

Overall Report

Survey of support needed by potential applicants under the ENI CBC Programmes 2014-2020

INTRODUCTION

TESIM is a technical assistance project financed by the European Union to support the implementation and management of the ENI CBC programmes for the period 2014-2020, including for awareness raising and capacity building of eligible organisations in ENI Partner Countries¹, Turkey and the Russian Federation (hereinafter CBC Partner Countries).

To assess the support needed by potential lead applicants and applicants/partners, wanting to apply for funding under ENI CBC programme calls for proposal, a survey of needs was conducted in April – May 2016. Eligible organisations targeted included local, regional and national authorities, associations of public authorities, NGOs and a range of other private socioeconomic stakeholders (see Annex 1 for the survey questionnaire including the list of categories of eligible organisations).

Survey questions covered both what kind of skills and information would be needed to submit applications, and the preferred medium for receiving such support (based on experience gained under the ENPI CBC programmes for the period 2007-2013, where applicable). The actual questions were based on a review of previous surveys and relevant reports to check for areas where support was needed in the past, and areas where more, or deeper, support might now be needed (see Annex 2 for the list of findings from this review). A comparison with the findings of these previous surveys and analyses is included in this report. As well as this overall report, separate analyses have been prepared for each ENI CBC programme and each participating country (when there is sufficient data).

Results of this needs analysis will be disseminated to Managing Authorities and National Authorities for use when preparing their own support for calls for proposals. They will also be used by TESIM to prioritise the support required, and match the needs with the TESIM support services and resources. The results will also inform the development of training and other support delivered by the project at programme and project level e.g. a guide on application packs.

¹ Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, and Ukraine

Survey set-up

In total, 973 responses were received to the needs assessment survey carried out using the SurveyMonkey platform². The invitations to take part in the survey were sent (with a link to the platform) on 6-8 April, with a deadline of 20 April. Invitations were sent to Managing Authorities, National Authorities and EU Delegations in CBC Partner Countries, with a request to circulate the survey to the organisations on their contact databases. Some of these bodies assisted further by distributing the survey via twitter, facebook, websites, and in one case, via an Eflash newsletter (Mediterranean Sea Basin programme).

Following a check of the geographic spread of responses, the deadline was extended to 11 May 2016, to ensure sufficient responses to be able to carry out analyses for a wider range of programmes and countries. Specific reminders were sent to Managing Authorities and National Authorities.

Comparison with previous surveys

Throughout the text of this report, comparisons are made with earlier surveys and studies into similar issues. One such earlier study was the *Evaluation of Partner Country Involvement in the Management and Implementation of the ENPI CBC Programmes and Further Partner Country Needs*, in 2009, to which 280 organisations responded. In addition to this, a survey was carried out among applicants, beneficiaries and partners in 2010 following the first call for proposals under ENPI CBC. Finally, a study called *Partner Country involvement in the implementation of ENPI CBC programmes* was carried out in 2012. All studies were implemented by the EU RCBI project³.

The current report has a broader target group than the previous studies as it includes respondents from Member States, Norway and Turkey as well as those from ENI Partner Countries and the Russian Federation. Therefore, comparisons are made only with results for the countries previously surveyed.

² Not all questions were answered by all respondents. In some cases, this was due to the logic of the survey. For instance, when respondents indicated they had no previous experience, they did not have to answer (and indeed could not have answered) various questions relating to the application process. In addition, some respondents chose not to answer to certain questions, even if they were shown these questions. In this case, the respondents may not have been sure about the answer (e.g. they did not remember). For every graph presented throughout this report, the number of “skipped” covers both cases and can therefore not be used as an indication of response rate for individual questions.

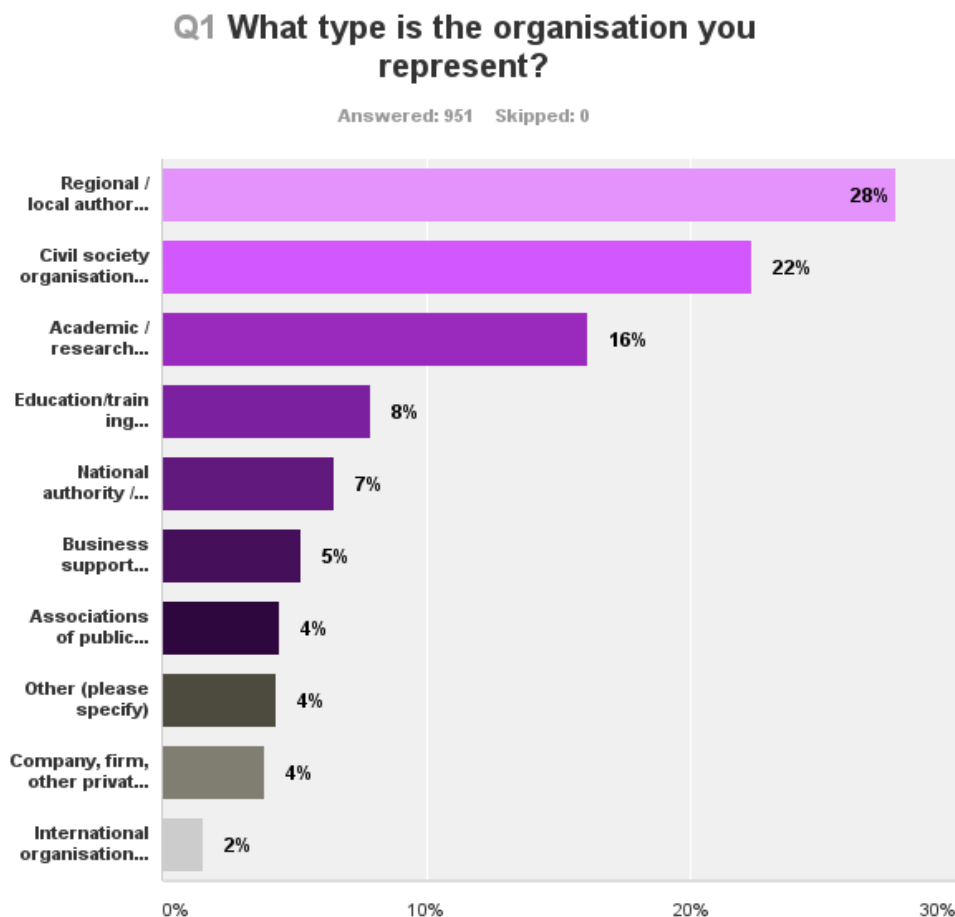
³ RCBI - Regional Capacity Building Initiative, operating from 2007-2012, was an EU project designed to assist in the preparation of the ENPI CBC programmes and strengthen capacity of organisations in Partner Countries to prepare and implement ENPI CBC projects.

RESULTS

Who responded

There were responses from the 31 countries currently participating in ENI CBC programmes. A little over half (53%) of the respondents came from the CBC Partner Countries, with the most responses coming from Turkey (14% of the total respondents), Ukraine (11%), Tunisia (9%), and Belarus (6%). Of the EU Member States, the most respondents came from Poland (12%). The number of respondents from Armenia, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Palestine, Portugal and Sweden was insufficient for a separate country level analysis for each of these countries.

The following graph shows the division of responses by the different types of organisations responding to the survey:



Similar respondent profile to previous surveys

In the current survey, the share of regional and local authorities among CBC Partner Countries (excluding Turkey) is slightly higher than in 2009 (18% vs 16%), whereas in the 2009 study there was proportionally a slightly greater response from NGOs (41% against 37% in the current survey).

Of all respondents, around **two-thirds were regional/local authorities, civil society organisations or academic/research institutions**. Other large categories were education and training institutions, national authorities and business support organisations. However, there are relatively fewer than average regional and local authorities among CBC Partner Countries (excluding Turkey) (19% vs 28%). On the other hand, the share of civil society organisations from CBC Partner countries was higher than the average for all countries participating in the survey (37% vs 22%).

Experience of ENPI CBC

Of the 924 respondents who answered to this question, **65% have previous experience** in ENPI CBC calls for proposals, either as lead applicant or partner. Of the respondents who have experience, **39% applied once, 22% twice, 29% three times** and **10% applied more than three times**. The largest proportion of respondents (21%) applied under the **Mediterranean Sea Basin programme**, followed by the **Black Sea Basin** (19%) and **Poland-Belarus-Ukraine** (17%)⁴.

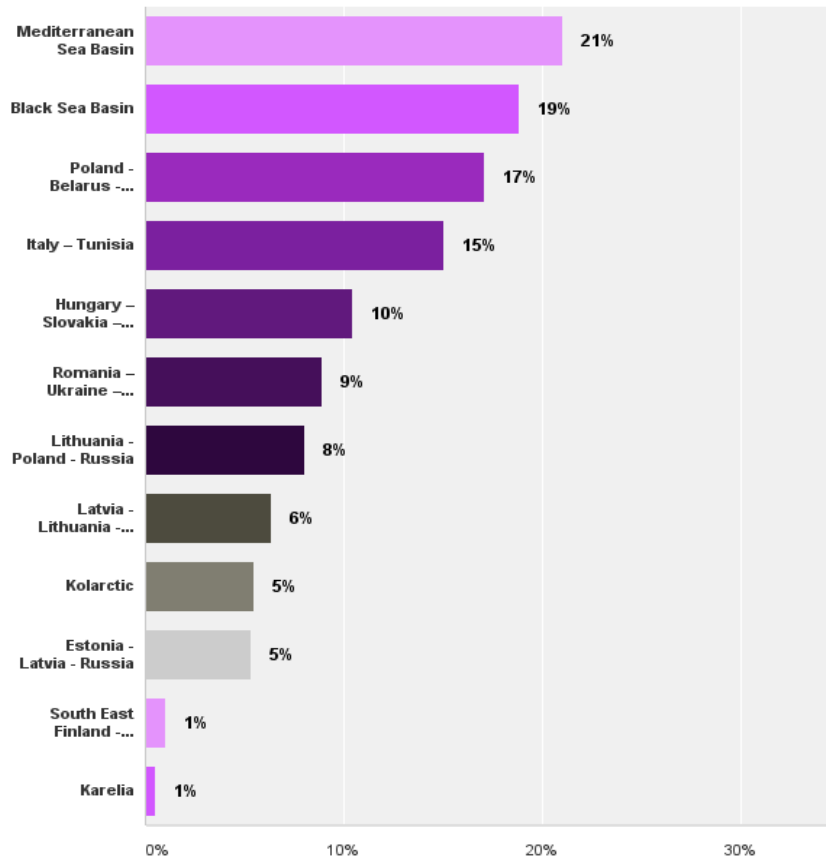
CBC Partner Countries have more experience now

For obvious reasons, the proportion of respondents having experience is significantly higher for the CBC Partner Countries - excluding Turkey - than in the 2009 study (64% of respondents – as compared to 50% in 2009).

⁴ The sum of the percentages exceeds 100 as some respondents have applied to more than one programme.

Q35 To which programme(s) did you apply?

Answered: 584 Skipped: 367



Of the respondents who have experience, a slight majority (**53%**) had experience **applying as lead applicant**, with 21% of the 53% also having applied in the role of partner. The other 47% of the respondents only had experience in applying as partner. Of those answering to the question below, **50%** indicated they **had only been involved in successful applications**, while only 8% had been involved only in unsuccessful applications.

Q37 How successful were the applications you were involved in?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Successful in all cases	50%	160
Sometimes successful, sometimes unsuccessful (no particular pattern)	24%	75
First unsuccessful, later successful	13%	41
Unsuccessful in all cases	8%	25
First successful, later unsuccessful	5%	17
Total		318

Challenges during the application process

When asked – by means of an open question answered to by 258 respondents - what the most difficult issues were within the framework of application processes, problems related to **finding partners**, or communicating or collaborating with them, were mentioned most frequently (almost a quarter of all mentions). Other often reported bottlenecks related to preparing a **budget** (14%); the vast amount of **documents** and annexes to be provided and completed (12%), and complicated and repetitive application **forms** (10%); as well as issues related to excessive **bureaucracy**, complex **rules**, compatibility of programme rules with national legislation (9%), and difficulties in creating a sound **intervention logic** (8%). Other, less frequently mentioned problems, included eligibility rules, clarification of needs, planning, language and finding co-financing.

Finding partners has always been a challenge, language and experience have improved

Several of the issues mentioned above also came out of earlier surveys on barriers to participating in ENPI CBC calls. For instance, the 2009 study also reached the conclusion that finding partners was the main challenge, next to finding co-financing and having the required technical and financial capacity to be lead applicant or a partner. This finding was confirmed by a survey carried out in 2010 after the first calls for proposal had been completed under the ENPI CBC programmes. That analysis also showed that co-financing, and the technical and financial capacity required, were considered as bottlenecks.

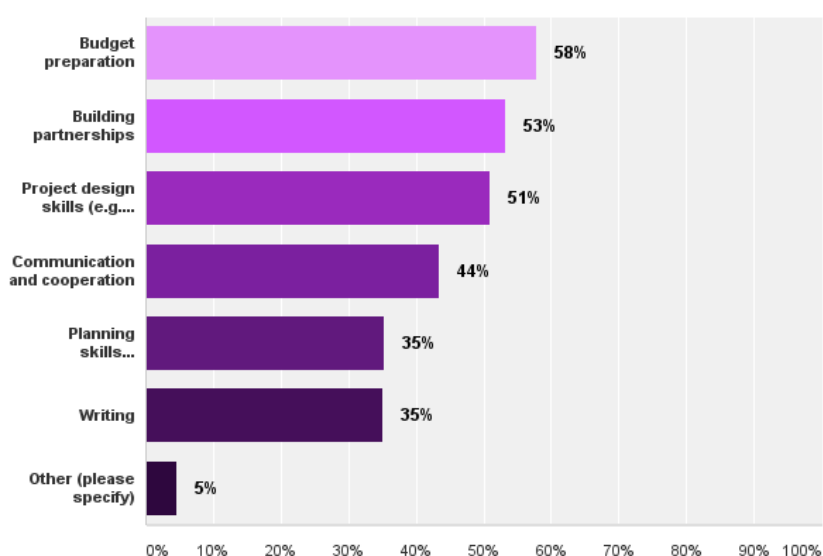
Finding partners was also mentioned as an important bottleneck in the 2012 study, which in addition highlighted difficulties in finding co-financing, and the complexity of the application process, including the perceived incompatibility of national legislation with ENPI CBC programme rules. These topics were also identified as problematic (for both Member States and CBC Partner Countries) in the current survey. The lack of experience and language problems have become less of an issue over time for CBC Partner countries, as they were less frequently mentioned in the current survey (also by respondents from CBC Partner countries), whereas they featured prominently in the 2012 study. The same goes for understanding programme opportunities and requirements, and possibly also co-financing.

Important skills

Mirroring responses related to challenges experienced, the respondents considered **budget preparation** to be the most important skill during the application phase, closely followed by building **partnerships** and **project design**. Writing and planning skills were considered less important.

Q39 What kind of skills do you think were most important when you were preparing your application(s)?

Answered: 533 Skipped: 424



Support received

The respondents to the survey were also asked how much support they had received during the application phase. Of the 538 respondents who answered to this question, a majority of **63% indicated they had received "some support"**, whereas **15% said they got "a lot of support"** with **21% saying they had received "no support at all"**. Of the respondents who indicated they had received a lot of support, 76% said they had been successful in all cases, while none of them were unsuccessful in all cases. Furthermore, of those who had received no support at all, only 45% was successful all the time and 15% failed with every application. It can be concluded that receiving support increases the chances of being successful with applications.

Answer choices	Successful in all cases	Unsuccessful in all cases
A lot of support	76%	0%
Some support	47%	5%
No support at all	45%	15%

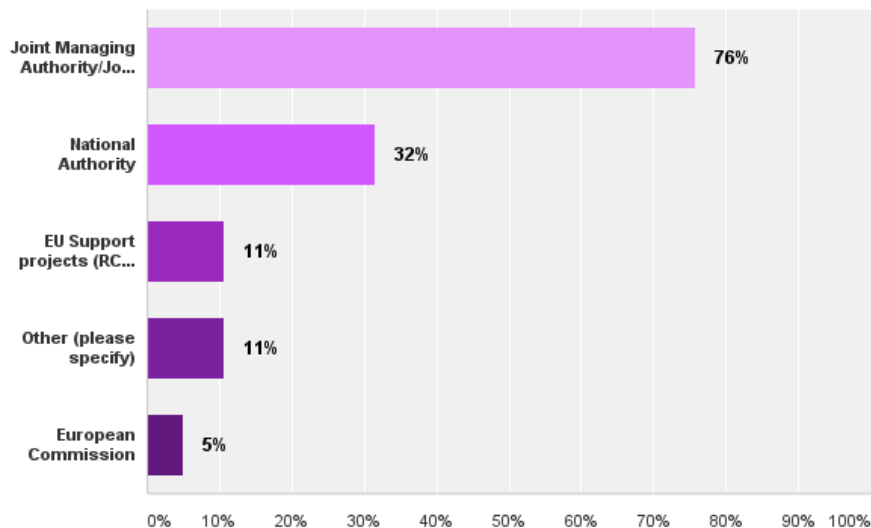
Most of the support received **came from programme bodies (76%)**, such as the Joint Managing Authority, the Joint Technical Secretariat, or a Branch Office. The **National Authorities** also gave support to a big proportion (**32%**) of the respondents. This figure is higher for CBC Partner Countries (36%) than for Member States and Norway (28%). Further support was received from EU support projects, the European Commission, and lead applicants or consultants. For CBC Partner Countries, 20% of the respondents indicated they got support from EU support projects, whereas this was less than 3% for Member States and Norway where there was less support available, and where programme bodies were a source of support for 83%.

Role of National Authorities seems to increase

These results are very similar to those for the 2009 study, which also concluded that “Information or project preparation events” were deemed to be the most useful. At the time, clarifications and information received from National Authorities were considered to be the least useful in CBC Partner Countries (excluding Turkey), possibly because they were not so involved at this early stage of ENPI CBC implementation. This could show the increasing role of the National Authorities since the early stages of ENPI CBC.

Q41 From which body did you receive the support?

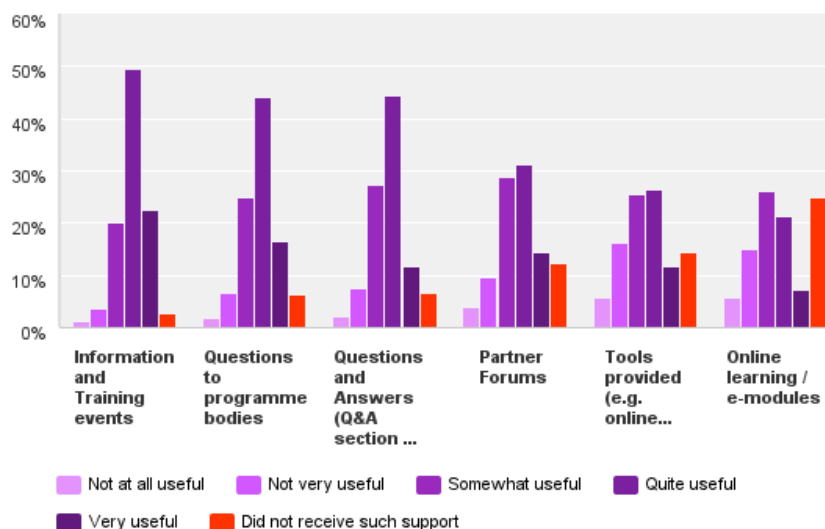
Answered: 400 Skipped: 557



The most **useful type of support**, according to the respondents, has been “**information and training events**”, with **72%** saying these have been “quite useful” or “very useful” (both overall and for CBC Partner countries). Also very useful were “**Questions to programme bodies**” (**60%**). Online learning or e-modules and tools provided were not rated so highly. However, these were not widely available.

Q42 How useful did you find the support received during the application process?

Answered: 402 Skipped: 571



Information received

A majority of the 507 respondents who answered this question (**74%**) indicated they had received “**General information on the programme**” while **71%** said they had been provided with “**Specific information on the application procedure**”⁵. These two groups overlap to a considerable extent: around half of the respondents who answered this question had both general and specific information at their disposal. The groups of respondents who said they had general but no specific information and those who indicated they had specific but no general information were equal in size. **Around a quarter** of the respondents **had received tips and hints** on how to write a good application.

The **sources of the information**⁶ received were very similar to the sources of support (see above), with **74% indicating** (and even 88% for Member States and Norway) that **programme structures** (JMA, JTS, BOs) were a source, and **31% saying they received information from National Authorities**. The latter number is 33% for CBC Partner Countries (excluding Turkey), indicating that National Authorities have become also a more important source of information (in addition to support, as mentioned above) than in 2009, when they were identified as a source by only 16% of the respondents. EU support projects (13% overall, only 5% for Member States and Norway) and the EC (9%) were identified as sources of information by smaller groups. Project partners were also mentioned as sources.

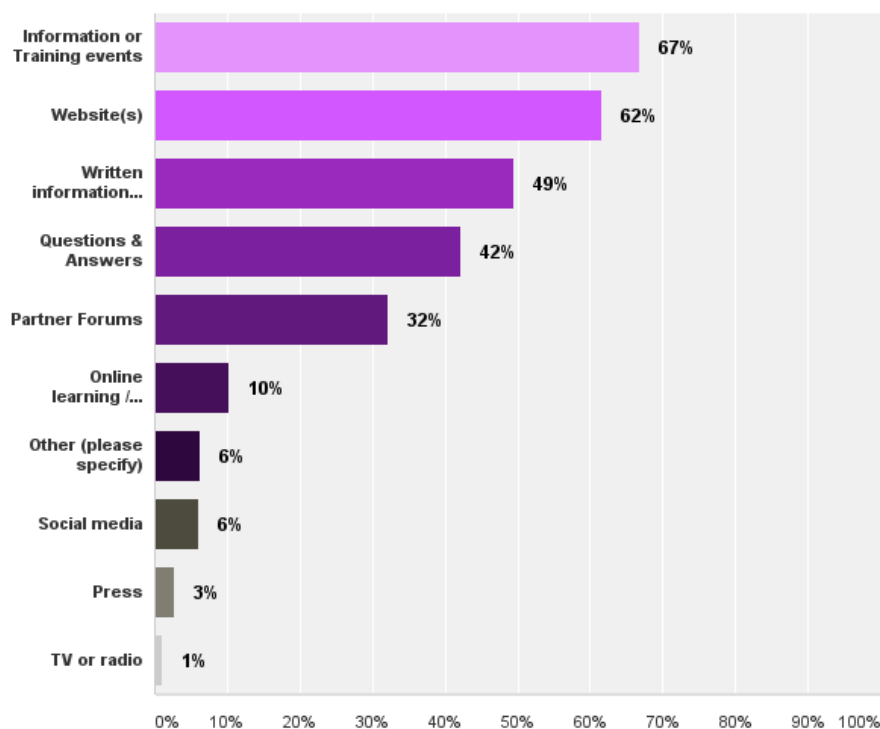
⁵ General info = info on ENI CBC and on the programme; specific info = info on the particular call and application process.

⁶ Please note that respondents could give multiple answers so that sum of the percentages in the graph above (Q41) is higher than 100.

Information and training events were the **most frequent medium**⁷ for receiving information: **67% of the respondents** indicated this is how the information reached them while **62% acquired information via websites**. Guidelines, leaflets, manuals and other written information was a source for almost half (49%) of the respondents, while 42% got information in the form of questions and answers directed to one of the sources mentioned above. Partner Forums were a way to receive information for 32% of the respondents. Online learning, social media, the press and radio and TV were less important channels. The category “Other” contained answers such as “telephone”, “e-mail” and “partners”.

Q45 How did you receive this information?

Answered: 500 Skipped: 457

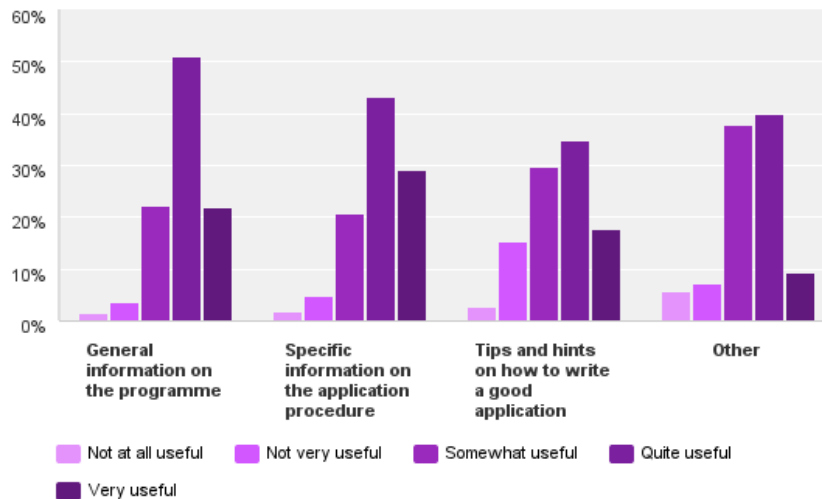


The information provided was considered to be useful, as a majority of respondents (**between half and three-quarters**) indicated that the **various types of information were either “quite useful” or “very useful”**. The tips and hints on how to write a good application were seen as the least useful.

⁷ Multiple answers possible in this case as well so percentages add up to more than 100.

Q46 How useful did you find the information received?

Answered: 483 Skipped: 479



Application Pack

The (open) question on the **most useful** elements of the application pack was answered by 241 respondents and this was done in a very diverse way with in total 36 different answer categories. The most frequently mentioned useful elements were the **guidelines for applicants** in general (almost a quarter of all answers), including other kinds of explanations and instructions. Other answers given by more than 10 respondents include: **examples** (including templates, models, and sample forms), the **budget** (financial part, information of eligible costs), the **application form**, the **documents added for information**, the **Logframe** and the parts on intervention logic, and **manuals and procedures**. Overall, only one out of four respondents was able to mention a useful element of application packs. Despite not being asked for it, several respondents (3% of those answering to this question) indicated there was nothing useful or the pack was very user unfriendly. However, there were more respondents who indicated that everything was clear and useful (11% of the answers).

In response to a mirrored open question (231 responses), the **least useful or user-friendly elements** of the application pack were considered to be the **budget** and explanations (a quarter of the almost 200 answers to this question), the **logical framework** (13%), and the **application form** (6%), which was either too lengthy, confusing or leaving too little room for providing information. In total, there were over 30 different types of answer to this question, with 21% of all the respondents who answered to this question saying that nothing was user-unfriendly, while 6% said everything was. Some 3% of the complaints concerned too much paperwork being required.

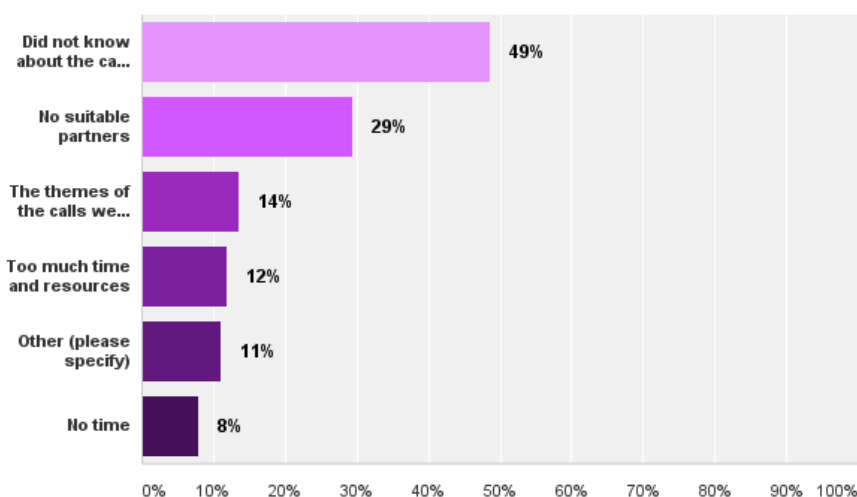
In this context, it is important to note that all ENI CBC programmes have by now indicated they intend to simplify the budget and to distinguish which financial information is only needed for assessment of the proposal, and which will be annexed to the grant contract, which would increase simplicity.

Reasons for not submitting

A little over one third of the respondents said they do not have any experience of ENPI CBC. When asked for the reasons for not participating in ENPI CBC calls, **almost half** of them indicated they were **not aware of the ENPI CBC programmes** and/or their calls for proposals (56% for CBC Partner countries excluding Turkey). A second frequently mentioned factor was the **inability to find suitable partners** to prepare an application with. This share of the respondents indicating this as a reason for not participating was **29%** overall and 34% for CBC Partner countries (excluding Turkey). Other reasons, such as a lack of time, a perceived mismatch of possible benefits and the resources required to submit an application, and the low relevance of programme priorities for their organisations were mentioned by around 10% of the respondents (both overall and for CBC Partner countries). The main answers under “other” concerned organisations which were established only recently and (previously) ineligible organisations.

Q50 What are the main reasons for not participating in calls for proposal under the ENPI CBC programmes (2007-2013)?

Answered: 300 Skipped: 657



The 2010 study found that the main **reasons for not participating** in the call were first and foremost related to **problems finding partners** and the lack of capacity of partners.

Intention to submit an application to ENI CBC programmes

The vast majority (**81%**) of respondents, who have participated before, indicated they **intend to submit an application** to one of the ENI CBC programmes, with 17% saying they have not decided yet, and 2% indicating they will not do so.

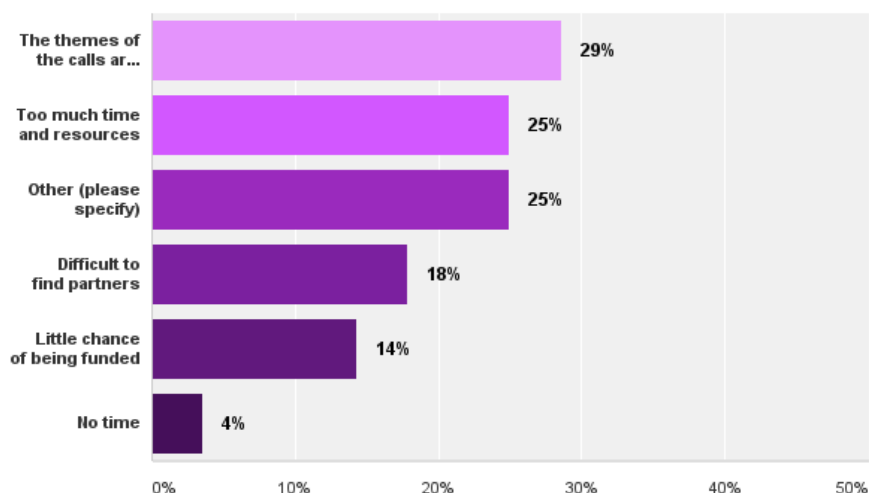
Of those who do not have experience of ENPI CBC, 69% intend to submit an application to an ENI CBC programme. The respondents without experience more often have not yet decided whether to submit an application, compared to those who have experience.

Answer choices (496 responses)	No previous experience	Previous experience
Intends to participate	69%	81%
Has not decided yet	26%	17%
Does not plan to participate	5%	2%

The most frequently stated **reasons for not participating** were expectations that the **themes of the calls** are likely not to be relevant for the respondent, and the perception that applying would take **too much time and resources**.

Q52 Please indicate the main reasons for not participating:

Answered: 28 Skipped: 929

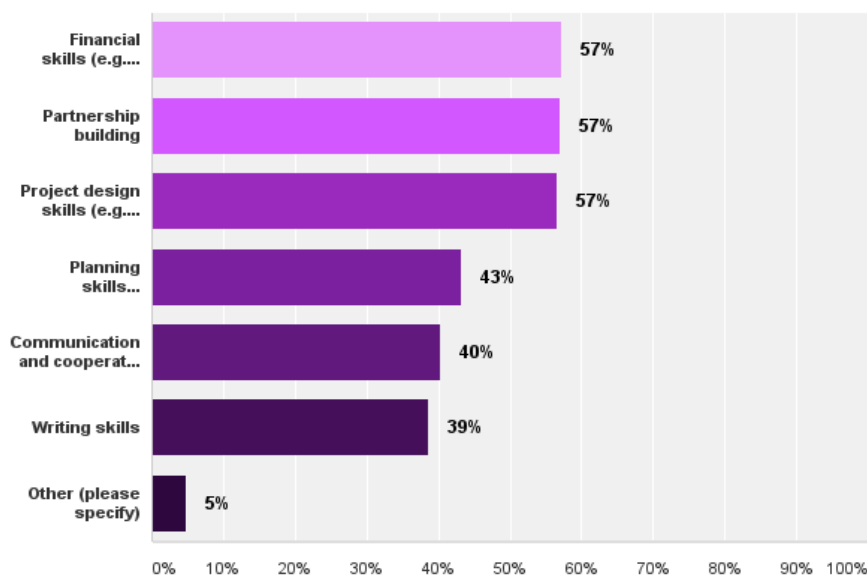


Skills to be strengthened

There are three types of skills that the respondents would like to strengthen most when preparing to submit an application under ENI CBC. **Financial** skills, **partnership building** and **project design** skills were mentioned by an identical proportion (57%) of the respondents. Very similar proportions were found for CBC Partner Countries (excluding Turkey) (58%-60%),

Q53 What kind of skills would you like to strengthen to submit an application in the new programme period (ENI CBC 2014-2020)?

Answered: 733 Skipped: 224



Information to be received

In terms of information, the respondents **wish to receive specific rather than general information**. Tips and hints on how to write a good application would be also highly appreciated. Under “other” several respondents mentioned they would like to receive examples of successful projects.

The most frequently mentioned sources, or those deemed most useful, are **training and information** events, followed by **written information** and **Question&Answers**. Social media, the written press and TV and radio are

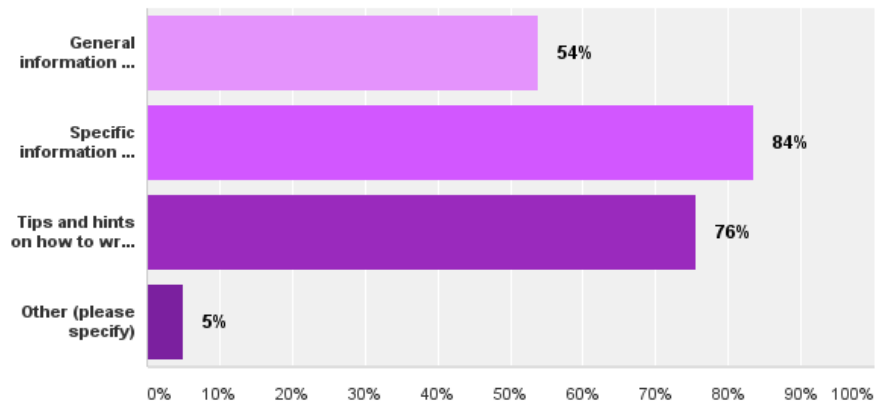
Partner Countries more willing to lead?

In the 2009 study, clearly the most important skill to be strengthened was finding partners. This finding may indicate a change. It is likely that in the past, organisations in the CBC Partner Countries were looking for an EU partner to be the lead applicant dealing with most of the financial/design issues, while now there is a greater awareness and/or willingness to have full capacity for project management.

considered much less important. The graph below (Q55) shows the result of a ranking from most important (1) to least important (9) the respondents produced. The sources on the top were ranked highest on average, those at the bottom, the lowest.

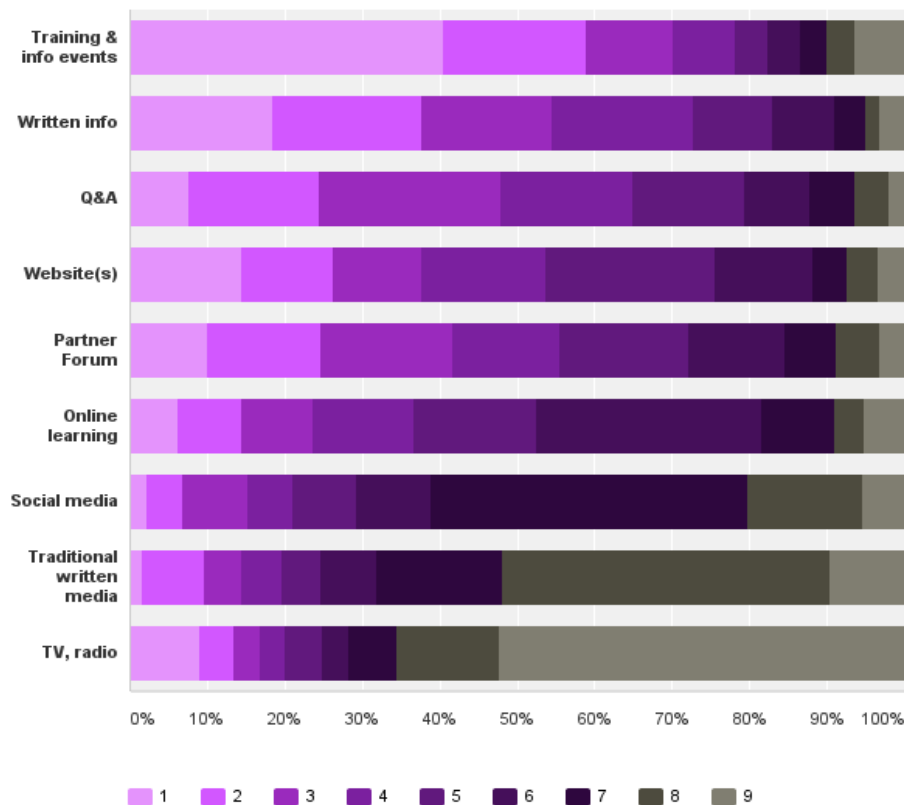
Q54 What kind of information would you like to receive during the application process under the ENI CBC programmes (2014-2020)?

Answered: 732 Skipped: 225



Q55 Please rank which would be the most important or useful sources of information

Answered: 746 Skipped: 227



When asked for suggestions on **possible other useful forms of support or information**, several topics were mentioned more than once. The most frequent categories were related to **more transparency** in application processes, the possibility to get **support in the mother tongue**, and **individual consultations** and advice. Also mentioned were requests for simplification and the possibility to organise live streaming of events or webinars.

CONCLUSIONS

- Problems related to **finding partners**, or communicating or collaborating with them, was the primary challenge mentioned by respondents to the current survey, as well as by those participating in the earlier studies, carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2012. **Budget** related bottlenecks also featured prominently in both past and present analyses. **Co-financing** issues were mentioned less often than in previous studies, even if only considering CBC Partner Countries.
- Finding partners and the budget are also the most frequently mentioned in relation to skills that respondents believe are important in the context of calls for

proposals. The attention to **project design skills** has increased since the earlier studies, replacing topics such as language barriers and understanding the context and rules of EN(P)I CBC programmes. This possibly indicates a greater appreciation of what is needed to be successful (both in being awarded funds and project implementation). This may reflect a greater empowerment of organisations from CBC Partner Countries in taking the initiative and designing (parts of) proposals themselves.

- The types of support that are considered to be most useful continue to be **information and training events**, which were the most popular with respondents in the 2009 study as well as the current analysis.
- In terms of the sources of information, the **programme structures** are still clearly the most important option for respondents. National Authorities have become a stronger second option than they were in previous studies. Websites are only 5th in the ranking of the most useful sources, even though 62% of the respondents acquired information about the programme via websites.
- Of those organisations that have experience of ENPI CBC, **81% intend to apply again**, which is higher than for those without experience (69%). Showing success stories and how to overcome reasons for not participating previously is important for the latter.

26 September 2016