

INTER-SECTORAL COOPERATION EXEMPLIFIED BY EU FINANCED PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED IN PODKARPACKIE VOIVODESHIP

INTRODUCTION

Polish accession to the European Union opened new possibilities for economic and social development. In order to seize the opportunity to accelerate the development of the country's civilization, Poland, guided by recommendations from the European Commission and the experiences of the *Old Union* countries, kept increasing emphasis on cooperation between the three sectors: public, social, and economic. The said cooperation, also called inter-sectoral cooperation, takes place in different areas but is mainly implemented through project activities financed by the European Fund. Creating this type of partnerships is a difficult task as it requires the close cooperation of the representatives of organisations whose priorities, objectives, and methods of operation may differ considerably.

This article introduces the idea of inter-sectoral partnership based on the author's experience from the implementation of projects in Podkarpackie Voivodeship aimed at assisting people facing social exclusion.

THE IDEA OF INTER-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIP

The idea of partnership between the representatives of different sectors of activity, perceived as an instrument of public policies, was known in Europe as early as the 1920s. Initially, these type of partnerships involved entities from the public sector and the business sector whose primary aim was not only to deliver public services at the local level, but also increase the development potential of local government units (Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014: 13). This type of partnership was known as a public-private partnership (Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014: 14).

The public-private partnership between a public institution and a private enterprise is also called a two-sectoral partnership. However, there is a partnership which, in addition to the entities from the above-mentioned sectors,

also involves the social sector and is usually represented by NGOs. This type of partnership is called inter-sectoral. It must be noted, however, that some authors also identify those situations where the private party is represented by a business or social entity as public-private partnerships. This understood partnership of the three sectors was one of the elements of reform in the area of public management since the beginning of the 1990s (Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014: 15). At that time, partnerships started being recommended – perhaps not as a perfect panacea but certainly as one of the effective instruments in combating unemployment, poverty and social exclusion (comp. Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014: 15). This was reflected in both European and national legislation. The basic EU regulations related to the principle of partnership are primarily covered by Council Regulations (EC) of 11 July 2006. No. 1083/2006, which lay down the general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999. When discussing the legal basis in Poland referring to inter-sectoral cooperation, at least several legal acts must be enumerated here. Taking into account the context of social projects, the most important would be: The Act of 05 June 1998 on voivodeship local government (Journal of Laws of 2001 No 142, item 1590, as amended), the Act of 19 December 2008 on public-private partnership, and the Act of 13 June 2003 on social employment (Journal of Laws No 122, item 1143, as amended).

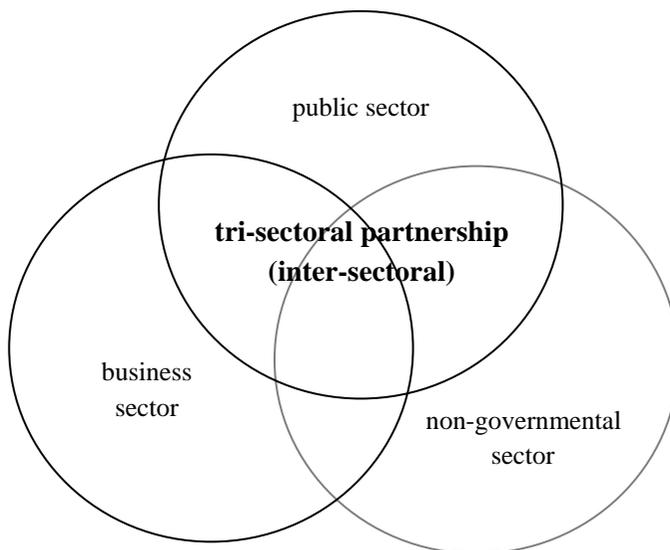


Figure 1. The scheme of a tri-sectoral partnership

An inter-sectoral partnership has been defined in compliance with the applicable regulations. Other numerous definitions can also be found in literature. Having generalised and combined these definitions, we can claim that an inter-sectoral partnership is a strategic alliance of organisations representing the various sectors of social life which are entered into in order to establish a cooperation, to which all partners contribute their expertise and resources, in which they together bear the risks and costs and share the benefits achieved from the common objectives of the partnership and the objectives of the individual partners (comp. Tennyson 2003; Jamrozik, Zmysłowski 2010: 11).

The very typology of partnerships poses some problems. Thus, partnerships can be grouped according to the type of activities, forms of operation, their initiators, the operational goal, or according to the measures taken to achieve the objectives. For the purpose of this article it is worth quoting the classification of partnerships according to the type of activities; the following partnerships can be distinguished here:

- 1) public-private partnership (PPP) which is a contract between a public institution and a private organisation entered into in order to accomplish a specific project in the public arena.
- 2) project partnerships where the objectives of a partnership are strictly defined in the project and the establishment of such a partnership is often associated with competition requirements set by the entity that finances the tasks.
- 3) industry/sector partnerships which are a platform for agreement between organisations/ institutions engaged in related activity.
- 4) local/tri-sectoral partnerships which are an agreement between public institutions, enterprises, and non-governmental organisations that wish to work together for their region, residential area, locality or district.

EXAMPLES OF EU PROGRAMMES FACILITATING INTER-SECTORAL COOPERATION

Projects involving a partnership in the context of acting on behalf of groups threatened with social exclusion in Poland were carried out under at least a few programmes. This article does not aim at discussing all of the kinds of programmes that create opportunities for partnerships, but only indicating those that can pass as a representative of the rest of the funds. Particularly noteworthy here are such programmes as: Leonardo da Vinci, EQUAL Community Initiative and the Operational Programme Human

Capital. Each of them allowed the possibility to establish partnerships, including international ones.

LEONARDO DA VINCI PROGRAMME

The Leonardo da Vinci programme was launched in Europe in 1995. It was three years later that Poland would benefit from the right to participate. At present, the third edition of this programme, implemented as part of a broader program “Lifelong Learning Programme” comes to a close. Starting from 01 January 2014 the “Lifelong Learning Programme” will be replaced by the Erasmus+ Programme (Erasmus+, <http://www.llp.org.pl/>).

The Leonardo da Vinci programme was aimed at stimulating the development of various forms of lifelong learning by supporting cooperation between education and training systems in countries participating in the programme. The program was to contribute to improving the quality and attractiveness of education and vocational training in Europe. Additionally, Leonardo da Vinci supported the mobility of workers in the European labour market so that graduates and employees could acquire new skills during internships and on-the-job training while improving their skills according to modern standards. Especially important here was fostering openness and inter-cultural sensitivity, learning foreign languages and gaining the ability to adapt to living and working conditions in different European countries (Leonardo da Vinci). The programme supported only international activities. Depending on the type of project, one or more foreign partners were necessary to implement the activities. Projects could be implemented in cooperation with partners from the EU member states (this group also includes EFTA-EEA member countries and Switzerland since 2011).

The programme engaged partners representing different sectors. Projects could be implemented by any entity: public, non-public as well as commercial ones. In the Polish edition of the programme participants were mainly universities, schools and training companies. Polish universities were initially evidently reluctant to cooperate with the final beneficiaries of many projects, especially from the economic sector. Further cooperation, however, developed successfully. Although the programme was not directly aimed at assisting people threatened with social exclusion, a number of projects supporting training systems for people in this social category could still be implemented. These projects also allowed the possibility of exchanging experiences between social workers during study visits, exchanges and internships.

EQUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

The EQUAL Community Initiative is a programme launched in 25 EU countries in the years 2000-2006 and financed through the European Social Fund and directly from the budgets of countries participating in the Initiative (EQUAL). The EQUAL Initiative was primarily aimed at testing and promoting new measures of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market; for example, gender, racial, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age, or sexual orientation against both those who are employed and those seeking jobs.

The EQUAL Initiative in Poland, which complemented the National Development Plan 2004-2006, was carried out by Development Partnerships and selected by way of a competition. The EQUAL Initiative provided examples of good practice and innovative solutions which, thanks to international cooperation and effective disseminating measures, can be implemented in the many member states of the European Union. The most important elements of the EQUAL programme were: thematic approach, partnership, empowerment of discriminated groups in the partnership (empowerment), transnational cooperation, and innovation and mainstreaming of achieved results (mainstreaming).

The effectiveness of the EQUAL programme was not determined on the basis of the number of direct beneficiaries, but on the quality of the achieved innovative results which would be introduced into widespread use in the labour markets. The scope of activities of the EQUAL Community Initiative in Poland covered five issues:

- 1) Facilitating the access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or reintegrated into the labour market, in order to promote a labour market which is open to everyone.
- 2) Strengthening domestic social economy (the third sector), particularly the services for local communities and improving job quality.
- 3) Enhancing the adaptability of enterprises and employees to structural economic changes and their use of information technologies and other new technologies.
- 4) Combining family and professional life and the re-integration of those men and women who have left the labour market by developing more flexible and effective forms of work organisation and supportive services.
- 5) Supporting the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers.
- 6) The idea of inter-sectoral partnership in the EQUAL programme was promoted as an optimal instrument to solve social problems (Piotrowski, Włoch 2008: 47). The partnership was indeed (as was previously men-

tioned) one of the basic elements of the programme. Under the programme, 107 out of 751 proposed project initiatives were qualified to be implemented in Poland. Projects were implemented by the Development Partnerships which joined as many as 632 organisations. An average partnership consisted of 6-7 entities. The Development Partnerships (DPs) were administered by different institutions: organisations offering support for discriminated groups (36% Partnerships), education and training organisations (20% Partnerships), higher education schools and research institutions (15% Partnerships), public administration units (national, regional and local – 10% Partnerships) and unions (5% Partnerships) (EQUAL).

THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME HUMAN CAPITAL

The Operational Programme Human Capital (OP HC) is one of the programmes financed through European Funds and implemented in Poland in the years 2007-2013. In order to effectively develop human resources, the program focused its support in the following areas: employment, education, social inclusion, development of the adaptive potential of employees and enterprises, as well as issues related to the establishment of an efficient and effective public administration at all levels and to the implementation of good governance. The primary aim of the Programme is employment growth and social cohesion. This goal was to be achieved through the implementation of the following six strategic objectives:

- 1) Raising the level of economic activity and employability of the unemployed and those professionally inactive.
- 2) Reducing areas of social exclusion
- 3) Improving the adaptability of workers and enterprises to changes in the economy
- 4) Dissemination of public education at all educational levels while increasing the quality of educational services and their stronger correlation with the needs of the knowledge-based economy
- 5) Increasing the capacity of public administration in terms of developing policies and providing high quality services, and strengthening partnership mechanisms
- 6) The increase of territorial cohesion (European Funds Portal)
- 7) The programme provided the possibility of implementing the so-called partnership projects under the Act of 7 November 2007 on the amendment of certain acts in connection with the implementation of the Struc-

tural Funds and the Cohesion Fund (new art. 28a of the Act on the principles of development policy). In accordance with the guidelines, a partnership project could be implemented on the basis of a decision or co-financing agreement concluded with the beneficiary acting on behalf of and for the partners to the extent defined in an agreement or partnership agreement. In the case of partnership projects, an agreement or partnership agreement determined in particular the partners' tasks, the principles of shared project management and how the funds were transferred by the beneficiary to cover the necessary costs incurred by the partners for the implementation of tasks in the project.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN INTER-SECTORAL COOPERATION ON PROJECTS INVOLVING PEOPLE THREATENED WITH SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The CREIN project

One of the first initiatives in the Podkarpackie region financed through EU funds and involving inter-sectoral partnership was the CREIN project financed under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The project was implemented in the years 2001–2003 and was to develop effective methods in helping women leaving prison. It was promoted by the Spanish company *Information and Image Management Systems* (Barcelona) and among the project partners were, apart from Polish institutions, enterprises and institutions from France, Italy and Austria.

It has been assumed in the CREIN project that female prisoners should successfully pass the difficult process of reintegration which would enable them to effectively enter the labour market. This process should not only involve overcoming psychological problems, but also completing the necessary qualifications in new information and communication technologies (ICT). Additionally, CREIN assumed a number of activities aimed at sensitising the public and SME employers to the problems of people leaving prison.

Apart from the tangible effects of this project, such as the purchase of computer equipment for female prisoners, the financing of training, and the development of original training programmes, it also resulted in the integration of various institutions in actions aimed at increasing opportunities for ex-prisoners in the labour market. Local government institutions, NGOs and private enterprises alike were involved in the project. What is more, CREIN

created the opportunity to establish contacts and the exchange of experience between the Detention Facility in Rzeszów and other penal institutions of the EU, in this case specifically the prisons in Barcelona and Marseille.

Animator Project

The *Animator* Project was implemented under the EQUAL Community Initiative, with its aim was to create equal opportunities in the labour market in the Podkarpackie region through the joint development and testing of effective mechanisms for professional activation in cooperation with employers, all within the framework of developing and promoting an open labour market. Pursuant to the project's objective, these measures would have been worked out by the so-called Development Partnership, i.e. the association of NGOs, public employment service institutions, educational institutions, social welfare centres, employers and businessmen who supported the objectives of the project and would cooperate with the aim of resolving the problems in the labour market identified by the Partnership¹. The partners for the project were selected in such a way as to take full advantage of the capacities of institutions declaring their involvement in the project. The members of the Development Partnership specialised in various aspects of the labour market and were often located in the furthest parts of the Podkarpackie region. They differed significantly from one another and each day were faced with completely different problems in the labour market which, as a result of cooperation, was to foster innovative solutions (*The Strategies of Animator Project*, http://www.animator.equal.pl/projekt_animator/opis_projektu/) The Partnership included 14 institutions (during project implementation a few partners resigned from the project) which represented NGOs, public employment services, social welfare centres, non-governmental educational institutions, as well as employers and businessmen.

The key objectives of the project include:

- 1) creating an effective system of cooperation (in terms of exchanging information, undertaking joint projects) between organisations from the different sectors (NGOs, local governments at various levels, offices, businesses, social welfare institutions, schools) acting to bridge barriers and eliminate discriminatory practices in local labour markets.
- 2) Providing training and advisory organisations with the results of detailed research and analysis carried out under the project, which would facilitate

¹ The article uses source materials: *The Strategies of Animator Project*, the application of Animator project and the official website of the project (www.rarr.rzeszow.pl/projekty/equal).

the adapting of training programs to the needs of target professional and social groups.

- 3) introducing a new profession to support the labour market, the so-called *Animator*.

The project was successfully completed as the target indicators had been achieved. Another advantage of the project was the fact that, shortly after the project came to a close, the institutions participating in it were able to join the new projects under the partnership formula with less anxiety.

INNOVATION PROJECT – A MODEL OF COOPERATION FOR LABOUR MARKET INSTITUTIONS AND THE LABOUR MARKET

One of the most interesting project proposals implemented under the Operational Programme Human Capital (OP HC) was aimed at promoting inter-sectoral cooperation and entitled: *An innovative model of cooperation for labour market institutions and the labour market*. Although this project was not considered a partnership project, according to the formal division applied in OP HC it is worth a brief discussion here due to its pro-partnership overtone. The main objective of the project was to bridge gaps in communication and the flow of information between public and non-public institutions, the labour market, and social welfare services. This aim was achieved by developing a model of cooperation between the aforementioned institutions. The developed model compiled ICT tools and traditional methods improving communication. The following must be included here: 1) a web platform used to encourage and initiate cooperation between private and public labour market institutions and social welfare institutions, 2) a model training programs for employees of private and public labour market institutions and social welfare institutions, 3) organising meetings with a team of experts, 4) a helpline which is the source of current information for the institutions participating in the project. The project garnered much attention of public and private labour entities. The main advantages of the project include: more efficiently organised cooperation and the flow of knowledge through modules offered in the on-line platform, improving the competence of the institutions' personnel through training such as e-learning, quick access to information on the planned initiatives and projects, along with the possibility of searching for partners using innovative tools.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of projects financed from European Union funds creates new opportunities for cooperation between the different actors across sectors. So far, a significant number of projects for solving social problems have already been implemented in the Podkarpackie region. Some of these projects have been implemented under the formula of inter-sectoral cooperation (Szluż, 2013: 7-11). However, organisational practices and procedures provided different experiences. Part of the projects were implemented without many difficulties, while the implementation of others entailed a lot of misunderstanding and tension which were difficult to ease. There were several causes of these difficulties. Three of them are especially noteworthy.

Firstly, developing principles of cooperation between a local government and NGOs or businesses is sometimes forced from above (as e.g. required by a project). Therefore, such cooperation was sometimes established not out of authentic need but of *formal* constraint.

Secondly, based on several known cases it could be said that local governments do not treat NGOs as a full partner. A local government tends to play the role of *the dominant one* in negotiations.

Thirdly, projects involved organisations of all sizes, resources, methods of management, and above all with varying experience in the implementation of EU projects. All this resulted in communication problems and tension in the relations between partners.

Undoubtedly, apart from the project goals which were mostly achieved, another advantage which is not to be underestimated is the multitude of experience acquired by organisations. Projects which purposely involved or allowed for the possibility of inter-sectoral partnership are a kind of testing ground, as the institutions that carry out such projects and then successfully pass the stages of tax audits, internal and external audits, and ministerial control expect it to bring positive results in future projects.

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Summary

After Polish accession to the European Union there emerged a lot of new opportunities to create and develop cooperation between the three sectors: public, social and economic. This cooperation was and is implemented on the ground of projects financed from the EU funds. However, creating these types of partnerships is a difficult task as it requires the close cooperation of representatives from the organisations whose priorities, objectives and methods of operation may differ considerably. The article presents the idea of inter-sectoral partnership based on the author's experience from the implementation of projects aimed at assisting those people threatened with social exclusion and which were implemented in Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

Key words: Inter-sectoral cooperation, projects, European Fund, social exclusion