

**Partnership principle –
NGOs involvement in Steering and Monitoring Committees
Success factors for influencing the Structural Funds - experiences from Germany**

**Presentation from Dirk Schubert
nova-Institut / WWF consultant
on the NGO Seminar “Today and tomorrow of the EU-Funds” 26th – 28th February Brussels**

The partnership principle and the possibility to participate in Steering and Monitoring Committees offers different opportunities for environmental NGOs. Whether these possibilities are realized, is in the opinion of the author affected by the following success factors:

Problem pressure: Activities of environmental NGOs are promising in those areas, where a certain problem pressure is present and noticed by other actors or even in the public. Economic, financial or political problems are primarily decisive. Environmental NGOs must be able to make a contribution to the solution of these problems, in order to be taken seriously as partners.

Strong partners: Environmental NGOs do not have the necessary strength for the penetration of their interests. For the penetration of their interests environmental NGOs need partners, which have command over the necessary power, competencies and resources. Partnerships with strong actors have to developed on a long-term basis and constantly maintained.

Vision: A long-term comprehensive commitment of environmental NGOs in the area of the Structural Funds needs a clear vision. What is the long-term goal of the commitment? How should the future like if success is achieved? A effective vision motivates, coordinates and is the condition as well for the internal as the external communication. The vision must be conceivable, desired, feasible, focused, flexible and obtainable.

Win-Win situations: Apart from the long-term vision a participation of the environmental NGOs requires a concrete and attainable benefit in the foreseeable future. What is the concrete effect of the commitment? The possible benefit can encompass different aspects like personal interest, information access, new contacts, political influence or financial objectives. In particular the activities of the environmental NGOs are successful if win-win situations with other actors are possible, that create benefits for both sides. To realise a win-win situation the two parties do not have to pursue necessarily the same goals.

Success: Success is for two reasons of importance for a commitment of the environmental NGOs. On the one hand success can is quite often the trigger for the engagement. If an environmental NGO e.g. succeeds to finance a info centre for a nature protection area through Structural Funds this motivates. On the other hand success is a condition for a durable commitment. Success shows that the engagement is meaningful, leads to the goal and motivates even if the first steps are painful. Therefore success is of great importance for the internal communication within the environmental NGOs to secure the necessary acceptance, support and last but not least resources. Since these necessary (partial) successes usually do not automatically appear, success has to be planned and identified systematically as well as communicated and celebrated.

Communication: A successful commitment of the environmental NGOs requires both a professional external as well as internal communication. External communication (among other things PR) is e.g. necessary to appear in the public, rise the problem pressure, to communicate the vision and sell success stories. An important component of external communication is the direct personal and informal dialogue. Task of the internal communication (within and between the environmental NGOs) is to keep and rise the internal acceptance for the engagement within the NGOs, to introduce learning processes and to increase the impact force.

Manageability: Focussing the engagement on a few clear goals with a few concrete subprojects increases the chances of success. Complex projects with a lot of involved partners complicate the project management, increase the co-operation expenditure and more probably result in a failure.

Critical mass: To be successful, the engagement of the environmental NGOs has to be supported by a critical mass within and outside of the environmental NGOs. To achieve this networking within the environmental NGOs seems to be necessary on the one side. On the other side partners must be found outside of the "own rows", actors with which NGOs can cooperate.

Connectivity: If the goals of the engagement of the environmental NGO are connectable with existing basic conditions, structures, instruments and developments, the chances of success rise. Cause with rising connectivity the change expenditure sink, synergies increase and strong partners can be won. On the other side connectivity covers as well the conditions of functioning communication. The representatives of the environmental NGOs in the Monitoring Committee must be able to communicate with actors from a wide range of areas like economics, social/education, agriculture, from the governmental and the non-governmental sectors and have to be able to think in different "realities".

Learning ability and exchange: A precondition of a successful commitment of environmental NGOs in the area of the Structural Funds is the learning ability. The framework conditions as well as the milieu constantly changes. Accordingly the own strategies must be adapted. A continuous exchange between the environmental NGOs can improve the Know-How-Transfer and joint strategies can be developed or at least coordinated.

Management of the environment: The success of the engagement of environmental NGOs depends to a large part on the acceptance and the support from the surrounding environment. Acceptance and support can be created by continuous communication and contact with the surrounding environment. On the other hand single-handed attempts lead to isolation and to refusal up to open resistance in the surrounding field. The surrounding field should be cared for actively, continuously and anticipatory.

Competence: A condition of a successful participation is apart from highly specialized technical and vocational skills (economics, EU-Structural Funds, national funding schemes, administration) also a high process competence. Process competence is based on the knowledge how political, social and inter-human processes run and can be affected as well as the ability to analyse the existing conditions and reflect the developments. Process competence covers both tactical skills, strategy ability, flexibility, the willingness to give-and-take as well as communication, presentation and dialogue skills.

Resources: A successful commitment requires the necessary temporal, personnel and financial resources with relatively high "investments" in advance (e.g. the operational system and "language" of the Structural Funds must be learned). The resources for communication and the management of the environment must be available. Contacts must be developed and maintained on a long-term basis. This requires a medium to long-term availability of resources.