

Partnership in programming during the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy -Taking stock-

Partnership in Cohesion Policy
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Implementation of the Partnership Principle



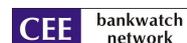
www.sftteam.eu

The NGO consultancy network "SFteam for Sustainable Future" promotes the use of structural funds for sustainable development of the regions in the Central and Eastern Europe through partnership and participation in related processes.



www.bankwatch.org

CEE Bankwatch Network is an international NGO with member organisations currently from 11 countries across the CEE and CIS region. Its mission is to prevent the environmentally and socially harmful impacts of international financial institutions and EU funding, and to promote alternative solutions and public participation.



Principles versus Reality



Our team realized several studies about the implementation of the Partnership principles in the early stages of 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy

We intended to present the situation in each country covered from the viewpoints of both the government and the NGOs.

It is quite illuminating to see what the same process looks like from different perspectives.

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Latest report, February 2013:

- **Basis:**
 - Compromise text of Art. 5 of Common Provisions Regulation and
 - Commission fiche on the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (18/01/2013)
- **Logic:**
 - The questions to be answered by Member States when preparing the Partnership Agreement and the Operational Programmes
- **Countries covered: BG, CR, CZ, EE, HU, LV, PL, RO, SK**

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Which authority has coordinated the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and which public institutions have been directly involved in this exercise ?

- The situation varies country by country but in each country the situation is clear
- In all analyzed countries (BG, CR, CZ, EE, HU, LV, SK, PL, RO), the authorities which coordinate the preparation of the Partnership Agreement were identified

What are/were the key stages of the preparation process?

- In about half of the countries, it is clear (CZ, LV, PL, RO, SK)
- In another half of the countries, it is unclear (BG, CR, HU), or the timeline is outdated (EE)

How have partners been selected?

Was the selection transparent?

What partners have been involved?

- Best examples: Latvia (every national social partner was free to participate) and Estonia (13 umbrella organizations have been invited to workshops and written consultations)
- In some countries (e.g. BG, CR, LV , RO, SK), working groups or thematic committees have been set up, with some involvement of civil society, but in some cases the selection process regarding civil society representatives (BG, RO) was controversial or unclear
- There's a lack of transparency or information in CZ, HU, PL
- Strange practice in Croatia (CR) – civil society organizations have been involved in the thematic working groups but economic and social partners and regional and local authorities have been left out

Have the following principles been observed: Diversity of partners, effectiveness of partnership, proportionality of partnership?

- Diversity and proportionality of partners are not ensured in most of the cases, even if partners are involved
- Officials generally outnumber civil society representatives; NGOs don't have much voice in the committees / working groups
- Good examples LV and EE, BUT even in Estonia, NGOs were allowed to send 1 delegate each to the consultation workshops while ministries participated with 3 people each on average
- Effectiveness: it's too early to assess

What actions did the government take to facilitate a *wide involvement* and an active participation of the partners, including in terms of accessibility?

- Public consultation organized in few countries, *not always necessarily about the Partnership Agreement itself but the document on which the PA will be based (e.g. National Development Plan in LV, “National Development 2020” strategy in HU)*
- The process was especially open in LV
- Some consultations, but they weren't really public (CR, PL) because NGOs were not invited (CR), or consultation events were announced publicly with date and city, but there was no info about the exact place, no possibility to register, no proper consultation document (constantly changing), confusion about the purpose of the meetings (PL).

What was the partners' role in and contribution to: *the analysis of the challenges and needs to be addressed by the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, contributing to the Europe 2020 Strategy*

- In some cases, partners could contribute through consultation on the baseline document (e.g. National Development Plan in LV, “National Development 2020” strategy in HU) or in the working groups (CR)
- Otherwise, there was no real chance for civil society to provide input into this (or local and regional authorities had some chance to contribute, e.g. SK) or there's no public info available

What was the partners' role in and contribution to: *the selection of thematic objectives and determination of priorities*

There were more opportunities in this regard than regarding the analysis of challenges and needs, through the following means / mechanisms / tools:

- Public commenting on the baseline document (e.g. National Development Plan in LV, "National Development 2020" strategy in HU) or on the draft Partnership Agreement (PL)
- Through working groups (CR, EE, RO) or other means (SK)
- Through roundtables (CZ) which were, however, difficult for NGOs to access.

Conclusions

- We can observe in each analysed country some steps towards the implementation of the Partnership Principle
- Without a clear EU legal framework and guidelines, the involvement of civil society in the process is still unclear and weak
- In our opinion for the successful implementation of the Cohesion Policy it is necessary a partnership
 - until the conclusion of the Partnership Agreement and
 - during its implementation
 - **SFteam and Bankwatch will monitor systematically**

Thanks for your attention

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