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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

**Best practices as regards implementation of the partnership principle in the European
Structural and Investment Funds' programmes**

Accompanying the document

Commission Delegated Regulation

**on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European
Structural and Investment Funds**

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This Staff Working Document gathers some inspiring examples of good practices as regards implementation of the partnership principle in the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds' programmes, as referred to in Article 5(3) of the draft Common Provisions Regulation of the ESI Funds.

1. Good practices for transparent procedures to be followed to identify relevant partners

In Romania, for the preparation of the 2007-2013 period, the ESF managing authority was responsible for conducting a contextual analysis prior to the country's accession to the EU. This document served as the key programming document for the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and operational programmes. As well as the need to work in partnership with the most relevant policy actors for the programming exercise at national level, it was clear that partnership mechanisms at regional and local levels were needed to strengthen capacity for decision making and implementation. A background analysis regarding employment and social inclusion in each region was conducted via meetings and discussions with relevant actors at regional and county level. In the North East region, for example, more than 200 actors were involved¹.

In Hungary, for the preparation of the 2007-2013 period, the methodology for the public consultation on the NSRF was set up following recommendations from civil society organisations. About 4000 partner organisations, including trade unions, employee interest groups and NGOs, representatives of business, education and science, were invited to advise on the orientation of the NSRF and the Operational Programmes (OPs). The general public was also able to access and comment on the NSRF and the OPs via a webpage. Workshops were organised to discuss draft versions with professional and social partners and ministerial representatives².

¹ Community of Practice on Partnership in the ESF, Guidebook 'How ESF managing authorities and intermediate bodies support partnership', 2011.

² Community of Practice on Partnership in the ESF, Guidebook 'How ESF managing authorities and intermediate bodies support partnership', 2011.

2. Good practices for involving different categories of partners in the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and programmes, information to be provided on their involvement, as well as at various stages of implementation

In the United Kingdom, between 2007 and 2013, partners were already involved in consultations at different points in the programming cycle. For the new 2014-2020 programming period, the UK Government has published guidance on European Union Investment Strategies, to explain the role partners will be invited to play, the support that will be available to them, and the timetable for implementation.

In Latvia, preparations for the period 2014-2020 involved an extensive and transparent public participation process, conducted around the National Development Plan. Informative meetings were held about partnership in programming. Furthermore, it was possible to comment on negotiations between Member State representatives and the European Commission and there was a follow-up meeting to discuss comments from social partners, held at the Ministry of Finance.

For the 2014-2020 programming period **in France**, the *Instance Nationale de Préparation de l'Accord de Partenariat* launched an official public consultation ahead of drafting the French Partnership Agreement. About 80 organisations representing the state, local authorities, social partners, civil society and economic actors, took part in thematic workshops in March and April 2013 to feed the drafting of the agreement. A national partnership, made up of 300 organisations representing various stakeholders, was invited to send written contributions to a consultation document drafted by DATAR (*Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale*).

3. Good practices for rules of membership and internal procedures of monitoring committees

In the Czech Republic, for the 2007-2013 programming period, every relevant Czech organisation was able to appoint representatives for monitoring committees. Each appointment required a CV and a letter of motivation and was sent to the national coordination body for NGOs, the Government Council for Non-Profit NGOs. The Committee responsible for European Affairs within the Council confirmed appointments to the monitoring committees.

In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany, for the 2007-2013 programming period, the monitoring committee is responsible for all EU Funds. It is composed of high-level representatives from the private sector (e.g. trade unions, employers, small enterprises, chambers, farmers, environment and social welfare associations). It meets frequently, five to six times per year. The monitoring committee has a real say in decision-making on proposed projects, and the public and private partners have the same number of votes. The participatory system also includes working parties and other consultative bodies.

In Denmark, the monitoring committee for the rural development programme for 2007-2013 always takes decisions on the basis of consensus. No voting takes place in practice.

4. Good practices for involving partners in the preparation of calls for proposals, progress reports, monitoring and evaluation of programmes

During the 2007-2013 programming period **in Greece**, the National Confederation of Disabled People (NCDP), as a member with voting rights in the monitoring committees, has been examining the correct implementation of accessibility criteria in all notices, calls for tender, etc. These criteria were not binding for accepting applications for Structural Funds' support.

In Poland, there is a Working Group for Civil Society within the Coordinating Committee of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) which formulates opinions and recommendations for implementing horizontal policies; monitoring the alignment of operational programmes with the Polish Country Development Strategy; monitoring the management and control systems for OPs; monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming and sustainable development principles in OPs.

In Portugal, the monitoring committee set up for 2007-2013 programming has the opportunity to express its opinion on evaluation reports which are discussed in its meetings. In addition, various partners made a substantial contribution to the Action Plan, which had to be drafted in view of implementing recommendations set out in evaluation reports.

5. Good practices for strengthening partners' institutional capacity

In Southern Italy, a support structure funded by technical assistance has been established to improve economic and social partners' involvement in regional and sectoral programmes. The economic and social partners also created and managed a very successful technical assistance project from 2000 to 2006, financed by the ERDF and focusing on improving their knowledge of development programmes and strengthening their capacity to participate.

For the 2007-2013 Operational Programme for **North West England**, the ERDF Technical Group in Liverpool is supported by two local staff employed through technical assistance funding and by the managing authority who provide management information relating to the OP (spend, outputs etc.) This staff attends meetings of the Technical Group in advisory capacity.

In Poland, the National Thematic Network for Partnership was established in June 2010 to support members of monitoring committees, aiming to make their activities more effective and to eliminate problems in implementing structural funds. The network has the support of the Polish Ministry for Regional Development. The cost of the network is covered from the Technical Assistance Operational programme 2007-2013. The network holds a national annual conference and regional meetings. It carries out analysis, shares expertise based on thematic studies, holds a competition for the monitoring committee with the good partnership practices, and organises educational activities. It enables horizontal exchange of information using a knowledge database, administered by the Ministry for Regional Development.

In Portugal, the Confederation of Portuguese Industry carried out a project under the Human Potential OP financed by the ESF for 2007-2013. This aims to improve its social dialogue capabilities, consolidate and expand its sectorial and regional representativeness, and strengthen its activities at international level. It has mainly targeted the Confederation's structure and associates, including sectorial, multi-sectorial and regional associations, and chambers of commerce and industry.

6. Good practices for Member States' assessment of the implementation of partnership and its added value

After the 2007-2013 programming period **in the United Kingdom**, Birmingham City Council, Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership plan to present a report to the UK Government which will include recommendations on how to implement new partnership and governance arrangements for EU Structural Funds more effectively.

7. Role of the Commission in the dissemination of good practices

During the period 2007-2013, **the Community of Practice on Partnership (CoP)**, funded from the ESF, was a network of ESF managing authorities and intermediate bodies from nine Member States. This network intensively exchanged experience about different ways of implementing partnerships using the 'critical friends' review method, with special emphasis on governance processes and actions. The CoP was co-financed by technical assistance allocations at the initiative of the Commission. The network produced several key lessons reports, ran a web portal including a database on partnership experiences and published a partnership learning manual at the beginning of 2012.