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Theme Paper on

“Partnerships on How to Create Safety in the Local Community”

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“Partnerships on How to Create Safety in the Local Community”

What is a Partnership?

A partnership is a valuable instrument or “organizational” model to overcome weaknesses of the policy and governance framework. Nonetheless, partnerships face several obstacles: they are difficult to set up and maintain, they require political will and resources, and results are not likely to come overnight.

Why partnerships today?

We are living in complex societies where the policy frameworks in place often cannot provide satisfying solutions to a growing number of problems. But while we may have to live with given policy settings, partnerships can be a great help in improving their performance: partnerships provide a mechanism for local organisations (such as Mother centers), in particular, to work together and adapt their policies to better reflect the needs of at the local level. Partnerships are thus a key instrument of local governance.

How does this work? An area based partnership is usually designed to bring together all relevant actors within a region that can contribute to improving a given situation on an equal basis. This seemingly simple principle actually raises a number of different issues.

Firstly, to bring together all relevant actors is not an easy task as this implies having around one table not only different government institutions (usually of different levels)- many of which are traditionally competing with or ignoring each other - but also social partners, entrepreneurs, NGOs, the education and scientific sector, representatives of the civil society and many more. The interests of such partners, and therefore their approach to certain problems will usually be rather different.

Secondly, partners should have equal rights - and in cases where they don't, this should be agreed to as a partnership principle. For example, to devise a strategy it is absolutely necessary that all relevant actors agree on 1) the underlying analyses and 2) on the overall targets and principles derived from those analyses.

The third key issue can be summarized under the term ownership, which stands for the partners' approach towards their partnership, its goals and its work.

How to start a partnership

Although area based partnerships are agreements of institutions of various kinds in a local or regional setting, this is not always how they begin. There are a variety of motives for starting



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a partnership, and therefore also a number of different ways to start. The initial impetus can be:

- Locally driven, or bottom-up, meaning from the region itself where the need for better co-operation and co-ordination of activities is recognised;
- Policy driven, or top-down, when someone at the central level considers the partnership approach to be the right one for the solution to a certain type of problem;
- Incentive driven, in that money is offered for a certain type of activity (as was the case with the European Commission programme on partnerships).

Whatever the reason to set up a partnership, there are certain key factors to bear in mind. It is important to get all the relevant actors to join in the partnership. So who is a relevant actor? One could say any organisation/institution that is either part of the problem to be addressed or part of the solution.

Once everybody is seated around one table, it is important to get formal commitment, which a number of partnerships have solved through the signing of a partnership contract. It is an important step forward when organisations of different background formally sign an agreement to reach out across their respective responsibilities and interests and to co-operate on certain issues, especially when non-formal partners (e.g. from civil society) are involved. To do this, partners have to share a vision. However, to succeed they also have to share a strategy; and to develop that strategy they have to agree on a shared analysis of the issues at stake.

Running a partnership is a very delicate operation requiring individuals who can really understand and work with different organisations and their requests. As the main task of partnerships is to find ways in which organisations – with their different tasks, responsibilities and approaches – can co-operate in dynamic societies, it is necessary to adapt methods and ways of working accordingly. Thus there has to be on the one hand a stable framework, and on the other hand a certain degree of flexibility to allow for all the necessary (and immediate) changes and adaptations. In addition there has to be strong communication, among the partners – so that there is maximum transparency both within and outside of the partnership.

Organisational structure and other partnership characteristics

To be efficient, a partnership should have recognisable and autonomous structure to help establish its identity. The structure should have stability and permanence as well as flexibility, and it is helpful if it has a certain degree of autonomy. The relevant characteristics are as follows:

- The partnership enjoys political and social acceptance.
- There is a strong sense of ownership.
- Agreements are based on identifiable responsibilities, joint rights and obligations, and are signed by all relevant partners.
- The partnership takes an inclusive approach (relevant actors are involved in planning and implementation).



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- Strong commitment from each of the partners is reflected in the fact that all partner organisations are equally present and, where possible, represented by experienced persons who have influence within their organization

Responsibilities and the nature of co-operation are clarified.

The coordinators of the partnership are nominated by the partners. Rules of conduct (e.g. Good communication between actors, regular attendance of meetings, continuity of personnel, regular transfer of information among the partners) should be set in the very beginning of the partnership among the partners. Resources, knowledge, know-how and ideas are shared within the partnership. Equal opportunities within the partnership are secured. Be sure that you have adequate financial and human resources available for implementation. The partnership should be able to lever funding from a range of sources. Resources, responsibilities and tasks may differ, but the added value of the partnership to each partner is recognised.

The Programme of Work

Partnerships need to develop a long-term strategy if they are to work effectively and have a lasting effect. For area based partnerships, this strategy must include a vision for the region focusing on the outcome to be achieved, an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities, and a coordinated working programme including activities and measures that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes. Some relevant characteristics are as follows:

- The working programme is based on a concerted strategy and on a comprehensive analysis of overriding problems.
- Common objectives are determined.
- Targets are set and are clearly defined.
- The strategy, the objectives and targets, and the working programme following from them, are reviewed and revised at regular intervals, taking into account partners' experiences as well as changes in context.
- The various measures and projects are planned and correspond to the strategy and to local and regional needs.
- The nature of co-operation within the partnership is described within the programme of work.
- Budget responsibilities (including different financial sources) are also specified in the programme and illustrated with budget tables.
- Measures for permanent monitoring and evaluation are planned.
- Public relations activities and a clear external reporting system are planned

Partnership members

Potential partners:

- Associations of towns and municipalities;
- Associations of political parties;
- Business sector (e.g. large firms, small and medium-sized enterprises [SMEs]);
- Chambers (e.g. agriculture, commerce, economic, employees, labour);



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- Citizens' initiatives;
- Consultants;
- Education or/and training organisations;
- Federal bodies (e.g. the Federal Office for Social Affairs and the Disabled);
- Federations (e.g. of trade unions, of industry);
- Financial institutions;
- Government institutions (on different levels and with different territorial responsibility, e.g. communities, provinces, countries);
- "Know-how" carriers;
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs, e.g. local employment initiatives);
- Non-profit organisations (NPOs);
- Political institutions;
- Public authorities (national, regional, local);
- Public employment services;
- Regional development associations and management bodies;
- Representatives of employees and employers;
- Representatives of the civil society;
- Research institutes, universities;
- School boards;
- Social partners;
- Women's spokespersons / gender mainstreaming experts.

Conclusion

To make a partnership inclusive it is important that all voices within it are heard. This both requires and guarantees a balance of influence, mutual respect and care in the organisation. Good communication will facilitate meetings, decisions and interactions between partners. One should not forget that the partners have to play a two-way communication role, acting as the link points between the organisations they represent and the partnership itself. Partners will have the most benefit from the work as long as they have equal rights and partnership lays down the financial rules, responsibilities, and tasks in a clear way to achieve the goal with the identified strategies. To sum up, following points should be given the most priority while forming a partnership:

- 1) Investments should be supported by:
 - Strong Financial situation
 - Knowledge
 - Experience
- 2) It is very important to create partnerships after a deep research. Wrong choice of a partner could also create an environment where we need to cease our activities, for example political or religious parties.
- 3) Mother Centers, internationally, should always include their members into the process of finding a partner or funding. This will help both parties to be better aware of profit and benefit for each of them. Besides, inviting members to the meetings of mother centers, will help empower the women. Eventually, the common goal for



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mother centers is not just finding fund but also personal and institutional development.

- 4) Partnerships are long term processes and parties should be open in their expectations, benefits and requests.
- 5) Partnerships are not only between at least 2 institutions or mother centers. There is also a partnership between the mother centers and the women attending there: mutual development and benefits, safe place, feeling safe and trusted, believing in one's self and continuity.



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