



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Programming Guide for Strategy Papers

Programming Fiche	
CONSULTATION OF THE NON-STATE ACTORS AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PREPARATION OF THE COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPERS	Date: March 2009

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS - OBJECTIVES, CONTENT AND TIMING

Non-state actors (NSAs) and local authorities (LA) have become key partners in the EU development policy. Informing and consulting them in the design of development strategies and the identification of priorities is a means to ensuring ownership and representation. Moreover, dialogue between central government structures and all other actors, active in development cooperation allows for confidence building and facilitates the interaction between state and non-state actors.

Dialogue between state structures at the national and local levels on the one hand, and between state and non-state actors on the other, must be a continuous and sustainable process, striving to ensure constant information flow. As such, this dialogue cannot be limited to a specific meeting or consultation event that occurs at a particular stage in the programming exercise, having to be re-launched and repeated at consecutive stages of the next programming cycle, without constant follow up and feedback.

The role of EC Delegations is to facilitate the conduct of such dialogue between NSAs on one hand and between local authorities and government structures on the other, and not to play the proxy for the government. It is the responsibility of partner countries' governments to engage in constant dialogue with NSA and LAs, and it is only in difficult cases (lack of political will on the part of government or lack of local tradition of participation of NSA and LA in these processes) that the Delegations should, as a last resort, take the initiative to conduct the consultation, without involving the government.

The purpose of that consultation is to allow NSA and LA to bring their experience and knowledge in the definition and identification of priorities for development cooperation, during the programming process but also in all subsequent stages of its review. To this end, Delegations should establish a timeline so that civil society is consulted in a timely manner, thereby allowing its position and judgements to be duly taken into account in the elaboration of development strategies. The shape and form of this consultation process should also be clearly defined. General level consultations, based on

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a global strategy document, should be followed up by a more detailed, sectoral level dialogue. To this end, it would be useful to establish, jointly with NSA and LA and, a set of reference criteria or indicators, to be used as a basis for evaluating the general trends as regards quality of the participation (see part 3 below).

STAGES OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

1.1. Identification of NSAs and LA (mapping?)

An indispensable starting point of a good quality consultation process is the identification of the actors concerned: a mapping should be conducted in order to select the institutions or networks thereof, which are the most representative in terms of sectoral and regional coverage.

This in effect helps to launch the participatory process and to identify the fields where support is necessary (see the Fiches on the strengthening of the capacities of the NSAs and support for decentralisation). This identification must concern all NSA and not just the most commonly recognised ones: NGOs, trade unions, economic and social partners, base community associations, women's associations, religious associations, media, research centres...

The "mapping study" should comprise of (i) an analytical outline of all the existing networks and organisations and of the legal framework in which they operate, (ii) an evaluation of their capacities, of their constraints and of their potential, (iii) an analysis of the vision and strategies of the governments concerning the engagement of NSAs and LA in the development process and (iv) an outline of the donors' initiatives related to the involvement of the actors concerned

N.B.: For more information on the implementation of mapping studies, contact Unit E4 of AIDCO.

If there are existent dialogue fora, those should be favoured to channel the contributions of NSAs and LA in the dialogue process. In theory it is appropriate to avoid creating new *specific structures* of dialogue. It is preferable to strengthen/improve the existing dialogue mechanisms (when that is the case) between partner governments, donor agencies and NSAs and LAs.

Regarding the consultations of LAs, they cannot be replaced by consultations of the ministry responsible for decentralisation. If there is a platform of LA, it can constitute a useful base for the consultations. If such a platform does not exist, the government and the Delegation should try to directly involve a range of representatives of municipalities (different size, geographical coverage, etc). A suitable support for the constitution of local authorities' networks within the framework of the strategy papers and the national or regional indicative programmes should be envisaged.

1.2. Organisation of the consultations

A well organised programming dialogue and taking account of the lessons drawn from previous participatory processes constitutes the basis of an effective participation and of a genuine consultation.

Some essential points:

- (1) It is important that appropriate information is sent sufficiently in advance to NSAs and LAs. The Delegations play an essential role in the dissemination of practical and clear information, adapted to capacities and to the interests of the participants and in relation to the object of the consultation. At the same time as the draft document of strategy by country and the last annual report on cooperation between the EC and the partner country concerned, the participants should be sent a short presentation of the programming process and what one expects from them. It is necessary to ask the actors involved to contribute their share to the draft document of strategy within a reasonable time. For example, the Commission Regulation provides for a minimum 8-week period for the consultation of civil society before the publication of its communications.
- (2) The channels of dissemination of information have to be adapted to the situation in the country and to the possibilities of those involved. The use of electronic mail, the downloading of the necessary documents on the Internet site of the delegations and the on-line management of the questionnaires are channels to be considered in complement perhaps to more traditional supports according to conditions of access to Internet according to the countries, etc.
- (3) To launch the consultation, the organisation of seminars and meetings throughout the country (and not only in the capital) proves generally very useful.
- (4) The organisation of sectoral consultations has shown, in a number of cases, a greater involvement of NSAs in the field concerned: more numerous and more relevant contributions.
- (5) The consultation must concern the broadest range possible of those involved, including their networks (national and international NGOs, media, economic and social partners, research organisations, women's associations, organisations representing the vulnerable and marginalised groups, such as young people, indigenous peoples and minorities, rural communities and other organisations presenting a special statute like the Red Cross, local authorities, etc).
- (6) During the consultation process, the points of view expressed by the various actors should be discussed during seminars, workshops or meetings co-chaired by the government's representatives and by the Head of Delegation.

N.B.: To find examples of good practices, consult the report carried out on the involvement of NSAs and LA at the time of the programming 10th EDF:

http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/Consultation-non-state-Actor-and-local-Authorities-Public%20report_en.pdf

- (7) The actors concerned should receive feedback on the results of the consultation and have an explanation on how and why their contributions have or have not been taken into account.

- (8) It is suggested that the Delegation keeps the participants of the consultation informed on the following stages of the process and that those share in turn this information with the other actors and communicate them to the citizens. It is advisable to institutionalise the participation by creating a permanent framework for an effective engagement with each stage of the process. This could be facilitated by the development of a roadmap of the consultations to be open within the framework of the 10th EDF, which could be made public and largely distributed to the various actors concerned with the consultation. This roadmap could thus indicate the approximate dates of the various consultations that will be undertaken within the framework of cooperation with the European Union for the years to come as well as the aim of these consultations (programming, halfway review, review at the end, the various consultations envisaged within the framework of identification and implementation of programmes...)

N.B.: For more information on what this roadmap should contain, consult the report carried out on the involvement of NSAs and LAs at the time of the programming 10th EDF:

http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/Consultation-non-state-Actor-and-local-Authorities-Public%20report_en.pdf

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

It is important to have suitable control systems based on realistic and relatively simple criteria intended to evaluate the quality of the participation process and the added value of NSAs and LA for the formulation and implementation of policies, in particular to identify the bottlenecks that can slow down the engagement of civil society in the dialogue and to improve the participatory approaches. This evaluation will be able to draw on the indicative list of the criteria below, adapted to the national context, as well as on the overall assessment of the Head of Delegation regarding the general characteristics of the country and to the tradition of participatory approaches.

How to evaluate the conditions in place for the implementation of participatory approaches?

- Was an appropriate mapping study of civil society undertaken in the country?
- Are NSA and LA regularly consulted by the government, by Delegation or by other donors concerning a proposal or a political initiative, such as the national development strategy, the drawing up of the strategy paper, a sectoral policy discussion or the review of the strategy paper?
- Are NSA and LA informed beforehand of the place and contents of the consultation? How long in advance are the relevant documents transmitted to the stakeholders?
- At which stage are NSA and LA involved? (from the beginning, when the proposal/initiative is drawn up; or during the process, when the proposal/initiative is formulated; or at a later stage, to endorse a proposal/ initiative already finalised and approved)
- Is it possible to amend the strategy paper in order to reflect the consultation with NSA and LA?

- Are all the interests of NSA and LA relating to the strategy paper under consultation represented? (check the types of invited/represented NSAs: local and international NGOs, trade unions, consumer organisations, women's associations and other organisations presenting a special statute like the Red Cross, etc.)
- Was a role for NSAs and LA envisaged in the implementation and the control of the proposals/political initiatives?
- Do the consultations envisage a follow-up?
- Does the strategy paper envisage financing for the strengthening of capacities of civil society/local authorities? (percentage of financing in relation to the total allocation of the proposal/political initiative)

How to evaluate the capacity and added value of NSAs and LA for the formulation of policies?

- Are NSAs and LA willing to benefit from the opportunities of entering into the development process (by increasing their own capacities, by raising awareness)?
- Are NSA and LA willing to strengthen networks (central level to allow the population to express itself, to inform the constituencies, to prepare the consultations, to provide feedback on these consultations, etc.)?
- Do NSA and LA contribute to the consultations and to the relevant dialogues?

N.B.: In order to be able to evaluate regularly and on the basis of comparable information the way in which NSA and LA are involved in the definition, implementation and evaluation of the European cooperation policy, it is requested from the Delegations to agree to complete the annex on the consultation of NSA and LA provided at the time of the various programming exercises: initial programming, Midterm review, and Final reviews.