



## Cohesion Requires Partnership

### *Civil society statement in support of strong partnership provisions in the general regulation on the Structural and Cohesion funds for 2007-2013*

[Article 10 of the proposed regulation COM(2004)492]

**A broad alliance of European social and environmental civil society organisations is deeply concerned about the proposed weakening of provisions on partnership (Article 10) in the new general regulation on the Structural and Cohesion Funds for 2007-2013. The wording suggested in the Council Presidency compromise (of 21 December 2005) seriously dilutes the partnership principle in comparison with not only the Commission's original proposal, but also with the current regulation 1260/1999.**

Partnership refers to the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), regional, local and other authorities in the programming, implementation and monitoring of the Structural and Cohesion Funds programmes. In November 2005, the Commission's evaluation of the partnership principle concluded that "structural funds deliver more, faster and better when national, regional and local authorities work together with their economic and social partners and with civil society groups". Partnership has proved to be a key to success in the Structural and Cohesion Funds programmes and its weakening would be an unfortunate step back.

The **European Parliament**, in its resolution on the general regulation of 6 July 2005, "*rejects any weakening of the principle of partnership as envisaged in the original proposal, especially in terms of strategic planning and monitoring of the programmes; calls particularly for the maintenance of the list of appropriate bodies (Article 10(1)(c));*"

**We support the Parliament's recommendation and call on you to do everything in your power to make sure that the partnership provisions in Article 10 of the general regulation are not weakened.**

#### **7 reasons for stronger partnership:**

- 1) Partnership leads to improved absorption of the funds, and more effective use of European taxpayer's money, through better selection of projects according to their quality
- 2) Partnership improves transparency and prevents misuse and corruption
- 3) Partnership contributes to a democratic and participative political culture
- 4) Partnership improves coordination through wider dissemination of information
- 5) Partnership strengthens both society's sense of ownership of the projects funded and the legitimacy of the cohesion policy
- 6) At a time when legitimacy of EU policies and efficiency of its expenditure are seriously debated, partnership in cohesion policy needs to be strengthened, not weakened.
- 7) Given the size of the cohesion policy budget and the trend towards decentralisation of financial control, partnership needs to be strengthened, not weakened.

Therefore, we urge you to return to the Commission's original wording or propose the following adjustments in the Council Presidency text:

Council Presidency text (of 21 December 2005)	Civil society proposal
<p style="text-align: center;">Article 10</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Partnership</b></p> <p>1. The objectives of the funds are pursued in the framework of close co-operation, hereinafter partnership, between the Commission and the Member State. The Member State shall organise, where appropriate and in accordance with current national rules and practices, a partnership with the authorities and bodies such as :</p> <p>a) the competent regional, local, urban and other public authorities;</p> <p>b) the economic and social partners;</p> <p>c) any other appropriate body.</p> <p>Each Member State shall designate the most representative partners at national, regional and local level and in the economic, social, environmental or other spheres, hereinafter "partners", in accordance with national rules and practices, taking account of the need to promote equality between men and women and sustainable development through the integration of environmental protection and improvement requirements.</p> <p>2. The partnership shall be conducted in full compliance with the respective institutional, legal and financial powers of each partner category as defined in paragraph 1.</p> <p>The partnership shall cover the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the operational programmes. Member States shall involve, where appropriate, each of the relevant partners, and particularly the regions , in the different stages of programming within the time limit set for each stage.</p> <p>3. Each year the Commission shall consult the organisations representing the social partners at European level on assistance from the Funds.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Article 10</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Partnership</b></p> <p>1. The objectives of the funds are pursued in the framework of close co-operation, hereinafter partnership, between the Commission and the Member State. The Member State shall organise, [...] in accordance with current national rules and practices, a partnership with the authorities and bodies, <b>namely</b>:</p> <p>a) the competent regional, local, urban and other public authorities;</p> <p>b) the economic, social <b>and environmental</b> partners;</p> <p>c) any other appropriate body, <b>representing civil society, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting equality between men and women.</b></p> <p>Each Member State shall designate the most representative partners at national, regional and local level and in the economic, social, environmental or other spheres, hereinafter "partners". <b>The Member State shall ensure broad and effective involvement of all the appropriate bodies,</b> in accordance with national rules and practices, taking account of the need to promote equality between men and women and sustainable development through the integration of environmental protection and improvement requirements.</p> <p>2. The partnership shall be conducted in full compliance with the respective institutional, legal and financial powers of each partner category as defined in paragraph 1.</p> <p>The partnership shall cover <b>preparation and monitoring of the national strategic reference framework as well as</b> the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the operational programmes. Member States shall involve [...] partners [...] in the different stages of programming within the time limit set for each stage.</p> <p>3. Each year the Commission shall consult the organisations representing the social partners at European level on assistance from the Funds.</p>