



## **COMMUNIQUÉ ON PARTNERSHIPS IN THE ESF** **(PARTNERSHIP COMMUNIQUÉ)**

### **Preamble**

The Community of Practice on Partnership in the ESF (COP network)<sup>1</sup>:

Recognizing that:

- The EU 2020 Strategy<sup>2</sup> calls on all parties and stakeholders to help implement the strategy, working in partnership, by taking action in areas within their responsibility;
- Partnerships are referred to in the European Social Fund (ESF) Regulation as a governance mechanism (ESF Reg., Art. 5) as well as territorial alliances (ESF Reg., Art. 3) in order to mobilise for reforms in the field of employment and labour market inclusiveness<sup>3</sup>; and,
- Partnerships foster employment, social cohesion, economic development, environmental sustainability and quality of life within EU 27 as well as in many OECD LEED countries<sup>4</sup>;

Proclaims this Partnership Communiqué<sup>5</sup> as a recommendation to the European Commission, to the end that partnerships should be integrated into both policy and design at all levels of governance in ESF programmes.

### **Recommendation 1**

*Partnerships are a valuable and essential policy instrument and practice and should be recognized as an integral part of both policy design and delivery at all governance levels.*

The COP's results prove that a large number of EU Member States<sup>6</sup> have built on their expertise of partnership implementation in either the form of contractual territorial alliances or of formal governance structures in the ESF policy design and implementation cycle (the partnership principle). Partnership is thus widely accepted as offering an invaluable instrument for stimulating more sustainable socio-economic development and the attainment of the EU's 2020 goals. The endorsement and practice of partnership across all governance levels and institutional structures, however, needs to be enhanced and more visible in some Member states.

### **Recommendation 2**

*Partnerships should be used to foster social innovation, stimulate change and mobilise reforms.*

Through the involvement, adequate consultation and participation of stakeholders, partnerships develop cross-cutting perspectives and integrated approaches to multi-dimensional problems. Partnerships adapt policies to territorial circumstances, needs and opportunities. The added value created by partnerships also involves the bringing together of diverse policy areas, the anchoring of new forms of collaboration,

<sup>1</sup> The COP network was set up as a mutual transnational learning network in order to ensure knowledge exchange between ESF-Managing Authorities and Intermediary Bodies with a focus on partnerships being adopted by national and regional Operational Programmes (OPs) of EU Member States, and, stimulate more creative partnership thinking and implementation in particular the ESF, in order to enhance policy outcomes of OPs. It contributes to better performance of the EU with impact on employment and social inclusion via enhancing the employment situation, supporting social inclusion of target groups and strengthening the economic development of the regions by providing high quality support to partnerships in the structural fund context.

<sup>2</sup> See Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion available at [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion5/pdf/5cr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion5/pdf/5cr_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fse/ce\\_1081%282006%29\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fse/ce_1081%282006%29_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_34417\\_20743766\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3746,en_2649_34417_20743766_1_1_1_1,00.html)

<sup>5</sup> The Communiqué was developed by the COP network and presented at the International Partnership Conference on 12 October 2011 in Vienna. The COP network comprises the following 12 core members: Austria: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and ZSI – Centre for Social Innovation; Belgium/Flanders: ESF-Agency Flanders; Germany: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and gsub - Projektgesellschaft mbH; Greece: Ministry of Employment and Social Protection; Hungary: National Development Agency and Ministry for National Economy; Ireland: Pobal; Poland: "Cooperation Fund" Foundation; Portugal: Programme Operacional Potencial Humano; Romania: Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://partnership.esflive.eu/node/223>



communication, participation and learning within the EU's regions, as well as the development and realisation of a common understanding of achievements. Partnerships therefore enable comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of strategies and policies. Since partnerships develop social innovations and encourage improvements in processes and actions within governance structures, they are a valuable vehicle for change.

### **Recommendation 3**

*Partnerships should contribute to the enhancement of policy outcomes from programmes, policies and actions.*

Partnerships can add considerable value to policy development by improving dialogue and co-operation between partnership members, program designers and policy makers at local, regional, national and international levels. Since they build consultative cross-policy strategies that are appropriate to territorial needs, policy outcomes implemented via partnerships have the potential to provide more sustainable solutions to development challenges than when different sectors operate in isolation.

### **Recommendation 4**

*Systematic learning from partnerships should be enhanced.*

The EU needs to respond adequately to present and future challenges such as demographic change, recovery from the financial crisis, as well as the ongoing increase of poverty within the EU. Learning environments which are built across borders, administrative cultures and institutional barriers assist the possibility of finding joint responses. More dynamic and innovative cross-territorial learning exchanges and capacity building between stakeholders at all territorial and implementation levels, where experiences and knowledge are shared openly and reflected upon at the same eye-level, can make a valuable contribution to addressing the EU's social and economic challenges and meeting the goals set for Europe 2020<sup>7</sup>.

### **Recommendation 5**

*Adequate resources should be provided for successful partnership implementation.*

By fostering social innovation via partnerships sustainable solutions can be created. In order to contribute to the EU's improved policy performance more comprehensively and sustainably, partnership implementation requires resources such as knowledge, commitment, time and money. Thus, both financial and in-kind resources are needed to build partnerships and to develop the requisite enabling environment at all governance levels.

### **Recommendation 6**

*Comprehensive efforts should be made to improve policy planning and delivery via partnerships.*

Partnership offers mechanisms for achieving comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of strategies and policies which are grounded in the common views and understanding of all involved. Thus, Member States and the EC need to work together to promote creative partnership thinking and implementation throughout the policy cycle. In line with the OMC (Open Method of Coordination)<sup>8</sup> policies designed and implemented are encouraged to adopt the partnership principle. In order to provide collective answers to challenges more comprehensive efforts need to be taken, including: 1) the improvement of vertical communication between policy makers at different governance levels; 2) the integration of civil society concerns into strategic planning exercises; 3) the enhanced use of synergies between different policies; and 4) recognition within the policy process of local diversity and the value of evidence from practice.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See EU 2020 Strategy; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>8</sup> See Open Method of Coordination; <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=750>

<sup>9</sup> See OECD LEED Vienna Action Statement on Partnerships 2010; <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/11/44598484.pdf>

