



Partnership principle in ESIF

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Partnership – strengthened under ESIF legislative framework 2014-2020

Common Provisions Regulation (article 5)

- makes it compulsory for each ESI Fund programme to organise a partnership at all programming stages and at all levels

Code of Conduct

- set up to support Member States
- key principles for stakeholder involvement





DG REGIO study – Implementation of the new provisions on partnership

Objective:

- review the establishment of the partnership principle and the application of Code of Conduct in PAs and Ops

Scope:

- all 28 PAs and all 292 OPs financed by the ERDF and the CF (including multi-fund and ETC)

Tools:

- document analysis, web-survey and interviews

Final Report January 2016 – all conclusions are preliminary at this stage!





Study – (preliminary) key findings

- The partnership principle is implemented very differently across the EU 28
- Implementation depends on:
 - national administrative structures & cultures
 - the technical & financial capacity of the partners
 - political circumstances in the country / region / locality
- Perception (cf. survey) and the results based on the document analysis – not always consistent





Balance of partnership: categories of partners

- **All types of partners** have generally been **involved**, both in PAs and Ops. **However...**
- Partnership not necessarily perceived as unbalanced in Member States that lack certain types of partners according to documents.
- A perceived lack of some types of partners can partly be explained by the high level of expectations in respect of partner involvement.





Balance of partnership: selection method and transparency

Selection method:

- "New" MS = new partnerships (+ exceptions)
- "Old" MS = existing partnerships (+ exceptions)

Transparency:

- Stakeholder selection mostly perceived to be transparent (MAs more positive though)
- Perception more positive in ETC programmes compared to IGJ, as well as in single funded programmes.



Involvement of partners

- In general high level of involvement
- Partners most commonly involved in the selection of TOs/development of programme priorities and in the needs analyses
- Documents generally accessible in time, but challenges exist in some MS.
- Comments and input from partners generally treated better in ETC and single fund programmes.

Perception of public authorities generally more positive compared to other types of partners.



Partnerships in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phase

- Almost all OPs have planned actions to involve partners during the implementation process, mainly through committees
- Over-representation of public authorities (especially national and regional) to be expected
- Non-public partners to be primarily involved through consultation actions, but these are less common than committees
- No major differences in the degree of involvement between different types of OPs



Capacity-building

- Stakeholder perception and programme documents are substantially different.
- Stakeholders involved in OPs usually perceive that a wide range of capacity-building actions will be undertaken.
- IGJ OPs mention institutional capacity-building activities more often than national sector-oriented OPs (*NB: capacity-building activities are often described in entirely ESF funded programmes*)
- 34% of OPs partly funded by ESF will allocate resources for capacity building of partners



ETC Programmes

- Low involvement of civil society and social/economic partners.
- Partnerships mainly built on previously established structures.
- Partners generally directly involved in the drafting process.
- Procedures largely considered to be transparent.
- Comments from partners generally well treated.
- Planned involvement of partners during implementation, but limited capacity-building actions.





Benefits and challenges

Benefits

- Ensuring consideration of experience & technical know-how in decision-making;
- Strengthening commitment & ownership;
- Introducing complementarities with other policies, strategies and funding sources

Challenges

- Mobilisation of partners (low interest/capacity)
- Stakeholders not seeing beyond their own interests
- Time constraints & administrative rules





Evolutions compared to the previous programming period

- Improved legal basis for partnership
- Code of Conduct well appreciated initiative
- More transparent selection of partners
- Improved stakeholder involvement, especially in national sector-oriented Ops and ETCs, but there is **room for improvement**
- Informal dialogue with the European Commission more often conducted and perceived more useful for OPs compared to PAs





European
Commission

