Problem analysis

Supporting document to the Video tutorial on Project Development, step 1
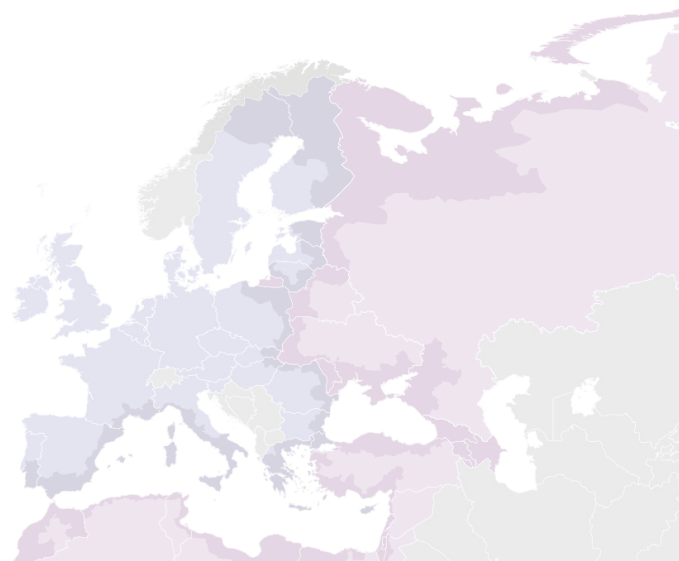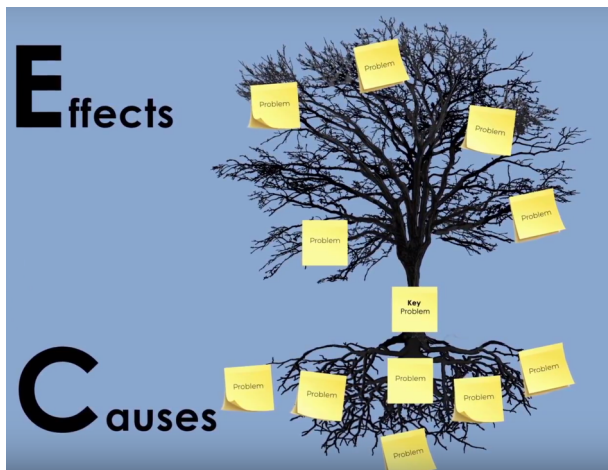
1. Why is problem analysis needed?

Problem analysis is the initial stage of project development: your project must address a problem, or overcome a constraint, so that the situation is improved at the end of the project compared to what it is now.

When applying to a cross-border cooperation programme, it is not enough to state that there is a problem. In order to demonstrate the relevance and coherence of your project proposal, you will notably need to:

- explain why the present situation is problematic: *why is this a problem*?

- show that you understand the causes and effects of this problem: *what causes what*?

- highlight the cross-border dimension of this problem.

In order to be able to act on some of the roots of the problem, you need first to analyze the problem thoroughly. There are usually several types of causes to a problem (institutional, technical…), as well as several ways to solve a problem. By understanding all the causal relationships, you will be able to determine which roots should be tackled to address the problem most effectively.

2. How to carry out the problem analysis for cross-border cooperation?

What to do:

(1) Brainstorm and identify the key problem that you want to solve.

(2) Check that this problem has a cross-border dimension related to a priority of your cross-border programme.

(3) Identify, jointly with your partners, all causes and effects related to this problem (only one at a time!). Formulate all causes and effects as negative situations.

(4) Build a "problem tree" with a hierarchy of causes and effects from the bottom to the top (please pay attention that the position of the

problem in the hierarchy does not indicate its importance but only "what causes what"!).

What not to do:

- **Do not base problems on accusations or fears**: think about existing problems based on facts; and consult stakeholders.

- **Do not define problems as "absent solutions",** as this considerably limits the scope of the project strategy at a later stage.

  For instance, when you say "lack of equipment", this is an absent solution: you have already identified the solution, which is "having equipment". In the example developed in our video, the problem is "inability to monitor" – this goes beyond "having equipment": you will also need training, exchange of data between organisations, etc.

  To provide another example: if you say "crops are infested with pests" you are indeed describing a negative situation. If you say "no pesticides are available", you are not, you are already choosing a solution (pesticides) and mentioning it is absent. You need an open mind when brainstorming on problems! The solution to crops infested by pests could be to choose other crops less subject to pests, or to introduce a predator for the pest… this is all to be defined further at a later stage when you will work on the development of your project intervention logic.

  At the stage of problem analysis you first need to focus on describing the negative situations - do not jump to solutions too soon!

3. Video illustration

Below you will find the example developed in the video tutorial. Remember that the "problem tree" is a working tool towards developing your project.

TESIM
Technical support to the implementation
and management of ENI CBC programmes

Threatened biodiversity
in water bodies

Harmful algal bloom

High level of nutrients
reaching water bodies in
runoff

Vegetation on lake and
river shores intercepting
nutrients runoff removed
by property owners

Farmers using too
much fertilizer

Weak enforcement
of laws and
regulations on
nutrient runoff

Ineffective sewage and
waste-water treatment
systems

Farmers' inability to
estimate the need for
more fertilizer

Low awareness among
farmers, property owners and
officials of causes and effects
of eutrophication

Inability to monitor the
levels of oxygen and
nutrients in water bodies