

LOCAL PARTNERSHIP

GENERATING AND SUPPORTING CO-OPERATION BETWEEN ORGANISATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This document is an analysis based on presentations and exchanges of material gathered during thematic working which was conducted as part of the "SYNJOB" transnational partnership project. The examples in this thematic document are indicative of good practice elements each member of the working group wished to highlight in terms of partnership development and conduct. The recommendations (the "conclusions") were taken directly from thematic exchanges and associated group work. This report is not a theoretical study of partnership, nor a comprehensive guidebook to "good practices". The group participants were aware of the diversity of their situations and of the national or even local habits and customs influencing their professional practices. The examples quoted in this report must therefore be considered in a specific political, social and legislative context. Comparisons and exchanges based on factual examples (as opposed to hypothetical models) was considered to be the most fruitful option. Members of the working group wish to contribute to the definition of the notion of "partnership" and "generating and supporting co-operation", on the basis of tangible and real examples.

The ambition of the various group participants was to present various examples of participation in partnerships, rather than put forward ideal recipes for success.

WHY PARTNERSHIP ?

It may seem unusual to reflect on the question of partnership when all the participants are already members of one, the SYNJOB transnational partnership. This could be construed as creating a vicious circle ! However this report deals exclusively with the experiences short-listed by each of the partners. They are summarized here, setting the landscape in which we, the participants, have a role to play.

The aim of our workshop was to show different partnership contexts, to describe the steps taken within the context of partnership and to look at good practice from all sides. We do not mean to highlight a universal or ideal way for the conduct of a partnership. We want to show how and why partnerships can be successful, identifying both limitations and achievements. There will be a catalogue of good practices, but each reader should understand it as a "menu of options". This selection or menu has been prepared in the absence of a *laissez-faire* or dogmatic approach.

The subtitle of this workshop is "generating and supporting co-operation". One of the points was to analyse to what extent the partnership approach favours this process.

The perplexing and recurring issue of professional and social integration is particularly relevant to people with disabilities. The complex nature of modern society indicates complex solutions to the failures, injustice and shortcomings of citizenship and socialisation. Therefore, we have to make continuous efforts to co-ordinate and harmonize the different protagonists of the integration process. We need to provide them with the means to work together, distribute responsibilities among themselves and use their skills. Partnership thus implies a number of procedures of co-operation between institutions with fairly similar roles.

A successful partnership requires more than improvisation, and operates by a number of set rules and provisions. From this point of view, the partnership approach evolves through three identifiable stages.

The emergence of existing relations between different protagonists, with a general recognition that they belong to a common professional sphere. These relationships do not develop from choice. They are de facto relationships.

The construction : participants strengthen their links and define their relationships with each other.

The structuring : there is a formalization of aims and pooling of resources. An explicit recognition that working together will deliver a greater and shared efficiency.

Highlighting and defining these steps assists the set up and the functioning of a partnership, avoiding the mere juxtaposition of protagonists whose intentions and practices would have been unclear. Finally, it should help us to position ourselves initially in an analysis of partnership creation, rather than the process of realization.

CONDITIONS FOR PARTNERSHIP CREATION

MINIMUM INTENTIONS

Participants should:

- have a number of common and shared objectives,
- adopt a positive approach to discussions and debate,
- acknowledge the abilities and worthiness of other participants,
- build relationships based on mutual trust,
- be willing to share information and to consider other participants as their equals in a process of shared evolution,
- accept the proposed functional model of the partnership and its objectives,
- be respectful of the differences between different members,

- take into consideration the creation of new or shared services by the partnership, which will add greater value.

MINIMUM PRACTICES

- the creation of a co-ordination body – commissioned, supported and formally acknowledged by all the participants
- the further development and management of common or shared activities.
- the creation and sharing of common resources and expertise.
- the organisation of a communication system which supports the various partnership activities and processes.
- a common reference terminology.
- the organisation of a body responsible for monitoring and assessment.
- a longer term development strategy for the partnership (as opposed to the mere launch of a timebound project)
- allocation of clearly-defined responsibilities between the members with the opportunity to rotate specific responsibilities.
- clarify the financial impact of membership and participation in the partnership.
- create an environment where partners participate in the project in accordance with their own potential, resources and expertise.
- to communicate information on the partnership and its activities to other agencies and individuals, promoting the partnership, its members and its achievements.

SCHEMATIC PRESENTATION OF THE PARTNERSHIPS ANALYSED BY THE THEMATIC WORKING GROUP

AGFOL (ITALY)

MAIN OBJECTIVES :

Partnerships set up at a provincial level, between employment services and the Work Integration Service (SIL) of local Veneto health institutions, to introduce innovative support mechanisms which assist with placing disabled people into employment (thereby supporting national legislative statutes on compulsory employment).

MAIN FEATURES :

- the creation of working groups, which set and realize quarterly plans supporting the integration of people with disabilities into the local labour market
- a steering committee which meets at least twice a year to monitor activities, plan or redefine activities and produce reports on the main activities carried out.
- runs campaigns to increase public awareness through various communication media and events - articles aimed at the wider public as well as in the specialized press, meetings with disabled persons' associations, entrepreneurs and workers etc.

AWIPH (BELGIUM)

MAIN OBJECTIVES :

The "Carrefour Formation" (Training Forum) is an information and counselling service for all jobseekers (including people with disabilities and other special needs) on all training courses organized in the Walloon area. This partnership creates a synergy between the various partners which leads to more effective information provision, lessening the competitive instincts often present between operators, contributing to improved uptake of training and vocational opportunities.

MAIN FEATURES:

"Carrefour Formation" exhibits the following features :

- Co-ordination of activities,
- Common production of materials and shared resources,
- Specialist subject working groups,
- A steering committee,
- A recognised system of communication between partner members,
- A partnership annual and financial report.

SPAZIO LAVORO (ITALY)

MAIN OBJECTIVES :

The co-operative company SPAZIO LAVORO is a lead member of group of local organisations, disabled associations, a training centre and public agencies who work to improve the integration of people with disabilities into employment and wider aspects of society in the Laziale region, south of Rome. The partnership undertakes work mainly in the fields of public awareness raising, research, information provision and promotion of existing services which support the integration of people with disabilities.

MAIN FEATURES:

This following features are exhibited in the partnership's activities :

- Co-ordination between local agencies,
- Team working at activity / operator level,
- Specific subject working groups,
- A steering committee,
- An assessment committee,
- Promotional activity aimed at the public and other agencies,
- Creation of shared tools and resources.

INTOWORK (SCOTLAND)

MAIN OBJECTIVES:

EMPLOYABILITY FORUM is an association / partnership of organisations who provide employment development and support services for people with disabilities, living in Edinburgh and the Lothians (part of east central Scotland).

The aim of the partnership is to create mechanisms and shared resources which support the movement of people with disabilities into employment e.g. the operation of an IT based network service which exchanges employer and labour market information between member organisations and their operators. The Forum also encourages joint working and marketing activity aimed at employers. Future development activity will continue to concentrate on the creation of new shared resources, which assist individual member organisations to build their own internal capacity.

MAIN FEATURES:

- Operating shared resources and services e.g. through IT based network which benefits members of the partnership
- Setting-up of subject working and training to groups improve professional competencies and practices,
- A steering committee responsible for management and longer term development,
- Promotional activity aimed at employers e.g. through specialist publications,
- Liaison with public agencies and other bodies

L'ADAPT (FRANCE)

MAIN OBJECTIVES:

To provide guidance to and assist with the integration of young disabled people. Financial and administrative links with the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, reinforced with follow-up initiatives. Further educational links with the network of Missions Locales (shelters and guidance institutions). Post-training follow-up in co-operation with other providers of integration support known and used by young disabled people.

MAIN FEATURES :

- Steering committee meeting at least once for the final evaluation of the initiative,
- Regular consultation and co-operation with the "Missions Locales",
- Drawing up of a final report on the work of the partnership,
- Financial report,
- Internal and external communication to other audiences through articles, photographs of joint achievement etc.
- Informal development and support of a network of professionals of integration.