donor, we are guided by several important elements presented in the graph below. At the same time, these are some of the golden rules of setting up a successful partnership.

Figure 7: Some Tips for Setting-up a Successful Partnership



Regardless of who launched the initiative and who came up with the project idea, the consortium agrees on the participant which will ultimately be the project carrier (it is usually an institution with the best human and financial capacity), and who will be the partners. The call forms provide questions relating to the description of the consortium and each of the partners (see section 2.3. Design).

Within the third step of the planning process, we join our partners in the process of inquiring about the competing consortia in order to understand whether we have opted for the correct lot (in the case of calls divided into lots, i.e. parties), whether we have a competitive topic or a target group, etc. By reflecting on the potential competition, we actually map our own potential for innovation by means of understanding the comparative advantages of our consortium, which will later help us formulate the project and present our capacities to the donor. In the context of

numerous calls, innovation does not necessarily imply an epochal breakthrough. On the contrary, it can refer to a new work methodology, the inclusion of a specific target group (e.g. female agri-entrepreneurs in rural areas) or a region (e.g. those particularly affected by the rural out-migration of young people), and some such.

The fourth step in the planning process serves to understand the main obstacles or shortcomings that can pull us away from the goal, which is getting the grant. These shortcomings and risks can be of an internal nature, i.e. existing within the consortium (e.g. spare capacities in the local self-government which is a necessary partner in the project, lack of staff in the leading organisation, etc.), and risks imposed by the external environment (e.g. the position of women in the countryside is traditionally accepted and their work activation is not possible). A careful risk analysis can indicate which pitfalls to avoid, and which ones to heed.

Last but by no means the least important step in the planning process is to seize the opportunity to do strategic positioning (and lobbying) towards key actors and the donor. This is not always possible and it primarily depends on the networking of the leading organisation in the consortium. However, some donors, especially those which support the application of new and small-scale organisations, organise an *open doors day* and allow consultations with organisations that wish to test/adapt the idea in this manner.

Outcomes and examples: The outcomes of the planning stage are as follows: the decision to submit the project proposal based on the go/no-go analysis, mobilised resources for the process of preparing the project proposal, the consortium, i.e. partnership is formed, and roles are assigned, the project scope as well as the total budget are determined relative to the conditions of the call and the conclusions of the analysis of the call for proposals.

Examples relating to the description of the consortium, and the risks and assumptions are given in part 2.3.