

*Mr. Walter Deffaa
Director General for Regional and Urban Policy
European Commission
Avenue de Beaulieu 1,
B-1160 Brussels, Belgium*

*Cc: Mr. Michel Servoz
Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities*

Brussels, 19th March 2014

Ref:

Subject: Deficiencies in the implementation of the partnership principle in Cohesion Policy

Dear Mr. Deffaa,

The European Commission has been a strong advocate for the involvement of partners into planning and implementation of Cohesion Policy for the 2014 – 2020 EU budget period, acknowledging partners' crucial role in delivering on the Europe 2020 Strategy and headline targets, and the multiple benefits that the involvement of partners can bring in:

- enhancing collective commitment and ownership of EU policies,
- increasing the knowledge, expertise and viewpoints available when strategies are being designed and implemented,
- managing the relevant funds, and
- ensuring greater transparency in decision-making processes.

The involvement of partners helps to reduce coordination and capacity gaps in policy making between different levels of government, in terms of information, resources, funding, administrative and policy fragmentation.

Indeed, our past experiences as partners actively involved in Cohesion Policy proved that the broad involvement of stakeholders leads to clear goals which make programmes more sustainable and effective. Getting the expertise from stakeholders on what works on the ground and reaching out to potential beneficiaries and including stakeholder results in better calls for proposals, better-informed applicants which mean better project applications, high quality projects and finally a better absorption. The multi-level governance approach is at the heart of subsidiarity in the EU and, if managed properly, partnership improves the democratic decision-making process. And last but not least, a partnership aiming at transparency, openness and prevention of misuse and corruption supports the smooth implementation of the programmes.

Even more we are concerned that during the ongoing programming a number of the basic partnership principles are not met by member states: timely access to information and sufficient time for reaction is far from being guaranteed; the involvement of partners was not happening at early stages when major strategic decisions have been taken, and a number of member states are failing to establish a reciprocal dialogue where partners receive feedback on their contributions.

And whereas – following recommendations of the European Commission – member states plan to allocate Technical Assistance to increase the administrative capacity of their managing bodies, support from Technical Assistance for partners remains marginal.

We are calling on the European Commission to hold member states accountable for their commitment¹ to implement a good partnership and to follow the principles laid down in the European Code of Conduct on Partnership while negotiating with Member States on the Partnership Agreements and with National and Regional Managing Authorities on the Operational Programmes.

Furthermore, we would like to emphasise that socio-economic and civil society partners must have access to Technical Assistance as well as global grants and capacity-building in order to ensure sufficient capacities to fulfil their role in contributing to an efficient and transparent implementation of ESI funding, in their coordination efforts and their representation in committees and decision making procedures.

On behalf of the signatories,

Yours sincerely



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European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)



European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL)



European Disability Forum



European Foundation Centre (EFC)



Coalition for sustainable use of EU funds in Bulgaria



SF Team for sustainable future



WWF



European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)



CEE Bankwatch Network



Czech Council of Children and Youth



Social Platform



Friends of the Earth Europe



Social Forum Slovakia



Latvian Green Movement



Polish Green Network



Centre for Transport and Environment Czech Republic



Green Circle Czech Republic



Green Coalition Slovakia



CEPA – Friends of the Earth Slovakia

¹ Joint declaration of the European Parliament and the Council on the application of article 5(3) of Regulation (EU) No // /2012 (CPR) and the exclusion of any retroactivity relating to it, in particular concerning its joint application with articles 13, 14 and 23 of Regulation (EU) No // /2012 (CPR).

