

Interviews of Experienced Project Partners on partner search and partnership building

Experienced project partners in alphabetical order:

- **Ms Silja Lehtpuu / Estonia / Consultant, Partner, Gravitas Consult OÜ**
- **Ms Anna Leontieva / Russia / Project coordinator, Council of the municipalities of the Leningrad region**
- **Ms Sille Talvet-Unt / Estonia / Member of the Board, Enterprise Estonia**
- **Ms Olga Vasilenko / Russia / Chairperson, NGO “Lake Peipsi Project, Pskov” (“Chudskoye Project”)**

Experience and tips on finding project partners

(1) The process of finding partners for your project, which tools/ contacts did you use?

(2) What advice would you give to those looking for the project partners?

- Use your old contacts, ask you network to help finding contacts (even if it is not in their field of experience they may know what are the relevant organisations in their country)
- Use relevant events where you could meet partners, even if they are not partner fora
- Find similar organisations across the border, doing the same thing as you (look it up through internet search)
- Start by knowing what you want to do, be specific in the area you want to work on, be concrete and look for the organisation you need (what do you want to do/why/whom with)
- Be pro-active: if your idea is good, then others will join you
- Show that you will add value to the project, what you could bring
- Listen also to your partner's needs to identify in which area you could bring something to one another
- Contact JTS for advice and support

Experience of working in partnership

(3) What has been your experience of working in partnership?

(4) What are the most important element of a successful partnership?

- New partnership can be as effective as old ones – so look for most effective/relevant one
- Keep some time to meet and communicate – partnership cannot build so quickly

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- Overcome cultural differences – be patient
- Agree precise tasks
- Everybody needs to know and understand their responsibilities. Each partner should feel responsible for project implementation him(her)self.
- Once the application is approved, go through the budget distribution (how to be spent, on what etc.) for the whole project duration
- Discuss all plans ahead with partner(s) so that action plan/timing/budget for the next 3 months are clear
- Be honest, fulfil your promises
- 3 key points for partnership:
 - Good idea
 - Communication: must know what's going on, need feed-back; also, always meet face-to-face before submitting a proposal, you will be working together for 2-3 years
 - Respect: all partners have to be heard, all have different expectations, it needs to be taken into account and still not losing the focus of the project (this is the hardest, but is necessary)
- Discuss sustainability from the beginning – is at the heart of a good partnership, think of it already when preparing the application: find best ways to implement so it is sustainable
- Need at least one member of staff who's familiar with the terminology and practices of international cooperation project (recruit him/her if needed)
- Trust the JTS, tell them if there is a problem, they are there to support