



Support Fund for the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

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1. Introduction

This document presents the general guidelines for submitting project applications for those seeking financial support from the Support Fund for the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL Support Fund).

It provides applicants with Application Form, instructions on filling in the Application Form and explanations on eligibility and evaluation criteria, as well as general description of the project pipe-line.

The main documents referred to in this guide are the following:

- Memorandum of Understanding setting out the modalities of establishing the NDPTL (NDPTL MoU)
- Rules of the NDPTL Support Fund
- “Proposal on the NDPTL Regional Transport Network” study
- “NORDIM. Preparing the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics” study

All above mentioned documents are available on www.ndptl.org.

2. NDPTL Member States, Purposes and Structure

Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics is a co-operation platform in the field of transport and logistics for 11 Member States (Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden) and the European Commission.

The practical co-operation is carried out by the Transport Ministries with support of the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of the Member States and the corresponding divisions of the European Commission (e.g. Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), European External Action Service (EEAS), etc.)

The main and specific goals of the NDPTL are stated in the NDPTL MoU:

- “1. The main goal of the Partnership will be to improve, in compliance with the ecological *needs of the region, the major transport connections and logistics in the Northern Dimension region* to stimulate sustainable economic growth at the local/regional and global level by focusing on a limited number of priorities that reflect both regional and national priorities in a balanced way.
2. With the general aim of promoting international trade, the specific aims of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics are to assist in:
 - Improving the major transnational transport connections between the Parties with the view of stimulating sustainable economic growth at the local/regional and global levels;

- Accelerating the implementation of transport and logistics infrastructure projects along the major transnational connections, and facilitating the approval of projects of mutual interest;
- Accelerating the removal of non-infrastructure related bottlenecks, affecting the flow of transport in and across the region, and facilitating the improvement of logistics in international supply chains;
- Providing effective structures to monitor the implementation of the proposed projects and measures.”

The institutional set up of the Partnership is as follows:

- High Level Meeting (NDPTL HLM), held annually at the minister’s level, decides on general strategy and priorities.
- Steering Committee (NDPTL SC), consisting of senior officials, elaborates and decides on practical measures, ensuring the implementation of the Partnership and seeing to that the objectives are met.
- Working Groups, created when necessary by the NDPTL SC, address specific issues at the expert level.
- NDPTL Secretariat provides administrative and technical support to the Partnership and coordinates activities between the NDPTL Member States and all other relevant stakeholders.

3. Eligible projects, applicants and costs

The financing from the NDPTL Support Fund is provided only to applicants and projects meeting all eligibility criteria listed in this chapter.

3.1. Conditions for the eligibility of projects

DEFINITIONS

The NDPTL takes as a basis the definition of the term “project” defined in the NORDIM report:

“PROJECT is an activity or a measure implemented on a piece of infrastructure in order to build, expand or improve it in some way. A project must have a pre-defined goal, timetable and resources.”

In these guidelines “project” relates to “studies”, “studies with physical intervention” and “projects on soft measures”.

- STUDIES are activities needed to prepare project implementation (including preparatory, feasibility, evaluation and validation studies) and any other technical support measure, including prior action to define the project fully and decide on its financing, such as reconnaissance of the sites concerned and preparation of the financial package.
- STUDIES WITH PHYSICAL INTERVENTION are projects in which the majority of the activities are studies, but where some physical intervention is undertaken, typically excavations for geotechnical analysis and so on).
- PROJECTS ON SOFT MEASURES are activities targeted on removal/reduction of non-infrastructure related bottlenecks, such as congestions at national borders and inefficiencies of logistics nodes (ports, terminals, etc.), caused by e.g. administrative and legacy constraints, lack or poor traffic management, lack or poor information sharing and management, differences in technologies.

ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECTS

- a) In compliance with the NDPTL MoU and the NDPTL Support Fund Rules the NDPTL Support Fund is envisaged to finance mainly studies. Studies with physical intervention and projects on soft measures are eligible for application as well. The NDPTL Support Fund Rules give room for co-financing investments in preparatory works, services and/or infrastructure on a case-by-case basis and as subject to a decision in principle of the Assembly of Donors.
- b) Projects are to be submitted by an NDPTL Member State(s) or the European Commission.
- c) Applications which are not submitted by an NDPTL Member State(s) must obtain the written agreement of the State(s) concerned.
- d) Applicant ensures the remaining part of needed financing (as the NDPTL Support Fund provides at the maximum 50% of the project cost), mobilising own recourses and other funds, including private, if necessary.

3.2. Eligible applicants

Only written applications submitted by legal persons of private or public law legally constituted and registered in an NDPTL Member State are eligible for the funding from the NDPTL Support Fund.

Applications must be presented by:

- One or more NDPTL Member states and/or
- International organisations, joint undertakings, or public or private undertakings, with the agreement of the NDPTL Member State(s) concerned (in this case an applicant must show that it exists as a legal person)

Applications are not eligible if submitted by:

- Natural persons (bodies that are not legal persons)
- Non NDPTL Member States or legal persons established in a non NDPTL Member State
- International organisations, joint undertakings, or public or private undertakings without the agreement of the NDPTL Member State(s) concerned.

3.3. Eligibility of costs

Costs in the application form are to be presented in euros.

Value Added Tax (VAT) is not considered as an eligible cost, unless the Beneficiary can demonstrate that he is unable to recover it.

VAT paid by public bodies is not an eligible cost.

Therefore, VAT paid by NDPTL Member States and public sector bodies (regional or local authorities, body governed by public law or association formed by one or several such authorities or one or several bodies governed by public law) is not an eligible cost.

4. Forms and maximum amount of support

The financial aid provided by the NDPTL Support Fund is paid as grants mainly for

- Technical assistance for institutional support with regard to capacity building for project feasibility, development, preparation and implementation;
- Assistance to project development and preparation, in particular with a view to draw upon available financing from international financial institutions, as well as other banks, private initiatives or public parties (including EU funds), or otherwise enhancing the projects' potential to mobilize resources for implementation
- Assistance to improved efficiency and quality in project implementation

Nevertheless grant contributions can also be used for co-financing investments in preparatory works, services and/or infrastructure. Such cases are subject to a decision of the Assembly of Donors on a case-by-case basis.*

The Fund can finance up to 50% of the total project cost.

* Rules of the Support Fund for the NDPTL

5. How to apply

5.1. Presenting your proposal

Applicants are to complete and submit an Application Form together with the supporting documents (annexes) to the NDPTL Secretariat.

The print-out of the Application Form is to be signed, scanned and submitted to the NDPTL Secretariat electronically as a PDF-file.

If possible, the annexes are to be attached to the message together with the Application Form.

In case the annexes are too heavy to be sent by mail, they are to be sent to the NDPTL Secretariat by post or courier on a CD-ROM or DVD-R disk (non-rewritable! Therefore USB sticks are not eligible). In this case the mail with the Application Form should contain information on what annexes are sent separately and by what means; and the disk should contain the complete proposal (Copy of the Application Form and annexes in PDF or other format readable by MS Office programmes).

All additional documentation (annexes) is to be specified in the Application Form. However, all necessary information for assessing the proposal must be provided in the Application Form. The purpose of additional annexes – which are not necessarily systematically read through – is to provide further information that supports, illustrates or provides evidence of an element described in the Application Form. Any additional Annexes included must be clearly referred to and their relevant parts summarised in the Application Form.

5.2. Application language.

As the working language of the NDPTL is English, the application is to be done in English.

Additional documents to those specified in the Application Form and included as separate annexes do not need to be translated unless the applicant deems this necessary. However, all relevant information for assessing the proposal must be provided in the Application Form in English.

5.3. Where to submit an application

Applications are to be sent electronically to the NDPTL Secretariat (ndptl@ndptl.org).

In case the annexes are too heavy to be sent by mail, a CD-ROM or DVD-R disk can be sent to:

NDPTL Secretariat

c/o Nordic Investment Bank

P.O. Box 249, FI-00171 Helsinki, Finland

or left in the reception of the

Nordic Investment Bank on Fabianinkatu 34, Helsinki, Finland

(working days 9.00 – 16.00)

in a sealed envelope addressed to the NDPTL Secretariat.

5.4. Correcting or revising your proposal

Applicants who have submitted a proposal must inform the NDPTL Secretariat as soon as possible of any change of an operational or financial nature that might affect them or the proposal.

No changes or corrections can be made to the Application Form or Annexes after submission.

In case there is a need to alter an already submitted proposal a new Application Form is to be made, signed, scanned and submitted to the NDPTL Secretariat with a clear notification on which proposal it substitutes and information on the changes/corrections made.

If more than one copy of the same proposal is received, only the most recent eligible version will be evaluated.

6. Project pipe-line

All proposals submitted to the NDPTL Secretariat will be checked in order to define their general relevance for the Partnership.

Projects meeting main eligibility requirements will be pre-screened using the methodology based on the one elaborated in the NORDIM study and approved by the NDPTL Steering Committee (NDPTL SC).

The NDPTL Steering Committee evaluates the presented projects and selects those to be sent for consideration of the Assembly of Donors (AD) of the NDPTL Support Fund.

The NDPTL Support Fund AD decides on which projects to support and on the amount of financing.

Both NDPTL SC's and AD's decisions are made on the basis of consensus.

Both SC and AD can request additional information if needed from the NDPTL Secretariat. The Secretariat may also require additional information or give the first feedback to the applicant already on the stage of pre-screening in order to correct/improve the application. Therefore, it is important to carefully fill in relevant contact information in the Application Form.

SC holds its meetings normally twice a year, usually in the end of February – beginning of March and end of October – beginning of November.

Projects submitted to the Secretariat between 15 October and 15 February are to be presented at the spring SC meeting, those submitted between 15 February and 15 October – at the autumn meeting.

In case there are specific circumstances and/or the project is of high interest for the ND region it can be presented to the SC electronically and discussed and assessed by the SC in written procedure.

The AD holds one regular annual meeting but can decide to hold other meetings, as necessary.

The AD shall consider only the projects approved by the SC and which are in line with the Northern Dimension Policy.

7. Publicity and acknowledgements

A satisfactory level of publicity regarding the funding requested and got from the NDPTL Support Fund is to be arranged by the applicant and NDPTL is to be mentioned whenever information on the financing of the project is disseminated.

The grant recipient should acknowledge the grant from the NDPTL Support Fund in communications and publications related to the project. The following should be reflected on the cover page of any publications and/or reports:

- NDPTL logo
- Study title
- Financial support received from the NDPTL Support Fund.

8. Evaluation

8.1. General criteria

The NDPTL Secretariat checks the submitted projects in order to verify that they comply with the main eligibility criteria described in the chapter 3 of these guidelines.

Projects passing this initial check-up are then pre-screened using the methodology adopted by the Partnership in order to facilitate SC's work.

Projects get clear priority if **located on the NDPTL Regional Transport Networks***, adopted by the NDPTL SC as the basis for the NDPTL activities and endorsed by the NDPTL High Level Meeting on 21 November 2012.

Projects on soft measures are assessed mainly on the basis of their positive impact on the transport and logistics system of the region, supporting both national and regional interests in a balanced way and otherwise meeting the main objectives and requirements defined in the NDPTL MoU and the NDPTL Support Fund rules.

An important aspect is the **cross-border impact** of a project.

A project can be considered to have a strong cross-border impact in case

- a) It requires action/construction works on at least two sides of the border. In some cases a cross-border project can be located on the territory of a single Member State at the proximity of the border and be necessary to link to the network of a neighbouring Member

* See Annex 2 "Maps of the NDPTL Regional Road and Railway networks" and "Proposal on the NDPTL Regional Transport Network" study.

State or a third country. In the latter case the application must be supported by the other Member State(s) concerned.

b) It is technically or financially indivisible.

Technical indivisibility is determined by the physical configuration of the infrastructure, so that one Member State cannot carry out the project independently of the other Member State (e.g. bridge or tunnel).

Financial indivisibility is determined by the unique or co-ordinated management or the financial or the legal structure set up.

c) The Member States concerned commit themselves jointly to the project and put in place a common structure for it. Joint commitment requires:

- A formal agreement at an appropriate level
- An agreed common financial plan or co-ordinated financial plans
- An agreed common timetable
- Common or compatible methodology (for studies)
- An agreement on assessment of environmental and socioeconomic efforts and on procedure of obtaining necessary permissions, etc.

A common structure must be created by a legally binding agreement at an appropriate level. The common structure could also be of an administrative nature (such as an Intergovernmental Commission dealing with a specific project).

8.2. Award criteria for pre-screening

Projects selected for consideration of the NDPTL SC will be assessed applying the methodology based on the one elaborated in the NORDIM study. Main criteria for this pre-screening, performed to facilitate discussion and decision making process of the NDPTL SC, are importance, maturity and quality.

Importance:

Importance refers to the contribution of a project to the transport and logistics system of the Northern Dimension region, in particular to the NDPTL regional networks^{*}, as well as to macro socio-economic benefits at the Northern Dimension regional level.

A project is assessed in terms of the extent to which it

- improves the major transnational transport connections with the view of stimulating sustainable economic growth at the local/regional and global levels;
- facilitates removal of bottlenecks, affecting the flow of transport in and across the region, and facilitating the improvement of logistics in international supply chains;

^{*} See Annex 2 "Maps of the NDPTL regional road and railway networks".

- is of mutual interest of the NDPTL Member States, reflecting both national and regional priorities in a balanced way**
- facilitates and improves the viability and “financeability” of the project
- has positive impact on improving general cohesion and balanced development of the Northern Dimension region;
- has positive or negative impact on environment (in case of negative effects, adequate measures are foreseen of prevention, monitoring and mitigation).

Maturity:

Maturity refers to the status of preparation of the activities, in particular the capacity to implement the project in compliance with the foreseen time schedule and technical specifications.

A project is assessed in terms of the extent to which

- it has received formal approval at governmental, regional and local level;
- political commitments have been given to the project (including cross-border commitments)
- all needed consultations have been positively accomplished and the plans to involve stakeholders throughout the project are appropriate and well-developed;
- the project is ready to start from the technical point of view;
- the necessary permissions have been received / the procedures to receive them are well advanced;
- procurement procedures are defined and well advanced;
- there are risks or factors of uncertainty of legal/administrative/technical/other nature which remain to be settled before activities can start;

Quality:

Quality refers to project’s completeness and clarity, in terms of the description of planned activities, the soundness of the project management process and the coherence between its objectives and planned recourses/activities.

Proposals will be assessed in terms of the extent to which:

- the overall proposal is of good quality in terms of its logic, completeness and clarity;
- the proposed activities are coherent with the stated objectives and are adequate to achieve them;
- the proposal is realistic and consistent from the technical point of view;
- the costs budgeted for each activity are realistic and reasonable;
- the organisational structure and the project management plan are sound;

** Memorandum of Understanding setting out the modalities of establishing the NDPTL

9. Feedback to applicant

Proposals which do not meet main eligibility criteria and cases where non-compliance with the Northern Dimension Policy, NDPTL MoU and The Rules of the NDPTL Support Fund is detected will be rejected and the applicant(s) will be notified of the grounds for such decision.

Applicants will be notified of the score their proposal gets according to the pre-screening methodology with explanations on the result. Possible improvements/corrections in order to strengthen weaker aspects of the proposal in question and raise the general score can be made at this stage.

Applicants, whose proposals will be selected for discussion on a SC meeting, will be notified of the results pursuant to the meeting.

After the meeting of the Assembly of Donors each applicant, whose proposal is selected for funding will be invited to finalise the terms of the grant Decision together with the Fund Manager.

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ANNEX 3. Maps of the NDPTL regional road and railway networks.