

# **Partnership without borders**

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# **Table of contents**

## **Introduction**

### **1. Institutional meaning of partnership**

- 1.1. Why partnership at all?
- 1.2. Definitions of partnership
- 1.3. How should transnationality be understood?
- 1.4. Most important characteristics of partnership
  - 1.4.1. Equality of partners towards one another
  - 1.4.2. Transparency
  - 1.4.3. Mutual benefits
- 1.5. Partner search levels
  - 1.5.1. Transnational level
  - 1.5.2. National level
  - 1.5.3. Regional level
  - 1.5.4. Project level

### **2. Partnership in the practical aspect**

- 2.1. Significant characteristics of a good partnership
- 2.2. Differences between partnership and subcontractorship
- 2.3. Modern communication tools useful in partnership relations
- 2.4. Electronic management tools used in partnership relations
- 2.5. Partnership success factors
  - 2.5.1. Identity of partnership
  - 2.5.2. Synergy of actions
  - 2.5.3. Understanding for cultural diversity
  - 2.5.4. Good communication

2.5.5. Effective management

2.5.6. Monitoring and evaluation

2.5.7. Settlement of technical issues

2.5.8. Settlement of conflicts within the partnership

2.6. Partnership risk factors

## **Summary**

## **Bibliography**

## **Introduction**

An eighteen-month cooperation of the National Supporting Institution, operating within the structure of the Center of European Projects, with central and regional Intermediary Institutions and with the Regional Centres of European Social Fund shows that finding credible transnational partners still poses one of the largest challenges in the process of initiating a transnational cooperation project.

The executors of the projects of the Human Capital - Operational Programme in Poland – especially those that do not have extensive experience in transnational cooperation – frequently do not completely know how and where to seek foreign institutions willing to cooperate. Of course, there is a huge diversity of tools supporting that process, including, above all, databases containing information about transnational partners, created while executing other programmes (more information about them is presented further down), but they do not always meet specific needs of project executors. A frequent reason for that is lack of up-to-date data and failure to adapt the tools to the specifics of the given operational programme in the given country. Same problem can be observed in other EU member states and the reason for that, among other things, are the differences in the programme implementation systems used in various countries, which makes it difficult to coordinate activities on the EU's level. Because of that it is not practically feasible to develop a single tool that would meet the expectations of all parties involved. In effect, in many cases, collaboration as part of transnational cooperation projects is undertaken with foreign institutions with which the project authors had contact in the past. Lack of effective support in seeking transnational partners also constitutes an object of work of the *Learning Network on Transnational Cooperation in European Social Fund*, in which the National Supporting

Institution actively participates. The Network's activity shows that the problem of seeking transnational partners and the need to support institutions in establishing transnational partnerships for the purpose of contests announced in various countries constitutes an important interest area of EU member states.

The aim of this publication is to identify and arrange selected practical tools supporting the process of seeking partners for transnational cooperation projects as part of the European Social Fund. There are references in this text to previous publication of the National Supporting Institution – *Transnational cooperation projects. Guidebook for project promoters*<sup>1</sup> – on how to construct transnational partnership. However, the *Guidebook*, due to a different objective which its authors followed, does not devote a lot of time to the development of partnerships. Considering the popularity of projects with a transnational component, being carried out as part of the Human Capital - Operational Programme, as well as past experiences and hardships which the project authors encounter while establishing and effectively developing partnerships, the National Supporting Institution found it justified to develop materials containing comprehensive presentation of that issue.

For transparency reasons this publication has been split into two parts. The first one describes the tools proposed by the National Supporting Institution, broken down into three dimensions: transnational, national and regional. It should be pointed out that the tools were selected based on their practical nature (possibility to implement them quickly and effectively). For each tool examples of links to websites have been given.

The second part is devoted to the practical aspects of partnership – an attempt has been made to answer the question what it must look like in order to be successful. In contrast to the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Osuch, P. Pawlak, D. Sowińska-Milewska: *Projekty współpracy ponadnarodowej. Podręcznik dla projektodawców*, Task Force for Training and Human Resources, Cooperation Fund Foundation, Warsaw 2009.

*Guidebook* a practical approach has been presented and tools have been proposed, which, in the National Supporting Institution's opinion, come in handy in the process of developing and functioning of partnerships, and a model analysis of problem areas and of the potential risk associated with the development and execution of partnership projects has been discussed.

The publication is intended, on one hand, for all institutions wanting to find a transnational partner and to execute a partnership project, and, on the other hand, for institutions responsible for implementing transnational cooperation as part of the ESF. It should be pointed out that the presented tools are universal enough to be applied to different types of projects, not only those being carried out as part of structural funds, just as partnership is not only a domain of this type of projects.

The *Summary* contains the most important conclusions and recommendations concerning transnational partnership projects.

## 1. Institutional meaning of partnership

**This chapter contains definitions of what partnership is, identifies the justness of creating a partnership and describes its most important characteristics and functions.**

### 1.1. Why partnership at all?

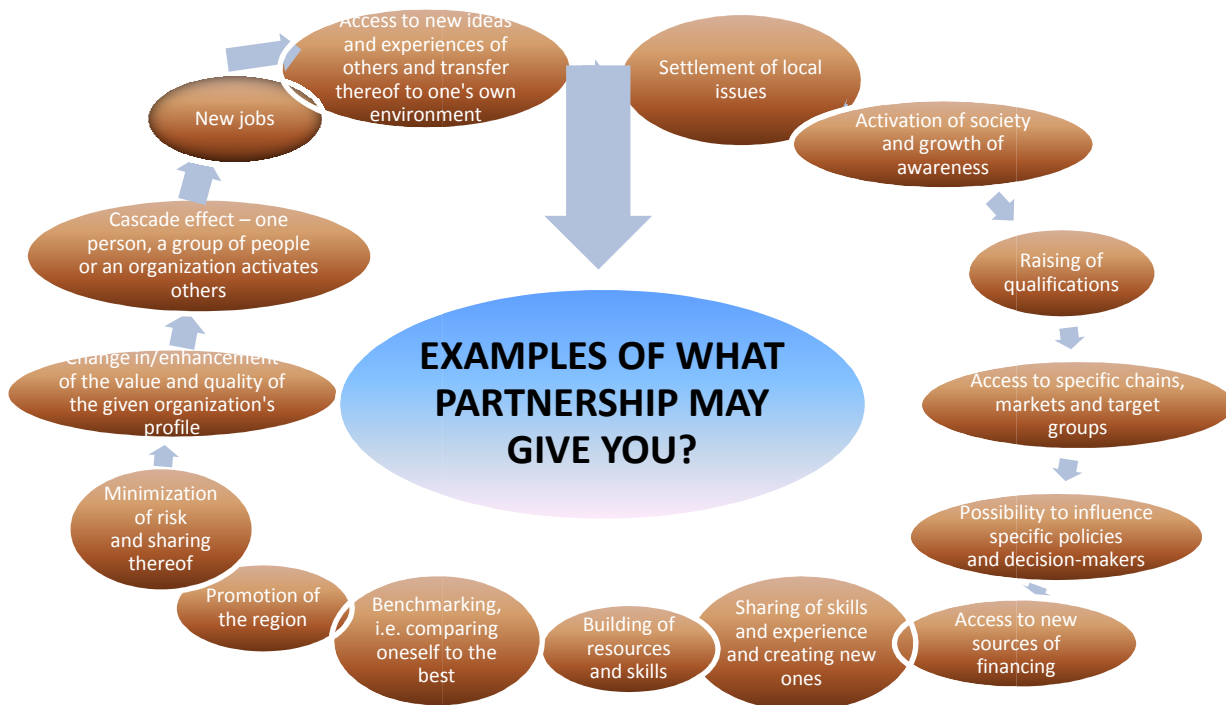
This question seems to be rhetorical, although many people, also in Poland, believe that one must count on oneself because we can do everything better and we don't need anyone's help. We also don't like to share what we managed to work out or achieve. And it does not matter whether these are other individuals or groups of people, or institutions and organizations which these individuals (groups) form.

There are many reasons for that and we are well aware of the fact that social processes concerning, for instance, changes in people's mentality, are very difficult, burdensome, extremely time consuming, and may be very expensive. Experiences associated with the transformation taking place in Poland for over twenty years, which occurred, to a large extent, with the help of many EU projects and programmes, are a proof that only a broadly understood, multi-level cooperation between partners may result in sustainable development initiatives (understood as economic, social development and environmental protection), which may help with solving difficult problems. This is particularly important as regards issues associated with employment, social integration and education, since these fields belong to complex categories, which are strictly interrelated. If acting on one's own, often in isolation, the available resources and means may be improperly or incompletely used and sometimes even wasted. These, in turn, are a limited good and for that reason such situation should be avoided. That is why, thanks to combination of potentials of various partners and seeking out ways of utilizing these potentials for the mutual benefit, further development perspectives are



possible. Moreover, the most frequent project partnerships, including those financed from the structural funds, may lead (and they do) to the most valuable strategic partnerships – solid and collaborating on the basis of a mutual objective, functioning not only while the project is being executed. We live in the world of specific policies and the associated rules. We often do not have any influence on them, whereas partnerships may constitute (and they do constitute) an excellent tool useful in the process of improving these policies by providing, especially on the local-regional level, appropriate mechanisms serving various organizations in their mutual work and in the adaptation of a sustainable development policy to better recognize the needs of people and the economy on the given level. According to this definition partnership is a key instrument of the local or regional authorities and it should be supported by them exactly for that reason. This is taking place on the EU's level, and for that reason – in the current as well as in the future programming period – a very strong emphasis is being put on the meaning of creating high quality partnerships between all parties concerned as a **significant factor guaranteeing that the cohesion policy is effective**. In summary, it can be stated that partnership, despite many types of risks associated with the execution of partnership projects, may yield many diverse benefits (figure 1).

**Figure 1: Benefits of a partnership**



Source: own elaboration on the basis of: *partnership – necessity or need*, Education for Democracy Foundation, Warsaw 2008.

## 1.2. Definitions of partnership

Since huge importance is attached to partnership in developed societies, it must be clearly defined. What does partnership mean then? There is plenty of definitions. Let us quote a few which, in our opinion, illustrate the idea of a partnership quite well.

According to the *PWN Polish dictionary* partnership means ***co-participation in something***. In the report of the EU Member States *ad hoc* partnership working group it is stated that: [...] *partnership is founded on a belief that large-scale problems can be solved only if organizations with cross-supplementing and cross-supporting profiles and competencies*

*actively collaborate*, developing synergy, *sharing ideas, objectives, risks, possibilities, obligations and tasks*, as well as *competencies and resources*. Thus, partnership means creation of "bridges", "interfaces" [...] which combine various services and support structures<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, Michael Geddes, in the report for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, states that: *Partnership [local one] can be understood [...] as a "formal organizational structure for policy-making and implementation [...]"*<sup>3</sup>.

To make the picture more complete, it is a good idea to quote the definition of an inter-sectoral partnership, formulated by the Overseas Development Institute / International Business Leaders Forum:

*Cross-sector partnership is a **voluntary** cross-sector alliance of organizations representing various sectors [...] established for the purpose of **working together** on executing a project or programme compliant with the **objectives of sustainable development**, where **all partners share their competencies and resources**, share their **risks** and **benefits** ensuing from the achievement of **mutual goals of the partnership** and the goals of each individual member organization*<sup>4</sup>.

Summarizing the above definitions, partnership can be defined as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> *Zasada partnerstwa w nowych programach EFS (2007–2013). Ramy programowania*, June 2006 ([http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/data/document/200606-reflection-note-partner\\_pl.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/data/document/200606-reflection-note-partner_pl.pdf)).

<sup>3</sup> M. Geddes: *Local Partnership: A Successful Strategy for Social Cohesion?*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg – London 1998, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://p5.fundacjatarnowskiego.pl/content/definicje-partnerstwa>

*Partnership is a voluntary relationship established for the purpose of executing a task (project) through collaboration and co-decision-making of the parties, which contribute their human, technical and financial resources to the task. Partnership brings specific benefits to all its participants, yielding results which a single partner would not achieve, and reducing overlapping of efforts which would be required for the same task to be performed by each partner independently.*

The issue of partnership is well regulated in terms of legislation. A list of the basic legislative acts and documents associated with transnational partnership in the Human Capital - Operational Programme is presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Basic legislative acts and documents associated with transnational partnership in the Human Capital - Operational Programme**

- *Regulation No. 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund repealing Regulation (EC) No. 1784/1999 ("Official Journal of the European Union", L 210/12, 31 July 2006).*
- *Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, amended by the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the European Council of 16 June ("Official Journal of the European Union", No. L 371/1, 27 December 2006).*
- *Act of 7 November 2008 amending certain acts in connection with the implementation of structural funds and the Cohesion fund, which implements amendments to the acts on: the education system, activities of government administration, rules of pursuing the development policy, the provincial self-government, the public finances, and the National Development Plan ("Journal of Laws" 2008, No. 216, item 1370).*

- *Act of 19 December 2008 on public-private partnership* ("Journal of Laws" 2009, No. 19, item 100).
- *Act of 6 December 2006 on the rules of pursuing the development policy* ("Journal of Laws" 2009, No. 84, item 712, as amended).
- *Act of 8 March 1990 on the commune self-government* ("Journal of Laws" 2001, No. 142, item 1591, as amended).
- *Act of 5 June 1998 on the poviast self-government* ("Journal of Laws" 2001, No. 142, item 1592, as amended).
- *Act of 5 June 1998 on the provincial self-government* ("Journal of Laws" 2001, No. 142, item 1590, as amended).
- *Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit and volunteer work* ("Journal of Laws " 2003, No. 96, item 873, as amended).
- *Scope of execution of partnership projects defined by the Managing Institution of the Human Capital - Operational Programme*, Ministry of Regional Development, Warsaw, 1 January 2011.
- *Guidelines for the implementation of the innovative and transnational cooperation projects as part of the Human Capital - Operational Programme*, Ministry of Regional Development, Warsaw, 1 April 2009.

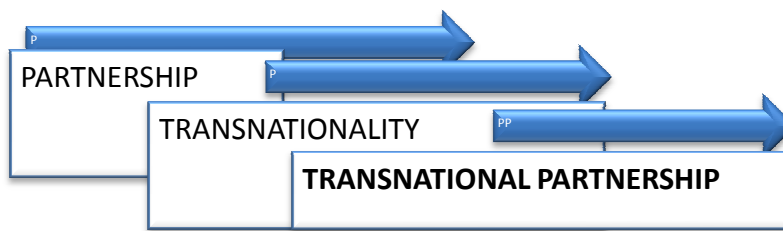
### **1.3. How should transnationality be understood?**

Transnationality goes beyond the national frontiers. It pertains to cooperation, for instance, of communes, non-government organizations or education and research institutions from other countries. And it does not matter whether these are countries directly neighbouring with Poland or countries from the other end of the world, provided that these entities, despite of having different origins, **combined their goals and are interested in collaboration**. Partners from different countries (where transnational partnership is concerned, there must be at least one foreign partner) have a common starting point for the project, and after the project is

completed, they formulate joint conclusions from their cooperation. In other words, all partners must actually be interested in what will be achieved by running a joint project on a transnational level.

**Figure 2.** Essence of a transnational partnership

**Partnership + transnationality = transnational partnership**



A transnational partnership will really take place when its **goal is embedded in an international context**. Moreover, transnationality should be present during all stages of the project (i.e. planning, actions, effects, dissemination), and the quintessence of partners' cooperation should be joint execution of other initiatives after the given project is completed. This last stage is worth being given particular attention since if cooperation is continued after activities associated with the project are completed, this means that the partners found it to be useful and valuable, which means that it brings in new quality to the actions and effects of work of the partners. Expected (or achieved) effects of the project should clearly differ from what could have been achieved without transnational cooperation. It then becomes possible to find an alternative path for solving a given problem and it becomes highly probable that such solutions bears the features of innovativeness.

#### **1.4. Most important characteristics of partnership**

Enthusiasm and good inclinations are not enough to establish a good partnership - and, in effect, for it to function properly and to be successful. Each partner can be ascribed certain, permanent features necessary for him to function correctly. There are many of them (for instance, primacy of the partners' goals before profit, voluntary membership, democratic control, social solidarity, cross-liability, social acceptance, permanence, effectiveness). Partnership is a complementing (and not substituting) process that takes into account learning and adaptation to changes, it is something more than just a sum of its individual elements. From among multiple features three seem to be most characteristic and crucial to the proper functioning of a partnership:

- equality of partners towards one another;
- transparency;
- mutual benefits.

#### **1.4.1. Equality of partners towards one another**

If a partnership is to function properly, the partners must be equal towards one another. Because partnership is voluntary, each participant is able to express his view, to propose his own solutions and take decisions, and to share the risks and benefits. That is why it is so important to respect every participant in the partnership and to take into account his capabilities and degree of involvement in the actions being undertaken. It is also important to remember not to confuse this characteristic of partnership with its natural element, i.e. leadership. It should also be pointed out that **equality does not mean equal rights**. In partner relationships where there usually are huge differences in terms of powers, resources and control, it is clearly visible that this is not the case. However, the right is not the same as

equality. Equal right means that every partner has an equal right to sit down at the table, and his contribution, not necessarily a financial one, is equally important but not equal!

#### **1.4.2. Transparency**

The second fundamental principle of a well-functioning partnership is transparency, which, in this case, means mutual trust, openness, honesty, fairness and publicness of action. To build mutual trust openness and publicness of action, and, above all, the principle of honest behaviour and honest treatment of others, is required. Transparency of action authenticates the partnership in the eyes of all entities interested in its functioning.

#### **1.4.3. Mutual benefits**

If partners contribute something to the partnership, then they would like to derive certain benefits from it. They should be helped with it. It should thus be noted that partnership is a collection of units which should be allowed to obtain individual benefits because only this makes it possible to maintain the involvement of individual partners, and, in consequence, to assure persistency of cooperation.

#### **1.5. Partner search levels**

**In this sub-chapter we will present tools used in EU funds to seek transnational partners on different levels: transnational, national and regional, as well as the available methods of searching for credible partners. The descriptions are accompanied by practical hints on how to use websites, where to seek information about contests for transnational cooperation projects, which information is important and how to contact and cooperate with international contact**



**points or various transnational cooperation networks.**

Practical tools useful in the search for partners will be broken down into three levels: transnational, national and regional.

Scrupulous selection of partners is extremely important since:

- it contributes to the increase in the importance of a partnership;
- it makes it possible to establish effective relations with potential partners as early as the working level;
- it makes it possible to minimize various types of risks;
- it guarantees permanence of actions in partnership;
- it offers better opportunities to incorporate the project's results into the main policy stream.

For that reason, when establishing a partnership, it is important to answer the question: **how to choose an ideal partner?**

### **1.5.1. Transnational level**

A good transnational partner is one which is involved in the project's subject matter or has appropriate knowledge and experience that allows him to make an active contribution to the partnership, and on which one can depend, considering that cooperation on a project usually lasts at least two years or more. That is why, before a cooperation agreement is signed, it is necessary to get to know the partner well and to find out if he is an appropriate partner for our project and why he is important. As an example let's use one of the projects from the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Libby Urquhart from ARCH, discussing this project,

presented transnational partners as the most important capital, without which it would not be possible to achieve the goals:

*International partners are our **greatest asset**. Each one is a marriage of shared goals and shared responsibility. Our partners are also our **hosts** who will take care of the practical issues of visiting a new country with an unfamiliar culture.*

She also named the criteria which may prove useful in the process of selecting the partner:

- *Partners must have shared objectives and visions.*
- *They are respected practitioners who have access to all levels of their area of expertise.*
- *People who can add an extra dimension to our project. They need to be adaptable and able to change the content of the programmes to the training needs of the participants.*
- *Because in a partnership we work with individuals and not organizations, we should choose people with whom we like to work and with whom we communicate well not just in terms of language<sup>5</sup>.*

Only well-selected partnerships may survive and continue functioning in future projects. As an example let's use the project called "Koszalin, city of European bicycle paths", carried out in 2003 by the Education for the Environment Foundation together with Koszalin's authorities. Bicycle paths have been planned as part of the project, and after it had been completed, the Foundation, together with the Association of Communes and Poviats of Central Pomerania, ran a new project called "Bicycle city". This "cycling" initiative constituted a turning point and initiated new partnerships that still exist today.

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<sup>5</sup> *Learning Together. How to Work Effectively with Partners and Get the Best out of Your European Project*, ECOTEC Research & Consulting Ltd., UK National Agency for Leonardo, Grundtvig & Transversal Programmes, December 2007.

Thus, once we know how to choose the proper partner, we can go over to the most important issue, i.e. tools which, on the transnational level, can support us in a practical way in the laborious and time-consuming process of seeking the best partner for our project. Organizations involved in various projects seek partners in different ways and using all available tools<sup>6</sup>. Every way and tool is good if it is effective. In table 2 we present a set of such tools together with their brief description. Which ones to choose? – it is up to the project authors, however, it should be pointed out that the more tools we use the greater the probability of us succeeding in selecting appropriate partners.

**Table 2. Tools for seeking partners on the transnational level**

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<sup>6</sup> Examples of the tools (for instance, the potential partner sheet, a tool to assess the level of risk of the transnational cooperation project or to monitor the material and financial progress, the degree of the project's achievement, etc.) can be found in: J. Osuch, P. Pawlak, D. Sowińska-Milewska: *Projekty współpracy ponadnarodowej. Podręcznik dla projektodawców*, Task Force for Training and Human Resources, Cooperation Fund Foundation, Warsaw 2009. ([http://www.kiwpokl.org.pl/download/\(w12ZhKjUcGJc65tVnmyd11htirKSXs2EYZ9xm1uqnJae2eNZIRc4ZtWn71nm5sQ-jTks6vmN-vkZjr0ZLQup\\_MmauA6NCRxa6bzKihhefYiM54nc-cVFzhm1efs2ebca8\)/pl/kiwpoklpublikacje/44/2/1/projekty\\_wspolpracy\\_ponadnarodowej.pdf](http://www.kiwpokl.org.pl/download/(w12ZhKjUcGJc65tVnmyd11htirKSXs2EYZ9xm1uqnJae2eNZIRc4ZtWn71nm5sQ-jTks6vmN-vkZjr0ZLQup_MmauA6NCRxa6bzKihhefYiM54nc-cVFzhm1efs2ebca8)/pl/kiwpoklpublikacje/44/2/1/projekty_wspolpracy_ponadnarodowej.pdf)).

Tool seeking partners on the transnational level	Description	Examples of websites
Use of existing institutional ties	<p>Many institutions on the region's, powiat's or commune's level already have established and proven, mutual "European ties" thanks to participation in the meetings of different types of networks, partnership or working contacts. Cooperation with proven partners may guarantee that they will get involved in the project right from the start of the process of establishing the partnership. It is a good idea to use such contacts when starting new projects and to treat them as the "starting point".</p>	<p>Web sites of different institutions from the region which readily inform about cooperation with partners from other countries (for instance <a href="http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/en/urząd/współpraca-z-zagranicą/współpraca-międzyregionalna/">http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/en/urząd/współpraca-z-zagranicą/współpraca-międzyregionalna/</a>).</p>
ESFCoNet – European cooperation network between institutions operating as part of	<p>There is a large number of different types of initiatives in the European Union which are associated with transnational cooperation, supported by the European Commission. ESFCoNet is a transnational cooperation network established for the purpose of supporting the implementation of operational programmes in the years 2007–2013 by exchanging information, good practices, personnel and by executing projects. The promoter of the network's activities is the Trento province in Italy, which also runs a permanent secretariat and handles the network's matters. On ESFCoNet's website (link in the</p>	<p><a href="http://www.esfconet.provincia.tn.it/public/partnership_view.php">http://www.esfconet.provincia.tn.it/public/partnership_view.php</a></p>

operational programmes 2007–2013	column to the right), in addition to all sorts of current information about the network's plans and activities, we will find a newsletter as well as a forum for exchanging know-how, experiences and good practices. Participating in the forum, you may establish numerous working relations useful in the search for partners. In order to gain full access to the materials you must register by providing your contact data.	
Transnational Contact Points as part of the ESF	The European Commission, getting involved in the process of exchanging information between the member states (see above), established the so-called Transnational Contact Points. Persons fulfilling the function of these points act as intermediaries in the process of exchanging information about transnational activities concerning national and regional operating programmes in their countries. The European Commission also cooperates with them, which means that they have access to "first-hand" information, also about who and when is seeking partners for projects. Information about these points can be found (without registration) on the Toolkit partner location website (described below), at the address indicated in the right-hand side column, by entering the tab "How does transnationality work in the Member States? How are projects selected and funded?", and then on clicking the map of the given country, then in: "Managing authority / National / Contact Points". The Points can be contacted directly or through the National Supporting Institution, since the National Supporting Institution maintains a permanent, direct contact with the persons fulfilling this function, meets with them on a regular basis during seminars devoted to transnational cooperation on the level of member states, so, it is possible to indicate who will be responsible for the contact in the given project or subject matter.	<a href="http://www.transnational-toolkit.eu/home.aspx">http://www.transnational-toolkit.eu/home.aspx</a>
Cooperation Networks	The Transnational Cooperation Network, as part of ESF, one out of 13 created so far, has been established by the	<a href="http://www.transnationality.eu/we">http://www.transnationality.eu/we</a>

<p>(so-called <i>Learning Networks</i>), including Transnational Cooperation Networks as part of the ESF 2007–2013</p>	<p>European Commission and is supported by it financially. The Cooperation Networks are grassroots initiatives of the member states concerning specific subject matters; as part of the Network experiences are exchanged and a catalogue of good practices and methods of solving specific problems is drawn up.</p> <p>The Transnational Cooperation Network, which has been functioning since December 2009 to November 2012, was created by the Czech Republic (the Network’s leader) together with France, Great Britain, Germany, Greece, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Poland. The aim of the Network is to educate and raise the skills of the persons managing ESF programmes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exchanging experiences and good practices;</li> <li>• developing new tools and procedures for transnational cooperation;</li> <li>• promoting transnational cooperation.</li> </ul> <p>For that purpose appropriate tools will be prepared and meetings, seminars, workshops and courses will be organized, whose aim is to effectively implement and promote transnational cooperation.</p> <p>The Network runs its own website (link in the right-hand side column), which is addressed, above all, to Managing Institutions and Intermediary Institutions. The aim of the information presented on that website is to improve transnational cooperation. In order to access the materials prepared by the Network you must register yourself on the website. The Network’s website is also an effective tool of exchanging good practices and a forum on which information about the contests for transnational projects in the member states and about partners being sought for projects is presented. It also</p>	<p><a href="#">lcome</a></p>
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	<p>contains up-to-date information about the Network’s activities and about other Thematic Networks in Europe, as well as information about events associated with transnational cooperation (conferences, seminars), forwarding to the Toolkit website, library and useful links. This information is available to everyone visiting the website, without the need to get registered. It is a good idea to register yourself on the website to have access to all information concerning the issues associated with transnational cooperation, and also because discussions concerning the future financial perspective and the shape of the transnational cooperation are taking place here. The National Supporting Institution publishes all important information and materials concerning the Network on its website.</p>	
RegioNetwork	<p>RegioNetwork is an on-line cooperation platform for the representatives of European regions and other parties interested in the EU’s regional policies. It makes it possible to exchange information, good practices and remarks concerning all subject matters associated with the regional policies. This is not a typical database, although it makes it possible to seek out partners (after getting registered).</p>	<p><a href="https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/regio-network2020/">https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/regio-network2020/</a></p>
<b>Examples of the existing partner search databases</b>		
Toolkit	<p>Toolkit is a tool for searching for partners as well as for exchanging information about transnational cooperation. The website’s target group are project authors and beneficiaries looking for partners for transnational cooperation. The database published on the website informs about implementation of transnational cooperation in all EU countries. It also contains information about the institutions involved in the implementation system and data of the Transnational Contact Points (described above). The website makes it possible to seek partners interested in transnational cooperation. To be able</p>	<p><a href="http://www.transnational-toolkit.eu/home.aspx">http://www.transnational-toolkit.eu/home.aspx</a></p>

to use this information you must register yourself on the website (without registration it is only possible to get acquainted with the operational programmes). After becoming registered you must enter your own institution's data into all required fields, which you can always modify or update. After those data are entered, you may start searching through the database in two ways. The first one involves searching through all the data in terms of appearance of a given text, and as a result we get a list of organizations containing the given expression. The other method is more advanced where you have to specify various criteria using drop-down lists. Here too you will get a list of results fulfilling the specified criteria.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme is a part of the European Union's new education programme called *Lifelong Learning Programme*. It is being run from 1 January 2007 till the end of December 2013. The aim of the programme is to promote mobility of employees on the European job market and to implement innovative educational solutions to improve job qualifications. It also supports solutions increasing transparency and recognisability of job qualifications in European countries (for instance, transfer of credit points in education and job training – ECVET, EUROPASS tools), as well as efforts undertaken to improve the quality of job and continuous education (for instance, the European Qualifications Framework/National Qualifications Framework (EQF/NQF) or the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)).

The Leonardo da Vinci programme promotes an innovative approach to education and job training in such a manner so that the education systems meet the needs of the job market as best as possible. On the programme's website you can find profiles and offers of institutions seeking partners.

- <http://leonardo.org.pl/>
- [http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/homepageView.h  
tm](http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/homepageView.htm)
- <http://llp.est.org.pl/search.php>
- [http://llp.eupa.org.mt/partner\\_sear  
ch.php](http://llp.eupa.org.mt/partner_search.php)



**ADAM** (*Advanced Data Archive and Management System*) is a portal where you can find information about Leonardo da Vinci projects and their products (for instance, teaching programmes, training modules, job skills and qualifications assessment tools, materials for learning foreign languages). Just as in the case of other databases, you must get registered to be able to submit information about a project as well as to seek partners. You can start searching the database by entering a keyword in the search box (“Search for projects and products”) or by choosing appropriate criteria in the advanced search box (“Extended search”).

More information about the programme and about the partner database is available on the website of the Polish National Programme Agency ([www.leonardo.org.pl](http://www.leonardo.org.pl)). If seeking partners, it is a good idea to visit the European Shared Treasure website (<http://llp.est.org.pl/search.php>) – the treasurers know about activities being undertaken by partner projects as part of sector programmes (the website is linked, among others, to the Leonardo da Vinci programme).

The database with the projects and effects of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme, despite the fact that the programme has been completed, still constitutes a valuable source of information about potential partners. The results database contains the most important information about validated solutions developed by the Development Partnerships. It is the results, i.e. reproducible models, materials, publications, technological solutions or good practices, that constitute the longest lasting achievement of the programme.

Apart from the detailed description of the results, the database contains descriptions of the projects as well as contact details of the administrators and partners. This information can be accessed very easily – it is sorted by result type,

[www.equal.org.pl](http://www.equal.org.pl)  
  
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/equal/jsp/index.jsp?lang=en>

expected beneficiaries, implementing entities or solved job market problem. A really significant part of the database are products developed as part of the results, as well as descriptions of how they are being put into use, which facilitates further reproduction of model solutions.

The EQUAL database can also be accessed from the European Commission's website, thanks to which it is possible not only to identify institutions which cooperated with the Polish beneficiaries but all institutions cooperating as part of that programme.

**Use of European supporting organizations**

Eurodesk is a programme for youth, people working with youth and youth organizations, supported – financially and substantively – by the European Commission and the Ministry of National Education as part of the "Youth in Action" programme. Eurodesk is a network of agencies operating in 31 European countries. Over 1 thousand organizations participate in this initiative, including over 70 in the Eurodesk Poland network. In Poland the local partner for Eurodesk is the Foundation for the Development of the Education System.

Eurodesk also supports the search for partners process. After sending an e-mail to Eurodesk's contact with a description of what type of a project we are running or what type of a partner we are seeking, the information will be placed in a special folder on Eurodesk's intranet where you can find information about other people, groups and entities seeking partners for your projects. You can find a whole list of different databases there.

<http://www.eurodesk.org/edesk/EUToolbox.do?go=7>  
  
<http://www.eurodesk.pl/eurodesk-w-polsce>

<p>ESPON Programme</p>	<p>The ESPON 2013 programme, the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion, was adopted in 2007 to support policy development in relation to the aim of territorial cohesion and a harmonious development of the European territory. The network is managed by the Coordination Unit and comprises the European network of contact points, composed of various national institutions designated by the member states involved in the programme. The programme supports various transnational projects, making it possible to seek partners through its website. It also ensures the support of potential partners in creating <i>Transnational Project Groups</i>.</p> <p>ESPON Partner Café – database of potential partners for the Transnational Project Groups, coordinated by the ESPON Coordination Unit. Entities interested in establishing a partnership may ask to be included in the database. Public as well as private entities may participate in the Partner Café. The list of the potential partners is updated on a regular basis.</p> <p>ESPON Partner Café also has its own LinkedIn group; potential partners may hold discussions there and find new partners to run projects as part of ESPON.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_ESPONPartnerCafe/">http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_ESPONPartnerCafe/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&amp;gid=144326">http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&amp;gid=144326</a></p>
<p><i>The Partnering Initiatives, The Partnership Brokers</i></p>	<p>The Partnering Initiative is a global programme of organizations of the International Business Leaders Forum – IBLF, which cooperates with individuals, organizations and systems to promote and develop partnerships for sustainable development – between business, government and civil society – at both strategic and operational levels to promote and support cross-sector partnerships that are appropriate, effective and innovative. It enables the sharing of practical</p>	<p><a href="http://thepartneringinitiative.org/">http://thepartneringinitiative.org/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.thepartneringinitiative.org/publications.jsp">http://www.thepartneringinitiative.org/publications.jsp</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.partnershipforum.org/">http://www.partnershipforum.org/</a></p>

	<p>experience, contributes to cutting-edge knowledge, offers support, training and advice as well as sets standards in what constitutes good partnering practice. IBLF also runs its own initiatives, for instance <i>The Partnership Brokering Project</i>, which deals with the practical aspects of managing effective partnerships. Although IBLF is based in the UK, it operates around the world through a growing network of trained and experienced partnership practitioners. This initiative also offers advice on building partnerships (forum for exchanging good practices, case studies, guidebooks, etc.). More information can be obtained after you register yourself on the website.</p>	<p><a href="#">login</a>  <a href="http://www.iblf.org/">http://www.iblf.org/</a>  <a href="http://www.partnershipbrokers.org/">http://www.partnershipbrokers.org/</a></p>
<p><i>Community of Practice on Partnerships in the European Social Fund</i></p>	<p>The Community of Practice on Partnership (COP) is an initiative of the member states financed by the European Commission. It focuses on various issues concerning different intervention areas of the ESF, i.e. on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- practice in creating partnerships among the EU member states;</li> <li>- creating policies and on their impact on the target groups;</li> <li>- possibilities to improve the policy planning processes.</li> </ul> <p>The COP's direct interest areas are: management, sustainable development, innovations and transnationality. The aim of this initiative is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learning from experiences and sharing knowledge on partnerships;</li> <li>- further development of the partnership approach of the member states;</li> <li>- participating in the employment policy and supporting reforms (partnerships are the driving force of changes, they are considered to be the basic, valuable instrument of the policy and practice).</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://partnership.esflive.eu/">http://partnership.esflive.eu/</a></p>

	<p>COP members share the knowledge and mutually learn how to work in a partnership, so, it is a good idea to get registered on the website to have access to current information and to be able to actively participate in the knowledge and experience sharing forum.</p>	
<p>Regional Capacity Building Initiative</p>	<p>The initiative is financed by the European Commission, supports 13 Partner Countries participating in the <i>European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Cross Border Cooperation [ENPI CBC] Programmes 2007–2013</i>.</p> <p>The initiative’s website enables seeking partners from the programme’s Partner Countries or other EU member states. Just as in the case of other databases, you can register yourself on the website as a potential partner.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.rcbi.info/pages/1_1.html">http://www.rcbi.info/pages/1_1.html</a></p>
<p>Participation in international partner search forums and other projects supporting this process</p>	<p>Many national ministries, agencies, institutions and organizations in Europe run projects from time to time, which are supposed to help various institutions in their search for partners. They assume different names, for instance, partner forums, <i>contact seminars</i>, <i>partner cafés</i>. Regardless of what we call them, they have the same objective – they enable direct contact between partners. The search for partners is sometimes combined with thematic seminars or conferences, which makes it possible not only to increase the knowledge and experience in the given field but also to find a partner for the project (information about these projects can be found, for instance, on the website at <a href="http://www.transnationality.eu">www.transnationality.eu</a>).</p>	<p><a href="http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/news/index_pl.htm#opt2">http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/news/index_pl.htm#opt2</a></p>
<p>Use of other local</p>	<p>Many project authors seeking partners turn in the first place to local or regional authorities and seek (and often find)</p>	<p><a href="http://www.twinning.org/pl/">www.twinning.org/pl/</a></p>

<p>initiatives (for instance, <i>twinning</i>)</p>	<p>partners thanks to contacts from partner cities or regions from other countries. Twinning agreements are very popular, their existence significantly facilitates the process of finding a proven and trusted partner. In the adjacent column we have provided a link to the website as one of the possibilities, nonetheless, everyone may find out in their own region which partners the local authorities cooperate with. It is also a good idea to use contacts obtained through different initiatives undertaken by the local and regional authorities (having units competent to cooperate with others on an international level).</p>	<p><a href="http://www.twinning.org/en/">www.twinning.org/en/</a></p>
<p>Use of other projects</p>	<p>The aforementioned databases as well as various contacts, including own ones, make it possible to identify a very large number of potential partners. Why not use capital that is proven and "at hand"? It does not really matter whether it is a project that is currently being run or already completed. The current programming period of the Human Capital - Operational Programme shows that many project authors seek partners from previously completed EQUAL Community Initiative Programme or the Leonardo da Vinci Programme. Even if some of the institutions or persons are not involved in the cooperation, they have many precious contacts which may yield new partnerships. It's worth checking every contact, it doesn't cost much but may yield measurable benefits – you never know what and when might come in handy!</p>	

## 1.5.2. National level

### Role of the National Supporting Institution

The National Supporting Institution supports transnational cooperation projects run as part of the Human Capital - Operational Programme on the central as well as the regional level, offering support not only to institutions involved in the Human Capital - Operational Programme but also, indirectly, to the applicants and executors of the Human Capital - Operational Programme transnational cooperation projects, among other things, by analysing contest documents, applications for financing, assisting in the search for partners for projects or by verifying transnational cooperation agreements.

**The Human Capital - Operational Programme execution system in Poland covers the Managing Institution and the Intermediary Institutions located throughout the regions.**

- **The Human Capital - Operational Programme Managing Institution (European Social Fund Management Department at the Ministry of Regional Development)** is responsible, among other things, for preparing the system for implementing transnational cooperation projects and for controlling it as well as for ensuring training and consultation support for transnational activities.
- **The Human Capital - Operational Programme Intermediary Institutions** (41 institutions) are responsible for managing various priorities of the Human Capital - Operational Programme, and thus for their proper execution. They are responsible for all tasks associated with selecting the transnational cooperation projects and with their implementation (especially for announcing contests, selecting projects, monitoring them, reconciling agreements with the beneficiaries and effecting payments as well as exercising control over the projects). The Intermediary Institution may delegate some of its tasks related to the selection of the projects to a level 2 Intermediary Institution (II2), which is then

referred to as an Implementation Institution.

One of the most important tasks as part of that support is helping Polish and foreign entities in establishing cooperation and in seeking partners for transnational projects.

### **Scope of support**

- Possibilities offered by contacts on the transnational level, described in the preceding section. Regular contact of the employees of the National Supporting Institution with the Transnational Contact Points and providing (directly and through the website) of information about transnational cooperation, to which employees of other institutions do not have access on a daily basis (information about contests, about seeking partners for projects, interesting events, good practices, etc.). Direct contact is extremely precious as it makes it possible to overcome bureaucratic barriers which also do not spare the administration in the European Union.
- Use of active participation of the National Supporting Institution in the work of the Transnational Cooperation Network – the so-called *Learning Networks* (providing of information on an on-going basis about the Network's activities, publishing of information about contests and searches for partners by Polish project authors, sharing of experiences and good practices, developing of the so-called *working papers* supporting the process of executing transnational projects). All information is made available on an on-going basis by the National Supporting Institution to Polish institutions and beneficiaries.
- Projects supporting the search for partners (partner forums, whose aim is to help with direct establishment of partner cooperation between the project executors from countries participating in the forums).



- Participation in various types of events (seminars, conferences, meetings) concerning transnational cooperation and sharing of knowledge in the quarterly bulletin published by the National Supporting Institution "Innovations without borders" or other publications or directly on the website.
- Use of all types of databases (for instance, databases of the level 1 and 2 Intermediary Institutions, Toolkit, Leonardo da Vinci, EQUAL, EUPA<sup>7</sup>) for the purpose of facilitating the search for project partners.
- Providing up-to-date information on the website. The National Supporting Institution tries to fulfil the role of a compendium of knowledge and of a catalyst supporting the process of implementing transnational cooperation at every stage (for instance, by publishing, on an on-going basis, announcements about Polish and foreign contests, about interesting events, initiatives, etc.).

### **Why are transnational partner forums being emphasized?**

An analysis of the past problems with seeking partners for transnational cooperation conducted by the National Supporting Institution made it possible to identify several key prerequisites in favour of using practical tools in addition to the instruments described above, i.e. partner forums<sup>8</sup>. These are the following prerequisites:

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<sup>7</sup> [http://llp.eupa.org.mt/partner\\_search.php](http://llp.eupa.org.mt/partner_search.php)

<sup>8</sup> A detailed description of the 1st and 2nd Transnational Partner Forum together with the appendices used to carry it out can be found at the following web address: <http://www.kiw-pokl.org.pl/pl/wspolpraca-ponadnarodowa/ponadnarodowe-fora-partnerskie/i-ponadnarodowe-forum-partnerski/>, we also give consideration to it further down in this document in the section describing support on the regional level. We are not describing in detail the whole organizational side but are only presenting the key conclusions and recommendations to be used when preparing similar events.

- A very large number of contests (most of them contain a transnational component, so, assuming that there will be more than one hundred contests in 2001, it is necessary to intensively and effectively support the search efforts) – the forum ensures that many projects are collected in a single place.
- Issues reported by institutions of central component and institutions from the regions. There are still problems with finding partners for transnational cooperation, and the available databases are not a sufficient tool but only support the process of seeking partners for projects. The forum makes it possible to directly contact potential, carefully selected partners.
- No time synchronization. The forum hosts projects that are adapted in terms of time and subject matter. They are being executed or will be implemented in the near future. There are also projects which are in the development stage.
- Lack of agreement on the scope of general topic to facilitate adaptation of contests in various countries. This problem does not exist in case of forum since Polish and foreign projects are selected in terms of territorial and thematic adaptation.
- The current databases (such as Toolkit) do not always fulfil specific needs of project executors. A frequent reason for this is that information contained in them is not updated and that substantive contents of the databases are not adapted to the specifics of the given operational programme in a specific country.
- Direct contact contributes to better communication between potential partners by making it possible to talk and present mutual criteria and expectations. The opportunity to meet people with whom you will work during the project implementation stage is also important.

The partner forum formula developed by the National Supporting Institution of the Human Capital - Operational Programme assumes that the participants are divided according to joint,

previously reported areas of interests as part of the European Social Fund and the Human Capital - Operational Programme. The National Supporting Institution seeks potential foreign partners by cooperating with foreign institutions, whose representatives will act as "contact boxes" for the National Supporting Institution and who will be asked to participate in the forum as an intermediary/patron for potential foreign partners. On the Polish counterpart Intermediary Institutions / level 2 Intermediary Institutions may fulfil a similar function.

**Stages of the forum organization process** (associated with the scope and schedule of contests being announced or selected topics in which countries participating in the forum are interested):

- identification of the countries interested in participating in the forum;
- analysis of the ESF implementation system in those countries, identification of the areas in which it is possible to carry out projects together with Poland (schedule, topics, financing, etc.);
- analysis of interest in cooperation by reviewing the completed project fiche of the potential foreign partner;
- selection of partners from Poland for transnational cooperation in the topic areas identified in the project fiches of the transnational partner, by way of open selection through the website of the National Supporting Institution and/or through the Intermediary Institutions;
- selection of participants in the forum;
- opening of the forum, presentation of the principles governing the transnational cooperation projects by the employees of the National Supporting Institution or the representatives of the invited foreign institutions;

- talks between forum participants grouped according to received, standardized information about the projects' assumptions (project fiches);
- exchange of contacts, preliminary cooperation declarations, etc.;
- monitoring of established partnerships.

Projects of such scale must be prepared at least several months in advance. It should be noted that a lot of different events are organized during the year. That is why it is a good idea to think in advance about informing and inviting guests, which will create a sense of security and will make it possible to plan the time necessary to devote to organizational, logistical and substantive matters. The most important thing when organizing a forum is selection of an appropriate number of potential partners (best if they have guaranteed financing and a defined, transparent timetable). What is important here is that the identified project authors get the opportunity to get acquainted with the projects beforehand, which should be briefly described in a standardized way, for instance, in the form of a project fiche.

Please, remember though, that organization of the forums themselves is not enough. After they are finished, you should continue supporting and monitoring potential partnerships. You must look after them since partnerships are like flowers – if not watered, they wither quickly. It is a good idea to maintain a continuous contact with the project authors participating in the forum since they may need support associated with the project execution system and constitute a "valuable resource" to other forums as well as an excellent source of disseminating and promoting the idea of forums in their regions. Moreover, maintenance of such contact may significantly facilitate the process of organizing future projects.

### **1.5.3. Regional level**

#### **Regional Contact Points**

The first link in the chain of sharing information and experiences between the National Supporting Institutions and the region are the **Regional Contact Points**. These are persons designated in the given Intermediary Institution to give information about transnational cooperation projects. Just as in the case of Transnational Contact Points, the persons designated in the regions act as a "contact box" which is used by the National Supporting Institution in daily contacts associated with these projects in Poland as well as abroad (all these persons are entered in the Toolkit database). They must have a thorough knowledge of the system of implementing this type of projects as well as what is being planned and what is currently happening in the region in this regard in order to be able to provide a credible and competent answer.

### **Informational and promotional meetings**

Another tool for sharing information and experiences are **informational and promotional meetings** organized by Institutions Organizing Contests. These meetings should vary depending on the needs of the region as well as on the region's capabilities. Many practical hints on this type of projects can be found in the publication of the National Supporting Institution called *Informational and promotional activities concerning innovative projects and transnational cooperation of the Human Capital - Operational Programme. Recommendations of the National Supporting Institution for level 1 and 2 Intermediary Institutions*. In this document we have described the most important recommendations concerning general meetings with potential project authors, which may be combined with the search for partners for transnational cooperation.

The aim of such meetings is, above all, to present how to apply for funds to run transnational cooperation projects as part of the contests and for the project authors to report issues which, in their opinion, should be discussed during workshops for the project authors and/or during "open

days". The meetings should be attended by experts having a thorough knowledge of the contest documentation, but the presence of an expert in the given field, having a thorough knowledge of the issues which the contest concerns, is also recommended. Moreover, the meetings are an excellent opportunity to start looking for partners. That is why it is a good idea to invite potential partners to these meetings – thus giving the project authors an opportunity at this stage of work to make preliminary arrangements concerning the search for partners.

### **Role of the Regional Institutes for the European Social Fund**

The chain of Regional Institutes for the European Social Fund is a group of over 50 different institutions (non-government organizations, regional development agencies, universities), whose purpose is to support local development by establishing partnerships that contribute to regional development, especially as regards the social capital. This objective is being achieved by supporting beneficiaries in preparing high quality projects (which can be financed from ESF) that fulfil social needs. The institutes support the beneficiaries by carrying out broadly understood animation activities through training, consulting and information. The Regional Institutes plan their activities on the basis of a diagnosis of the local environment, gather information about the social and economic situation and the local needs, institutions/organizations operating in the region and their potential, about the local leaders and partnerships which already exist.

The National Supporting Institution intends to increase the Regional Institutes' involvement in activities associated with informing about transnational cooperation projects and with promoting and disseminating them. In connection with the fact that the Regional Institutes chain is made up of different institutions, it can be said that their potential creates a kind of multi-sector partnership, combined into a single chain, which is currently not sufficiently utilized. It seems that the role of the Regional Institutes in this process will increase together

with the gradual depletion of funds for the so-called standard projects. Thus, the Regional Institutes should intensify their efforts encouraging the project authors to submit projects as part of contests, educate and, as far as it is possible, integrate local and regional communities to support the process of fostering ideas which will translate into projects. Further activities of the Regional Institutes acting as animators of the local communities could be focused on helping to build partnerships and organize Regional Transnational Partner Forums. Noticing this potential, the National Supporting Institution provides training to all Regional Institutes in order to increase their consulting potential in the regions to support project authors and beneficiaries in carrying out transnational cooperation projects.

### **Regional transnational partner forums**

The last recommended tool are **regional transnational partner forums**<sup>9</sup> – one of the key elements of the support provided by the National Supporting Institution in implementing transnational cooperation projects.

The National Supporting Institution recommends organization of regional partner forums as part of a single province or jointly with other regions and provides the necessary support and assistance at every stage of the organization work in this field.

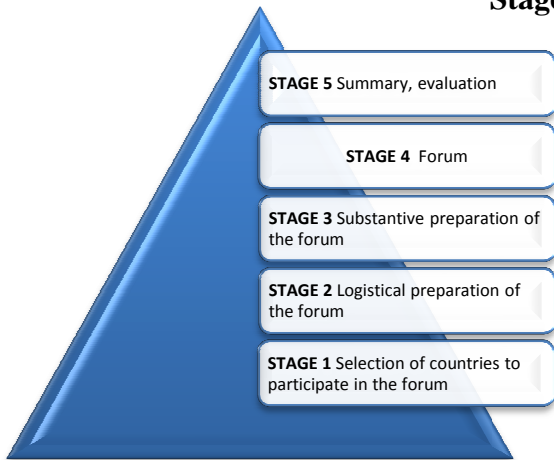
The forum is comprised of five basic stages (figure 3), which we will briefly describe pointing out the key elements.

### **Figure 3. Stages of the Regional Transnational Partner Forum**

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<sup>9</sup> A full description of organization of regional transnational partner forums can be found in the document *Model of the Regional Transnational Partner Forum* prepared by the National Supporting Institution.

## Stage 1. Selection of countries to participate in the forum



- Identification of the countries interested in participating in the forum.
- Consideration of the past experiences related to partner cooperation (in some regions traditional relations are maintained with foreign regions for historical, geographical or business reasons, for

instance).

- Consideration of relations which have been established while executing other programmes or initiatives involving transnational cooperation.
- Strategic documents laying out priorities and paths of international cooperation in the region.

It is recommended that **no more than three partner countries be selected for cooperation.**

A higher number of countries only magnifies the difficulties with preparing the projects and only increases the risk of the entire project being unsuccessful.

An analysis of the ESF implementation systems in the potential partner countries should be conducted, which covers:

- ESF support areas in our projects and projects of the potential partners;
- contest timetables (ours and of the potential partners);
- the progress of the projects being carried out by the potential participants in the forum.



At the stage of identification of countries to participate in the forum by the Intermediary Institutions it is a good idea to engage representatives of the Regional Institutes who may also help with the recruitment of the participants and with the selection of the countries taking advantage of their contacts and experience in transnational cooperation and in running forums themselves, especially in facilitating talks between partners / in groups.

## **Stage 2. Logistical preparation of the forum**

- **Contact with institutions responsible for implementing transnational cooperation in selected partner countries**

For the purpose of organizational preparation of the forum institutions responsible for implementing transnational cooperation in selected partner countries should be contacted. To establish contact the previously mentioned transnational Contact Points<sup>10</sup> or contacts available, for instance, through the Regionetwork 2020 networking platform can be used<sup>11</sup>. All important organizational matters such as the date, place, the forum's language, the need to provide an interpreter, the number of participants, etc. should be discussed during subsequent talks. It should be pointed out that all forum participants should communicate in the agreed language (for instance, English, German), which will ensure easy communication and facilitate mutual agreements, and in the future, cooperation.

- **Development of uniform tools**

We recommend preparing (in the forum's language) uniform models of tools which will be used during the forum (agenda, timetable, specimen project fiche, talk scenarios, etc.). They must be simple and understandable to everyone.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.transnational-toolkit.eu/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/regionetwork2020>

- **Division of roles and responsibilities among the countries**

In order for the forum to be successful it is important to agree on who is responsible for each task and to divide the roles between the countries and institutions. It should be determined who (personally) will lead/moderate the whole meeting and the various workshops taking place in groups (facilitators), what type of speeches will be made during the meetings, who will deliver them and what is the time limit for each speech.

Theoretical speeches (for instance, presentations concerning ESF implementation systems in each country, financial matters concerning transnational cooperation, cultural differences) should be brief because they do not constitute the essence of the meeting. The aim of the forum is, above all, to establish relations for the purpose of running joint projects. A large portion of time should be devoted to talks between potential partners – in smaller groups selected by topic. The talks should be held in accordance with the facilitation script and should cause the participants to take a decision to continue them in order to establish a partnership as part of the project. The facilitators should be persons well aware of the potential of future applicants and having experience in holding talks and meetings (for instance, Regional Institutes' animators).

To ensure proper communication between the cooperating institutions it is recommended that at least one working meeting devoted to organization be held (approx. 1–2 months before the forum starts). All tools and materials concerning the forum should be given to the participants beforehand so that they can be discussed during the meeting. A working meeting is very important because all doubts, questions and matters arising during the planning stage may be clarified then. Moreover, during such meeting the representatives of the institutions cooperating in the organization of the forum may get to know one another better, which - by

building trust - will have an impact on the quality and atmosphere of cooperation in organizing the forum.

- **Ensuring appropriate logistical facilities.**

### **Stage 3. Substantive preparation of the forum**

- **Distribution of the sample project fiche and recruitment of Polish and foreign participants in the forum**

After obtaining a consent to cooperate a sample project fiche should be mailed out to the foreign institutions responsible for the forum with a request to identify the participants in the forum (potential partners). The aim of the fiche is to gather basic information about the partner, project and the scope of the anticipated cooperation makes it possible to check whether the thematic scopes of the potential partners overlap (where there is a field in which cooperation can be established) and to preliminarily match the partners for talks. The date by which recruitment must be finished should be established for all countries, which will make it possible to efficiently match the participants for talks.

At the same time Polish participants in the forum should be selected based on the same sample fiche. The recruitment procedure should be simple and transparent for all participants.

We propose the following two recruitment criteria (to be applied jointly):

- **concordance of the thematic areas and qualitative analysis of** transnational cooperation projects in order to ensure the possibility of finding a potential partner (key criterion);
- **order in which the participants register** for the forum (in the event of a large number of potential participants); due to a limited number of seats dictated by the size of the room available, the number of facilitators and the

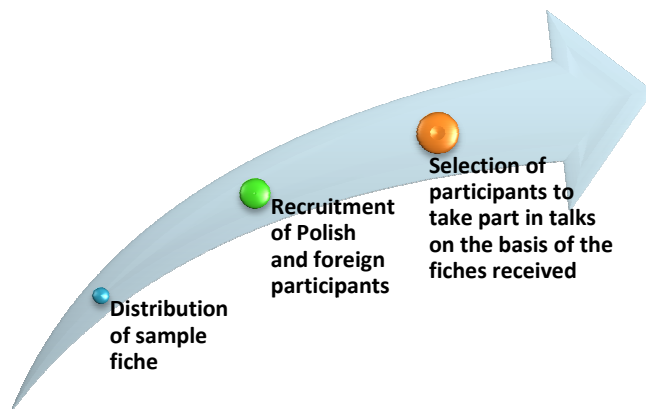
possibility to hold talks effectively, it is recommended that for every foreign participant there be no more than 2-3 Polish participants (additional criterion).

The recruitment process can be conducted using one's own website as well as other information channels and regional institutions (for instance, Regional Institutes, associations of non-government organizations, chambers of commerce).

- **Selection of participants for talks**

After the Polish and foreign participants are qualified, all completed fiches should be mailed to the foreign institutions responsible for the forum with a request to identify potential cooperation partners on their basis. This will make it possible to correctly select the partners for talks at the tables. Next, potential partners for talks should be selected on one's own (on the basis of the fiches mailed in and the indications of the participants). The list of these partners should be mailed out to the participants with a request to make adjustments or provide comments, if necessary. The size of the groups should be flexible. In order for the talks to be effective the groups should not be too big. A single working group should not be larger than 10 people; the scope of the projects being presented to the given group should also be taken into account. Do not forget to prepare a list of back-up participants who will be invited to the forum should any of the participants resign after the recruitment is finished.

**Figure 4. Substantive preparation of the regional transnational partner forum**



#### **Stage 4. Holding of the forum**

We recommend that the forum be split into two parts:

- **theoretical part** – containing brief, introductory, general presentations (concerning, for instance, ESF systems, rules of financing, cultural differences);
- **workshop part** – focused on work in thematic groups led by facilitators (for instance, Regional Institutes' animators).

#### **Stage 5. Summary and evaluation of the forum**

After the forum is finished, it is a good idea to conduct a survey to gather the participants' opinions about the forum's effects. We, too, should summarize the activities for the purpose of implementing potential changes in similar projects in the future.

#### **1.5.4. Project level**

As we have already mentioned in the preceding sub-chapter, international seminars and own contacts are great and essential tools facilitating the search for partners. We also gave

examples of databases which offer information about potential partners. There are many of them available on the transnational level, however, there is a shortage of databases created by Polish institutions, and the ones that are being created do not always fulfil the needs of Polish project authors. This is particularly important on the project's level since persons working on the project frequently lack support in the process of finding an appropriate project partner and must deal with this unquestionable problem on their own. That is why the National Supporting Institution came up with another initiative and is preparing yet another useful tool outside of the partner forums.

***Fishing Pool, literally "fishing" for potential partners to join projects***

While performing monitoring activities (cyclical collection of information from Intermediary Institutions, and in the form of completed project fiches concerning various projects run as part of contests), the National Supporting Institution intends to create a sort of a database about these projects. At the same time it will be possible to enter project fiches in that database, which are recorded on transnational partner forums or other projects whose executors seek partners for transnational cooperation.

Every person will be able to fill out a fiche under an appropriate tab on the National Supporting Institution's website. The fiches will be filled out in English but Polish project authors will be obliged to fill them out in Polish as well.

Every user will be able to search the database to find a potential partner/partners based on the selected criteria. The database will be monitored on a regular basis and will be checked if the data contained therein are up to date.

## 2. Partnership in the practical aspect

In the beginning of this chapter we would like to recall the definition of partnership and why it is a good idea to establish it.

**Partnership is a *voluntary relationship* established for the purpose of executing a task (project) through *collaboration and co-decision-making of the parties*, which contribute their human, technical and financial resources to the task. Partnership brings specific *benefits to all its participants*, yielding results which *a single partner would not achieve*, and *reducing overlapping of efforts* which would be required for the same task to be performed by each partner independently.**

So, partnership means a union of objectives, collaboration in achieving them as well as sharing the benefits and risks associated with the project. However, before such cooperation can take place, every partner should answer at least three questions:

- What do I want to achieve? What are my goals?
- How do I want to achieve them?
- Do I lack anything to achieve them?

If the answer to the third question is affirmative, then a fourth question should be asked:

- Who has got what I lack?

It should be pointed out that partnership is not always necessary. If we can achieve our goals on our own, then introducing a partner into our project may only prolong its duration and result in higher costs. The partner must contribute his knowledge, skills, experience into the project which we do not possess and cannot attain, even if we hire a subcontractor or an employee. A subcontractor attains an economic profit while a partner attains other benefits

(for instance, ability to test one's own product on a different market, joint development of new, more universal solutions, etc.). In other words, a transnational partnership must mean development and benefits for us, which we cannot attain in any other way.

## **2.1. Significant characteristics of a good partnership**

Let us start with a simple exercise. Make a simple drawing (for instance, of a house, tree, dog) and sign it. Then invite someone to make the same drawing. Hold the pencil together but do not say how you will draw and do not talk while you do the exercise. Compare the results. Achieving the task on our own if we have all the tools and skills is simpler, faster and the drawing looks nicer. Imagine that you are on a desert island with another person. You have a piece of paper and your companion has a pencil. So, each one of you needs something. In this case, in order to draw something, you must collaborate: establish a partnership to make a drawing improving the landscape.

Luckily, we are not on a desert island and usually have a much wider choice. However, this hypothetical situation causes us to think what criteria our partner should fulfil. Should he be involved in the same subject matter as we are? Or, on the contrary, in something else that complements our competencies. What other criteria should he fulfil? Thinking about a partnership we should create a list of such criteria for our own needs. Below we present several such criteria which we believe are of key importance:

- Experience in transnational cooperation.
- Experience in the topic area of interest to us.
- Experience in running projects financed from external sources.
- Rich operation history.
- High position in the industry and innovativeness.
- Competencies complementing the competencies of our institution.



- Stable organizational structure.
- High quality of staff.
- Financial credibility.
- Communication skills.
- Other criteria important from our point of view.

We should choose a partner for the project based on the above criteria. This can be done using a simple tool in the form of a partner selection criteria matrix. We place the aforementioned criteria in it and assign them scores ranging from 1 to 10, evaluating all potential partners one after the other. It is important that the matrix contain only key criteria. We omit criteria of lesser importance. If any one criteria is particularly important from our point of view we can assign it a weight, for instance, 2, 3, etc. (depending on how we evaluate the importance of the criterion).

**Table 3. Partner selection criteria matrix**

	Examples of criteria	Weight (depending on the criterion's importance)	Partner 1 (score given to each criterion from 1 to 10)	Partner 2 (score given to each criterion from 1 to 10)	Partner 3 (score given to each criterion from 1 to 10)
	Experience in transnational cooperation				
	Experience in the topic area of interest to us				
	Experience in running projects financed from				

	external sources				
	Past activities				
	Position in the industry, innovativeness				
	Competencies complementing the competencies of our institution				
	Organizational structure				
	Quality of staff				
	Financial credibility				
	Communication skills				
	Other criteria important from our point of view				
	<b>Total score</b>				

This simple tool allows us to objectify the score when selecting a partner. Please, remember though that specific people work on the project. It is them that makes cooperation either successful and pleasant or unsuccessful and unpleasant. Before we enter any partner in the matrix, it is a good idea to check whether his employees, in addition to high substantive qualifications, have the ability and willingness to cooperate.

Looking at the above list of the criteria let's go back to our exercise. Let's try again to draw our picture together, both holding the same pencil but this time talking to each other while doing it and agreeing on key issues (for instance, who is in charge and who takes binding decisions, in what order we draw the different elements, etc.). We will discover very quickly

that talking is better than remaining silent. We come to an evident conclusion here that good communication is a key criterion for drawing a high quality picture. Good communication is crucial to good and effective cooperation, a criterion which must be fulfilled if you want to reach the objectives set by the partnership.

Who hasn't laughed at a joke about cars being given away in Moscow in the Red Square, except that it was not in Moscow but in Saint Petersburg, not in the Red Square but near the Winter Palace, not cars but bicycles, and they are not giving them away but they are stealing them. This old joke illustrates what we are exposed to if we do not pay attention to communication. In the end we get information which is not only useless but also harmful. In transnational partnership the situation gets even more complicated. In addition to ordinary communication problems there are additional "transnational" problems. They include language barriers, cultural differences, distance, infrequent meetings. To achieve the project's objectives the consequences of communication problems should be minimized. In table 4 we present possible solutions to these problems.

**Table 4. Potential problem areas in transnational partnership and proposed solutions**

Potential problem areas	Best solution	Other solution
Communication	<p>Provide an opportunity for people who will communicate to get to know one another.</p> <p>Define the basic terms used in the project so that they are understood in the same way.</p> <p>Precisely define the communication procedure (for instance, sending of reports,</p>	<p>Prepare a list of employees working on the project, together with contact information.</p>

	information by e-mail once a week, every month, teleconference).	
Language, vocabulary	<p>Define the project's language. This should be a language which the national coordinators speak fluently.</p> <p>Define the project's vocabulary; it can be entered in the project's glossary.</p>	<p>Hire interpreters/translators. If possible, these should be the same persons during the entire duration of the project. This will make it possible to define the project's metalanguage.</p>
Culture	Employ persons on the project who know the specifics of the partner's culture well.	Conduct courses on the cultural differences.
Distance	Hold the meetings as often as possible.	Use the latest communication technologies (for instance, the Internet, telephone) to hold meetings with the partners.
Meetings	Define a plan of working meetings for the project's staff and a separate plan of the meetings for the decision-	Take advantage of other project activities, for instance, study visits or conferences,

	makers. Make sure that minutes are drawn up from the meetings and that they are approved.	to meet with the partner directly.
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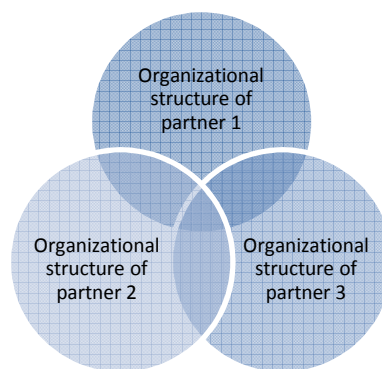
It should be noted that each of the solutions presented in the table has financial consequences. Hence, the solutions should be discussed and accepted before cooperation is commenced. Problem solving procedures should be approved in advance and attached to the partnership agreement as an appendix. However, such approach requires time (this should be taken into account when planning transnational activities). Keep this in mind in the context of observing the deadlines for filing applications for funds and the procedures for signing subsidizing agreements. All these activities require months of preparation and work, and, additionally, they must be harmonized with the partner's procedures. Do not hurry up though as haste is a significant element of risk.

Going back to our exercise with the drawing we can notice other characteristics in it which are crucial to partnership – the organizational structure, leadership and the way the decisions are taken. These issues are important to every institution. In a situation where we have to deal with at least two entities that differ from each other in terms of size, organizational culture, values, experience or the leadership model, the situation becomes serious and requires a good approach.

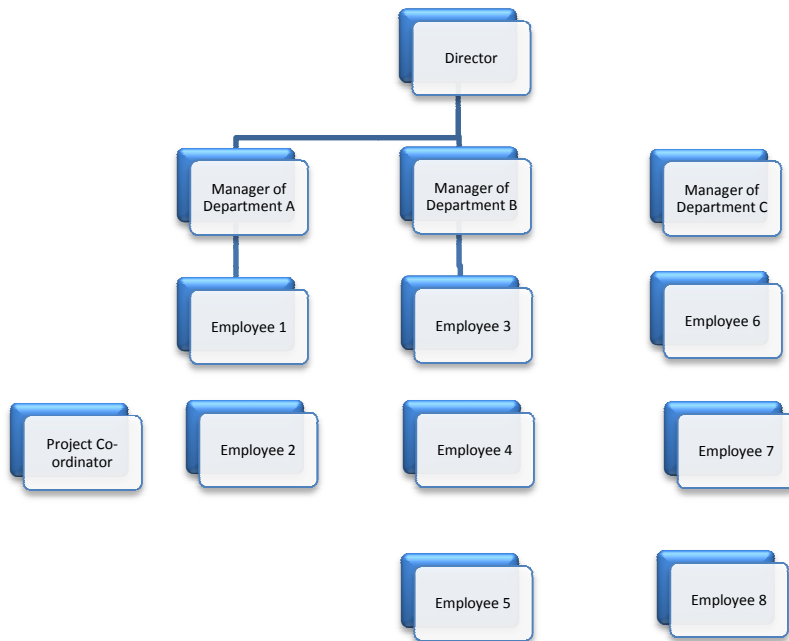
Talking about the structure of the partnership several obvious issues should be mentioned. Every partner should have his own, precisely defined role in the project. Partnership should have its own, designated institutions (for instance, a secretariat which acts as an organizational and informational contact point). The partnership's structure may overlap with the organizational structures of the partner institutions, which may lead to problems and

competency conflicts. In figure 5 the partnership's organizational structure is presented by a small triangle where the three circles intersect. As you can see, the partnership's structure absorbs a portion of the resources of each of the partners – i.e. financial, human and material resources.

**Figure 5. Common partnership structure area**



It should be pointed out that the project is being carried out based on tasks and constitutes a task in which persons from different departments of the institution participate (accounting, HR, production, training, etc.), creating a horizontal structure. The project is administered by a coordinator (supervisor, manager). At the same time the partner institution has extended vertical structures (director, supervisor, chief officer, coordinator, personnel, etc.). These two structures intersect each other (figure 6), which may lead to competency conflicts and disarray in the area of tasks and responsibilities of various employees.



**Figure 6. Task-based management vs. process-based management in an organization**

Another issue that needs to be resolved is leadership in the partnership, i.e. determining who the boss is. If we don't resolve that issue in a transparent manner, we might have serious problems. The situation may then resemble an attempt to drive a car with two steering wheels, which will inevitably lead to a disaster. Should the boss be a person who is a leader in the partnership? Such approach seems logical from the point of view of accountability before the financing institution and from the point of view of budget management (who is responsible for finances, for everything). On the other hand, the partner may object to such solution. The reasons for the objection may vary (partner having more experience, higher ambitions, sense of honesty). It seems that rotational leadership is a good solution. A frequent approach is establishment of a Steering Group, i.e. a collective body composed of representatives of the partner institutions, which lays out the project's strategic paths and takes the most important

decisions. This solution makes it possible to appreciate all partners who thus may feel co-responsible for the partnership's success.

The issue of the decision-making process can be resolved in several different ways:

- Authoritative decisions – the project's leader always decides.
- Democratic decisions – all partners participate in the decision-making process, decisions are consulted and joint decisions are taken in a democratic manner (for instance, by an ordinary majority of votes, qualified majority of votes).
- Consensus – joint approval of the decision. The decision is worked out by a group, it is not taken if not all participants in the partnership agree with it.

Each of the aforementioned solutions has its advantages and disadvantages (table 5).

**Table 5. Decision-making methods**

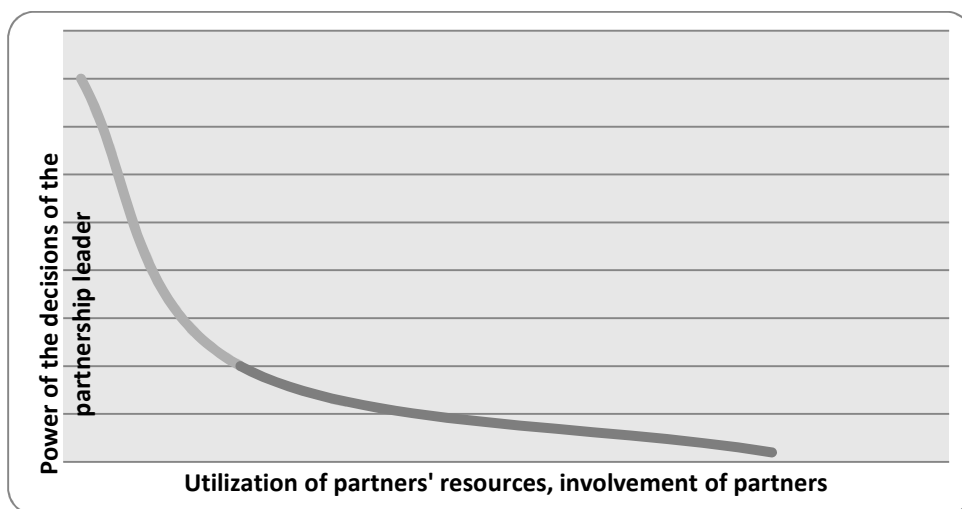
Decision-making method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Authoritative decisions	The project leader controls everything that is taking place in the project.	Potential input of the partners, their knowledge, experience, skills and involvement suffer.
Democratic decisions	Partners are included in the decision-making process, thanks to which they better identify themselves with the activities being pursued. The partners' involvement in the project increases.	Some control over the project is lost. The partners' potential is utilized only partially.
Consensus	All partners strongly identify	The project leader has a very



	themselves with the project using all their knowledge, skills and experience; are deeply involved in the project.	limited control over the project.
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Considering this issue, one may notice a correlation between the decision-making method (the power of the decision made by the partner) and the partner's involvement and possibility to utilize his resources (figure 7).

**Figure 7. Correlation between the decision-making method and the utilization of the partners' resources**



In this situation every partnership must strike a happy medium between a safe realization of the project and its effectiveness. Past experiences show that the longer the partners know each other and the more they trust each other, the more eagerly they resign from exercising strong control in favour of more effective cooperation. And vice versa – the shorter they know each other and the less they trust each other, the stronger the willingness of the leader to exercise

control and enforce his decisions. In an extreme situation the partner may resign from cooperation.

The decision-making process requires good cooperation and effective communication. The partners should mutually determine how communication within the partnership will be pursued. The following should be agreed on:

- The language of communication.
- The form of communication (meetings, phone calls, e-mail, etc.).
- The frequency of communication.
- The persons designated to communicate, responsible for working arrangements.
- The decision-makers (person taking the final decisions).

As regards transnational cooperation the frequency of personal meetings quite naturally cannot be too high. So, be prepared to use the latest communication tools.

## **2.2. Differences between partnership and subcontractorship**

In the preceding chapter we defined the characteristics of a good partnership. We must ask ourselves a question then: what is the difference between partnership and subcontractorship. The best way to define this difference is by referring to the definition of a partnership. It can be said that every cooperation not exhausting the definition is not a partnership. The subcontractor is a party doing work commissioned by the project leader. Such general statements may still be difficult to apply in specific cases. Hence, we propose a simple summary of the main characteristics of the partnership and their reference to subcontractorship (table 6) and a graphic presentation of that correlation (figure 8).

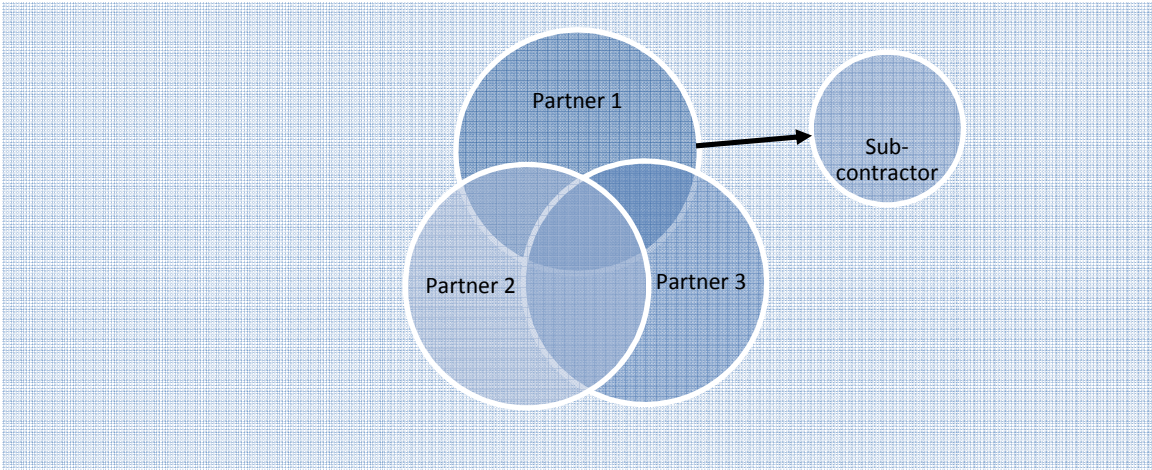
**Table 6. Partnership vs. subcontractorship**

Characteristic	Partnership	Subcontractorship
<b>Project planning</b>	The partners jointly plan the project, identify its objectives, activities, products.	A subcontractor does not make any input into planning.
<b>Project management</b>	The partners mutually contribute their resources to the project (human, technical and organizational resources) and manage them mutually. They form mutual decision-making bodies (for instance, the Steering Group, joint project management board, national coordinators) but remain autonomous at the same time.	The subcontractor does not participate in management. Renders his resources and knowledge available so that the project leader may achieve his objectives but reports to the leader.
<b>Project financing</b>	The partners finance their operations or otherwise define their own financial involvement.	The subcontractors engages his own funds to achieve an economic profit.
<b>Benefits from the project</b>	Each partner derives benefits from the project. Each partner's benefits may vary (for instance, one of them may adapt a product belonging to the other one on his local market and co-hold the rights to it, the other one may benefit from his product being popularized on new markets while holding the copyrights to it, etc.).	The subcontractor achieves an economic profit.

	The benefits may be of non-material nature (for instance, prestige, better recognition on a new market).	
Risk associated with the project	The partners share the risk associated with the project.	The subcontractor accepts the risk ensuing from business activity but does not participate in the risk associated with the project.

**Figure 8. Partnership vs. subcontractorship**

We can graphically illustrate it this way:



**2.3. Modern communication tools useful in partnership relations**

Cooperation with foreign entities is a difficult task. If we want to effectively execute the project and to utilize the knowledge, experience and skills of our partners, we must answer the question how to do it. Frequent meetings mean devoting a lot of time and money. Phone calls may generate high phone bills. Hence, we are faced with the need to use the latest communication tools (table 7) whose quick development occurred in recent years.

**Table 7. Modern communication tools useful in partnership relations**

### Internet telephony

Internet telephony has revolutionized telecommunications several years ago. It made it possible to make free phone calls between two Internet users or to make very cheap PC-to-phone calls (all you need is to plug a headset into the computer, log in and start calling). Many operators presently offer such services (for instance [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com), [www.google.com/talk](http://www.google.com/talk)).

### Messaging clients (*instant messaging*)

Another useful tool may be an instant messaging client which makes it possible to exchange text messages between computers hooked up to the Web in real time. This is an effective communication method which makes it possible to simultaneously talk and work on several documents on the computer. There are numerous instant messaging clients (for instance, ICQ, Gadu-gadu, VoIP).

### Online electronic cooperation tools

An ideal tool is such which makes it possible to simultaneously participate in a video conference and for several partners to work on the same document. Such tools are available free of charge. Thanks to the Internet and software available *online* it is possible for several persons to work on the same document at the same time. The changes made in the documents can be seen by everyone participating in the discussion and can be responded to immediately. Such tool can be used in partner projects and makes it possible to significantly reduce the risk associated with the distance between the partners. Online electronic cooperation tools include, for instance [www.zoho.com](http://www.zoho.com); [www.thinkfree.com](http://www.thinkfree.com); [www.google.com/google-d-s/b1.html](http://www.google.com/google-d-s/b1.html)

### Online groups

An online group is also worth thinking about – these are groups of people involved in the

project as well as people with whom we cooperate. Online groups make it possible to exchange opinions, photographs and information. They also offer event calendars or notice boards as well as other functions adapted to our needs (such groups include, for instance. <http://group.yahoo.com>, <http://groups.google.com>).

#### **2.4. Electronic management tools used in partnership relations**

Once we take care of cheap and good communication within the partnership, making effective work possible, it is a good idea to think about a project management tool. To choose an appropriate tool we must answer the questions: how do we want to manage the project and what methodology are we going to use.

The methodology recommended when working on projects financed by the European Social Fund is the *Project Cycle Management* (PCM) – an approach that was developed as a result of huge simplification and compilation of project methodologies, among other things, PMI (*Project Management Institute*), Prince2 (*Project in a Controlled Environment*), APM (*Association for Project Management*). In a transnational project it is a good idea to unify the methodology which will be used by all partners. This will make it possible to unify the project and management processes and to use a single electronic tool to administer the entire project. The tool (application) using any of the methodologies may be a multi-station tool, which means that each partner is able to enter his data into the application. It should also allow all partners to follow the progress of work on the project and to monitor the achieved indicators and to generate reports. The following are examples of electronic tools that can be used:

- *MS Project* – uses the PMI methodology.
- *P2ware Planner* – uses the Prince 2 methodology.

## **2.5. Partnership success factors**

The success factors indicate on what the project's success depends and what is most important in achieving it. In the preceding sub-chapters we presented tools which an effective partnership should use and the characteristics of such partnership. Undoubtedly the use of such tools and the possession of such characteristics is one of the success factors. Nonetheless, it is a good idea to determine which ones are of key importance and lack of which makes it impossible for the project to be successful. Such factors include, among other things:

- Identity of partnership.
- Synergy of actions.
- Understanding for cultural diversity.
- Good communication.
- Effective management.
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Ability to settle technical issues.
- Ability to settle conflicts within the partnership

### **2.5.1. Identity of partnership**

Building a common identity of institutions having different origins is a difficult task and should be based on achieving joint, long-term goals. The fact of having such goals makes it possible to plan subsequent activities along the path leading to their achievement. It also provides an appropriate time span to build joint history and experiences, where these in turn allow the sense of individuality, affinity, elitism to develop. It's worth taking care of that. An external expression of mutual identity of the partners can be the project's logo, joint website or the same graphic design of the partners' individual websites, as well as rituals characteristic of the partnership, for

instance, specific meeting agenda, method of presentation or workshop activities. These are the areas where we can specifically use our creativity, agree on mutual identification elements, and then consequently and patiently apply them.

In order to be able to imagine it better, just take a look, for instance, at the fan club of any football team. They have a common goal – support "their" players and team. They have specific identification symbols – scarves, T-shirts, emblems. They also have their own rituals, for instance, the same cheers or chants. Fans of the same team, even if they come from different countries, demonstrate solidarity and recognize one another easily. They have the same identity. We must do the same in our partnership: we should define our common goals, strive towards them and make use of the elements of mutual identification.

### **2.5.2. Synergy of actions**

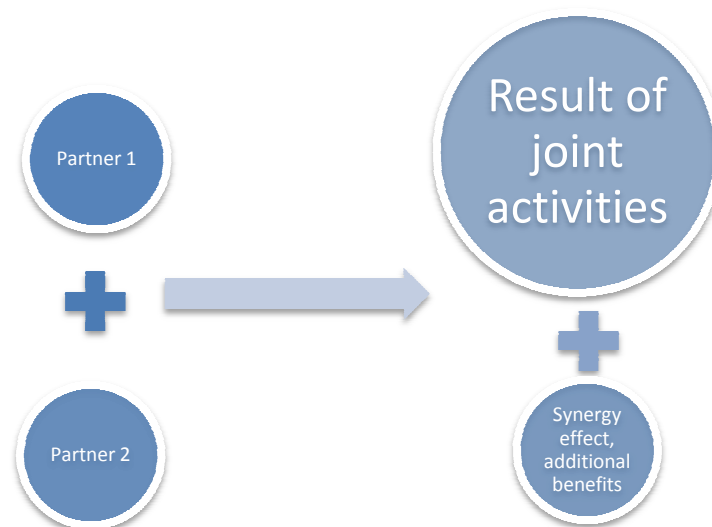
Synergy means achievement of multiple benefits thanks to a skilful combination of individual parts into one whole. The synergistic effect means an effect arising between two or more factors that produces an effect greater than the sum of their individual effects – this can be described as a situation where one plus one produces more than two (figure 9). As an example of a synergistic effect we can use a good sports team or music band. The entire team or band has a defined long-term, strategic objective (for instance, to be a champion or to publish a record which will reach the top of the hits list). It also has specific objectives (for instance, win specific games or play at specific concerts). Every team or band member has tasks assigned to him that require particular skills. These skills vary but they must complement each other (for instance, the skills of the guitar player, drummer and lead singer). Every team or band member must do his job well but the objective can be achieved only if they work together. We may observe the synergistic effect when the team or band is well coordinated – it does not have to be



made up of outstanding players or musicians, but it achieves its objectives better, wins, and is better. Such effect is also crucial to partnerships.

Partners, similarly to the individual employees, should be selected accordingly to the tasks which they must perform. They also must understand the objective which they want to achieve together. Once they learn to cooperate well, they will be able to achieve that objective in an exceptional manner, carry out a wonderful and important project. As this description illustrates, it is very important to select partners who have skills that complement one another and employees who can work well in teams.

**Figure 9. Synergistic effect**



### **2.5.3. Understanding for cultural diversity**

In order to get nearer success, the partners should well understand that they differ and that these differences are not bad at all – they simply are a part of reality that we have to face. Dealing with these differences is undoubtedly a huge challenge which we can, nonetheless, cope with if we approach it with an open mind and if we apply variable

methods, depending on the partner's country and the field which our cooperation concerns. Several areas where cultural differences appear can be distinguished.

- **Law and finance.** The partners may operate under different legal orders. These differences should be taken into account, for instance, in the public procurement procedure (different times by which the procedure is decided, which affects the timetable) or in the way accounting is done.
- **Non-business days and traditional holiday seasons** (for instance, summer). This should be kept in mind when preparing the project's timetable because non-business days in the partner's country may differ from those in our country. Moreover, the partner's country may lie in a different time zone, other business hours and other breaks may be in effect (for instance, siesta). Do not forget about a varied attitude towards time (for instance, in Northern Europe, contrary to Southern Europe, punctuality is a standard).
- **Organizational culture.** Partner institutions may vary in terms of structure, customs and degree of formalization. The sector that they represent (administration, business, non-government sector) as well as the culture of the given country have an impact on that. This should be taken into account when planning the project's structure and its procedures (for instance, government organizations follow different procedures than non-government organizations). It should also be noted that, for instance, Polish administration and the German administration may differ significantly. We may assign various priorities to different tasks; what is important to us does not have to be important to the partner. The time within which the task is to be carried out may also vary.

- **Meaning of symbols.** Do not forget about the national and religious symbols of the partner's country and remember to find information about body talk (for instance, gestures which can be considered to be rude).
- **Attitude towards equal opportunities.** Southern and Northern Europe differ significantly as regards this issue. It is a good idea to take this into account and to derive benefits from those differences. The benefits may accompany the assumed objectives of the project and be derived when the opportunity occurs (for instance, possibility to take a look at solutions concerning gender equality applied in Scandinavian countries).
- **Religion.** Religious differences affect the way values are assigned to objectives, behaviours, situations. This may pose problems to the decision-making process since partners may assign different values to religion and may have different attitudes towards it.

Before we start cooperating we should have a close look at our partners, understand the sources of their dissimilarity and assume an open attitude and be ready to accept compromises.

#### **2.5.4. Good communication**

We have mentioned the role of good communication in the preceding sub-chapters. It should be pointed out that it is extremely important to agree on the communication channels as well as the frequency of the meetings and talks with partners. When recruiting employees for the project attention should be paid to the knowledge of the project's working language. It is also a good idea to prepare a glossary of terms used in the project (an unequivocal glossary of definitions and terms which will be used by the partners in the project) and to ensure that it is possible to jointly consult important

documents being prepared while the project is being executed (for instance, agendas and minutes from the meetings).

### **2.5.5. Effective management**

Effective project management should be characterized by:

- Equal and fair treatment of all project employees, regardless of the country of their origin.
- Understanding of the impact of cultural differences on the quality of the partnership.
- Proper utilization of knowledge, skills and experience of all partners.
- Observance of all deadlines by which the tasks are to be completed.
- Ability to communicate and utilize all necessary channels of modern information technology.
- Kind acceptance of remarks put forward by all partners.
- Preparation of proposals of decisions for the partnership's collective bodies.
- Preparation of a detailed timetable for implementing the project, including international meetings.
- Being concerned about the partnership's intellectual property.
- Development of a project monitoring system.

### **2.5.6. Monitoring and evaluation**

To ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the project appropriate tools should be developed (for instance, a monitoring plan and an evaluation plan), which will make it possible to determine what we will be examining, as well as where, when and how we will be doing it. These tools should be approved by all partners. The difference in the way the partners approach this issue should be taken into account. Such tools allow us to objectively discipline all partners to fulfil their duties. The issue of external evaluation of the project should be considered, and its effects should be used to promote the project's achievements and all partners.

### **2.5.7. Settlement of technical issues**

It is hard to imagine how many unexpected problems the latest technology may pose. If we want to succeed, we must be able to deal with technical problems which may appear during the course of the project. The operating systems on the computers used in the project and the key software applications used in daily work (for instance, text editors, spread sheets) should be unified and the standards of various documents as well as the channels and deadlines by which these documents are to be delivered should be agreed on.

#### **2.5.8. Settlement of conflicts within the partnership**

Conflicts are unavoidable even in the best partnership. In order to be successful we should learn how to resolve them. To achieve this, we should, above all, ensure that the partnership agreement is of high quality and that it lays out the duties and tasks of all partners, and we should not leave any ambiguities during the course of negotiations as well as while working on the project. Misunderstandings always turn themselves against us. We should be sensitive to all symptoms of conflict – understatements, impatience, arguments. It's a good idea to create an atmosphere encouraging an honest and open dialogue during regular partner meetings. However, we should not react too sharply to conflicts having little impact on the project.

#### **2.6. Partnership risk factors**

Execution of projects in a partnership is a task accompanied by a high risk. Apart from the threats typical of every project being carried out in the given field, many types of risks associated with the fact of the partner cooperation itself will appear. We must be aware of those threats and should minimize them. The risk factors should be considered in two aspects:

- Probability of occurrence.
- Impact on the project.

Both aspects can be evaluated using scores from 1 to 5 (1 means a factor characterized by small probability and insignificant impact). Risk is a product of both aspects. High risk factors should be eliminated, and if this is not possible, then the project’s goals and activities should be re-formulated. Low risk factors can be ignored, as regards medium risk factors procedure scenarios should be developed in the event of their occurrence.

**Table 8. Risk matrix**

Probability \ Impact	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	2	3	4	5
2	2	4	6	8	10
3	3	6	9	12	15
4	4	8	12	16	20
5	5	10	15	20	25
Low risk					
Medium risk					
High risk					

Projects being executed as part of transnational partnership are even more risky as many new types of risks associated with transnationality accompany threats observed in "normal" cooperation. That is why one of the characteristics of partnership is sharing of that risk between the partners. Several examples of the types of risks occurring in transnational partnership are presented in table 9.

**Table 9. Examples of the types of risks occurring in transnational partnership**

Risk	Potential reaction/countermeasure
<p>Inappropriate selection of partners which may result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- misunderstanding of mutual expectations;</li> <li>- mistrust leading to unwillingness to share one's own <i>know-how</i>;</li> <li>- the partner's withdrawal from the project;</li> <li>- the partner's failure to fulfil his duties.</li> </ul>	<p>We recommend that you cooperate with previously known partners or their representatives. It is very important to clearly define the expectations with respect to the given partner at the start of the cooperation. In case of the greatest threat which is the partner's withdrawal from the project, you should, above all, remain in touch with such institution, "have your finger on the pulse", for instance, organize regular meetings and during such meetings assess the level of satisfaction with the project's progress (each partner should be given an opportunity to express the expectations of the institution that he represents, and to indicate to what degree they have been fulfilled). Another option is having more than one partner in the project, so that the other partner may take over the tasks of the partner that withdrew from the project.</p>
<p>Unclear demarcation lines between the scopes of duties of the partners</p>	<p>You must clearly define the duties of the partners in the partnership agreement. If necessary, the demarcation</p>

	lines can be defined in a separate internal document of the partnership.
Lack of financial engagement of the partner (financing of the entire project from the Human Capital - Operational Programme) may lead to the partner's demotivation to become involved in the project.	The benefits which the partner will achieve thanks to the project should be identified, for instance, trying out a proven method in a new environment (in another country) or disseminating one's own solutions and promoting one's own institution.
Lack of time	The partners, in addition to the project, must carry out their daily tasks. The project is an extra activity to which extra time and/or resources must be devoted. It is possible to increase the employment level or hire external entities to perform some of the tasks for the duration of the project.
Cultural differences	Experience of the persons understanding the differences between the partners should be taken advantage of. If possible, it is a good idea to get them involved in the project or to conduct courses or workshops for the project's employees to help them understand the new situation.
Language and communication barriers	The project's working language should be defined and it should be made sure that the project's staff can speak it. When working on important documents it is a good idea to hire professional translators. A good practice is to prepare a communication plan which defines the tasks of every partner in this area and contains a description of the adopted communication channels.



Differences in the annual work plans associated with different holiday dates, etc.	The work calendar should be adopted at the start of the project (with respect to non-business days, holiday leaves, etc.).
Lack of support from the management of one's own institution	It should be made sure that the superiors know about the project, that they are informed on an on-going basis about its progress and that they have no doubts about the benefits which their institution can derive from participating in the project.
Other unexpected problems	The tasks being performed by us and our partners should be continuously monitored using previously prepared tools  (for instance, a timetable of tasks).

We could mention more threats accompanying transnational cooperation. Remember that the most important thing is to choose a responsible partner who will be willing to work hard and to share the risk in the project. Risk sharing may be the most important characteristic of a good partner.

## Summary

The aim of this publication is not to answer the question whether partnership is a necessity or just a need in today's society. Its aim is only to indicate certain practical tools for seeking competent partners, which – since they are "ready-made" – can be used immediately. Of course, if someone is interested in finding the answer to the above question, the best thing to do is to look for it in the closest neighbourhood where very likely many partnerships function. All you need to do is to look around and talk to people. They will surely answer questions that are bothering us.

We live in an information society, in an ever changing environment, and it is not possible for a single person, institution or organization to be able to solve problems on its own, problems which appear constantly and are becoming ever more complex, especially those concerning social issues. It is necessary to apply a more complex, multi-level and innovative approach to be able to solve them. This can be achieved through cooperation between numerous parties (persons, institutions), having different but complementary competencies, but are interested in and focused on achieving the assumed goals together.

Partnership is not a fad but a continuously developing process that should gain strength in the near future. The recent economic and financial crises have clearly shown that the social dimension (i.e. for instance, unemployment, demographic processes, climate changes causing a need for new professions) will play an ever greater role, which means that the meaning of partnerships – as one of the possibilities to effectively solve social problems - should grow. Being aware of that fact, we presented here simple and practical tools which may help find competent and credible partners to carry through ideas which will translate into partner projects, and these, in turn, will help solve difficult social problems.

Let's not forget about a very important issue: everyone can change the world, but to know how, what and where to change, it is necessary to talk to each other. It is not possible to propose a reasonable solution to specific problems if we don't know and don't understand the needs or concerns of the local community (we are not operating in a vacuum), and such understanding is possible only if we hold a dialogue, carefully listening to what others have to say. Partnerships are an ideal tool for that.

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