



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Structural and investment funds: Commission boosts partners' role in planning and spending**

A common set of standards to improve consultation, participation and dialogue with partners such as regional, local, urban and other public authorities, trade unions, employers, non-governmental organisations and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination during the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) has been adopted today by the European Commission.

These Funds comprise the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

This **European Code of Conduct on the Partnership Principle** requires Member States to strengthen cooperation between their authorities responsible for spending EU structural and investment funds and project partners so as to facilitate the sharing of information, experience, results and good practices in the 2014-20 programming period, and so help to ensure that this money is spent effectively.

*"We want to ensure that Member States work in constructive partnerships with representative stakeholders in the planning and implementation of programmes using European Structural and Investment Funds so as to maximise the impact of this money",* said Commissioner Andor.

The Code of Conduct, which takes the form of a legally-binding Commission Regulation, sets out objectives and criteria to ensure that Member States implement the partnership principle. This means that Member States are required to:

- ensure transparency in the selection of partners representing regional, local and other public authorities, social and economic partners and bodies representing the civil society, to be appointed as full members in the monitoring committees of the programmes.
- provide partners with adequate information and sufficient time as a prerequisite for a proper consultation process
- ensure that partners must be effectively involved in all phases of the process, i.e. from the preparation and throughout the implementation, including monitoring and evaluation, of all programmes
- support the capacity building of the partners for improving their competences and skills in view of their active involvement in the process and
- create platforms for mutual learning and exchange of good practice and innovative approaches.

The Regulation establishes the principles Member States must apply but leaves ample flexibility to Member States to organise the precise practical details for involving relevant partners in the different stages of the programming.

## **Background**

Partnership, one of the key principles of the management of European Union funds, implies close cooperation between public authorities at national, regional and local levels in the Member States and with the private sector and other interested parties. Until now, despite being an integral part of Cohesion Policy, feedback from stakeholders indicates that its implementation has varied greatly between different Member States, depending largely on whether the institutional and political culture in a Member State was already conducive to consultation, participation and dialogue with relevant stakeholders.

The new rules, in the form of a legally binding and directly applicable Commission Regulation (a so-called 'Delegated Act'), therefore strengthen the partnership requirement in Article 5 of the Common Provisions Regulation for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for the period 2014-2020.

## **For more information**

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