

INVOLVING BUSINESSES IN EUSBSR PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES



EUSBSR
EU STRATEGY
FOR THE BALTIC
SEA REGION

To reach out to new target groups and to make the EUSBSR known in a broader societal context, the project 'Let's Communicate' has undertaken a series of activities (including surveys, workshops, events and bilateral meetings) to better understand how and why businesses engage in EUSBSR, gathering insights of their motivations, expectations and reservations.

Based on this knowledge we have collated 6 key recommendations which we hope EUSBSR actors can use to mitigate common obstacles in engaging business partners, and thereby contribute to ever more fruitful collaborations across the EUSBSR framework.

97% OF CURRENT
EUSBSR ACTIVITIES
INVOLVE BUSINESSES.

BUSINESSES ARE PARTNERS IN
OVER **60%** OF PA/HA/FLAGSHIP
PROJECTS.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1

DEFINE THE BUSINESS PROFILE YOU AIM TO ENGAGE



Finding the right business partner can be an arduous project in and of itself. Casting a wide net often leads to extensive communication with a pool of potential partners with varying degrees of interest, expectations and motivations. Clearly defining your target business is therefore an essential first step in streamlining your efforts to enrol business in your activity.

Use simple mapping exercises to delimit potential partners to a manageable number before using time to research their individual profiles in detail. Once you have this it can be useful to 'externalise' your project. Imagine your project from the business's point of view. Use SWOT analysis tools to imagine what strengths and weaknesses your project will bring to those businesses. Those points can then help define your approach to each business, demonstrating a clear intent for yourself and the business in question.

2

DEVELOP YOUR 'BUSINESS' LANGUAGE



One of the most common barriers for business engagement across the EUSBSR is the variation between 'public' organisation and 'private' business language.

At first this may sound inconsequential, but frankly speaking the EUSBSR and the private sector operate in different environments; running at different speeds, with different visions, missions, methods and practices, and most importantly, mindsets. As such, the way we communicate reflects which environment we primarily work in. As a farmer would take time to grasp the world of a financial analyst, so would the analyst take time to adapt to the world of a farmer. Developing language that reflects an understanding of the 'business' perspective within your EUSBSR activity is therefore a fundamental step in ensuring a mutually progressive engagement. Simple procedures of proofing project materials with 'business' orientated colleagues can go a long way to ensure business actors understand, prioritise and act on the given correspondence or proposal.



3

IDENTIFY THE ACTIVITY'S 'BUSINESS' CASE



EUSBSR activities can add value to a business in a number of ways. From product development and testing, to capacity building, market research, gaining policy insight, and access to new networks, businesses are able to benefit across their primary and secondary business areas. No matter how obvious the direct added value to business is, co-identifying what area(s) a business benefits from the EUSBSR activity and to what degree resources are needed to achieve that benefit is key in aligning expectations and goals across project partners.

Such business values should be identified as part of the project planning processes and communicated accordingly.

4

HAVE A CLEAR AND REALISTIC TIMELINE IN MIND



As with any project, aligning time preferences between actors is essential to keep partners moving forward towards the project's goal. Engaging business in EUSBSR activities is no different.

It has been identified that businesses currently involved in EUSBSR activities have to justify their time resources against their primary business, making realistic time expectations extremely important to guarantee prioritization of 'non-essential' business operations. Therefore, it is recommended that a clear and realistic timeline be mapped out in as much detail as possible. This is often hard to do in the early stages of project planning, however short-term and long-term time expectations are crucial for businesses to measure, especially when project outcomes are retrospective of invested time.

Use GANT charts, or online project management software tools such as Podio to map the timeline of your project and mark expected time expectations for potential business partners to visualise their time commitments across timescales.

5

SUPPORT BUSINESS IN REPORTING, PROJECT ADMINISTRATION AND STATE AID RULES



The administrative capacity of businesses to conform to EU project procedures, reporting and regulations can strain even the most willing of partners.

To many, such processes are an alien environment and it can take time to fully understand project requirements and how much resources they demand. We recommend that project specific reporting procedures, project administration requirements and state aid rules are clearly defined in the first instance. Use previous examples of reporting templates to show businesses what sort of thing is required.

6

CLARIFY CO-FINANCING FROM THE GET GO



Co-financing rates were surveyed to be both a positive and negative factor in engaging business. On the one hand, low co-financing is attractive; encouraging a wider pool of business that may not be able to justify a large monetary investment. On the other hand, high co-financing rates ensure the full engagement of business and a motivation for all parties to achieve activities and stated goals.

Regardless of the percentage given for co-financing, its purpose as a monetary investment in the given project requires a direct approach to clarify its implications. We recommend this take place as early in the project processes as possible to avoid any misunderstanding. Again, make it as clear as possible; this is the requirement via direct investment, in kind payment etc.

We hope these 6 recommendations can help you approach and engage business in EUSBSR activities.

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