

question government policies, without regard to any existing financial relationship and to determine and manage their own business.

NGOs participating in partnership shall be ensured the right to elect their representatives through a democratic election process. The costs of this shall be included in the national budgets.

As a part of Cohesion Policy, safeguards shall be provided for NGOs expressing views opposing government position, making sure that the state or government would not impose any sanctions on them, nor withhold or deny support. Should there be the misuse of political superiority suspected, the affected civil society organization shall have the right to turn to EU level mediation bodies.

The new regulations guiding Cohesion Policy funds should set minimum standards for partnership, including access to information, stronger definition of the roles of partner and procedures for compensating involvement. These should include binding measures for meaningful public participation and partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, at all programming stages and levels (European, national and regional), as well as in implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Subject of partnership

Partnership shall cover the preparation, programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Cohesion Policy strategies and programmes of national and regional level. This shall include but not be limited to the involvement of representatives of stakeholders in teams developing national and regional strategies and operational programmes, monitoring committees, project and programme evaluation teams etc. Planning should be cooperative and striving for consensus, giving all stakeholders the possibility to be involved from the early start on.

Capacity building for public administration, managing authorities and stakeholders is essential to further develop the culture of transparent and effective cooperation between all partners both in member states and accession countries. Guidelines on best practices, tools and methods of meaningful partnership should be compiled to enhance this process and to aid the implementation of partnership processes.

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project and programme information at a central website, including a timeline for programming and related public consultation, preparatory documentation, programmes, project selection criteria and processes, the composition and minutes of committees, proposals, environmental impact assessments, selected projects, beneficiaries, auditing, monitoring and evaluation criteria and reports. Processes leading to decisions, and the implementation and enforcement of them, should be clear and accessible to anyone.

Cohesion Policy funds working for the beneficiaries

We welcome the European Commission's initiative for the reduction of administrative burdens linked to the use of Cohesion Policy funds, including the wider application of "simplified methods of reimbursement" (standard scale of unit costs and lump-sum payments for grants) and the motion for differentiation in eligibility rules "where needed to reflect the specificities of the policy, the instrument and the beneficiaries".

We also call on member states to follow this track and work on the reduction of financial and administrative barriers regarding the access to Cohesion Policy funds, taking into account the specificities of NGOs and public benefit service providers in particular. We are open to provide further contribution as to the concrete tools and instruments of this simplification based on practical experience of civil society groups.

We also welcome the Commission's call for maintaining support for the dialogue between various levels of stakeholders, social partners and civil society. To this end, we recommend member states to introduce funding schemes to promote partnership practices, participation and capacity building.

We hereby request the annual review of the implementation of the above recommendations, involving representatives of the nonprofit sector.

Budapest, 7 June 2011

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Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Literature

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