

Resolution of the Committee of the Regions on the partnership principle (12 April 2000)

Caption: Resolution of 12 April 2000 adopted by the Committee of the Regions on 'The partnership principle and its implementation in the reform of the Structural Funds 2000-2006'. The Committee of the Regions is in favour of partnership providing a key role for regional and local authorities.

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Resolution of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The partnership principle and its implementation in the reform of the Structural Funds 2000-2006’ (12 April 2000)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to its Bureau decision of 17 November 1999 instructing Commission 1 to draw up a resolution on the partnership principle and its implementation in the reform of the Structural Funds;

having regard to the draft resolution adopted by Commission 1 at its meeting of 1 December 1999 (CdR 434/99 rev. 1; rapporteur: Mr Tindemans, NL/PSE);

whereas it has adopted an opinion on the role of the regional and local authorities in the partnership principle of the Structural Funds (CdR 234/95 ⁽¹⁾ — July 1995); an opinion on the views of the regions and local authorities on arrangements for European Structural Policy after 1999 (CdR 131/97 fin ⁽²⁾ — November 1997); an opinion on the Proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds (CdR 167/98 fin ⁽³⁾ — September 1998); and a resolution on the reform of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the context of the political debate on the Agenda 2000 package (CdR 1/99 fin ⁽⁴⁾) and an opinion on developing a genuine culture of subsidiarity. An appeal by the Committee of the Regions (CdR 302/98 fin ⁽⁵⁾ — both March 1999);

whereas the Council adopted Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 on 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds;

whereas the Tavistock Institute has published the report ‘The Thematic Evaluation of the Partnership Principle’ (London, February 1999);

whereas the Committee of the Regions has already expressed its views in the declaration on the partnership principle presented at the final conference of a series of COR seminars on the implementation of the reform of the Structural Funds, 2000-2006 — the contribution of local and regional authorities, organised by the Committee of the Regions at the invitation of the Autonomous Region of Madeira on 10 January 2000,

adopted the following resolution at its 33rd plenary session of 12 and 13 April 2000 (meeting of 12 April).

The Committee of the Regions:

1. emphasises the importance of the partnership principle for efficient implementation of the Structural Funds;
2. states that the partnership, as described in the COR’s opinions, should be essentially broad, involved throughout the aid allocation procedure and should provide a key role for regional and local authorities; and notes that only a few provisions are required in the regulations to put the principle into practice;
3. notes Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999, which provides general provisions for putting the partnership principle into practice and seems to ensure the full participation of regional and local authorities;
4. states that Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 expresses in Article 8(1) the wish for broad partnership and in Article 8(2) the wish for involvement of the partnership in all stages of programming, but that it is up to the Member States to decide how to put this into practice and what role the local and regional authorities can play;
5. stresses that in Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 the provisions for putting the partnership principle into practice have not essentially changed compared with Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2081/93. However, it could be inferred that the intention is to give regional and local authorities a key role despite the fact that the Member States are still explicitly responsible for the implementation of partnership and of Community assistance at the appropriate territorial level;

6. notes that the plans submitted by the Member States are required to include an account of arrangements made to consult the partners, but that in spite of this it is not known if or how this matter shall or can be reviewed since there does not seem to be a clear and transparent Community responsibility;

7. agrees in general with the conclusions laid down in the Tavistock report 'The Thematic Evaluation of the Partnership Principle', especially as regards the effectiveness of partnership, and agrees that the development of the partnership principle is uneven across Member States and across programmes, giving scope for substantial improvement in many countries;

8. calls the attention of the European Commission and the Member States to the following important aspects:

— the vertical partnership within the European Union between the European Commission and the Member States should consequently be extended to regional and local authorities, permitting a wider and more even division of power;

— the desire for a key role for regional and local authorities in regional programming and also their involvement in horizontal programming;

— the inclusiveness of the horizontal territorial partnership and a clear division of decision-making power between financing and non-financing partners;

— the integration, or at least co-ordination, of the vertical and horizontal partnerships;

— better opportunities for regional and local authorities as managing and paying authorities;

— in principle, one programming document and one partnership per territory to simplify management and control and to restrict bureaucracy;

— adequate technical support for the partnership to allow all the partners to fully participate;

— formalisation of the partnership's constitution without loopholes, ensuring transparency over roles and responsibilities, working arrangements and delegated powers and management resources.

9. calls on the European Commission, with regard to the subsidiarity principle, to help Member States and regional and local authorities improve the implementation of the partnership principle by drawing up, in co-operation with the Committee of the Regions, a working document giving examples of good practice and clear models of partnership and consequently providing the requisite information about the various partners' financial contributions.

Brussels, 12 April 2000.

The President of the Committee of the Regions

Jos CHABERT

(1) OJ C 100, 2.4.1996, p. 72.

(2) OJ C 64, 27.2.1998, p. 5.

(3) OJ C 373, 2.12.1998, p. 1.

(4) OJ C 198, 14.7.1999, p. 1.

(5) OJ C 198, 14.7.1999, p. 73.