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Imposing cooperation: application of EU cohesion policy's partnership principle at the sub-national level in Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary

Marcin DĄBROWSKI  
Institute for European Integration Research  
Austrian Academy of Sciences  
[marcin.dabrowski@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:marcin.dabrowski@oeaw.ac.at)



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## Abstract

*EU cohesion policy is often credited for improving cooperation and coordination in the delivery of the regional development policy with the EU member states through the partnership principle. Existing studies showed that the latter can alter the domestic centre-periphery relations creating scope for a growing role of the regional tier and greater bottom-up regional involvement in economic development policy. However, lack of traditions of decentralisation and collaborative policy-making as well as limited capacity of sub-national actors can result in uneven application and impact of the partnership principle across the member states. This prompts a question about the transferability of partnership to the new member states characterised by weakly institutionalised sub-national authorities, legacy of centralised policy-making and weak civic involvement. This paper addresses this issue by comparing partnership arrangements in the context of implementation of EU cohesion policy in three countries with differentiated systems of territorial administration: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. By doing so, the paper assesses EU cohesion policy's capacity to promote an inclusive regional governance and cooperative behaviour in Central and Eastern European countries.*

## Introduction

Cohesion policy has grown over time to become one of the major policies of the EU, accounting for more than one third of the EU's overall budget and constituting a comprehensive investment instrument that is fundamental for the delivery of the Europe 2020 objectives (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2010a). One of the defining features of EU cohesion policy is its multi-level mode of governance embodied in the principle of partnership.<sup>1</sup> It requires close cooperation between the European Commission, the authorities at national, regional and local levels in the Member States and non-state policy stakeholders during all stages of the implementation cycle of the Structural Funds (SF), including program formulation, management and monitoring. The partnership principle involves both vertical and horizontal mechanisms of cooperation: it encourages cooperation between the actors at different levels of government, from the EU level, down to the regional level, and requires inclusion of a variety of public and non-state stakeholders in the policy process. The partnership has been broadened and deepened since its introduction in 1988 reforms of the SF, yet it will be of particular importance for the implementation of EU cohesion policy in the upcoming programming period 2014-2020 emphasizing the place-based approach to regional policy. This approach, advocated in the Barca Report (BARCA, 2009: 178) and promoted by the European Commission (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2010b), involves tailoring interventions to the specificities of the targeted areas and requires access to local knowledge through effective horizontal partnership. The growing pressure for achieving better results with EU cohesion policy – particularly in the times of economic crisis and austerity – further reinforces the rationale for effective horizontal partnership as a tool allowing for improvement of the effectiveness and quality of the EU-funded projects (POLVERARI and MICHIE, 2009: 36-7).

The partnership principle can also be considered for its capacity to trigger institutional changes in the member states and generate added value, which has often been put forward to justify the policy's increasing costs and downplay the criticisms of its effectiveness (MAIRATE, 2006). Partnership promotes greater coordination between the policy actors as well as a more inclusive approach to regional development policy. Thus, in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), the main beneficiaries of the SF, the introduction of the EU cohesion policy framework catalyzed major changes in the center-periphery relations, creating scope for a growing role of the regional tier and greater bottom-up regional involvement in economic development policy (BACHTLER and MCMASTER, 2008; BAUN and MAREK, 2008; BRUSZT, 2008). Nevertheless, the literature to date also revealed significant difficulties in adjusting to the EU cohesion policy framework in these countries (BAUN and MAREK, 2008; EPRC, 2009a; FERRY, 2007; KOZAK, 2007; PARASKEVOPOULOS and LEONARDI, 2004) due to the legacy of centralized policy-making, entrenched bureaucratic routines and the weakness of the civil society.

Against this background, it was argued that as a result of the limited learning capacity of the domestic administrative institutions the Europeanization of regional policy actors in CEECs could remain 'shallow' (CZERNIELEWSKA et al., 2004). Additionally, according to the Europeanization literature – focusing on the domestic impacts of the European integration - the pre-accession period the adjustment to EU policy norms was mainly driven by conditionality and external incentives (reward of membership, access to EU funds, etc.) which limited the scope for social learning and internalization of these norms (GRABBE, 2006; SCHIMMELFENNIG and SEDELMEIER, 2005). Some authors, however, hypothesized that once these countries become fully integrated into the EU policy arena, sociological mechanisms of Europeanization could become more prominent (BAFOIL and SUREL, 2008; GOETZ, 2005; SEDELMEIER, 2006), which in turn could potentially ensure 'deeper' adjustment and more effective and efficient implementation of EU policies.

Can one make the partnership principle work in the CEE context? How do the sub-national actors respond to this new practice imposed upon them with the SF framework? Do they comply superficially or do they learn how to put it into practice and internalize it over time? The paper answers these questions and puts the above hypothesis to test. It sheds light on the mechanisms and outcomes of adjustment to EU cohesion policy' partnership principle in three regions of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary and identifies the domestic factors affecting this process.

The paper is structured as follows. First, it reviews the literature on EU cohesion policy's partnership. Second, it introduces Europeanization as theoretical background for the study and outlines the research design used. Third, this will be followed by an empirical part presenting the findings from the regions studied. The article closes with an assessment of findings against the existing literature and a discussion of the mechanisms and outcomes of the adjustment to the partnership principle in CEECs.

### **The partnership principle and its impacts in the member states**

The partnership principle is one of the most important sources of added value generated by EU cohesion policy. Its application helps improve the domestic administrative actors' institutional capacity and creates opportunities for boosting innovation and learning across organizational boundaries (KELLEHER et al., 1999). Yet, more importantly perhaps, compliance with the partnership principle can induce major changes in the patterns of governance by promoting multi-level cooperation and incorporating the regional stakeholders into the policy process. This aspect of the partnership principle's impact is particularly important in the case of CEECs (BACHTLER and MCMASTER, 2008; BRUSZT, 2008), where centralized decision-making, lack of cross-level and cross-sectoral coordination and a lack of openness towards the influence of non-state actors are entrenched in the political and administrative traditions.

Research to date demonstrated partnership in EU cohesion policy programs was best observed in countries with traditions of cooperation between public, private and societal actors, such as Ireland (ADSHEAD, 2005) or Scotland (DANSON et al., 1999). On the contrary, in countries with centralized territorial administration and policy-making styles, applying partnership tends to be challenging. For instance, in Greece (GETIMIS and GRIGORIADOU, 2004) and Portugal (NANETTI, 2004) the operation of partnership was hampered by centralization, financial and organizational weakness of local governments and frail non-state sector. The capacity to adapt to the partnership principle can also be regionally differentiated, as illustrated by the case of Italy: in its Northern regions SF partnerships could draw on the pre-existing networks and strong regional institutions, yet in the South the application of partnership faced difficulties due to lack of cooperative culture and limited administrative capacity (KELLEHER et al., 1999). The partnership capacity depends on the region's endowment with institutional networks and social capital, territorial assets which enhance the regional actors' capacity to adapt to the EU cohesion policy's multi-level governance and collaborative approach to policy-making (LEONARDI, 2005; PARASKEVOPOULOS and LEONARDI, 2004). Nonetheless, even in regions lacking those assets cooperation between the policy actors imposed by the EU cohesion policy framework can contribute to reinforcement of institutional capacity and stimulate processes of social learning generating social capital (KELLEHER et al., 1999; PARASKEVOPOULOS and LEONARDI, 2004).

Studies focusing on the impacts of EU cohesion policy and the adjustment to its partnership principle in CEECs, joining the EU in 2004 and 2007, came to similar conclusions. The legacy of 'democratic centralism' under the communist rule, the lack of cooperative policy-making traditions, and deficiency of administrative capacity were considered as a major obstacle for partnership (CZERNIELEWSKA et al., 2004; MAREK and BAUN, 2008; MCMASTER and BACHTLER, 2005). This was expected to result in superficial and strategic adjustment involving creation institutional

arrangements conforming with the partnership requirements but without changing the actors preferences and 'ways of doing things' (BACHE, 2008). One may therefore assume that the scope for its institutionalization in CEECs is limited, as its application requires *"political commitment, capacity, and resources at the regional level, which may not exist"* (BACHTLER and MCMASTER, 2008: 402). Indeed, the ex-post evaluation of the implementation systems for the SF in 2004-2006 period showed that application of the partnership principle in CEECs remained deficient, however, they also noted learning dynamics resulting in gradual improvement of the operation of partnership arrangements over time (EPRC, 2009a). There is however a shortage of studies that explain the mechanisms of the domestic actors' adjustment to the partnership principle, particularly in a comparative perspective and at the sub-national level.

## EU cohesion policy and Europeanization

The concept of Europeanization, dominating the EU studies literature since the late 1990s (COWLES et al., 2001; FEATHERSTONE and RADAELLI, 2003; GRAZIANO and VINK, 2007), refers to the influence of EU policies on the member states' policy processes, institutions and politics. The outcomes of this process depend on the way in which EU norms are interpreted by the domestic actors, how they affect their preferences and how they resonate with the embedded domestic institutions. Europeanization has been used as a theoretical framework in many of the studies examining the domestic impacts of EU cohesion policy (BACHE, 2008; FERRY, 2007; HUGHES et al., 2004; LEONARDI, 2005; MENDEZ et al., 2008; PARASKEVOPOULOS and LEONARDI, 2004). In the case of CEECs, EU cohesion policy has had a particularly strong impact, due to the weakness of pre-existing domestic regional policies and the rapidity of the conditionality-driven *"almost wholesale assimilation of EU regional development approaches into domestic environments"* (FERRY, 2007: 10) in the pre-accession period. Therefore, in CEECs EU cohesion policy has set the domestic regional development agenda to a large degree and EU-funded programs are the main components of the domestic regional policies.

Most accounts of Europeanization rely on the distinction between the rationalist and sociological mechanisms of adjustment to EU norms (BÖRZEL and RISSE, 2003). In the first case, EU policies are considered as a factor changing the domestic structures of opportunity. Hence, the actors follow the logic of consequentiality and adjust strategically to EU policy norms following a cost/benefit calculation or out of necessity. In the second case, the domestic actors change their preferences and internalize the EU norms through processes of social learning, which corresponds to the logic of appropriateness.

Prior to their accession to the EU, the process of Europeanization of CEECs involved mainly a hasty adjustment to EU rules spurred by conditionality and external incentives (BÖRZEL, 2006; GRABBE, 2006; HUGHES et al., 2004; SCHIMMELFENNIG and SEDELMEIER, 2005; SEDELMEIER, 2006), which left little scope for learning and institutionalization of these rules. In addition, with respect to EU cohesion policy and its multi-level and inclusive mode of implementation, the lack of cooperative culture and legacies of centralization, statism and the silo-mentality of administration led many to expect a 'shallow' Europeanization (CZERNIELEWSKA et al., 2004), involving superficial change without profoundly modifying the pre-existing mode of governance (BRUSZT, 2008). Nonetheless, others (BAFOIL and SUREL, 2008; GOETZ, 2005; SEDELMEIER, 2006) advanced a different hypothesis that the social learning mechanisms of Europeanization, marginalized in the wake of conditionality-driven pre-accession adjustments, could become more visible once the CEECs become full members of the EU and a greater number of their policy actors becomes actively involved in implementation of EU policies. The objective of this paper is to test this hypothesis by investigating the adjustment to EU cohesion policy's partnership principle in a comparative perspective.

## Research design and case studies

In this article the mechanisms and depth of adjustment to EU cohesion policy framework is operationalized drawing on the distinction between 'thin' and 'thick' learning (BACHE, 2008: 18; RADAELLI, 2003: 52). Thin learning corresponds to rationalist mechanisms of Europeanization involving a strategic reorientation of policy practices driven by constraint or interest in order to accommodate EU-imposed policy rules. It occurs without fundamentally changing the established 'ways of doing things' and, hence, can be qualified as 'shallow' change. On the contrary, thick learning occurs when EU-imposed practices are internalized by the domestic actors who consider them as appropriate and being part of their mode of operation. In this case, the pre-existing 'ways of doing things' become gradually transformed and the actors change their preferences, which corresponds to a 'deep' change.

Three test variables were used in this qualitative research to distinguish between the rational choice and sociological mechanisms of Europeanization. Firstly, the study examined the actors' motivation for adopting partnership. If it was motivated chiefly by the desire to acquire EU funds and/or obligation, this was considered as an indicator of strategic and 'shallow' adjustment. On the contrary, the adoption of partnership stemming from the desire to enhance the outcomes of the actors' actions was considered as an indicator of internalization of this practice. Secondly, a further indicator of 'deep' change and internalization were the actors' positive perceptions of partnership as useful and appropriate practice. Third, spillover effects of adoption of partnership, such as the voluntary use of the partnership approach outside of the SF programs or EU-funded projects, were also considered as an indicator that it was internalized.

The study was based primarily on 46 semi-structured interviews conducted during winter of 2011 in Poland (Lower Silesia), Czech Republic (South East region) and Hungary (South Transdanubia) as well in these countries' capital cities. The interviewees were selected among the key informants within the institutions coordinating the implementation of EU cohesion policy (e.g. Ministries of Regional Development, Hungarian National Development Agency), regional-level institutions distributing the SF (regional authorities, regional development agencies) and a variety of experts. While the few existing studies on horizontal partnership focus on NGOs and economic and social partners (BATORY and CARTWRIGHT, 2011; POLVERARI and MICHIE, 2009), this research puts emphasis on territorial administration and project level partnership. Thus, the interviews were also conducted with representatives of the local authorities benefiting from the SF. Additionally, the study also drew on an earlier round of interviews conducted in Poland in 2008 as part of the authors earlier study (DĄBROWSKI, 2011). This was complemented by an analysis of secondary sources (evaluation reports, programming documents, press articles), which allowed for triangulating the findings from interviews.

Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary, while sharing the legacy of the communist rule, differ significantly in terms of the degree of decentralization and organization of their territorial administration, which resulted in differentiated patterns of adjustment to the EU cohesion policy framework. Out of the three countries studied, Poland has also the most decentralized three tier system of territorial administration. Unlike in other CEE countries, the Polish regions, established in 1999, correspond to the NUTS 2 designation and their elected authorities (Marshal Offices) were given wide competences in terms of regional development policy and management of the SF, particularly in 2007-2013 period when they took over the role of Managing Authorities for their ROPs, which considerably increased their profile in the state hierarchy and within the regional arena. Poland's local authorities are also relatively big and resourceful as compared to those in Czech Republic and Hungary. The case study region for Poland is Lower Silesia Lower located in the more economically developed South-West of the country. Lower Silesia has benefited from EU cross-

border programmes since 1994, hence as compared to other Polish regions it has acquired substantial experience in absorbing the European funds (SWIANIEWICZ and LACKOWSKA, 2007: 2) and could benefit from an early exposure to diffusion of EU-imported 'good practice' in developmental projects. Moreover, Lower Silesia benefits from a relatively strong civil society (GUMKOWSKA and HERBST, 2005) as well as from an above average administrative capacity (SWIANIEWICZ et al., 2000).

In the Czech Republic 14 regions (Kraje) with elected regional assemblies, appointing a regional governor (Hejtman), and a responsibility for regional development were established in 2000 (BAUN and MAREK, 2008: 166-8). The regions, however, remain financially weak and dependent on the central government, which raised doubts about their capacity to deliver a regional development policy and effectively participate in EU cohesion policy (FERRY and MCMASTER, 2005: 20-2). Additionally, unlike in Poland, the regions did not map well onto the NUTS classification and in some cases did not correspond to historical regions (BAUN, 2002: 269). For the purpose of implementation of the SF eight NUTS 2 cohesion regions were created regrouping several Kraje. In 2000 Regional Councils - comprising representatives of the participating Kraje – were created for the purpose of management of the SF in NUTS 2 units, yet remained inactive until 2006. In 2007-2013 period the Regional Councils play the role of Managing Authorities (MAs) for the ROPs. However, while the Regional Councils play an important role in management of the SF and aspire to increase their role in development policy,<sup>2</sup> these are the Kraj Offices, with a legal responsibility for regional development, more political weight and legitimacy, that remain the predominant actors at the regional level. A system of small and fragmented 6249 Czech local self-governments was put place soon after the fall of communism. Given the limited budgets of many smaller municipalities, they were encouraged to form associations (LACINA and VAJDOVA, 2000), the so-called micro-regions, in order to pool resources in provision of public services and, later on, also to jointly apply for the SF. South East Cohesion Region, which was chosen as a Czech case study, comprises two self-governed kraje: the Jihomoravský Kraj and the Vysočina Kraj. The South East region ranks second in terms of its contribution to the Czech GDP (approximately 15%) and its GDP per capita is at 91.6% of the national average.<sup>3</sup> The region is also characterized by a relatively strong cooperative culture (by Central and Eastern European standards).

Hungary has the most centralized system of territorial administration and management of the SF out of the three case study countries. A 'euro-conform' institutional system was put in place with the Law on Regional Development from 1996 and its amendment from 1999 putting in place Regional Development Councils (RDCs) and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) at NUTS 2 level with important competences in management of pre-accession and structural funds (KOVÁCS et al., 2004: 457). The 1996 law also put in place nineteen counties with elected authorities at the meso-level, which however do not have competences in regional development policy.<sup>4</sup> The local level authorities, similarly as in the Czech Republic, remain very fragmented<sup>5</sup> and most of them have limited resources, which hinders their capacity to provide public services<sup>6</sup> and prompted establishment of micro-regional associations to overcome these limitations. The effectiveness of the EU-catalyzed regionalization in Hungary remains handicapped by the financial weakness of counties and the newly created regions, dysfunctional operation of RDCs and the fact that the 'artificial' NUTS 2 regions did not correspond to the spatial ties of the regional actors operating on a lower scale (HORVATH, 2008: 191, 7, 202). Despite the regionalization reforms introduced in the 1990s, the government retained a tight grip on the regional institutions and one can observe a reversal of the decentralization and regionalization trends (HORVATH, 2008: 198; KOVÁCS, 2011).<sup>7</sup> In 2007-2013 period, unlike in Poland and Czech Republic, the NUTS 2 level institutions (RDAs) do not have the status of MAs for the ROPs. At the central level the management of the administration is the responsibility of the National Development Agency (NDA), while at the regional level the funds are distributed by the RDAs, which operate alongside the RDCs.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the regional development system in Hungary was set up in parallel to and outside of the state administration structures, which limits the scope for spillover of the EU cohesion policy norms and practices to the latter. This research focused on South



Transdanubia, the economically declining region located in South West Hungary comprising Baranya, Tolna and Somogy counties. South Transdanubia is among Hungary's economically lagging regions, however it is there that regionalization, new approaches to regional development policy and EU regional funding were pioneered in Hungary (KOVÁCS et al., 2004: 442-3), which allowed for accumulating a stock of experience in collaborative policy-making and fostered a reputation of the region as the 'cradle of regionalism.'

### Empirical findings from Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary

This section will present the empirical findings from Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. It will review discuss different aspects of horizontal cooperation in each of them: partnership in programming, partnership in implementation of the SF and project-level partnership.

#### *Partnership in programming: learning how to cooperate*

There is evidence of a gradual internalization of partnership at the programming stage in all three regions studied. While in the initial period after accession, 2004-2006, the application of partnership in programme consultations remained limited, partnership in the formulation of ROPs for 2007-2013 was much more inclusive and the influence of the partners was growing, as attested by the interviewees from Lower Silesia, South East and South Transdanubia and corroborated by other studies (POLVERARI and MICHIE, 2009: 33,44, 5).

In all three regions, wide-spread consultations were organized at the regional level offering genuine opportunities for influencing the shape of the programs by participating in numerous working groups, seminars and conferences or submitting suggestions *via* online consultation forums.<sup>9</sup>

The Polish, Czech and Hungarian regional authorities generally initially considered the consultations of the ROPs not as an EU-imposed requirement. However, once involved in organising consultations the regional officials tended to change their perceptions and consider them as *"a very good practice"* and a means to improve their *"end product."*<sup>10</sup> A number of interviewees highlighted that after this initially 'shallow' response to the partnership principle, cooperation with stakeholders improved over time and the officials administering the EU programmes gradually recognised that such partnership would be a *"good thing."*<sup>11</sup> Most interviewees argued that consultations allowed for taking advantage of local knowledge and enhancing the connection between the region's needs and the program's priorities.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, this form of partnership was also seen as tool for spotting potential implementation problems and building consensus on the use of the SF in the region and share responsibility for decisions taken with the stakeholders, thus avoiding criticism from them at the implementation stage.<sup>13</sup>

In all of the three regions, an important spin off of the consultations of the ROPs was the establishment of a broad regional network and good relationships between the regional authorities and regional stakeholders. In Lower Silesia, the interactions in consultations contributed to mutual understanding and allowed for fostering relationships based on trust, a pre-condition for efficient operation of cooperative governance arrangements. This was favoured by the relatively stable management at the MO in Lower Silesia, which as an interviewee argued, was *"critically important"* and allowed for building *"excellent interpersonal links strengthened over the years."*<sup>14</sup> This indicates that the partnership in program formulation involved dynamics of social learning over time. In South East region, the networks established for the purpose of consultation of the ROP remained active after the launch of the program and allow the regional actors to *"meet, talk about development and*



exchange ideas”<sup>15</sup> on its implementation and wider developmental issues.<sup>16</sup> Finally, in South Transdanubia, the STRDA saw the establishment of a regional network revolving around the SF as an opportunity to build informal relationships with the potential applicants and spread the knowledge on the programme and preparation of projects among them.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless there are some important caveats. Interviews with the Polish and Czech stakeholders participating in consultations of the ROPs showed that their involvement was chiefly motivated by self-interest,<sup>18</sup> which is indicative of a shallow and rational choice-based adjustment to the horizontal partnership among them. Consultations of the ROPs were undermined by the attitudes of the local leaders keen to secure as much funding for their constituencies as possible, making it difficult to reach consensus (see KOVACS and CARTWRIGHT, 2010: 45). Thus, not much has changed since the programming process for the 2004-2006 ROP, where regional level partnership was akin to a ‘wishing forum’ where partners articulated their interests (EPRC, 2009c: 26). As one Polish local official put this, *“yes, there were consultations [...] but this was more like expressing our wishes.”*<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, while horizontal partnership was generally perceived in a favourable light by the beneficiaries of the SF,<sup>20</sup> a number of local authorities, particularly those of smaller towns or villages, did not participate in consultations of the ROP and some of the local officials demonstrated a lack of interest in it and disillusionment.<sup>21</sup> Thus, even though there is evidence that the partnership approach introduced with the SF starts taking roots at the regional level, there is still scope for improvement, as at the local level the actors often lack the capacity, knowledge and desire to take part in it.

Another noteworthy detail: in all the three regions studied, the consultations of the ROPs were dominated by the public sector actors, chiefly local authorities, while economic and social partners often lacked the capacity to make their voice heard (see also BATORY and CARTWRIGHT, 2011: 47; POLVERARI and MICHIE, 2009: 45).

Finally, as argued in a recent report on partnership (POLVERARI and MICHIE, 2009: 44), the involvement of stakeholders in the design of ROPs was hindered by the mismatch between the NUTS 2 units and the regional boundaries, which is the case in Czech Republic and Hungary. In South East region this could, however, be compensated by the consultations of ROP conducted by the Kraj Offices within their jurisdictions in parallel to consultations run by the Regional Council. By contrast, in Hungary, the Counties are not an administrative level actively involved in regional development policy.

A closer look at the outcomes and spin offs of the consultations of the ROPs revealed some further notable differences between the three regions studied. In Lower Silesia various activities organized as part of the consultations stimulated new interactions between the regional policy stakeholders and spurred emergence of new SF-oriented associations of local officials. Thus new informal links and networks were created, helped disseminate knowledge on the SF and ‘good practice’<sup>22</sup> and stimulated cooperation between local actors. For example, unofficial consultation groups were organized by and between various stakeholders in Wałbrzych sub-region in order to foster joint recommendations regarding the ROP. Furthermore, the majority of the stakeholders interviewed in Lower Silesia appreciated the possibility of influencing the making of regional development policy via consultations, which allowed for promoting their interests. For example, as a result of pressures from the local authorities, revitalization of urban areas as an area eligible for funding was introduced into the Lower Silesian ROP,<sup>23</sup> which demonstrates that the stakeholders had a genuine possibility of influencing the program and the regional authority took their opinion under consideration.

However, the study found no concrete evidence of such ‘bottom-up’ mobilization of local authorities or the influence of the regional stakeholders on the ROPs in South East and South Transdanubia. Additionally, the Czech Regional Councils and the Hungarian RDAs had a much lesser degree of freedom in shaping their ROPs than the regional authorities in Poland. In Czech Republic, the MRD

imposed a set of three priorities for all the ROPs.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the scope for influencing the ROPs by the regional stakeholders was by default limited, yet they could exert some influence on the particular measures in each of the priorities as well as on the implementation procedures. In Hungary, the degree of central control on the ROP appeared to be even stronger, which fuelled dissatisfaction of some regional actors. The STRDA was subject to the trusteeship of the NDA that had the final word concerning the content of the ROPs, therefore the draft ROPs established in consultations at the regional level *“were often overwritten and overridden”* (SFTEAM, 2009: 20). Additionally, representatives of central-level actors, both public (e.g. ministries, agencies) and private (interest groups), were also relatively active in the process of consultation of the South Transdanubian ROP (KOVACS and CARTWRIGHT, 2010: 47-8).

In addition, the study found some evidence of spill-over of the consultation practice at the local, which suggests that internalisation of horizontal partnership is taking place. Yet, the scope for this varied across the regions studied. In Poland, public consultations at the local level are becoming common-place (EPRC, 2009d: 65) and are organized for a variety of local issues, not only in relation with the local development strategy or acquiring the SF.

In Czech Republic one can observe similar developments. Even though introduction of local consultations tends to be initially driven by the desire to acquire the SF - as towns with over 50,000 inhabitants are obliged to prepare Integrated Urban Development Plans in partnership with stakeholders in order to be granted access to EU funds – this practice is also increasingly used for the purpose of domestic funding schemes or own developmental initiatives.<sup>25</sup> Consultations on developmental issues are also increasingly used by some Czech micro-regions, which is actively encouraged by the Kraj Offices.<sup>26</sup>

In Hungary, there is also some evidence of spillover of horizontal partnership at the local level, however, it is often stemming from the obligation to prepare Integrated Town Development Strategies with participation of local stakeholders in order to be eligible for the SF. While this requirement promoted the consultation practice at the local level,<sup>27</sup> it reflects strategic adjustment of municipalities rather than internalisation of stakeholder involvement in strategic planning. The local officials tend to consider it a formal requirement rather than a useful exercise, as it is hard to foster ‘consultative coalitions’ in most Hungarian municipalities that remain fragmented and dominated by political client networks (KOVÁCS, 2011: 35-6). Additionally, there is much less scope for spillover of this practice to domestic initiatives, as currently the EU structural funding is in practice the only developmental funding available for the Hungarian local authorities,<sup>28</sup> while the domestic funds are being used for the purpose of co-financing the EU-funded investment.

More generally, the separation between the EU-funds administration and territorial administration in Hungary hampers learning across organisational boundaries and limits the spillover effects of EU-imported practices<sup>29</sup> (see also EPRC, 2009c: 45). The knowledge and experience acquired tends to be used exclusively for the purpose of administration of the SF and stays within the institutions involved in those tasks, namely RDAs and the NDA, or eventually is used by private consultancies where their former employees often work.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, one should bear in mind the limitation of this study focused on a single region from each of the three countries. The responses to the obligation to ensure partnership in programming in the regions studied and the spin-off of this process, may well be different in other regions of those countries. In fact, the pro-activeness of the RDA in building an extensive partnership network for the purpose of the ROP was a unique characteristic of South Transdanubia and may not exist in other Hungarian regions.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, the South East region is reputed for its relatively strong horizontal partnership,<sup>32</sup> which may be lacking in other Czech cohesion regions.

While there were some notable differences between Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary in the application of partnership in implementation and monitoring of the SF programmes at the regional level, overall the study showed that adjustment to this aspect of partnership remains 'shallow' across the three case studies.

In 2004-2006 period Poland opted for different solutions than other CEECs. The regional horizontal partnership was extended beyond the requirements of the European Commission by including the stakeholders in project appraisal via formalized partnership committees – the Regional Steering Committees (RSCs). These bodies comprised a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including representatives of the central government, regional and local authorities as well as various non-state actors. The RSCs, playing an advisory role by assessing the ranking list of projects to receive funding pre-established by the experts at the MO,<sup>33</sup> created a new channel for participation of stakeholders in regional policy-making,<sup>34</sup> yet in reality they remained *façade* institutions. The final decisions were anyway taken by the Board of Voivodship (regional executive). Moreover, the RSCs were heavily politicized and affected by favoritism (DĄBROWSKI, 2010). Unsurprisingly, the regional officials perceived the RSCs as a pointless obstacle to swift disbursement of the SF.<sup>35</sup> As a result, in 2007-2013 period formalized partnership in the implementation of the ROPs in Poland was restricted to the MCs, similarly as in Czech Republic and Hungary. In some cases, however, decisions were consulted with the relevant stakeholders on an *ad hoc* and informal basis.<sup>36</sup>

The regional monitoring committees (MCs) were also put in place, creating a further new channel for involvement of stakeholders in regional policy-making. Despite some hurdles stemming from lack of preparation of its members (EPRC, 2009d), the assessment of the functioning of the MCs during the 2004-2006 period was more positive than that of the RSCs, with 63 percent of officials interviewed expressing positive opinions about their effectiveness (EVALUATION FOR GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS, 2010: 220-1). Additionally, in 2007-2013 period, unlike in Czech and Hungarian regions, in Lower Silesia the powers of the MC were extended by including it in the process of formulation of the eligibility criteria for the ROP. However, as an earlier study suggested (DĄBROWSKI, 2011), participation in partnership committees was interest-driven, as their members were motivated mainly by the prospects of potentially influencing decision-making, lobbying in favor of their own projects or obtaining valuable "*first-hand information*" on how the projects were selected, helpful in obtaining grants.<sup>37</sup>

In Czech Republic and Hungary the application of partnership at the implementation stage remained even more superficial than in Poland. Both in the 2004-2006 and 2007-2013 periods, the involvement of stakeholders in implementation of the ROP in Czech and Hungarian was formally limited to participation in the MCs. In Czech Republic, the MCs at the regional level struggled with the lack of interest of partners considering this form of partnership as a formality (EPRC, 2009b: 33) and remained weak in 2007-2013 period,<sup>38</sup> despite the voting rights attributed to its members. In South East region, formally the MC worked well, yet in practice it suffered from a the staggering asymmetry of power between the agenda-setting experts from the Regional Council and the often unprepared representatives of local authorities and economic and social partners lacking in-depth knowledge. Consequently, there was hardly any debate and "*the Committee usually accepted almost everything that the Regional Office presented.*"<sup>39</sup> Thus, the MC was widely seen as a "*talk shop*"<sup>40</sup> that is nonetheless "*imposed by the regulation.*"<sup>41</sup>

In Hungary, the functioning of the regional MCs in 2004-2006 period was assessed positively by the evaluators and their utility was widely recognized, which resulted in spillover of this form of partnership to some domestic programmes (EPRC, 2009c: 3, 43). However, it turned out that this spillover effect was not sustainable, as domestic development funding schemes have practically disappeared since 2009.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, some commentators stressed that the government officials

were assured a majority position in the regional MCs, which limited the scope for influence of the regional partners (KOVACS and CARTWRIGHT, 2010: 31). Even though the introduction of partnership in program monitoring created new opportunities for networking and contributed to greater transparency (obligation to publish information about the operation of the MCs), the partners involved were disillusioned by the limited powers of the MCs, which resulted in a gradual decline in attendance (BATORY and CARTWRIGHT, 2011: 17-8). In the 2007-2013 period, the structure of the monitoring system for the ROPs reflected its centralized management. The so-called regional sub-committees monitored the implementation of the ROPs and reported to the Convergence Monitoring Committee, an overarching Budapest-based partnership body advising the NDA (South Transdanubia ROP, p. 125). Hence, the influence of the sub-committees was limited by the fact that, unlike the regional MCs in Poland and Czech Republic, they did not advise the MA directly. In South Transdanubia the interviewees' opinions on partnership in monitoring of the ROP were overall positive,<sup>43</sup> which mirrored the adherence of the region's elite to idea of partnership and inclusion of stakeholders in regional policy. However, the role of the regional partnership bodies - similarly as in the previous programming period - remained de facto limited to 'rubber-stamping' the decisions taken before by the RDAs, which remained "movers and makers of the system" at the regional level.<sup>44</sup> The partners involved also failed to make abstraction of their narrow interests and lacked knowledge and a "global view" on the regional issues.<sup>45</sup> That said, one should bear in mind that it the weakness of MCs is a general issue across the EU member states (see BATORY and CARTWRIGHT, 2011). In fact, a Committee meeting one or twice a year "*cannot be a real decision-making locus*" (POLVERARI and MICHIE, 2009: 13).

#### *Project-level partnership: differentiated capacity to initiate and sustain cooperation*

The availability of structural funding also prompted new forms of collaboration between local actors as part of the EU-funded projects, which is another aspect of the impact of EU cohesion policy on the patterns of governance and cooperation in development policy. Project-level partnership could take the form of alliances between local authorities (e.g. infrastructural projects) or inter-sectoral partnerships that bring together public authorities, NGOs and/or firms (e.g. human resources development projects). At this level, the study also found considerable differences between the three regions as well as between the municipalities within them. In fact, the capacity to initiate partnership projects varies considerably and depends on the Mayors' activeness, openness for collaboration as well as previous experience with joint projects.

In 2004-2006, partnership-based projects were rather unpopular in Lower Silesia, chiefly due to the lack of experience in inter-institutional cooperation, limited trust in other actors and the fact that Partnership projects require increased efforts<sup>46</sup> to cope with the additional red tape. The majority of the partnership projects implemented were somewhat 'artificial' and did not lead to continuing cooperation, since their only *raison d'être* was to obtain EU money.<sup>47</sup> However, the local authorities in Lower Silesia are slowly learning to take advantage of partnership arrangements.<sup>48</sup> In fact, the situation in changed in the 2007-2013 period with a growing experience of beneficiaries and the introduction of both implicit and explicit incentives for partnership-based infrastructural projects to the sectoral OPs and the ROPs.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the MO informally advises the beneficiaries to consider preparing joint projects, while at the same time additional points are attributed to cooperative projects and the thresholds in terms of the projects' value and impact on the region's development are higher than in 2004-2007 period.<sup>50</sup> These changes encouraged many local authorities to prepare joint infrastructural projects as part of inter-communal consortiums.<sup>51</sup>

Interestingly, the decision to get involved in project-level partnership could stem both from the desire to increase chances of acquiring a grant and from a desire to cooperate in order to generate

synergies by pooling resources. As a local official argued, *“both factors are important, common needs of the partners and the fact that such projects get more points in the assessment.”*<sup>52</sup>

Despite an initial skepticism, the local officials, both from bigger and smaller municipalities, expressed positive opinions about partnership projects. They also demonstrated a growing awareness that partnership can solve problems that could not be solved by an individual actor and, hence, improve the impact of the project,<sup>53</sup> which indicates internalization of this practice (see also RE-SOURCE, 2010: 68).

Notably, in many cases inter-communal cooperation initiated for the purpose of joint application for EU funding continued beyond the project, which can be considered as a further indicator of ‘thick’ learning. As a local official put this, such projects can be *“a platform for a more long-term cooperation”*,<sup>54</sup> also *“in other fields”*.<sup>55</sup> Yet, most importantly, perhaps, several interviewees argued that participation in successful partnerships fostered relationships based on trust favoring further cooperation within and beyond the SF.<sup>56</sup> This observation was confirmed by a recent evaluation showing that more than 50 percent of partnership project leaders continued cooperation with their partners after the project had ended (RE-SOURCE, 2010: 108). It is also noteworthy, that the partnership approach spilled over to the Government’s National Program for Reconstruction of Local Roads 2008-2011, in which the applicants for funding are encouraged to prepare joint investment projects.<sup>57</sup> Such examples of continuing cooperation and spillover effects can be considered as an encouraging sign and demonstrate the possibility of internalizing partnership in Polish regions, even though this likely to be a long incremental process.

Unlike in Poland, in the Czech Republic and Hungary, some limited cooperation between the municipalities existed before the arrival of the SF, mainly as part of micro-regions.<sup>58</sup> It was mainly driven by the need to pool resources among the fragmented local authorities. Despite this early experience, EU-funded partnership projects remain unpopular in South East and South Transdanubia because of the strong competition for EU funding among the local authorities, limited trust and the *“lack the understanding of partnership”*<sup>59</sup> rendering cooperation difficult.<sup>60</sup> The cooperation as part EU funded projects - if it takes place at all – often remains opportunistic, interest-driven and fails to generate any significant spillover effects.<sup>61</sup> As a result, such cooperation was often short-lived and limited to the duration of the project, which was not oriented towards solving common issues, but rather seizing the opportunity to acquire EU funds.<sup>62</sup>

Nonetheless, in South East there were also some counter-examples of EU-funded partnership projects based on pre-existing cooperation within a micro-region and well defined common aims, which created scope for more durable cooperation<sup>63</sup> and fostering trust-based relationships.<sup>64</sup> Yet, unlike the Polish local officials interviewed, the Czech interviewees were more often uncertain about future cooperation and its spillover beyond the EU-funded project. Overall, however, the Czech interviewees expressed positive opinions about partnership<sup>65</sup> and there is evidence of a growing interest in collaborative projects in some micro-regions where the local leaders *“realised the necessity to join forces and cooperate”*<sup>66</sup> in order to overcome their financial limitations.<sup>67</sup> As a Regional Council’s official observed, *“the culture of cooperation is not yet established in the Czech Republic, but it grows.”*<sup>68</sup>

In South Transdanubia there are also some isolated examples of learning dynamics stimulated by EU-funded partnership projects in localities where entrepreneurial Mayors were driving joint initiatives exploiting the local assets (e.g. geothermal energy, wine culture), such as Tamási<sup>69</sup> or the partnership of municipalities from Villány area.<sup>70</sup> However, the outlook for partnership projects in Hungary is bleaker. The NDA puts less emphasis on promoting cross-sector and inter-communal partnerships in the currently implemented OPs than was the case in 2004-2006 period,<sup>71</sup> a trend that is opposite to the one observed in Poland. Moreover, as some interviewees in South Transdanubia highlighted, inter-institutional cooperation is hampered by political rivalries between the municipalities grouped

in a micro-region<sup>72</sup> and clashes with the Hungarian political culture in which *“cooperation is not something to be proud of.”*<sup>73</sup> As a result, such cooperation is most often ‘formal’ and limited to the duration of the project,<sup>74</sup> unless the partnership is driven by pro-active leaders<sup>75</sup> or is based on prior cooperation on common goals. Lastly, as a result of the severe economic crisis hitting Hungary and the related austerity measures, there are practically no domestic funding schemes where project-level partnership could be applied, hence there is hardly any scope for spillover of this practice to domestic initiatives.

## Conclusions

In all of the three countries studied, given their shared legacy of democratic centralism, the concept of horizontal partnership is a novelty introduced by the SF. Interviewees often highlighted the fact that the partnership principle is and “something completely new”,<sup>76</sup> “alien”<sup>77</sup> or “exotic”<sup>78</sup> in the domestic context and clashes with the predominant “political culture characterised by statism”<sup>79</sup> and clientelism. However, the findings presented above also show that the imposition of the SF cooperative framework spurred gradual development of the partnership culture, albeit to varying extent between the three countries. The study also showed that the depth of adjustment varied considerably across the different aspects of partnership and, notably, across the different actors within a region.

In all three regions studied, partnership at the programming stage was internalized by the regional actors. The consultations of the programming documents for 2007-2013 period were widespread, considered as appropriate and beneficial by the regional officials involved, which suggests that this new practice can take root, providing that the actors involved consider it in line with their interests and preferences. Even though the participation of stakeholders in consultations was driven by self-interest, one could observe spillover effects of this new practice in terms of emergence of new regional networks, diffusion of consultations at the local level, and, in the case of Poland’s Lower Silesia, stimulating grass-roots cooperation among the local authorities.

However, the depth of adjustment to the partnership approach in implementation of the SF and at the project-level varied more significantly across the three case study regions. The impact of partnership at the implementation stage was more pronounced in Poland, where in 2004-2006 period partners were formally involved in project appraisal. Even though the RSCs were to a large extent a ‘failed experiment’ and were discontinued in 2007-2013, the Lower Silesian MC participated in formulation of eligibility criteria for the ROP and the stakeholders were consulted on project appraisal on an informal basis. By contrast, in the South East region and South Transdanubia partnership in project appraisal is practically non-existent and the MCs remain weak and dominated by the regional or central actors. Similarly, in the Polish case, following an initial reluctance, partnership at the project level is becoming gradually internalized by many local authorities. Even though involvement in partnership projects remains initially driven by the desire to acquire funding and new incentives in the funding eligibility criteria, collaboration on a joint project triggers social learning processes and often continues and expands beyond the project. These are encouraging signs that over time the partnership approach may take root in Poland. On the contrary, in Hungary and the Czech Republic, despite the earlier experience in inter-communal projects, the small and fragmented local authorities tend to lack partnership capacity and remain reluctant to cooperate as part of joint EU-funded projects. Unlike in Poland, the study did not find any evidence of spillovers of such cooperation in the Czech and Hungarian regions studied. That said, one could still find some isolated examples of successful partnership projects.

Overall, the findings also point to several factors that affect the regional and local policy actors' responses to the partnership principle. First, the adjustment to partnership was shaped by the institutional legacies, which highlights the crucial importance of the domestic institutions for the outcomes Europeanization and the effectiveness of EU policies on the ground. While, many of those legacies are shared by all the three countries studied (legacy of democratic centralism, silo-mentality, lack of traditions of cooperative policy-making, clientelism), they differ in terms of the degree of decentralization and fragmentation of the local authorities. Both of these factors clearly affected the responses to the partnership principle. In Lower Silesia, where the regional authorities enjoy significant autonomy from the central government and are responsible for the formulation and management of the ROP, the stakeholders could exert a greater influence on these processes than their counterparts from South East and South Transdanubia. The greater budgetary and institutional capacity of the Polish local authorities also implies greater capacity to cooperate, formulate joint projects and seems to favor stronger spillover effects of the partnership approach. The small and fragmented Czech and Hungarian municipalities tend to avoid partnership projects, even though they could take advantage of their previous cooperative experience as part of the micro-regions.

Second, another crucial factor in promoting partnership is the existence of incentives for cooperation. In Lower Silesia clear incentives for partnership projects were introduced to the ROP (as well other national OPs), which encouraged project-level partnership and created scope for new learning dynamics. Such incentives are missing in the ROPs of South Transdanubia and South East region.

Third, the extent to which the regional policy actors internalize the partnership approach varies greatly depending on their attitudes, resources and administrative capacity. Some local authorities acquired hardly any or no EU funding due to their inability to provide match-funding, insufficient human resources to cope with preparation of a bid for funding, and/or a passive and risk-averse attitude of the mayor. Such local authorities were hardly exposed to the influence of the SF framework and also less interested in participating in the various aspects of horizontal partnership. Similar observations were made in all of the regions studied, where one could also find both examples of municipalities lacking partnership capacity as well as counter-examples of successful inter-communal partnership projects, chiefly in municipalities lead by entrepreneurial and forward-looking leaders capable of identifying local strengths and common goals, the foundations of successful partnership.

Last but not least, the study highlighted the importance of the time factor. Learning over time was observed in all three countries, confirming the view that internalization of partnership can only happen incrementally (EPRC, 2009a; KELLEHER *et al.*, 1999).

Therefore, can partnership be successfully transferred into the CEECs' context? The evidence presented in this paper suggests that yes, even though it is not easy. If the actors involved consider it in line with their interests and preferences, then social learning processes can follow and there is scope for internalization of partnership. This was illustrated, for instance, by the growing popularity of partnership projects in Lower Silesia or the successful application and spillover effects of horizontal partnership at the programming stage in all of the three case study regions. The evidence suggests that the 'carrot and stick' approach characterizing the SF framework can be effective in promoting the partnership approach in CEECs thanks to the learning dynamics that it stimulates, which in turn may contribute to development of social capital facilitating cooperation between the sub-national actors. Nevertheless, the study also highlighted examples the purposefulness of partnership was undermined by political rivalries, clientelism and focus on narrow particular interests, which show that partnership can also generate some perverse effects and lead to sub-optimal use of the SF. How to prevent this from happening remains an open question that the policy-makers should address urgently, especially in the light on the current pressure to achieve better results with EU cohesion policy.



Regarding the Europeanization processes, the study showed that they may involve a mixture of rationalist and sociological mechanisms of adoption of EU policy rules. A 'shallow' rational-choice driven adjustment to the partnership principle does not necessarily preclude gradual internalization of this new approach over time in cases where partnership was in line with the interests of the actors concerned and was perceived as beneficial and useful. This was observed in the case of consultations of the ROPs in all of the three regions studied, where regional officials argued that this form of partnership stemmed both out of EU's requirement and their desire to gain access to local knowledge and enhance the programs.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the impact of the partnership principle, and more generally of the EU cohesion policy, remains uneven and differentiated across the actors operating within a region. Thanks to its focus on Europeanization processes among the sub-national actors involved in the policy process, the study showed that their responses to the norms and practices promoted by EU cohesion policy varied considerably. Some of them complied only superficially with them in order to gain access to EU funds, while others gradually embraced them. The 'depth' of their adjustment to the EU-imposed policy rules depended not only on their financial and administrative capacity, but also on their preferences, interests or even attitudes of individual local leaders. Moreover, their responses to EU-imposed policy norms can change over time. In sum, the study emphasized the complex and multi-faceted nature of Europeanization processes and their outcomes.

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## Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> See Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999, Article 8.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview: Expert (Prague).
- <sup>3</sup> See ROP South East: <http://www.jihovychod.cz/download/rop/rop-se-november2007.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Interviews: RDA, Expert (South Transdanubia), Ministry for National Development (Budapest).
- <sup>5</sup> There are 3168 municipalities.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview: Municipality and member of the RDC, County Office, Expert (South Transdanubia),
- <sup>7</sup> Interviews: Expert (South Transdanubia) Expert (Budapest).
- <sup>8</sup> Interviews: RDA, Expert (South Transdanubia), Ministry for National Development (Budapest).
- <sup>9</sup> Interviews: Vysočina Kraj Office, Jihomoravsky Kraj Office (South East), Expert; MO (Lower Silesia), RDA, former official of the RDA and consultant (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>10</sup> Interviews: Marshal Offices (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>11</sup> Interview: former official of the RDA and consultant (South Transdanubia). Similar comment by an Expert (Budapest).
- <sup>12</sup> Interview: Regional Council, Jihomoravsky Kraj Office (South East), Ministry of Regional Development (Prague).
- <sup>13</sup> Interview: Jihomoravsky Kraj Office, Vysočina Kraj Office, Expert, Regional Council (South East), Expert (Prague).
- <sup>14</sup> Interview: Commune (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>15</sup> Interview: Expert (South East).
- <sup>16</sup> Vysočina Kraj Office
- <sup>17</sup> Interview: RDA (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>18</sup> Interviews: Expert (Prague), Vysočina Kraj Office (South East), Commune (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>19</sup> Interview: Commune (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>20</sup> Interview: Expert (South East), Municipalities (South East), Communes (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>21</sup> Interviews: Municipalities (South East), RDA (South Transdanubia), Municipality (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>22</sup> Interview: Commune (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>23</sup> Interview: Commune (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>24</sup> Interview: Vysočina Kraj Office (South East).
- <sup>25</sup> Interviews: Jihomoravsky Kraj Office (South East), Expert (Prague).
- <sup>26</sup> Interview: Jihomoravsky Kraj Office (South East).
- <sup>27</sup> Interviews: former official of the RDA and consultant (South Transdanubia), senior official at VATI Hungarian Nonprofit Ltd. for Regional Development and Town Planning (Budapest).
- <sup>28</sup> Interviews: RDA, former official of the RDA and consultant (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>29</sup> Interviews: RDA, Expert (South Transdanubia), Ministry for National Development (Budapest).
- <sup>30</sup> Interview: Expert (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>31</sup> Interview: senior official at VATI Hungarian Nonprofit Ltd. for Regional Development and Town Planning (Budapest).
- <sup>32</sup> Interview: Expert (Prague).
- <sup>33</sup> See IROP, p. 494.
- <sup>34</sup> Interviews: expert; NGO participating in the RSC (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>35</sup> Interview: MO (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>36</sup> Interview: MO (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>37</sup> Interviews: several experts and Communes (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>38</sup> Interviews: Ministry of Regional Development (Prague), Regional Council, Ministry of Regional Development, Expert (South East).
- <sup>39</sup> Interview: Expert (South East).

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- <sup>40</sup> Ministry of Regional Development (South East).
- <sup>41</sup> Interview: Regional Council (South East).
- <sup>42</sup> Interviews: RDA, former official of the RDA and consultant (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>43</sup> Interviews: local official and member of the RDC, RDA (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>44</sup> Interview: Ministry for National Development (Budapest).
- <sup>45</sup> Interviews: Expert (South Transdanubia), senior official at VATI Hungarian Nonprofit Ltd. for Regional Development and Town Planning (Budapest).
- <sup>46</sup> Interview: RDA (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>47</sup> Interviews: MO; RLO; NGO (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>48</sup> Interview: MO (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>49</sup> For instance, the Lower Silesian ROP highlights the opportunities for the region's development stemming from partnership-based projects bringing together local authorities and NGOs (p. 47). Moreover, inter-institutional partnership is part of the eligibility criteria for funding in priority 6.5 concerning infrastructure for tourism and culture, while in priorities 2 (information society) and 3 (transport) above-local impact is stated as a requirement. Sources: [http://dolnyslask.pl/upload/RPO/07\\_komitet\\_monitorujacy/posiedzenia/100909\\_kryteria\\_czysta.pdf](http://dolnyslask.pl/upload/RPO/07_komitet_monitorujacy/posiedzenia/100909_kryteria_czysta.pdf), [http://dolnyslask.pl/upload/RPO/03\\_dokumenty\\_i\\_wytyczne/iz/rop\\_21\\_08\\_2007\\_en.pdf](http://dolnyslask.pl/upload/RPO/03_dokumenty_i_wytyczne/iz/rop_21_08_2007_en.pdf) [Accessed October 2010].
- <sup>50</sup> Interviews: Commune, MO (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>51</sup> Interviews: Communes; MO officials; RDA; NGO; Expert (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>52</sup> Interview: Commune (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>53</sup> Interviews: Communes (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>54</sup> Interview: Commune (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>55</sup> Interview: RDA (Lower Silesia); similar comments were also made by several local officials (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>56</sup> Interviews: Communes, NGO, MO senior official (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>57</sup> Art. 6 of UCHWAŁA Nr 233/2008 RADY MINISTRÓW z dnia 28 października 2008 r. w sprawie ustanowienia Programu Wieloletniego pod nazwą "NARODOWY PROGRAM PRZEBUDOWY DRÓG LOKALNYCH 2008 - 2011"
- <sup>58</sup> Interviews: Experts (Prague), former official of the RDA and consultant, expert (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>59</sup> Interview: Expert (Prague).
- <sup>60</sup> CZ5, Interview: Expert (Prague), Municipalities, Expert (South East).
- <sup>61</sup> Interviews: Expert, Vysočina Kraj Office (South East), Expert (Prague), former official of the RDA and consultant (South Transdanubia), Expert (Budapest).
- <sup>62</sup> Interviews: Experts (South East, Prague).
- <sup>63</sup> Interviews: Municipalities (South East), Experts (Prague).
- <sup>64</sup> Interview: Expert (South East).
- <sup>65</sup> Interviews: Municipalities, Expert (South East).
- <sup>66</sup> Interview: Ministry of Regional Development, Jihomoravsky Kraj Office, Municipality (South East).
- <sup>67</sup> Interview: Expert (Prague), Expert (South East).
- <sup>68</sup> Interview: Regional Council (South East).
- <sup>69</sup> Interview: Municipality (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>70</sup> Interview: Municipality (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>71</sup> Ministry for National Development (Budapest).
- <sup>72</sup> Interview: Expert (South Transdanubia), Ministry for National Development (Budapest).
- <sup>73</sup> Interview: Ministry for National Development (Budapest). Similar comment by former official of the RDA and consultant (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>74</sup> Interview: Ministry for National Development (Budapest).
- <sup>75</sup> Interview: RDA (South Transdanubia).
- <sup>76</sup> Interview: Ministry of Regional Development (Prague).
- <sup>77</sup> Interview: Expert (South Transdanubia). Similar comments by a senior official at VATI Hungarian Nonprofit Ltd. for Regional Development and Town Planning (Budapest), official at the Ministry for National Development (Budapest).
- <sup>78</sup> Interview: Expert (Lower Silesia).
- <sup>79</sup> Interview: Expert (Prague).