



IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

An EESC study on
Developing the Partnership
Principle in EU Cohesion Policy



European Economic and Social Committee
Section for "Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion" (ECO)

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This publication is based on the EESC exploratory opinion *“How to foster efficient partnership in the management of cohesion policy programmes, based on good practices from the 2007-2013 cycle”* (OJ of the EC C 44/2011, p.1) which was adopted by the Committee on 14th July 2010.

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The annex of the EESC exploratory opinion served as the basis for this publication but has been completely revised and enlarged by **Elisabet MATTSSON** and **Lena BJÖRK** (Sweden)

The European Economic and Social Committee is the Treaty-based forum for the representation, exchange of information and expression of the views of organised civil society in its dialogue with the European institutions. The EESC has an essential role to play in encouraging greater involvement and participation of organised civil society in European policies. The EESC has therefore always argued to develop a genuine partnership principle in EU cohesion policy.

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WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership principle has come of age, as the following quotes heard during the 5th Cohesion Forum (31 January & 1 February 2011) and the European Parliament's Regional Affairs Committee (27 January 2011) demonstrate:

"Without a strong cohesion policy there is no strong EU... A strong EU is based on solidarity... and involves all partners"

Tamás Fellegi – Minister of National Development of Hungary (European Parliament – REGI Committee)

"Cohesion policy should be based on solidarity and partnership"

Donald Tusk – Prime Minister of Poland (5th Cohesion Forum)

"We must have partnership... we must go local and regional"

Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, MEP (5th Cohesion Forum)

"Partnership... a long-term perspective of real participation ... a win-win situation for all stakeholders"

Staffan Nilsson, EESC President (5th Cohesion Forum)

"... a Cohesion Policy built on solidarity, partnership and responsibility..."

Andrius Kabilius, Prime Minister of Lithuania (5th Cohesion Forum)

"Partnership is crucial for the success of Europe 2020... there can be no ownership on the ground without partnership... to make cohesion policy more successful we must involve all partners."

Dirk Ahner, European Commission, Director General DG REGIO
(Summing up Day 1 of 5th Cohesion Forum)

"There is a need to develop the partnership principle"

Ivan Svetlik – Minister of Labour of Slovenia (5th Cohesion Forum)

"Cohesion Policy ...is...best when building on a broad partnership between the public administration on different levels, social partners, NGO's and civil society in the broadest sense of the word."

Commissioner László Andor (Summing up 5th Cohesion Forum)

PREFACE

PREFACE



Michael SMYTH

President of the Section for "Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion" (ECO)

The European Economic and Social Committee firmly believes that the citizen must be placed at the centre of all EU policies. The Committee fully endorses the place-based nature of EU Cohesion Policy as it is advocated by the European Commission, and believes that particular attention should be given to genuinely involving all partners and stakeholders in the preparation, execution and ex-post evaluation of projects undertaken in the framework of this policy.

When the European Commission asked the EESC to draw up an exploratory opinion identifying good practice of partnership, the Committee responded enthusiastically to the challenge. In the course of elaborating this opinion, it became increasingly clear that a publication presenting the examples of best practice seen by the EESC would be very helpful to policy-makers and practitioners, both in Brussels and beyond.

It gives me great pleasure to present this publication; it offers readers a short description of the cases of best practice found by the EESC and sets out which elements make them worthy of attention. Selected internet references are given for readers wishing to find out more.

What emerges from these examples is that partnership is in the first instance a matter of mindset; but experience shows that even in countries with a strong consultative culture, it takes trust between partners to achieve a successful level of working together efficiently. I hope that this EESC publication will contribute positively towards furthering the partnership principle in EU Cohesion Policy.

Finally, a special word of thanks is due to all those who have contributed directly or indirectly to this publication: European, national, regional and local representatives too numerous to mention individually. During the 15 months that the EESC worked on this opinion, the Rapporteur, study group and experts met with hundreds of practitioners. We have tried to reflect their collective wisdom in the pages that follow. Without them, literally, this publication would not have been possible.

May 2011

BACKGROUND TO PARTNERSHIP IN EU COHESION POLICY AND THE EESC OPINION



EESC Member Tom Jones, rapporteur Jan Olsson and Expert Elisabeth Mattsson meet with Rt. Hon Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister of Wales – November 2009

The Partnership principle is one of the cornerstones of EU cohesion policy. Its earliest roots can be found in the Treaty of Rome of 1957, when the European Social Fund was set up. A new step was taken in 1988 when the Partnership principle was established as a common instrument for all structural funds.

In the beginning, partnership focussed on traditional economic and social actors only; over time it has been extended and now includes “*any other appropriate body representing civil society, environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting equality between men and women*”^{*}. This continuing evolution reflects the EU’s strategic objective of good governance, which was most recently reaffirmed in the Europe 2020 vision. Partners should be involved in programming, implementation and evaluation of all aspects of cohesion policy.

The concept of partnership in EU cohesion policy is defined in the Council regulation on the structural funds which lays down rules for both so-called vertical (that is to say EU-to-Member State) and horizontal (that is to say among stakeholders) partnership.

The factors for success and effectiveness of cohesion policy that are attributed to the partnership principle can be summarised as follows:

- Diverse view-points and knowledge are brought in, highlighting the realities on the ground.
- There is a better response to the needs and perspectives of the partners.
- By going local, interventions can be even more adapted to the realities of business, workers and the citizens in general.
- Environment, gender equality and measures to combat social exclusion will have a higher profile in the programmes.
- Value added from integrated policies becomes more visible.
- Partnership is a key instrument of collective commitment and contributes to better efficiency of public expenditure and public policies.
- Partners will bring EU cohesion policy closer to the citizens.

In February 2009, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) was asked by the European Commissioners Hübner and Špidla to draw up an exploratory opinion on “How to foster efficient partnership in the management of cohesion policy programmes, based on good practices from the 2007-2013 cycle”.

^{*} Cfr. Art. 11 of Council Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 on the structural funds. OJ of the EC L 210/2006, p. 25

The reason for this request was the Commission's wish to develop more efficient partnerships with stakeholders in the operational programmes for the programming period 2007-2013. Given that successful partnership strengthens the impact of EU-funded projects, it was deemed important to develop the partnership principle as much as possible in all Member States. But the opinion should also help to prepare and improve the partnership principle in the future cohesion policy of the Union beyond 2013.

The EESC set out to identify good practice of partnership in current national operational programmes. The task was given to a study group composed of EESC members and looked for those essential factors of success and practical experience which could serve as learning for the future. It benefitted from close cooperation with the Commission



Expert Elisabeth Mattsson and Rapporteur Jan Olsson

services. Considerable field work was carried out involving members of the EESC, national economic and social councils, trade unions and employer organisations (i.e. the social partners) and other civil society organisations (i.e. social economy, third sector, NGOs). Hearings were held and visits organised in several countries; valuable assistance was given also by the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

Cases of good practice were identified from the perspective of the involvement and the role of the private partners, not the public authorities. These cases are presented in Part 2.

Good practice was judged from different perspectives:

- real access to partnership;
- empowerment of the partners;
- whether partnerships have a real decision-making power; and finally
- whether partnerships are well targeted on groups, sectors, communities, tasks etc.

The major conclusions of the EESC opinion as adopted in July 2010 are set out hereafter. In Part 3 more detailed proposals can be found of what the Committee considers essential changes to the regulations and the policies in the future.

The EESC is convinced that partnership which is genuine and profound in character will lead to more targeted and effective use of the structural funds and thereby to more successful projects. Partnership must be based on a long-term perspective of

real participation providing equal opportunities for private partners to work alongside public authorities. Real partnership creates a win-win situation for all stakeholders. The citizen must be at heart of all Community policies. Therefore, partnership in the context of the structural funds should reflect a bottom-up approach and provide opportunities for all citizens and their organisations to become involved in cohesion policy and the projects it funds. Where the partnership principle permeates programming and implementation, it leads to active participation of citizens and organised civil society in cohesion policy, thereby giving a genuine sense of participative democracy and of citizen involvement in Europe.

Successful partnership relies largely on whether a tradition of consultation and participation is part of the national and political culture. Where this is the case, partners are more involved and able to formulate and implement programmes and projects. It is therefore essential to develop partnership thinking in those Member States with a weaker tradition of consultation and participation.

Achieving a culture of real partnership is a process of learning. It is about empowering partners and creating equal opportunities for all of them to take part in all phases of the cohesion policy.

Evidence, as the selected examples in Part 2 demonstrate, shows that resources for capacity-building have made a crucial contribution to making partnership more efficient and genuine. Such resources should therefore be available for **all** partners, both private and public, in **all** operational programmes across the Union and not only in the convergence regions. Genuine partnership is two way street; after all, **IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO.**

ABBREVIATIONS WHICH ARE REGULARLY USED:

CC:	<i>Coordination Committee</i>
EAFRD:	<i>European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development</i>
EEA:	<i>European Economic Area</i>
EFF:	<i>European Fisheries Fund</i>
ERDF:	<i>European Regional Development Fund</i>
ESC:	<i>Economic and social council</i>
ESF:	<i>European Social Fund</i>
MA:	<i>Managing Authority</i>
MC:	<i>Monitoring Committee</i>
MS:	<i>Member State (of the EU)</i>
NGO:	<i>Non-governmental Organisation</i>
NSRF:	<i>National Strategic Reference Framework</i>
OP:	<i>Operational Programme</i>
WG:	<i>Working Group</i>

A COMPENDIUM OF SELECTED BEST PRACTICES





AUSTRIA

Traditional partnership model strengthened by an open forum for strategic debate - Local partnerships for local employment initiatives

Economic and social partnership (*Sozialpartnerschaft*) has a strong tradition in Austria. Its scope is to find consensus-based solutions between different interest groups in society (particularly business and trade unions).

This traditional partnership model is reflected in Austria's cohesion policy. The interest groups, i.e. the social partners and the so-called chambers* take part in designing and monitoring the *National Strategic Reference Framework (STRAT.AT 2007-13)* within a permanent public body, ÖROK (*Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning*). ÖROK was set up in the 1970's to coordinate regional policy and it is also based around the traditional partners. Against this background the role of the monitoring committees has become rather formal.

* The Austrian Chambers (for Labour/Consumers, Business, Agriculture, etc.) are the official representatives of interest groups; membership is compulsory.

STRAT.AT plus is an innovative instrument and was set up specifically for the current programming period 2007-13. It is a *platform for strategic policy debates*. It is a bottom-up process for learning, exchange of experience and dialogue, targeting a broad partnership to develop new strategies and concrete projects. It does not have any formalised structure or any clear membership basis.

Dialogue meetings, which take place under the name of "*Foren*" and "*Synergien*", are organised several times a year. In 2010, these meetings for instance covered key topical issues and analysed their effects on regions: the 5th Cohesion Report, the Europe 2020 strategy, the Barca report, growth scenarios beyond GNP, regional governance and the economic crisis.

Programmes are implemented at the provincial level (*Länder*). At this level, the partnership principle within the ERDF varies in practice. In the ESF, social partners take part fully from the national to the local level. Third sector organisations are neither very much involved, nor particularly active.

Austria is one of the few EU countries that have taken on board the concept of *Territorial Employments Pacts (TEP)*. It is an ESF measure following up on the interesting and innovative EU TEP initiative in the late 1990's and the **EQUAL** programme.

The Austrian pacts are composed of broad public-private partnerships at provincial level (*Länder*). There is one pact in each province though in **Vienna, Oberösterreich** and **Steiermark**, pacts are also organised at the sub-provincial level. There is a clear role for civil society organisations in addition to the traditional social partners. *Innovative actions and methods*, also focussing on structures and target groups are key aspects of the pacts. Thereby the TEPs become permanent learning organisations for a *decentralised integrated employment policy*.



Within the TEP, regional specific employment and social problems are identified which are to be tackled and solved in partnership. Traditional labour market policies are combined with other policy areas concerning for instance immigration, refugees, youth and long-term unemployed. It has been evident that coordination of policy fields, actions and resources has increased efficiencies, also between the different EU funds.

A private body is responsible for coordinating the TEP network and for capacity-building. The TEPs are also engaged in a European network for exchange of experience between the management authorities of the ESF: "Community of Practice - Partnerships in the ESF".

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.esf.at
www.oerok.gv.at
www.pakte.at

WWW



CZECH REPUBLIC

Mainstreaming the EQUAL experience in ESF - Delegation of responsibilities to social partners for capacity-building - Unique procedure for NGO nomination to MCs

The positive **EQUAL** experience has encouraged the authorities to *mainstream the partnership principle* in all the ESF programmes of the current programming period. Through **EQUAL**, many national and transnational partnerships between various actors – NGOs, universities/academia, private business, municipalities and other public authorities – were initiated, which still continue today; e.g. a thematic network for developing the social economy and infrastructure for support of social entrepreneurs.

Partnership is encouraged when funding projects; it is also a criterion for project selection. Concrete examples of public-private partnerships are found in different areas: human resource development, further education, gender equality, and support to vulnerable groups and people from disadvantaged communities, strengthening the advisory bodies of the employment offices, and participation of citizens in local public life.

The social partners – employers and trade unions – have run a large ESF-funded project to build up their capacity for social dialogue: *“Strengthening the social dialogue with focus on the modernisation of institutions, human resource development and higher quality of services provided by the social partners”*. It is a programme created and managed by the major social partners* themselves and it operates without any state intervention. It is based on the principle that 1 per cent of ESF resources should be allocated to social partners. The objectives of the programme are about making the social partners more visible towards the public, developing the skills and qualifications of the employees with a focus on competitiveness and providing legal and social counselling for employees.

The method to *nominate NGO representatives for the Monitoring Committees* is unique. In practice, every Czech organisation could nominate representatives. The nomination is supported by a CV and letter of motivation and is sent to the national coordination body of the NGOs, the Government Council for Non-profit NGOs. The Committee responsible for European Affairs within the Council votes on whom to select for the MCs.

The CpKP (*Centrum pro komunitní práci*), one of the NGOs represented on the Council, is very active in its efforts to make the partnership principle more efficient. It emphasises that more funding for technical assistance is needed. The CpKP also heads up a *network of NGOs in 10 countries*, predominantly in Eastern and Central Europe: SF-Team (*Sustainable Future*). SF-Team was involved in exchanging experience and securing better NGO participation in the current programme, but it is also *preparing for the programming period after 2013*.

* SPČR - Svaz průmyslu a dopravy ČR, Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic; KZPS - Konfederace zaměstnavatelských a podnikatelských svazů, representing employers; ČMKO - Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů; ASO - Asociace samostatných odborů, Association of Independent Trade Unions, representing trade unions

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

- www.cmkos.cz
- www.cpkp.cz
- www.esfcr.cz
- www.kzps.cz
- www.sfteam.eu
- www.spcr.cz



DENMARK

Decentralised EU structural funds integrated in regional development strategies also based on partnership agreements - Real decision power of a partnership dominated by business

Six *Regional Growth Forums* were created in 2007 to formulate regional business development strategies. The strategy is supported by the EU structural funds and Danish regional development funds.

Both main EU structural funds, ERDF and ESF, are managed by the Growth Forums. At national level, there is a common MC for both funds. However, real partnership lies with the Forums. These can be seen as decentralized institutions that implement the partnership principle according to a traditional Danish model.

The 20 members of the Forums are appointed by elected regional councils but nominated by both the public and the private sectors. Nine are nominated by regional and local authorities; six come from business, three from universities and educational institutions and two from the social partners (i.e. one employer and one trade unionist).

Thus the majority is in the hands of the partnership, particularly of business. There is no third sector/NGO representation in the forums.

The composition reflects the development strategy which focusses on growth, innovation, business development and human resources. The partnership principle is also reflected in the projects which are financed within the strategy.

The Forums play a decisive role in how funds are used. Decisions are based on consensus. However, the formal decision lies with the Ministry in charge. The *Growth Forums are supported by Partnership Agreements* which are concluded with Government.

The Copenhagen Growth Forum is a case in point. The last Partnership Agreement which was concluded in September 2010 lays down that the Copenhagen area shall be the most attractive and competitive metropolis in Northern Europe when it comes to running businesses, working and living conditions and education opportunities. It concentrates on three themes: *education* (from primary school to PhD-level); *innovation* particularly in health, welfare and transport; and the *opportunities* of the new cross-border *Femern/Baelt link* bringing together Northern Germany and southern Sweden with Copenhagen at its centre.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.ebst.dk
www.regionh.dk

WWW



FINLAND

LEADER: a model for a cross-sectoral, targeted and bottom-up partnership with decision-making power

The task of the *Finnish Rural Network* is to support different stakeholders to implement the Finnish Rural Development Strategy. The network is a learning organisation based on capacity-building, innovation and cooperation between various actors. It is open for all rural organisations to join. It is further the official national network for **LEADER** and the *Local Action Groups (LAG)*; it is also linked to the *Village Action Association of Finland*, which is an important local community network providing services to the LAGs.

The Management Committee of the Rural Network is composed of the major public and private stakeholders for rural development, agriculture, environmental protection, as well as the above-mentioned village movement. The legislation foresees that rural development policies should be coordinated with the EU structural funds. According to the OECD, the *strength of the Finnish rural development policy is its cross-sectoral approach*.

The LAG in **Ostrobothnia** (Aktion Österbotten) on the west coast, covering 250 km coast and the archipelago, is a case in point given its role, composition and management. The aim of the LAG is to strengthen the opportunities for people living and working in the

Swedish speaking areas of the region; it focusses on the needs, wishes and priorities of the inhabitants. This is also reflected in the partnership which is made up by both legal and natural persons. Cooperation between government, local authorities, community groups, business and voluntary associations is the cornerstone of the partnership.

The mutual interdependence between active communities and innovative enterprises to create jobs in the villages of the region lies at the centre of the action plans.

The LAG is managed by an adult educational association (Studiefrämjandet i Österbotten), which is an umbrella organisation of civil society in the region. Its aim is innovative rural development, seeking to achieve ecological, social and economic sustainable development. Its members are individual citizens, small enterprises, voluntary associations and municipalities. The board of the LAG has the tripartite composition foreseen in the guidelines for **LEADER**: one third coming from the municipalities, another third from local organisations and the last third being local residents. It is this board that takes decisions on the projects.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.maaseutu.fi
www.rural.fi
www.ruralpolicy.fi
www.aktion.fi



FRANCE

Unique global grant to develop very small businesses and crafts

Poitou-Charentes has been very pro-active in applying the partnership principle in a meaningful manner in all phases from preparation to implementation of projects. The region also applies an *integrated approach to all structural funds* so that there is a common policy and monitoring of ESF, ERDF, EAFRD and the EFF.

It is the *only French region* where very small enterprises and crafts, represented by the Regional Chamber for Crafts (*CRMA - Chambre Regionale de Métiers et de l'Artisanat*), manage a *global grant for business development* financed by the ESF. This experience is probably also unique at European level. Concretely, the grant funds training for entrepreneurs and their employees, technical support and assistance to employer groupings as well as support for taking over companies when the current owner wishes to step down. The programme has so far been very successful and has covered thousands of enterprises. For the period 2010-12, funding from the ESF is 2,5 million Euros.

The CRMA also asked the ERDF for a global grant to support innovation in the smallest enterprises. Initially, this demand was not accepted though a project has been approved since. In October 2010, CRMA became project leader of an ambitious ERDF programme

to detect and promote innovation in small business through using a number of “innovation agents” as well as by developing a service kit for innovation aimed at the Chamber’s members.

At the French national level, mention should also be made of the particular efforts undertaken by the *French national crafts association*, APCM (*Assemblée permanente des Chambres de Métiers et de l’Artisanat*) which regroups the regional chambers, to come up with proposals to improve efficient participation of small enterprises in cohesion policy. Based on the conclusions of a working group, APCM underlines the importance of and the need for global grants, easy access to financing, simplification of (financial) regulations and capacity-building. An important motive behind this initiative is that small enterprises and crafts receive just three per cent of the total of French structural funding.

Poitou-Charentes, like several other French regions, also uses the ESF *global grant system* for the training of workers and for micro-projects of the social economy. The first is managed by a specific joint social partner organisation OPCA (*Organisme paritaire collecteur agréé*), representing both employer organisations and trade unions, responsible for training of workers. The second activity in Poitou-Charentes is managed by the *Ligue de l’Enseignement*, an important French association for culture, sports and education, to integrate disadvantaged groups into the labour market. All global grants are also accompanied by technical assistance for staff.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.fse.microprojets.fr
www.artisanat.fr
www.crma-poitou-charentes.fr



GERMANY

Decentralised ESF implementation,
policy-shaping and decision-making
monitoring committee -“Kompetenzstellen”–
Support structures for the partnership –
Annual partner meetings
with the EU Commission in Brussels

In **Baden-Württemberg**, the ESF has decentralised more than one third of its budget to 42 *sub-regional networks* (*Arbeitskreise*). These networks decide on the projects that are to be selected; decisions are based on the local needs and strategies. The networks are composed of all relevant actors: local authorities, public employment services, social partners, business organisations, social welfare associations, women’s representatives, educational institutions, etc.

Entrepreneurship, human capital and innovation are the focus of the Baden-Württemberg programme; decentralisation of the ESF activities also means that funding of small projects is a prominent feature.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The Monitoring Committee is a *forum for overall economic and social policy-shaping* in the region. The Committee is responsible for all EU funds: ESF, ERDF and EAFRD. The Committee is composed of high-level representatives from the private partnership (e.g. trade unions, employers, small enterprise, chambers, farmers, environment, and social welfare associations). Its role is emphasised by frequent meetings (5-6 times per year) which is rather unique. The value of partnership for efficient implementation of the EU funds should be underlined.

The MC has a real say in decision-making on proposed projects: the public and the private partners have the same number of votes. In case of an equal number of votes obtained, the president has the casting vote. The participatory system also includes a sub-regional structure (there are four sub-regions), working groups and other consultative bodies. The tasks of these sub-groups are decided by the partnership. There is an internal regulation defining the competence of the MC which could serve as an example for the code of good practice proposed in the EESC opinion. (See also in Part 3)

Technical assistance is of strategic importance to strengthen the professional capacity of the partners so that they can fully play their role. Thus in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the specialised staff of the partnership organisations (at present 4.5 employees) is financed by the technical assistance budget line.

This model whereby *technical assistance is provided to the staff of the partnership* is also applied in other German regions. The staff prepares and coordinates the representatives of the partnership for their meetings. They also maintain an information flow to the partnership organisations, organise seminars and support partners in drafting projects.

In **Niedersachsen**, as in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, support is given to each partner organisation. In **Brandenburg** and **Sachsen-Anhalt** partners have a common *support structure (Kompetenzstelle)*. In both cases the partnership is located with DGB, the German trade union confederation. However all partners are equally served. Special note should be paid to Brandenburg as a debate was started here on the next round for the period after 2013 early: this example should be considered as good practice.

At national level, the *Wohlfahrtsverbände* (the social welfare associations) were fully accepted as partners in the previous programming period 2000-06. In the regions (*Länder*), they were only accepted as members of the MC s in the current programming period. The *Wohlfahrtsverbände* have established a *national support structure* of their own. They meet on a regular, annual basis with the ESF Germany desk at the European Commission in Brussels.

The *Wohlfahrtsverbände* are also beneficiaries of a large human resource development programme (60 million Euros for the 2007-13 period) for their employees, especially with a view to achieving gender equality and anticipating the effects of demographic change.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.esf-bw.de
www.europa-mv.de
www.kbs-dgb.de
www.sachsen-anhalt.de/LPSA/index.php?id=32155
www.bagfw-esf.de



ITALY

Technical assistance to social partners in the south - National agreement on partnership principle implemented in some regions - Innovative partnership in managing global grants: "green partnerships"

In Italy, partnership in cohesion policy differs from region to region. Often it is formal, and therefore not always genuine. But there are several good practices.

In **Mezzogiorno** (South Italy) the *social partners created and managed* a very successful technical assistance project during the 2000-06 period, financed by the ERDF. The project focussed on improving their knowledge, on development programmes and on strengthening their capacity to take part more effectively. The project is good practice, both for its governance and the results obtained. It is managed by a Committee where the social partners are in majority. Key persons from the partner organisations can now take part in programming in a genuine way. Agreements about partnership rules have been signed at regional level. The project continues in the current programming period.

In 2008, a *National Framework Agreement (Protocollo di Intesa)* between a broad partnership and the government was signed in order to define rules on how to involve the partners in defining and monitoring regional policy strategies. This agreement defines targets for the involvement, rules for representativeness and expected outputs. It is supported by a Partnership Forum, a Coordination Committee, and thematic and sectoral groups. The national agreement has only partially been followed up by regional agreements, especially in less developed regions.

Puglia is one of the regions where the national agreement has been followed up by a *regional agreement*. It covers not only the three EU structural funds, but has also a role in the *overall regional development programming*. This agreement is supported by a permanent forum, working groups and a secretariat to inform and support actions by the partnership. It is a flexible partnership open for new members. In Puglia, *Confcooperative* and *Legacoop* manage a *global grant* to create new social cooperatives for the integration of vulnerable groups; this initiative is supported by Coopfond and Fondosviluppo, the specific financial institutions of the cooperatives.

The partnership principle of the structural funds in **North-Centre Italy** is often subordinated to the governance system of the integrated development programmes of these regions. With this approach, the role of the Management Committees has become more of a formality. **Tuscany** is a case in point where the ESF, ERDF and EAFRD are an integrated part of an overall regional development programme. Real partnership lies with other consultative and participative bodies than the MCs. In those bodies the social and economic partners play an important role, while third sector organisations with some exceptions are left out. This integration is very useful in order to combine EU resources with the own resources of the social partners, an arrangement which has particularly benefited small enterprises and crafts.

ESPRIT manages a *global grant to promote social cohesion* in Tuscany. It is unique with regard to partnership, working methods and scope. The partnership brings together regional trade unions (*UIL – Unione Italiana del Lavoro* and *CISL – Confederazione Italiana sindacati dei Lavoratori*) and cooperative organisations as well as an ethical bank (*Banca Etica*). It aims to empower vulnerable persons through NGOs and focusses on the creation of enterprises. Investment in new enterprises is further supported by loan guarantees in such a way as to multiply the impact of EU resources.



During the first five years of its existence, more than 100 new enterprises have been created. In all new activities around 500 people have been employed at a cost of around 6 million Euros. **ESPRIT's** aim is to transform itself into a permanent body and not just being a project manager within the ESF.

Lazio is a region where the MA of the ERDF has the clear ambition to boost active partner participation; it has also launched an interactive website for this purpose. A further step would be to use the regional law on citizens' participation also in the area of cohesion policy (a similar law exists in Tuscany).

Trento is an example of where planning with the partnership has been very fruitful to encourage *sustainable development measures*. An energy and environment network - the *Technological Distretto Habitech* - was created to promote the green building sector. Heat energy production from renewable sources (hydrogen, biomass, photovoltaic) as well as heat management, energy control, home automation are some of the issues addressed. The network comprises over 300 companies, research organizations and public agencies, with a total of 8 thousand employees.

An action plan for local sustainable economic development within protected areas and *Natura 2000* sites has been promoted following a dialogue with the environmental NGOs.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.partenariato.it
www.esprit.toscana.it
www.dtt.it
www.por.regione.puglia.it
www.porfesr.lazio.it



POLAND

A systematic and evolving approach to partnership - Partner organisations have initiated working groups at national level also chairing some of them - Partnership is closely monitored and an award given to best practice of partnership

The Polish government (Ministry of Regional Development) has, in close cooperation with organised civil society, continuously improved the implementation of the partnership principle over the last years. This process started with a broad consultation regarding the 2007-13 programming period.

The *NSRF Coordination Committee (CC)* has played a key role to develop the partnership principle. It has created six working groups that were set up as a joint initiative between the Ministry and the socio-economic partners. The private partner organisations have the same voting rights as the public authorities in all but one of them. Two of the working groups are chaired by the private partners. One example is the *WG on SMEs* which is chaired by the *Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan (PKPP Lewiatan)*.

The other example is the *WG on civil society* and was an initiative from the sector itself in 2008. It focusses the effective application of the partnership principle. OFOP (*Ogólnopolska Federacja Organizacji Pozarządowych*), the Polish Federation of NGOs, has the chair. This WG develops partnership mechanisms, also assessing the procedures for appointing members to the MCs, intervenes where there is an insufficient level of partnership and follows up on equal opportunities and sustainable development. It also organises training for partnership members of the monitoring committees.



Hearing Katowice - October 2009

Initiated by the NGO members of the WG on civil society, the Coordination Committee took a decision in December 2008 to ensure active involvement of social and economic partners in the planning process and in executing individual programmes, priorities and actions in order to implement the NSRF. This decision reinforced the guidelines that the Ministry had issued earlier on the functioning of the MCs.

One of the six strategic objectives of the *Human Capital OP (of the ESF)* is partnership. Within this, there is a transversal WG that is also chaired by the OFOP. In particular it monitors cross-cutting issues such as innovation, transnational cooperation, partnership and gender mainstreaming. Developing the civil and social dialogue are specific actions within this programme.

In June 2010, a *National Thematic Network on Partnership (Krajowa Sieć Tematyczna ds. Partnerstwa)* was established by the NSRF CC for more effective implementation of the partnership principle. This network involves MC members from all over the country, particularly those from the socio-economic partners. The main aim is to strengthen their position in the committees by giving them real support and opportunities to exchange experiences. Various methods are used: analysis, studies, personal and virtual meetings etc. There is also a competition between MCs on how they implement the partnership principle and on awards given for "best practice".

Capacity-building of the partnership is an important measure for judging success, as is the possibility for real decision-making and determining criteria for project selection.

Civil society participates in different bodies that are constituted under the Operational Programme MCs at regional level, but the degree of participation could be improved. In order to decentralise further and engage the local actors, sub-regional groups below the Operational Programme level have been established.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

- www.cpsdialog.pl
- www.dialog.gov.pl
- www.ngo.pl
- www.ofop.eu
- www.pozYTEK.gov.pl
- www.pkpplewiatan.pl





PORTUGAL

At national level unique role of the Portuguese ESC; at local level small businesses and NGOs struggle against authorities to achieve real partnership

The implementation of the partnership principle in Portugal must be seen in the context of the politico-administrative system and the socio-economic structure of the country. Portugal is based on a centralised national government and there are no politically elected regional authorities. On the other hand, there is a multitude of autonomous local authorities, small business and small NGOs. As a result some interesting good practices have emerged.

Programming has a centralised and top-down character; the consultation process hardly involves civil society organisations. The most interesting aspect in this phase of the development of cohesion policy is the unique role of the *Portuguese Economic and Social Council* in the European context. The Council nominates some of the members representing civil society organisations to the MCs. It also plays an active part when the *NSRF (QREN)* is being drafted. It is invited – but has not yet accomplished – to comment

the annual reports from the Portuguese coordinating body, the *QREN Observatory*. This Observatory is not based on the partnership principle, as it involves only public institutions at a strategic monitoring level.

A decentralised partnership is needed to implement the Portuguese OPs. However the current normal partnership practice is more a kind of delegation of competencies to local authorities or contracting out services to private actors. For instance one quarter of the resources of the operational programme of the ERDF in Northern Portugal (*CCDR Norte - Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte*) are managed by seven different associations of local authorities.

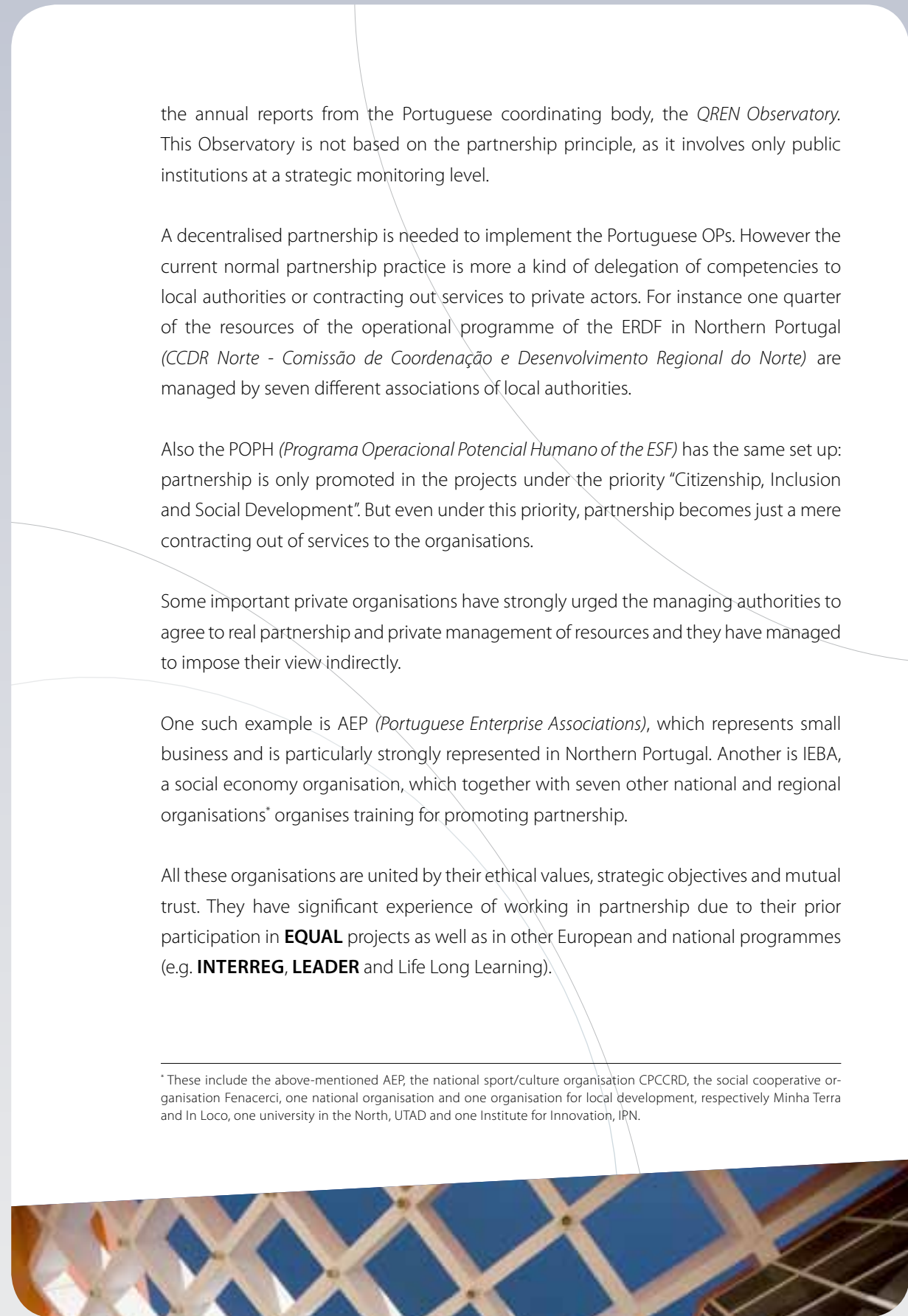
Also the POPH (*Programa Operacional Potencial Humano of the ESF*) has the same set up: partnership is only promoted in the projects under the priority “Citizenship, Inclusion and Social Development”. But even under this priority, partnership becomes just a mere contracting out of services to the organisations.

Some important private organisations have strongly urged the managing authorities to agree to real partnership and private management of resources and they have managed to impose their view indirectly.

One such example is AEP (*Portuguese Enterprise Associations*), which represents small business and is particularly strongly represented in Northern Portugal. Another is IEBA, a social economy organisation, which together with seven other national and regional organisations* organises training for promoting partnership.

All these organisations are united by their ethical values, strategic objectives and mutual trust. They have significant experience of working in partnership due to their prior participation in **EQUAL** projects as well as in other European and national programmes (e.g. **INTERREG**, **LEADER** and Life Long Learning).

* These include the above-mentioned AEP, the national sport/culture organisation CPCCRD, the social cooperative organisation Fenacerci, one national organisation and one organisation for local development, respectively Minha Terra and In Loco, one university in the North, UTAD and one Institute for Innovation, IPN.



They run a joint project called Q3 that aims at capacity-building of the third sector and the social economy; the project is sub-contracted out by POPH, thereby not allowing for *real partnership*. However the organisations taking part in Q3 have reinforced their partnership model in this project despite the restrictions imposed by the managing authority

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.ccdrn.pt
www.ces.pt
www.ieba.org.pt
www.poph.qren.pt
www.q3.org.pt



SLOVAKIA

Targeted local social inclusion partnerships to integrate Roma communities

Roma represent 8 per cent of the Slovak population. Unemployment is high; housing and service is poor. *Marginalised Roma communities* is therefore one of the four horizontal priorities of all Slovak Operational Programmes.

A major tool to implement this horizontal priority is based on local integrated development strategies, combining the different structural funds, particularly in areas with a high proportion of Roma population. The Slovak management model of the Roma community priority is categorised as “*private decentralised/local management within the context of national public/private partnerships*” Partnership includes representatives from central government, labour offices, local authorities, business, non-profit organisations and the Roma community itself in order to empower the most disadvantaged groups, giving them social and economic opportunities as well as a voice in local affairs.

* EURoma Report 2010 – Roma and the Structural Funds, p. 58

The *Local Partnerships of Social Inclusion (LPSI)* organised in the 2004-06 programming period and experience from **EQUAL** have been further developed for the 2007-13 programme. Projects of Roma inclusion seem to be rather successful, particularly when they are based on partnership which actively involves the local communities. Projects focus among other things on housing, education, employability, social enterprise and social services. The intermediary body, the *Social Development Fund*, plays an important role to support the partnership model. Good practice of partnerships – not only financed by the ESF - are for instance found in Šariš (social services), Moldava nad Bodvou (housing), Matej Bel Banská Bystrica University (education, training), the CSR (*Corporate Social Responsibility*) approach of US Steel in Košice to integrate Roma in work and society and the Norwegian/EEA-financed local alternative education model (*Community Bridge building - from Cradle to Grave*).

Minimum rules for the partnership principle are currently being established giving a particular role to not-for-profit organisations. Partnership is a criterion to determine the beneficiaries. Networking between the different partnerships is encouraged. The local partnerships are supported by regional partnerships in the most vulnerable regions (Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica).

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.esf.gov.sk
www.etp.sk

WWW



SLOVENIA

Real participation and recognition of the NGO sector in programming; capacity-building and networking are given particular priority

The Operational Programme of the ESF recognises the potential of the NGO sector contributing to employment policies and to providing proximity public services. However at the same time it should be emphasised that NGOs are small, dispersed and have insufficient management, organisation and development capacities; this limits their opportunities to take part actively.

The recognition was the result of a joint programming process between the sector and the government; the programme also followed up on a long-term agreement with the government, however without involving financial resources.

During the programming phase, CNVOS (*Centre for Information, Cooperation and Development of NGOs*) played a key role. CNVOS is a national network which today comprises more than 500 associations. Its aim is to empower non-governmental organisations and to encourage networking among them thereby also ensuring a dialogue with the government.

Particular funding was introduced within the ESF priority axis of Institutional and administrative capacity with the aim to support and mobilise NGOs to really take part in developing and implementing policies. Networks of NGOs were particularly targeted for this funding.

CNVOS is one of these networks. It proposes NGO-representatives for the MCs and supports NGOs to be involved in the structural funds. Furthermore, ten regional NGO networks were established to foster development of regional and local NGOs and to enable them to contribute more actively to public policies. In order to improve dialogue in specific areas (culture, environment, health, etc.) twelve thematic networks receive support as well.

In practice, CNVOS conducts several training sessions for NGOs (ranging from 2-hour seminars to advanced 3-day workshops). They target "good governance" and "raising skills" in the NGO sector. CNVOS also serves as an advocate for the whole NGO sector in order to create a favourable environment, for instance by demanding the establishment of a Government Office for NGOs and the preparation of various initiatives for legislation.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.cnvos.si

WWW



SPAIN

Unique example of Operational Programme managed by civil society organisations

Spain is a unique example of where an ESF Operational Programme is fully managed, controlled and implemented by organised civil society.

In this case five large civil society organisations make up the responsible intermediate body. Four of these are aimed at different target groups: *Fundación ONCE* on disabled groups, *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* on the Roma, *Caritas* on those who are most removed from the labour market such as the homeless, drug addicts and mentally ill; and finally *Cruz Roja Espanola* on immigrants. The fifth organisation, the *Fundación Luis Vives* supports NGOs with analysis, information and training with a view to creating partnerships.

Partners of the programme also include specialised public bodies such as agencies for gender equality, integration of immigrants and ex-offenders.

Based on the positive experience from the 2000-06 period, the OP was designed to increase the participation of economically inactive people in the labour market, combating social exclusion, promoting gender equality and non-discrimination.

At regional level, the programme should support the actions of the Regional ESF Operational programmes, thus creating synergies and added value.

The total funding is around 300 million Euros and also covers capacity-building for partners.

The economic crises and rising unemployment has put more pressure on the programme. However, the results show that the challenges have been taken on successfully. In 2009 for instance, 155,000 persons participated in training and other activities; in addition, almost 20,000 persons obtained a job; among them 9,000 immigrants, 4,000 disabled and 6,000 socially excluded belonging to other groups who thus benefited from the programme. Over 1,200 enterprises have benefited. The result was even better for 2010.

Empowerment, innovation and transnational cooperation are important issues of the programmes. Methods on tailored pathways of integration and training are developed. Corporate social responsibility is encouraged and social economy enterprises for integration are stimulated too. A debate on how to continue the OP after 2013 has already started. Through the heavy involvement in different European networks, the partners are active in disseminating the results of the programme. One example is the leading role of the Roma Secretariat in the EU activities to facilitate the use of structural funds for the Roma population.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.fundaciononce.es
(see: ESF Contracts)



SWEDEN

Coordinating public/private partnerships with real decision making power -
Thematic groups within ESF take on board good practice

The *Structural Fund Partnerships (SFP)* are key actors to implement the EU's cohesion policy in Sweden; in total eight SFPs cover Sweden. One half of the partners must, according to a *specific law on the partnerships*, be made up of elected municipal and regional politicians; the other half is composed of social partners, social economy and representatives of government authorities.

It should be noted that in two of the eight structural fund regions covering North of Sweden, the Sami minority is represented in the SFP. The regional variety is also shown in the support of the social economy. ESF funding has paid for specific persons to support the projects of this sector. In one case, the Stockholm SFP, the social economy is represented in the internal preparatory committee which assesses the projects.

Through their composition the SFPs facilitate the coordination of different policies: regional policy, the labour market and the EU's cohesion policy. They are responsible for both the ERDF and ESF. They take the real decisions on the projects to be funded by both structural funds by setting priorities which the managing authorities have to follow.

In reality, all the SFPs are consensus-based creating synergies between ERDF and ESF projects. Before the next programming period (2014-2020), there is a need to review the representation of the third sector. There is also a need for funding of small projects and targeted technical assistance.

Thematic groups within the ESF form an interesting example of how to take on board results from earlier and current OPs as well as the **EQUAL** programme in order to pursue policy changes in employment policy. However, it is only the thematic group *Entrepreneurship*, which is particularly focussed on social enterprises, that is genuinely based on implementing a real participation of the partnership; the others are based on more formal partnerships.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.esf.se
www.tillvaxtverket.se
(see: EU-program)



THE UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND

A patchwork of partnerships:
will they survive?*

A patchwork of partnerships from top to bottom exists all over England. This is reflected in the composition of monitoring committees and other bodies, regional ESF and ERDF committees as well as in programmes, projects and technical assistance.

All over England social partners and the third sector are strongly involved, from the preparatory stages of programmes to their final evaluation. A very good practice is that summaries of consultations on the policy documents are made and that ongoing adjustments are annexed to the OPs. As a result of the consultations in 2007, more technical assistance to support partner participation and global grants was achieved.

* From the summer 2010, the new Coalition government of the U.K. has been introducing significant spending cuts affecting these programmes. Although many positive elements of genuine partnership run the risk of disappearing, these good practices were identified as such as the time of writing up the original opinion in Summer 2010. In this later edition some updating on the new structures has been made.

The *Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs)*, *Regional development agencies (RDAs)* and local authorities have been key public actors, all working in partnership with the private sector. It should be noted that regional ESF committees have the opportunity to take on board representatives "agreed by the regional partnership". From 2010, the *Skills Funding Agency* has taken over from the LSC regarding its ESF activities; it also works together with the new *Young Peoples' Learning Agency (YPLA)*. The RDAs will cease to exist beyond March 2012 and economic development will be led by *Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP)*. Local Authorities and business leaders currently have the opportunity to propose where and how LEPs should be created.



'Makin Trax' is a project aimed at pupils in Year 10 (±15/16 year-olds) in the Birmingham area who are multiple offenders with a persistent police history. The objective of the project is to rekindle the pupils' interest in school and to enable them to acquire a Duke of Edinburgh Skills Award in music technology within a traditional school environment. A specially adapted creative-learning bus is itself an incentive for pupils who want to complete their training; the project has become a phenomenal success and receives ESF co-financing.

West Midlands show how a region has implemented the partnership principle of the structural funds. The existing networks of broad partnerships, that were originally set up by the LSC and local government (*West Midlands LSC/West Midlands Local Government Association Partnership*), have strong working links with the RDA, *Advantage West Midlands* to ensure that European funding adds value to other complementary activities and domestic funding. There is also a joint regional committee covering both ESF and ERDF.

In the framework of the ESF activities, the *Regional Skills Partnership* – a body linked to *Advantage Midland* - plays a leading role. Such partnerships bring together the key stakeholders. They have a strong enterprise focus which provides for a demand-led attribution of funds. One interesting partnership project is *Better West Midlands (BWM)*. The project is managed by *Unity*, a trade union, which intends to work with employers of all sizes across the West Midlands when they make redundancies. It provides a redundancy support package, giving the employer a single point of contact for support. The ESF will for 2011-13 continue to target the most vulnerable groups as well as development of skills, however with a cut of £25 million in funding. *Advantage West Midlands* is committed to supporting economic recovery however with a budget cut of £40 million for 2010-11.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

- www.betterwestmidlands.org.uk
 - www.esf.gov.uk
 - www.lga.gov.uk
 - www.englandsrdas.com
 - www.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk
 - www.communities.gov.uk
- (see: Regeneration and economic growth)

NORTHERN IRELAND

Partnership and a bottom-up approach are reflected in the unique PEACE programme

The *EU PEACE and Reconciliation Programme* was launched in 1996 as a contribution to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society in Northern Ireland. It is now in its third phase, PEACE III. The programme is funded by all structural funds and managed by one authority. It has contributed significantly to enabling the region to emerge from a troubled period to more peaceful times with the political leaders of both communities (Protestant and Catholic) committed to peace and reconciliation.

Especially in the initial PEACE I programme, there was a very strong emphasis on a grass-roots approach, based on broad partnerships between local authorities and community and voluntary groups. The programme operated a great many small projects focussing on citizen participation, local development, social inclusion, women, children and youth; this approach has been one of the key factors of its success to bring about peace and the beginnings of reconciliation.

However partnership is still a cross-cutting theme and is underlined in the preparation and implementation of the programme.

The participative bottom-up approach was reflected in the consultation process when drafting PEACE III. All stakeholders - business, trade unions, rural, agricultural, community and voluntary organisations including environmental and equality were involved from the start; a first discussion document was sent to the partners to define priorities,

implementation and management. Several public consultation events were held. A new round of consultations followed after a first draft OP was published.

A consultative group with all partners was set up. A consultation response document was produced outlining how the Operational Programme was amended following the public consultation.

The local partnership model has always played a strategic role in the delivery of the PEACE programmes. In the current period the Local Councils in Northern Ireland have formed themselves into eight clusters and developed *local Peace and Reconciliation Action Plans* in a participative bottom up approach. The same goes for the six county councils in the Border Region of Ireland. To develop innovative approaches is important for addressing the issues related to a shared society.

The demonstration of active partnership is a requirement for funding. Formalised partnership agreements which detail the roles and responsibilities of various partners such as those developed under the **EQUAL** programme have been encouraged in the projects. The partnership has access to funds for capacity-building to ensure that the projects are well managed.

In more recent times, the PEACE programme has tended to move away from small projects for local people towards larger projects requiring a lot more administrative support. From PEACE II onwards, a special body, the SEUPB, was set up to manage the funding. Smaller groups feel they have lost easy access to EU Funding as a result.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.seupb.eu
www.communityfoundationni.org
www.concordiapartnership.org
(Project now completed - 2011)

Technical assistance to 3rd sector stimulates partnership and involvement in programmes – Global grant-style programmes

There is a strong history and culture of partnership working in Wales. The **EQUAL** programme and global grants from the 2000-06 programming period helped very much to stimulate collaboration through partnerships.

The *Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)* is a key player to uphold the practice of participation. It is the umbrella body of the voluntary sector in Wales and has used technical assistance funding from the structural funds to set up the *WCVA's third sector team (3-SET)*. This team is part of the *Spatial European Team (SET)* network which provides advice, information and support to public, private and third sector organisations to develop and implement Structural Funds projects in Wales. The purpose is to involve and strengthen partnership collaboration in project and planning development, which is considered to be a key factor for success. *3-SET* organises regular information, awareness raising and consultation events which is supplemented by newsletters and a web-site.

This service has enabled the voluntary sector to run large key projects based on effective partnerships. Even if the global grants programme was brought to an end, the WCVA has continued a global grants type of approach in the 2007-2013 programme through the *Engagement Gateway* and the *Intermediate Labour Market (ILM)* projects. The aim of the Gateway is to build the skills, confidence and knowledge of people most

removed from the labour market, so they can make progress towards employment. The scheme will invest £34 million in organisations that work with the most disadvantaged groups. The contracts have a maximum total value of £150,000, including match funding. In line with EU rules and regulations, activity must now be procured through a competitive tendering process, which costs money and slows down the transfer of means to the organisations working with the target groups at grass roots level. The ILM is based on the same model.

There is also a £5 million package to support and develop new and existing social and community enterprises across South West Wales. The project, called *Collaborative Communities* aims to assist 400 organisations and to establish 30 new social enterprises.

Some of these activities are under threat in view of the budget cuts proposed by the new coalition government in the UK; nevertheless, the practices described remain examples of good practice in partnership, and are commended as such by the EESC in its opinion.

SOME WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.wcva.org.uk

WWW

EESC PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE



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The selected best practices clearly show that there are concrete methods on how to implement the partnership principle successfully. The learning extracted from these practices is reflected in the following proposals of the EESC for the future EU cohesion policy.

- For the EESC there is a strong and urgent need to establish **European minimum requirements** on how to organise a high standard of partnership. In the current Regulation, it is the MS that manages the application of the partnership principle in accordance with national rules and practices. In order to ensure that genuine partnership does permeate the whole of the EU, such minimum requirements should be made mandatory and could even be made a condition for receiving EU funding.
- The EESC firmly believes in a **stronger and much more pro-active role for the Commission** as guardian of the partnership principle. The Commission should, jointly with the Member States, regions and together with organised civil society, strengthen propagation of the principle based on the Open Method of Coordination.
- A **Code of Good Practice on Partnership** should be established at European level, agreed upon with the appropriate European partners.
- The EESC underlines that **global grants are a very efficient instrument** to achieve real participation of partners - particularly small enterprises and the social economy - and should therefore be extensively used by all Member States in both ESF and ERDF programmes.
- The EESC feels that the **ERDF** should reorient its **focus more on small enterprise, innovation and local development**, to use instruments that favour and benefit partnership like targeted programmes, global grants and so on.

- The EESC advocates a return to **simplified Community initiative programmes** targeted at social innovation and local development which has proved in the past to be extremely successful.
- **Simplification is imperative** in order to enhance – the positive impact of programmes, notably for projects involving smaller players. **Controls on projects must be rationalised. Financial payments** to such players must be better facilitated and **speeded up** through pre financing and payments made in due time. The European Commission should focus more on results less on procedure.
- In most Member States, **regions play a crucial role** in implementing the partnership principle. The EESC therefore proposes that regions wanting to share their experience and disseminate good practice set up a **network of “regions of excellence in partnership”** and believes the Committee of the Regions would be the appropriate mentor for such a network.



EESC Rapporteur Jan Olsson

This publication builds on the EESC opinion adopted in July 2010 on developing the Partnership principle in EU Cohesion policy and describes examples of best practice in several Member States. The aim is to provide interested stakeholders with practical information on how to improve the performance of partnership in the light of recorded examples of best practice. The EESC has an essential role to play in encouraging greater involvement and participation of organised civil society in European policies; it has therefore always argued the need to develop genuine partnership.



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In 2009, the EESC was awarded the prestigious “Ecodynamic Enterprise” label by the Brussels Institute for Management of the Environment (IBGE), obtaining 3 stars, the highest level possible. This label rewards organisations for good environmental performance.

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