Tool 1:: How to identify the need for cross-border collaboration

The starting point of every project is a project idea. Usually project ideas originate from a specific need or a specific problem that lacks an adequate solution or has no solution at all. Once the user has identified a need or problem to be solved, he/she needs to find out if stakeholder(s) in other (neighbouring or distant) countries or regions face similar problems. In order to frame the project idea, it is advisable to develop an understanding what drives cross-border healthcare collaboration. Glinos et al. (2014) identified five main factors that drive cross-border healthcare collaboration (Glinos, 2014):

* the need for cooperation, either due to unmet patient needs or increased efficiency of the use of resources or the knowledge exchange of healthcare organisations,
* sufficient time and effort of the stakeholders involved to make the project work,
* alignment of interests and the aim of achieving a common goal of the stakeholders involved,
* support of external stakeholders, e.g. public authorities, funding institutions and local actors, and
* a governance structure that supports the cooperation and the involved stakeholders.

Often it is that a need on one side of the border can be solved by solutions to be found on the other side of the border and it is rather a matter of identifying complementarities, common interests or solutions that are mutually beneficial. To increase the likelihood of sustainability of the project, an important factor is to create a ‘win/win situation’ for all involved parties.

As cross-border regions vary (rigid vs. fluid borders), and this variation determines the scope for and nature of cross-border healthcare collaboration. Therefore, a comprehensive situation analysis and mapping at the start is crucial. An in-depth analysis, which should not only include the driving factors mentioned above but also include an analysis of stakeholders, legal (in)compatibilities and applications and support from central/national politics/administration.

Useful tools for the observation of cross-border territories are (Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, 2017):

* **The Greater Region geographical information system** ([www.sig-gr.eu](http://www.sig-gr.eu)): produces customised thematic maps that make it possible to steer development and spatial planning policies and to guide users in their decision-making. The maps created are made available via the Greater Region’s geoportal server, which posts most of the maps in the form of cross-border overlays on an interactive map.
* **The Network of Statistical Offices** ([www.grande-region.lu](http://www.grande-region.lu)): brings together the Greater Region’s statistical offices to compile harmonised economic and social statistical data for the cross-border regions.
* **The Interregional Job Market Observatory** ([www.iba-oie.eu](http://www.iba-oie.eu)): is a network of specialised institutes responsible for compiling comparable and interpretable data on the job market for Greater Region policy-makers. The data relates to the area of structural and employment policy for the Greater Region.

A ***problem statement*** may serve several purposes in an upcoming project. It clarifies the current situation by specifically identifying the problem and its severity, location and financial impact. It also serves as a great communication tool, helping to get buy-in and support from others. A well-written problem statement helps people readily grasp and understand what you are trying to accomplish (Coley & Scheinberg, 2013).

A well-written problem statement does not need to go on for pages if the following questions are answered in a concise way.

1. What is the problem, its impact and the eventual risk if we do not respond to this problem?

*Brief description of the problem in one or two lines (including the list of issues)*

*e.g. lack of healthcare personnel, waiting times and travel distances, long transportation times (emergency care), salary cuts for staff, recruitment freeze*

1. Where does the problem arise?

*Describe the setting, including geographical level*

*e.g. region-specific, Member State-specific, EU*

1. Who is affected by the problem/who is the target population facing the problem?

*Explain who needs a solution*

*e.g. (emergency) patients), healthcare providers, healthcare workforce, local/regional authorities*

1. Optional: What path might lead to the solution?

*Not a solution itself, but a rough idea of a potential path to a solution*

References

Coley, S. M., & Scheinberg, C. A. (2013). *Proposal writing: effective grantsmanship*: Sage Publications.

Glinos, I. A. W., M.; Palm, W. (2014). Cross-border collaboration in health care: when does it work? *European Journal of Public Health, 24*(suppl\_2).

Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière. (2017). *Cross-border territories. Europe’s laboratory*. Paris: Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

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