

Managing EU Structural Funds - using a Multi-Level Governance Framework through the Partnership Principle

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Abstract

In this paper we utilise Multi-Level Governance (MLG) within the overall context of EU Cohesion Policy to present findings on a particular research project on the relationship between partnerships at programme level and partnerships at project level in the Czech Republic. In particular, the paper examines vertical and horizontal partnerships to show how the various partners, but in particular, and crucially the role civil society organisations in EU Cohesion Policy through the Partnership Principle.

The primary finding is that effective partnerships at project level help to achieve relevance and impact of EU programmes. The Czech case examined in this paper can significantly add to, and advance our understanding of the wider debate on the effectiveness and management of EU Cohesion Policy, by highlighting the key components of partnership working and overall performance.

The intricate and dynamic inter-relationships between within and between the levels of governance and partnerships are drawn out to indicate some of the important advantages and disadvantages of a MLG approach to project and programme management.

Key words

Key words; Multi-level governance (MLG), Partnership, EU Cohesion Policy, Czech Republic, Civil Society

Introduction

There is general agreement that the EU has outgrown the institutional framework created in the 1950s and 1960s for a community of six with very limited tasks and responsibilities, it is less well accepted that, as the scope and scale of the EU's policy responsibilities have grown, the means of managing them have become more diverse and complex since the original and orthodox Community Model of European Policy Management (Metcalf, 2004). Wallace (2000) had identified four distinct configurations that evolved alongside the Community Method (a European regulatory model, Multi-Level Governance, open coordination and benchmarking, and intensive trans-governmentalism) and in this paper we utilise Multi-Level Governance (MLG) within the overall context of EU Cohesion Policy to present findings on a

particular research of the relationship between partnerships at programme level and partnerships at project level in the Czech Republic.

Methodology

Methodologically, the research discussed in this paper was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods with the objective of obtaining sufficient data and information for assessment of the implementation of partnership projects. In this regard, several methods of collection of relevant data and information were used. A continuous activity was processing of data from previously published studies on the partnership principle, together with an analysis of the legislative framework of the partnership principle. Then a questionnaire survey was carried out among the applicants for programmes funded by the ESF in the Czech Republic. In this survey, nearly one thousand responses from applicants for these programmes (divided by the support area) were obtained.

Information obtained through the previous methods was supplemented by information from in-depth guided interviews with fifty applicants for support from the OP HRE. This method was supplemented by information from focus groups. Data from databases and information systems supplemented by other independently collected data were analysed so that it was possible to obtain a relatively objective view of the situation in partnership projects and the environment in which they were implemented. Where possible and appropriate, the data from the above collection methods were combined together and further analyses were carried out.

The research results and conclusions arising were discussed at a panel discussion with representatives of the managing authority and intermediate bodies of the OP HRE. Incorporation of contributing suggestions led to greater viability of the proposed recommendations.

This research primarily concerned the OP HRE, a programme funded from ESF. Within this programme, it is particularly priority axes 3 and 5 where a large number of projects executed within a partnership can be found. The objective was to evaluate the implementation of the partnership principle in project practice and provide practical recommendations and tips for preparation of calls, application assessment and administration of projects based on the partnership principle in OP HRE.

Therefore, the research carried out analysed the creation, form, problems and possibilities of the partnership principle in OP HRE projects. The fulfilment of the partnership principle not only at the national level but also at the international level was evaluated. Financial, legislative and institutional aspects of the execution of the partnership principle at the project level were evaluated to examine partnership performance.

The survey as a whole is focused on project partnerships which are established already at the time of preparations of project applications, last throughout the project implementation and sometimes persist even after its completion. The emphasis of the grant provider is on the agreement of potential partners on future cooperation in advance in order to jointly prepare and implement the project and jointly “maintain” selected results according to the circumstances.

The larger share of the evaluated project partnerships will show characteristics of so called value partnership, the deeper, more permanent and valuable it will be. We have identified the following characteristics of partnership:

- 1. not only declared but also real shared common goals of the partners;**

2. **mutual benefits of cooperation;**
3. **a long-term relationship;**
4. **full acceptance of the contents and forms of cooperation** by all partners;
5. **necessity and balance** (each partner contributes something that would otherwise be missing and without which the result cannot be achieved);
6. **synergistic effect** – overall positive effects are greater than the sum of effects of individual participant

In the survey, we only excluded the last characteristic (synergistic effect) because it is difficult to ask a simple question on the synergistic effect: even if limiting the suggestibility of the question, respondents would tend to answer positively because they assume that the synergistic effect is expected. In our opinion, for other items this effect – negative for a valid survey – is significantly lower.

Multi Level Governance (MLG) and its application to EU Cohesion Policy

The concept of Multi Level Governance (MLG) has been widely discussed over the past 30 years to explain both the changing nature of domestic and international politics, but more especially later writers have applied it to examining the effectiveness of EU policies (Bache and Flinders, 2004). Indeed the European Commission has made a reference to multilevel governance in its White Paper on European Governance adopted in 2001. This document sets out the needs for public authorities to cooperate, interact and broaden the involvement of different stakeholders when it comes to drafting and implementing Community policies (COR, 2009). On 16 June 2009 the *Committee of the Regions* (CoR) adopted its *White Paper on Multilevel Governance*. In this White Paper the CoR formulated its vision on the future European governance system which involves regional and local authorities in the formulation and implementation of Community policies. European Union governance is multidimensional meaning that the process of governing encompasses a multiplicity of political, legal, social and executive actors that operate along and across various levels of authority (regional, national and supranational). Multilevel Governance has been the most prominent approach to describe and analyse this European integration process in most recent years.

Diverse academic disciplines and policy territories have been included under the MLG analytical umbrella due to its novelty as an explanatory framework, and because it was a challenge to traditional dominant approaches. At heart, MLG can assist in understanding the context within which competencies are transferred upwards to supra-national organisations, sideways to quasi-autonomous actors and downwards to sub-national authorities. In essence MLG facilitates an understanding of the transformation of structures and capacities of national governments to achieve policy outcomes, as well as allowing us to illustrate the dynamic interrelationships, within, and between different levels of government and governance.

Whereas the key features of the original Community Method had been the transfer of policy competences to the European level and a corresponding shift in the locus of decision-making the Commission had a strategic role in all phases of the policy process. All member states still had roles to play in policy formulation and implementation but European institutions, in particular the Commission took the lead. However, intergovernmentalism and supranationalism reflected tensions inherent in this model so other models of management became prevalent, The European regulatory model, as a mode of decentralised economic

governance, played an important role in the development of the internal market and competition policy. While the production and promulgation of regulations takes place at the EU level with member state and industry participation, there is a heavy reliance on national authorities at the implementation stage. Open coordination and benchmarking exemplified the emergence of a different management strategy based more on strengthening horizontal relationships among the relevant organisations in national administrations and the generation and adoption of standards based on professional peer group evaluations rather than hierarchical authority or central direction. The Multi-Level Governance (MLG) model that featured strongly in the management of the structural funds relied on building partnerships among organisations at different levels of government to develop and implement spending programmes (Metcalf, 2004). It is the Multi-Level Governance model which will form the framework for analysis of the case findings on this research of Partnership performance within the Czech Republic, as the following section illustrates.

EU Cohesion Policy and the Partnership Principle

It has been more than 30 years since the partnership principle was introduced into EU Cohesion Policy. The initial appearance of the partnership principle was based more on a vertical partnership rather than a horizontal partnership. Vertical types of partnership had been implemented between the European Commission and national governments and national governments and regions. Later, the vertical partnership dimension of partnership had been accompanied by horizontal partnership by adding social partners as eligible partners (EC Regulation 1260/1999). The partnership had been re-defined by EC Regulation 1083/2006 (Article 11) in the programming period 2007 – 2013, and had strengthened the position of partners. It had also been accompanied by more experienced partners at the national level in that programming period. The comprehensive description of this development is described by Bache (2010).

Cohesion policy is one of the core EU policies with an annual budget of approximately 44 billions EUR. Lobbyists, civil society organizations and politicians are interested in its implementation. Not only is the partnership principle in the cohesion policy a technical tool of economic policy, but also a tool of politics (Bache 2010).

Recent papers on the partnership principle implementation (Polverari and Michie 2009, Bache 2010 or Batory and Cartwright 2011) highlight the expectations of all relevant partners, and some of the obstacles with implementation of this principle. Partnership became a key part of Cohesion Policy, and all partners were required to take this into consideration in their plans. Civil society organisations were crucial partners, as the following examination reveals.

The role of civil society in cohesion policy through the partnership principle

Civil society organizations are very interested in the partnership principle across the whole EU. They are keen to have involvement in and develop the partnership principle. Partnerships allow civil society organizations to have some participation in political decision-making. Political parties that had previously grown out of the roots of the civil society became disconnected from civil society and became more connected to the state. The engagement of civil society organisations became a significant element of policy making.

Political parties evolved as brokers between civil society and the state, as the distance between civil society on one side and state on the other increased (Mair 1997). The interest of civil society in partnership is a reaction to a process of industrialization and urbanization and the changing role of political parties in relation to the state.

The partnership principle is regarded as a tool for democratization of EU cohesion policy implementation and accountability (Bache and Olsson 2001). EC Regulation Nr. 183/2006 (Article 9) fosters the active participation of the civil society organization in implementation of the cohesion policy in comparison with the previous programming period.

The above-mentioned studies are oriented to the partnership as a relation of the public sector and nonprofit organizations. The attention paid to the partnership principle is mainly to its programme level at the national level, usually concerning monitoring committees. Partnerships at a project level usually do not seek changes in policies and a major change at the macro level, even if successful partnerships can also bring such a change. In the section to follow, vertical and horizontal partnerships in the Czech Republic are explained and examined by utilising MLG as a framework.

Development of Partnership Principle in Central Europe: focus on the Czech Republic

Horizontal partnerships

Until 1989 civil society activities were suppressed under the Communist Party rule in the former Czechoslovakia. Political decision-making was more oriented to politics than to civil society participation in the Czech Republic (Frič 2004). The lack of capacities (personnel, technical, financial) caused civil society organizations to have a weak position in the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe (Rose-Ackerman 2007), in particular, in the case of the Czech Republic (Fric, 2004). This lack of capacities presented problems for active participation in partnerships (Batory and Cartwright 2011; Bache and Olsson 2001)

As the public sector, non-profit organisations and private companies had little experience in implementation of partnerships in the countries in question; partnership was understood in various ways. For example the Czech Office for the Protection of Competition (OPC) suspected that final beneficiaries of the structural funds were project partners, who were contractors trying to evade the law on public procurement (Opinions of the Office for the Protection of Competition, ref. 5581/05-100 and ref. 131/2005-100). This situation was uneasy particularly for the Managing authority of the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL, as partnership was one of the main principles of the programme. The situation was finally settled by negotiations between OPC, Ministry for the Regional Development and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Nevertheless, no legal framework had been established that would define the issue of partnership in the Czech Republic. Official definitions were quite unclear, thus giving way to ambiguous concepts of partnership. It was also augmented by a historical development in the CEE countries where the partnership concept had appeared only in the course of the period of transition. Similar problems also appeared during previous years in other EU countries in 1990s (Bache 2010, Bache and Olsson 2001). The MLG framework emphasizes power-sharing between levels of government, with “ *no centre of accumulated authority. Instead, variable combinations of governments on multiple layers of authority - European, national, and subnational - form policy networks for collaboration. The relations are characterized by mutual interdependence on each others’ resources, not by competition for scarce resources (Hooghe 1996: 18).*

The importance of needing time to increase experience in implementation of the partnership principle was evident in the Austrian case (Bathory and Cartwright 2011). Thus, the problems did not only apply to the historical background of communists’ rule, but also in the case of accession into the EU.

Harvey (2004) pointed out a certain disillusionment concerning the partnership principle and its implementation in Central Europe. This disillusionment partly resulted from too high

expectations on the one hand, and weak managerial skills on the part of non-profit organizations. Also it was shown that the public sector was apparently inexperienced in effective implementation of the partnership principle. The values of the public and private sectors are very different, and decision-making in the public sector can be a lengthy process due to the need to avoid mistakes.

Gombitová, Slintáková and Potluka (2010) used the example of the evaluation of cohesion policy to describe the situation in Slovakia, in which they found evidence of resistance in the public administration to apply the principle of partnership. On the other hand, however, there was apparent mobilization and responsiveness of the civil sector, which led to achieving at least partial success for the civil sector organizations.

Vertical partnerships

In the CEE countries the partnership principle began appearing more frequently during the pre-accession period. In this respect, the issue of Structural Funds, in particular, brought about the need to introduce and implement the partnership principle. The situation was similar in all CEE countries - the national governments were very reluctant to enable an opportunity for other actors to participate in political power and decision – making. This was a new experience in policy-making in CEE countries. The situation was almost the same in all CEE countries (for Poland see Komorowska 2009, for Slovakia see Gombitová, Slintáková and Potluka 2010, for Hungary see Batory and Cartwright 2011, for the whole CEE countries see Baun and Marek 2008).

There has been evidence of this typical approach of public administration described by Sobel and Leeson (2006) in all countries in question. The public sector tried to avoid mistakes resulting from being cautious rather than mistakes resulting from over cautiousness. It also influenced implementation of the partnership principle.

The Czech vertical partnership had been influenced by political representation in both central and regional governments. Central government was led by the social democratic party after elections in 2002, but the majority of regional governments was led by representatives of the Conservative Party. The situation was completely overturned after elections in 2006. There was a conservative led central government and majority of Social Democrats led regional governments.

Results

We have investigated project partnership in all project cycle management phases (EC 2004). The exception is the phase of termination of project and start of a new cycle. This was due to short period since the projects have started.

Planning phase

The actual selection of project partners significantly influences future project implementation. Selection of suitable partners can greatly enhance the future impacts of the project but also paralyze the partnership.

In 80% of cases, the applicants knew their partners from previous cooperation. The methods of initial contact are more or less the same in the OP HRE as in other OPs (differences are statistically insignificant):

Table 1: How did you find out about possible partners?

	Applicants OP HRE		Total
	Yes	No	
We knew our partner from previous cooperation.	82.7 %	75.6 %	80.2 %
The partner was recommended by another partner or someone close.	4.0 %	9.8 %	6.0 %
The partner contacted us because they were interested in our activities.	1.3 %	7.3 %	3.4 %
Other	12.0 %	7.3 %	10.3 %
Total	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %

Source: *Questionnaire survey*

The relationship between the initial contact and the type of applicant is statistically insignificant (business, NGO or other). The majority of „other methods“ is seen in public administration, where there are other selection procedures. There are hierarchy and subordination structures compared to the independence of businesses and NGOs).

The research showed that when selecting their partners the organisations (applicants and partners) mainly assessed whether they have similar objectives, what benefits will bring their inclusion in the project and whether they are pleased by the factual contents of the project and the project management methods. Less frequently it was the importance for how long they knew the partners and to what extent those partners are necessary for the success of the application.

According to the results of the survey in November 2009 among 495 applicants in the OP HRE, „ a partner is invited to join the project with whom it is easy to meet the planned indicators even if the partner basically does not contribute to the project implementation“¹. That was the opinion of about a third of the respondents who admitted that there are practices to ensure the required outputs and results.

¹ See Evaluation in relation to monitoring – evaluation of the indicator system of the OP HRE. Final Report, MLSA, February 2010, page 78.

Table 2: Do you realise formerly other partner project co-financed from ESF?

Support area OP HRE	Yes, CIP EQUAL	Yes, other	Not so far	Total
1.1	10,5%	47,4%	42,1%	100,0%
2.1	16,7%	50,0%	33,3%	100,0%
3.1	9,1%	72,7%	18,2%	100,0%
3.2	20,0%	40,0%	40,0%	100,0%
3.3	33,3%	44,4%	22,2%	100,0%
3.4	26,3%	31,6%	42,1%	100,0%
5.1	33,3%	33,3%	33,3%	100,0%
Total	20,0%	45,3%	34,7%	100,0%
<i>% of recipients</i>	27,7%	44,6%	27,7%	100,0%
<i>Others</i>	10,3%	38,2%	51,5%	100,0%

Source: questionnaire survey

The last two lines: 47 respondent subjects in OP HRE have the project applications approved. Among them there is relatively higher number of subjects, who already have realised a partnership project (28 % vs. 10 % others) and lower number of subjects without such experience (28 % vs. 52 % others). It clearly indicates that previous experience with partnership projects favourably affect the approval of the new project. However it cannot be interpreted as exclusive cause of success, as OP HRE includes very diverse aid areas and the invitations are not declared evenly in particular aid areas. Thus, previous experience cannot be the sole factor of the approval result.

75 applicants assessed „level“ of partner cooperation in actual and previous project. However not all projects are from previous period – some recipients obtain assistance for more projects in actual period, out of which some are already completed. It was assessment of „growth“ of experience with partnership projects. One third of recipients did not expressed their opinion to the question, particularly as there is too short time in realisation of their actual project.

Territorial aspects of partnership

Local partnerships are defined for purposes of our assessment as cooperation of subject within municipality or maximum within the borders of county. Such partnerships are applied almost in two thirds of evaluated cases:

Table 3: What partnership type did occur regarding the partner operation place? (%)

Local (max. within county)	63,4
Within CR (some partners are from other counties)	22,2
Within EU, EEA (come partners are not from CR)	14,4

Source: questionnaire survey

From the set of all applicants, we have chosen 48, which have the projects approved and realised in OP HRE. Most frequently (always one fifth or fourth) they are from support area 1.1, 3.1 and 3.4. These recipients were again sorted from the specified aspect, compared with the 70 other beneficiaries. It was shown that no statistically significant differences are between both groups. In other words, from the selected territory aspect the partnerships are created roughly equally in OP HRE as in the other OP.

Sectoral aspect of partnership

The situation is more balanced from the sector point of view than the territorial. More than one third partnerships are formed by subjects from various sectors, but the occurrence of intra-sector partnerships is equal – i.e. subjects engaged in the same branch of activities.

Table 4: What type of partnerships occurred regarding the sectors? (%)

Intra-industrial (partners are from one industry)	37,3
Intra-sector (partners are only from public sector, only from non-profit sector, only from business sector)	26,9
Inter-sector (partners are from various sectors)	35,8

Source: questionnaire survey

At first view it might seem that the partners will search partners, who supplement their own activity, and thus originates from different industries. But often these are cases, when there are joined e.g. two children and youth houses, two public service organisations with similar engagement etc., and one of them is usually more experienced than the other, or operates in larger scope of activities.

Regarding the inter-sector partnerships, often case is cooperation of a non-profit organisation and a municipality. This is the typical case of an attempt to change horizontal partnership into vertical one, especially for the phase of sustainability. Non-profit organisations with low financial capacities need partner able to finance the sustainability of activities. Another aspect is that municipalities can help NGOs with mainstreaming and persuasion of their ideas in political decision-making.

Situation is worse in cooperation of enterprises and NGOs. Data from IS Monit 7+ do not show more frequent origination of partner projects with participation of subjects between business and non-profit sector. Many companies have project with partners beyond own industry – with chamber of commerce, however still only few of them have project with non-profit organisation.

It shall be noted that roughly one third of applicants have minimum 3 partners. Partnership of three, 4 and more partners is much more intensive demanding the internal management, occurrence of conflicts, effective communication, joint sharing of continuous results etc. The more partners, the more requirements should have MA, or IB concerning previous experience of the applicant and its competence to effective management of the project.

More detailed finding of number of partners and their diversity was based on data from IS Monit7+ to 24th November 2010. By then it contained data on 8353 projects, out of which almost one fifth (18.9 %) had partners.

Out of 1579 partner projects, 53 % have one partner, over 20 % two partners etc. Contrary to it, out of questioned (207) subjects (recipients) only 43 % have one partner, but almost one fourth has two partners.

Now we combine partnership regarding territory and partnership regarding the sectors into one table:

Table 5: Types of partnership

Type of partnership	%
intra-industry local	24,6
intra-sector local	17,5
inter-sector local	21,8
intra-industry within CR	8,5
intra-sector within CR	6,6
inter-sector within CR	6,6
intra-industry within EU	4,3
intra-sector within EU	2,4
inter-sector within EU	7,6

Source: questionnaire survey

It may be seen that relative majority is taken by intra-industry partnership (25%), local inter-sector (22%) and local intra-sector (18%). The lowest frequency is taken by intra-sector partnerships with foreign partner. As in other cases, this phenomenon is not result of single factor. It is rather concurrence of circumstances, among other particularly fact the partnership with foreign subject almost do not occur, except support area 5.1, where it is a requirement of the OP HRE.

Applicants and recipients in the support area 5.1 International Cooperation established most frequently the inter-sector (i.e. not e.g. intra-industry) partnerships. This type of partnership was made by 4 out of 6 applicants, whereas between the applicants in other support areas of OP HRE there were only 2 out of 68.

A lot of findings can be derived from statements of beneficiaries and their partners (up to 100 persons questioned in total):

a) targeting

In most projects (79 %), at the time of the preparation, all partners already had their own objectives conforming to the objectives of a project. In other cases, some partners (whether a majority or a minority) supplemented their own objectives after the project preparation started,

b) joint decision making

Joint decision making is practiced in less than a half of projects. This does not mean that the others “disapprove” but that they do not practically make decisions and only join a decision made by someone else, generally the beneficiary.

All proposals for major changes, further procedures and sub-objectives are raised by the beneficiary in about one third of projects. Other partners raise at least some proposals in about two thirds of projects.

c) functional non-substitutability

There is no clear functional non-substitutability in almost one half of projects, i.e. that all partners have different, unique roles in a project. This is not detrimental to project quality and achieving objectives, it only highlights the potential redundancy of a part of the partners. This would have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The most frequent situations are that two or more partners do the same thing – the same social service, the

same training. It happens when these partners “find” a target group and someone else “services” it. An advantage for the beneficiary is that the value of the monitoring indicators can be achieved more easily and that a partner (if lost) can be replaced with another one. We can say, with a bit of exaggeration, that it is an analogy to the forbidden replacement of a partner with a supplier in the figurative sense that these partners are suppliers of target group people to the beneficiary. Of course, the end of this analogy is that a beneficiary has compliance with material output indicators of a project due to such a “supply of people” in discussed cases, whereas explicit and contextual definitions of a forbidden supplier in partnership projects tend to describe services provided for profit. Some projects look (and appear to have been developed) as follows: The future beneficiary is a common supplier of services, e.g. training. The beneficiary does have any contracts now. The beneficiary approaches its future partners and offers them “tailor-made” training for free (paid by the ESF) if they become its project partners. The beneficiary prepares everything; the partners gladly sign it and leave everything on the beneficiary. The beneficiary takes ready-to-use training materials out of a drawer and uses them after dusting them off. Training is certainly carried out and participants exist. Project partners have just supplied human “material”. We think these cases are wholly legitimate in respect of OP HCE rules. Otherwise, they would have to be interpreted as impermissible favouritism on this service market.

It is also necessary to point out that some key activities are performed without the participation of partners in a high number of projects and are implemented by the beneficiary alone. The partners just acknowledge these activities, no matter how important they are in a project, and they are probably not discussed at meetings of the implementation team.

d) synergic effect

Implementation of a project in the OP HRE gives rise to outputs such as educational programmes, training, care of target groups etc. If all partners worked independently, in most cases some of the outputs would be accomplished and some would not. Those not accomplished independently can be generally called partnership added value – a synergic effect of a project. Questioned beneficiaries and partners confirmed in up to 80 % of cases that approved project objectives could only be fulfilled within current partnerships, not by partners independently.

Conclusions

This case provides empirical evidence of a Multi-Level Governance (MLG) approach to analysing the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy at country/state level, and illustrates the intricate and dynamic inter-relationships between the respective partnerships and actors in achieving project and programme aims and objectives. It adds to wider understanding on the debate about the management of EU Cohesion Policy by showing some of the key components of the inter-relationships and the strengths and weaknesses of current policy and practice.

The primary finding is that effective partnerships at project level help to achieve relevance and impact of EU programmes. The Czech case examined in this paper can significantly add to, and advance our understanding of the wider debate on the effectiveness and management of EU Cohesion Policy, by highlighting the key components of partnership working and overall performance. The intricate and dynamic inter-relationships between within and between the levels of governance and partnerships are drawn out to indicate some of the

important advantages and disadvantages of a MLG approach to project and programme management.

Partnership at the project level is typical as a horizontal partnership. Partners are equal as no one has coercive power in the partnership. Typically, civil society organizations attempt to reshape horizontal partnerships to vertical ones by inviting public sector organisations as partners. Thus, civil society organizations are in a dichotomous position. They usually initiate the establishment of a partnership by taking on the role as a leading partner and invitation of partners from public sector. There are usually two main reasons for doing it. The first one is financial reason (financing the activities for long-term sustainability after the structural funds assistance). The second reason is the need to pursue results of the partnership by public sector.

Identification and selection of partners is conducted very carefully. The applicant mainly considers the formal acceptability of the partner, the benefits the partner brings to the project, the partner's expected role in the project and the balance of the partner solution. Most applicants know their partners from previous cooperation. The decisive and more frequent aspect of the search and selection of partners is their familiarity with the applicant from previous cooperation.

Most partnership projects are adequately structured in relation to their project objectives due to the fact that the projects have been designed with regard to a specific structure of partners. On the other hand, many of them probably include partners increasing their capacities to achieve planned outputs and are not functionally necessary there.

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