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# Why projects fail, and why yours won't

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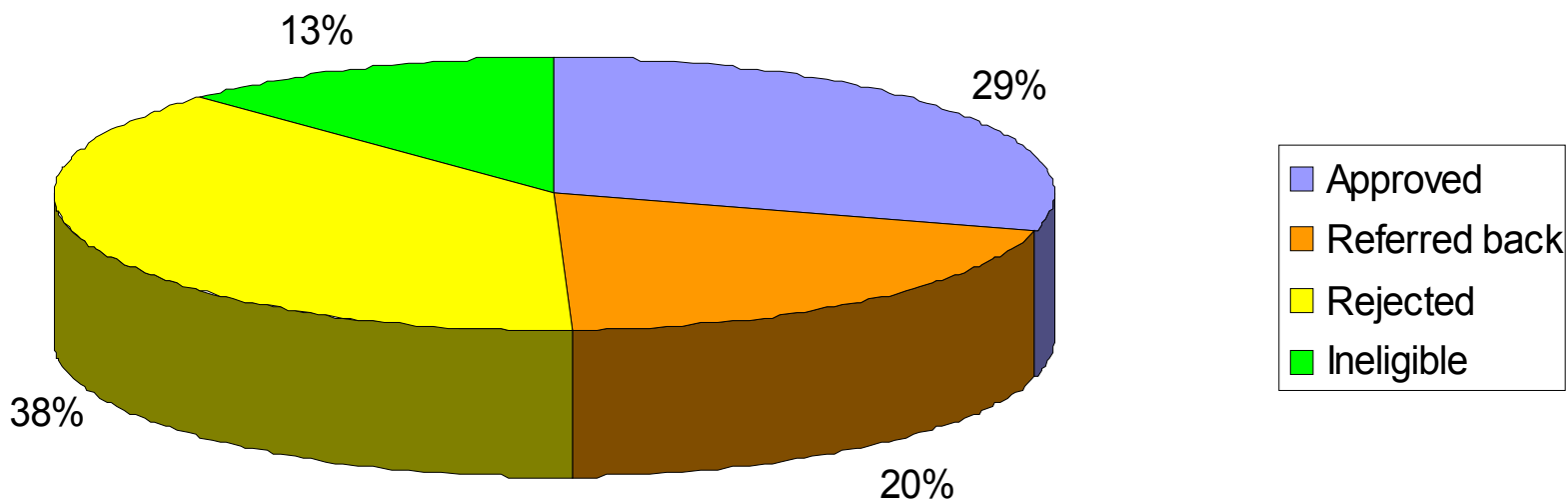




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# Context: NWE success rates

Interreg NW Europe calls 1-5





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# Why projects fail

- Projects undergo a technical assessment against 13 selection criteria, listed in the Guidance Notes
- Most common areas of weakness:
  - **Transnationality**
  - **Innovativeness**
  - **Partnership & management**
  - **Project structure**
  - **Finance**
  - **Value for money & outputs**
  - **Programme & strategic fit**
  - **Administrative issues**





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# Transnationality

**How not to do it.....**

- Not the right partners, or not enough MSs, for this topic/issue
- Actions do not logically follow from the objectives
- Primarily driven by the desire for the local investments – the 'shopping list' approach
- NWE-wide impact not thought through
- Joint design not evident in application
- Bossy or incompetent consultants
- All partners have identical budgets



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# Transnationality

## Features of 'good transnationality'

- Clear common vision before development of action plan
- Topic important for NWE as a whole (easier when technically focussed) – check the OP!
- Addresses topic which is impossible to tackle alone
- Do everything together (plan, implement, investments, comms)
- Communications: disseminate results widely; have collective, not separate, communications activities
- Stress why each partner brings something special & different
- Outputs include common product or strategy, useable over NWE, e.g voucher scheme, NWE brand or product



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# Innovativeness

**How not to do it.....**

- Project activities are not new or interesting
- Project tries to replicate the same activities in all partner regions
- Project duplicates actions of previously approved projects





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# Innovativeness

## Some suggestions

- Check the list of currently approved projects (available on the website [www.nweurope.eu](http://www.nweurope.eu))
- If necessary, contact those projects to find how your activities differ from theirs
- Also check the projects which were funded during the Interreg IIIB period (2000-6) – also on the website or by asking contact points
- Also check what has been done elsewhere, and find evidence to build your case
- Ensure that investments are truly pilot or demonstrations projects
- Try different investments in each region





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# Partnership & Management

## Problems and reasons for rejection

- Weak partnership or management structures
- Not enough/ right sort of partners;
- Partners not well briefed;
- Partners cannot deliver;
- Lack of EU Project Management expertise
- Capacity of lead partner
- Observers, sub-partners and contractors not distinguished



# Partnership & Management

## The Solution

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- Involve partners in planning from the start
- Describe as clearly as possible the partnership and management structure
- Details what meetings, where, when & for what purpose
- Give partners clear tasks or WPs to deliver or co-ordinate
- 'Partner' in Interreg has a specific meaning (distinct from, e.g. other stakeholders)
- Make it clear why these are the right partners to solve this problem/deliver this project
- Think of partners' contributions to impact and dissemination



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# Project Structure

## Problems and reasons for rejection

- No clear description of activities and why they address problem
- No logical link between activities and results
- Actions/investments don't seem essential to aims
- No consideration of intellectual property rights or state aids issues



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# Project Structure

## The Solution

- Write your application for non-technical specialists
- Develop a clear logic chain: Problem → Project idea → Aims → Objectives → Work Packages → Actions → Results
- Every action and investment must link back to the aims and objectives
- Check in advance issues around IPR and state aids
- Think widely about dissemination; who could benefit from the learning? How can we mainstream these ideas?



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# Finance

## Problems and reasons for rejection

- Use of project revenue
  - Risk of double funding
  - No explanation of tendering process for sub-contractors or consultants
  - No explanation of how private sector partners or beneficiaries are selected
- Poor explanation of costs
- Poor value for money or no link to market prices



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# Finance

## The Solution

- Understand the difference between partners, observers, and external experts (consultants)
- Non-partners who spend ERDF must be procured in line with EU and national rules; explain how you will do this
- Avoid revenue-generating activity, or be very clear how it will be built into costs
- Match funding in kind can be difficult to audit – in UK may be limited to land and property (not in NI)
- Be aware of grossly imbalanced partner budgets



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# Value for Money & Outputs

## Problems and reasons for rejection

- Lack of concrete & tangible outputs
- Value for money
- Planned results did not justify the budget
- Grandiose claims for results
- Costs not justified



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# Value for Money & Outputs

The Solution

- Tangible outputs are those that will last beyond Interreg funding
- Quantify, where possible
- Quote benchmark figures if you have them
- Focus your plans – ensure actions, spend and outputs fit project aims and objective
- Be realistic and immediate about results
- Check budget against outputs ('what am I buying?')



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# Programme & Strategic Fit

## Problems and reasons for rejection

- Relevance of the proposed idea to the Programme
- Lack of relevance to Lisbon/Gothenburg strategies
- Poor fit with regional and national strategies
- Wrong INTERREG programme



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# Programme & Strategic fit

The Solution

- Read the Operational Programme, particularly SWOT analysis (and the Guidance Notes.....)
- Explain how your project addresses these issues
- Find relevant targets/objectives in Lisbon & Gothenburg strategies, and explain how you will contribute
- Also identify other relevant EU & National strategies
- Identify how you will extend the work of previous Interreg projects in your field (particularly NWE IIIB and IVB)
- Talk to Regional or national authorities before submission



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# Administration

## Problems and reasons for rejection

- Project did not take the opportunity to meet with the JTS/ CPs and get advice on development
- Project did not provide required documentation or signatures
- Application form missing information or too thin
- Project not revised sufficiently since the last submission (for re-submissions)



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# Administration

## The Solution

- If you are resubmitting, be clear about changes and improvements
- Make maximum use of programme support structures (CP, JTS, workshops like this one...)
- Check all documentation....twice!
- Set out a clear timetable to get you to submission
- Remember it takes longer than you think to get the right signatures; ensure the right people are briefed in advance
- Plan to submit a few days early





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## Summary

- Plan well in advance, with all your partners
- Read all the documentation early in the process
- Understand your common vision and objectives
- Involve finance managers in budget setting
- Make use of the support available
- Make sure you have a plan B....