



PES to PES Dialogue

The European Commission Mutual Learning Programme for Public Employment Services

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Successful partnerships in delivering public employment services

Analytical Paper

(December 2013)

This publication is commissioned by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the EU2020 goals in these fields.

The seven-year programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

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<http://ec.europa.eu/social/pes-to-pes>

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In collaboration with ICF GHK and the Budapest Institute

Please cite this publication as: European Commission (2013), Successful partnerships in delivering Public Employment Services, Brussels, Author: Anette Scoppetta

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Executive Summary

Partnerships are widely accepted as an invaluable instrument for stimulating more sustainable socio-economic development and the attainment of the EU's 2020 goals. Through the involvement, adequate consultation and participation of stakeholders, partnerships develop cross-cutting perspectives and integrated approaches to multidimensional problems. Public Employment Services (PES) cooperate with many stakeholders such as private employment services, employers, municipalities and NGOs, but only in some countries are PES strongly engaged in partnerships – understood as close collaboration with equal partners and joint decision-making. Strategic partnerships established at the policy level to enhance policy planning and delivery and service partnerships set up at the local level to jointly improve PES delivery are thus in demand in order to achieve EU 2020 goals.

As envisaged by the PES vision 2020, PES target adopting a conductor role in building bridges, cooperation and partnership. This paper aims to assist PES to make best use of their unique position in being placed in the centre of the European Employment Systems to achieve their goal. Based upon literature review, it thus provides information on how to use partnerships as a mechanism to enhance employment opportunities. Analyses of collaboration in delivering PES, for instance, show that three major aspects are important to make partnerships successful. These are: framework conditions enhancing collaboration at all levels of governance; stakeholders that are open to learn from others, share a common vision and take responsibility in developing and implementing activities and policies together; and actions that provide consolidated answers to the complex problems faced. There is a need to be seen to break out of policy silos. Partnerships often set activities at the interface of policies, and, hence, are a policy tool that has proven to contribute in an enhanced way to policy planning and implementation. Partnerships therefore need to be promoted by PES to ensure innovative collaborative policy delivery so that the inclusive society of the EU 2020 can jointly be build.

1. Introduction

Partnership rationale, value added and forms of relationships

1.1 Why partnerships?

'Well-functioning partnerships of all relevant labour market stakeholders, including employment services, social security services, education and training providers and social partners, are vital to ensure complementarity of services and truly manage careers.'

With a wide territorial coverage and implementing most of the measures which 'make transitions pay', public employment services are in a central position to act as transition agencies and develop these partnerships'.

The Employment Committee: Making transitions pay (Council of the European Union 2010a)

The European Union (EU) is struggling with many challenges in the labour market: High unemployment has already led to all-time high long-term unemployment; large scale job destruction has aggravated low employment; at the same time precarious employment has increased and labour mismatches occurred with the rise of structural unemployment. In addition, the group of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) expanded. And last but not least, poverty and social exclusion has increased, following a rise in jobless households and in-work poverty, and a connected decline in household incomes.¹ In order to deliver growth that is *smart, sustainable and inclusive*, the EU has set five targets for 2020 within its EU 2020 Strategy in the areas of employment, R&D/innovation, climate change/energy, education and poverty/social exclusion.² **The EU Strategy calls on all parties and stakeholders to help implement the strategy, working in partnership, by taking action in areas within their responsibility.**

Value added of working in partnership

Partnerships have been endorsed as particularly appropriate for addressing the complex and multi-faceted issues that Europe's employment, social inclusion and human resource development policies are faced with, which are *'too complex and interdependent for any one institution to effectively respond to alone.'*³ Additionally, a need is seen to break out of policy silos (OECD LEED 2011). The collective effort of different stakeholders is regarded as central to the achievement of EU 2020 targets. Close cooperation of PES with employers, municipalities, NGOs, social partners, training providers, and others, is therefore vital for enhancing employment opportunities and increasing labour market participation.⁴ **Partnerships have been shown to help foster employment, social cohesion, economic development, environmental sustainability and quality of life within the EU.** Evaluations at national and EU level have highlighted the value added of working in partnership.⁵ Partnerships contribute to *'improving efficiency of actions by avoiding duplication of efforts and promoting the use of complementary approaches or resources in a coordinated and synergetic way and by achieving economies of scale and increasing*

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1974&furtherNews=yes>

² http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

³ EQUAL Managing Authorities of Belgium et al. 2006, p.2

⁴ see also Employment Guidelines 2020: Council of the European Union 2010b

⁵ See, for instance, ESF Expert Evaluation Network 2012, BBI, ICAS, ECONOMIX 2006 and EQUAL Managing Authorities of Belgium et al. 2006,

effectiveness of actions by addressing real needs which are linked to multi-dimensional (involving a variety of actors and perspectives) and multi-level (involving different levels of society in terms of local, regional and national) issues and bridging gaps in services and provision that no one single organisation could fill'.⁶

Partnership is a key instrument of collective commitment and contributes to better efficiency of public expenditure and public policies, states the European Economic and Social Committee (2010). Partnerships have therefore become an important policy tool and action. The European Social Fund (ESF) Regulation refers to partnerships as a governance mechanism (ESF Reg., Art. 5) as well as territorial alliances (ESF Reg., Art. 3) aimed at mobilising reforms in the field of employment and labour market inclusiveness. In the ESF, partnerships are used to support policy linkages that promote growth and prosperity by reducing economic, social and territorial disparities *through* encouraging employment and social inclusion at all governance levels; stimulating the involvement of diverse actors and approaches; clearly defining target groups, objectives and priorities; balancing competition and cooperation; achieving benefits for both partners and wider society; and building participatory democracy through collaborative decision-making (COP 2012).

Adoption of the partnership approach in delivering PES

Just as European Welfare Systems are characterised by plurality (Hegelich and Schubert 2008), PES are similarly far from being equal in terms of business models, the range of services offered and the state of development on the way from a more administrative authority to a modern service agency (HoPES 2011). This calls for flexibility, organisational responsiveness and creativity. PES have to transform into '*work focused gateways to welfare systems*' and play a more comprehensive role as '*lifelong service providers*' (European Commission 2010c). **PES need to adapt to changing environments and work in close cooperation with other stakeholders to 'maximise job matching, secure pathways for vulnerable groups and improve labour market intelligence in the context of the new skills agenda'** (European Commission 2012h).

PES confirm their willingness to develop towards more flexible, open, market and network oriented structures within their statement on PES' contribution to EU 2020. **Developing partnerships is a priority area for action among almost all PES.** PES identified *five key areas* for action, one of which is to **adopt a conductor role in building bridges, cooperation and partnership** (European Commission 2013a). More precisely, PES aim to conduct by '*enabling labour market actors to cooperate and innovate*', '*match citizens and employers with appropriate and accessible services*' and '*commissioning market orientation and partnership formation*', amongst others (European Commission 2012c). The adoption of the partnership approach is regarded as key by PES within three areas of concern:

- 1) Partnerships at the local level between local employment offices and other stakeholders to ensure a co-ordinated strategic service offer and easy referral of individuals to nearby support services;
- 2) Enhanced cooperation with employers and providers of education and training services in order to improve the way in which the training offer is tailored to demand; and
- 3) Development or optimisation of sub-contracting for specialised services (HoPES 2011).

⁶ EQUAL Managing Authorities of Belgium et al. 2006, p.4

Some PES understand their role as that of 'chief of orchestra', coordinating *partnerships for employment individual services* (European Commission 2010b). Since PES as key actors in labour market policy already link internationally in the network of HoPES (Head of Public Employment Services) and through the PES to PES dialogue⁷ and PARES⁸, they can learn from successes and failures of partnership work practiced across the EU. The activities of the Mutual Learning Programme in 2011 also clearly showed 'the value of, and the lessons which can be learnt from strong delivery partnerships at the local level' (European Commission 2013a, p.15).

Local labour market offices confirm the need for collaboration: 79% of local labour market offices agree that there are vulnerable groups that they have trouble targeting (OECD LEED 2011). PES, for instance, face challenges to gain access to young people who are not officially registered and are living on the streets, and who do not even approach the authorities due to fear and a lack of knowledge while field workers, NGOs and schools (as partners of the alliances) have access to them. Varying competences and resources, consequently, can be combined by partnerships. Partnerships offer a mechanism with the help of which problems in the labour market such as the low-participation rate of vulnerable groups can be solved more readily than by institutions working in isolation. **PES are urged to use the mechanism of partnerships to address particular problems faced at the local, regional and national levels** by playing a *new and more active role* in the implementation of the European Employment Strategy (European Commission 2011a referring to European Commission 2010a). **Partnership-working, however, not only applies to the design and delivery of specific services and measures, but the wider analysis and improvement of PES practice** (European Commission 2012g).

1.2 Existing forms of relationship between PES and other partners

Bilateral cooperation or multi-lateral collaboration?

A review of the literature confirms that many PES already work closely with other actors to deliver their services and measures. These do not only include labour market policy stakeholders but also actors in the sphere of economic development, education, social policy, and others. Different relationships are applied in the three most relevant policy areas of the EU 2020 Strategy under scrutiny, i.e. employment, social inclusion and education. Table 1 relates common relationships of PES with target groups and policy areas by providing project examples of PES relationships with other actors. The chosen form of relationship depends on factors such as the objectives, the context and the partners. **Bi-lateral cooperation of PES is frequently applied to address specific objectives and policy challenges whilst multi-lateral collaboration of PES target multiple objectives and policy challenges.**

⁷ The PES-to-PES Dialogue is the EC's specific mutual learning programme for Public Employment Services.

⁸ PARES is a strategic integrated initiative of the Commission to encourage an EU-level strategic dialogue between Employment Services on policy implementation and delivery issues

Table 1: Examples of PES relationships with other actors regarding EU 2020 goals

EU 2020 goals ⁹	Policy challenges	Target groups	Main partners of PES	Examples of PES relationships with other actors
Employment (75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed)	Matching skills supply/demand Up-skilling Integration Social Inclusion Demographic change Health...	Employed, unemployed: Youth Women Older persons Migrants ...	Enterprises NGOs Private providers Municipalities/ governmental authorities Training institutes Social partners Beneficiaries ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PES-Enterprise (or NGO or private providers): e.g. agreements with enterprises on job placements • PES-Enterprise-NGO: e.g. Vocational Training for employed/unemployed • PES-Municipality-NGOs-Enterprises-and others: e.g. Local Action Plans to improve the integration process of socially excluded • PES-Government-NGOs-Social Partners-and others: e.g. set activities jointly on raising awareness of demographic change (Company Award on Age-friendly enterprises) • PES-Municipality-Social partners: Policy coordination in order to strategically develop policy areas, i.e. interface between labour market and health
Education (reducing school drop-out rates below 10%; 40% of 30-34 year-olds completing 3rd level education)	Up-skilling Social Inclusion ...	School drop-outs Low-skilled persons Youth ...	Schools Training institutes Municipalities/ governmental authorities Enterprises Private providers Social partners Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PES-Schools: e.g. regular exchange between the two policy systems (labour market/education); foreseeing entries into the labour market • PES-Enterprise-NGO: e.g. advising SMEs on HRD • PES-Schools-NGO-private providers-and others more: e.g. regional strategies to prevent social exclusion of youth • PES-Government-NGOs-Social Partners-and others more: e.g. development of a skills strategy within a territory
Poverty / social exclusion (20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion)	Social inclusion Health Integration Demographic change ...	Vulnerable persons e.g. persons with multiple disadvantages ...	Municipalities/ governmental authorities NGOs Enterprises Private providers Social partners Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PES-Municipality-NGOs-Enterprises and others more: e.g. develop integration chains for vulnerable groups • PES-Government-NGOs-Social Partners-and others more: e.g. develop cross-policy activities/programmes (Health, Education, etc.) • PES-Municipality-Social partners: Policy coordination in order to solve integration problems for persons with multiple disadvantages

Partnerships are a specific form of arrangement between partners

According to the literature in this area, **not all relationships of PES are partnerships** in a strict sense: Wood (2010) distinguishes working relationships in the labour market according to the intensity of working together and, accordingly, differentiates between cooperation (informal, no joint goals, information is shared), coordination (some joint planning, intensified communication and closer working relationship) and collaboration (working together, shared commitment, developed partnerships).¹⁰ Consequently, **partnership is a specific form of arrangement**

⁹ The two other goals are R&D / innovation (3% of the EU's GDP (public and private combined) to be invested in R&D/innovation) and climate change / energy (greenhouse gas emissions 20% (or even 30%, if the conditions are right) lower than 1990 20% of energy from renewables 20% increase in energy efficiency).

¹⁰ Whilst the majority of experts refer to partnerships as an intense working relationship between actors (OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development, EC e.g. ESF regulations), the ILO refers to partnerships in a broader sense and distinguishes three forms of partnership: *cooperation* (ex-change of

between partners: that of a close relationship with joint decision-making and shared commitment of partners. Based upon Wood, the varying forms of relationship practiced are provided in table 2. These can be distinguished by their *intensity of working together* (x-axis in table 2: cooperation, coordination and collaboration) and in their *orientation, i.e. strategic orientation and operative orientation* (y-axis in table 2). Please note that hybrid forms of these approaches exist since there are no boundaries in practice.

The models developed by the Mobility Lab (European Commission 2011a) refer to the relationships presented in the table as follows:

- The 'capacity building model' (model 1) and the 'integration of skills' model (model 3) correspond to the forms of relationships of table 2 under the heading 'cooperation' (primarily operationally oriented relationship).
- The 'co-ordination' model (model 4) relates to arrangements under the title 'coordination' in table 2 (for both operative and strategic orientated forms of arrangements).
- The 'co-operation' model (model 2) and may either correspond to 'coordination' or 'cooperation' depending on the intensity of interaction between partners.

Cooperation: an important form of relationship established by many PES

An important form of established relationship is co-operation. PES share information, discuss topics and network with other stakeholders based upon mutual agreements, for example in policy fora, strategic platforms, networks and consultation meetings. This form of relationship is characterised by a loose relationship between actors and can have a strategic orientation.

Cooperation is also practiced when **aiming at improving particular services** (operative orientation) such as contracting out and outsourcing the delivery of PES services (model 1 'capacity building' and model 3 'integration of skills' of the partnership models developed in European Commission 2011a). Frequently practiced cooperation of PES with private employment services, employers, other service providers or municipalities include **'agreements with enterprises', 'contracting out to service providers' and 'cooperation agreements with municipalities/governmental authorities'**¹¹. The relationship is classified as 'loose' compared to the other forms of relationship even if this form of relationship is often based on contracts between two parties (formal agreements between PES and service provider in case of contracting out¹²).

Coordination: a more intensive way of working together

A more intensive way of working together is coordination. This is characterised by some joint planning, intensive communication and closer working relationships. Coordination between multiple stakeholders is practiced in order to jointly develop policy areas and solve (cross-policy) problems. Since competences and skills in particular policy fields are spread across partners, policy coordination involves more than one partner. The involvement of social partners into activities of this kind is

information, cooperation is largely non-financial), *complementarity* (contracting out or outsourcing of services) and the *competitive* form of partnership (outsourcing through bidding or tendering procedures, i.e. there is a 'level playing field of competition' and no reserved role for PES); see Barbier et al. 2003

¹¹ PES-Municipality arrangements can be based on public (community-led) programmes (intra-governmental agreements). Further information on arrangements with municipalities are also provided in Arnkil et al. (no date).

¹² See, for instance, Finn 2011 and European Commission 2011a

crucial for policy development in many countries.¹³ The forms of agreement comprise Memoranda of Understanding, Codes of Conduct, guidelines, PES involvement in social dialogue, councils, committees, boards, and forms of agreement and joint working. **Policy coordination with enterprises on labour skills supply and demand in a territory (i.e. up-skilling and placement) is an example of a PES practice of this kind with operative orientation** (model 2 'co-operation' of the partnership models developed in European Commission 2011a may also refer to coordination). This relationship is applied to **coordinate services between parties, explore possibilities and balance options**. Model 4 'co-ordination' of the partnership models developed in European Commission (2011a) can be regarded as a form of interaction practiced in this area.

Collaboration: the most structured form of interaction

Last but not least, collaboration is used when close relationships are established between stakeholders. These advanced forms of interaction are characterised by joint objectives and decision making, shared commitment and **developed partnership**.

¹³ Further readings on cooperation with social partners include Weishaupt 2011.

Table 2: Forms of relationship of PES

		Forms of relationship			
		Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration	
		Loose relationship		Close relationship	
		<i>Characteristics: information is shared, informal or formal</i>	<i>Characteristics: some joint planning, intensified communication and closer working relationship</i>	<i>Characteristics: joint objectives and decision making, shared commitment, developed partnership</i>	
Multi-stakeholder arrangements of PES	Strategic Orientation	Aims	To share information To discuss topics To network	To jointly develop policy areas To solve (cross-policy) problems To elaborate future partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve strategic planning and policy delivery To contribute to systemic change by sharing responsibility
		Forms of agreement	Informal: Mutual agreements	Informal/formal: Memorandum of Understanding, codes of conduct, guidelines	Formal (legally binding): Partnership agreements, pacts, multi-lateral contracts
		Examples	<i>Policy forums, strategic platforms, networks, consultations, etc.</i>	<i>Involvement in social dialogue, Councils, Committees, Boards, etc.</i>	<i>Strategic partnerships such as Structural Fund Partnerships in Sweden and the Territorial Employment Pacts in Austria</i>
		References¹⁴	-	<i>Cooperation model (model 2) provided that policy coordination is practiced, Coordination model (model 4)</i>	-
Arrangements between two or three partners	Operative Orientation	Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exchange information about particular services To update knowledge To integrate skills into PES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To coordinate services To explore possibilities To balance options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To jointly improve specific (employment) services To enhance employment options To boost social inclusion
		Forms of agreement	Informal/Formal: Mutual agreements, contracts in case of contracting out of services	Informal/formal: Agreements between parties	Formal (legally binding): Partnership agreements, pacts, multi-lateral contracts
		Examples	<i>Meetings between parties, contracting out, outsourcing of the delivery of PES services, etc.</i>	<i>Coordination of skill supply and demand in a territory, etc.</i>	<i>Service partnerships such as the Local Employment Partnerships in the UK and Public-Private Partnerships of various kinds</i>
		References¹⁴	<i>Capacity Building model (model1), Cooperation model (model 2), Integration of skills (model3).</i>	<i>Cooperation model (model 2) provided that policy coordination is practiced, Coordination model (model 4)</i>	-

¹⁴ Reference to models developed in European Commission 2011a

Partnerships, consequently, are working relationships that are characterised by close collaboration between multiple stakeholders and joint decision-making (see table 2; marked by an ellipse). More precisely, partnerships:

- **are (frequently) multi-stakeholder relationships;**
- **have agreements based on identifiable responsibilities, joint rights and obligations, and accepted by all partners;**
- **jointly define, decide and pursue objectives; and have shared commitment and strong sense of ownership.**

Partnerships are commonplace in some countries, in others they hardly exist (see also European Commission 2012b). Local/regional level partnerships are set up, for instance, in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, France, Croatia, Hungary, the Netherlands and Sweden¹⁵. PES engage in alliances with multiple stakeholders to **improve strategic planning and policy delivery and contribute to systemic change by sharing responsibility**. Mostly, formal (legally binding) agreements are established such as partnership agreements, pacts and multi-lateral contracts. Examples of strategic partnership models established are the Structural Fund Partnerships in Sweden (see box 2, chapter 2) and the Territorial Employment Pacts in Austria. **When PES engage in a close relationship with others to jointly improve specific services, to enhance employment options or to boost social inclusion, often service partnerships are set up.** An example of this kind is the Local Employment Partnerships in the UK (see box 3, chapter 2).

Multi-stakeholder collaboration has proven to contribute in an enhanced way when aiming at solving multi-dimensional problems. More precisely, partnerships are regarded by OECD to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources and enhance policy outcomes (OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2010). The impact of collaboration of local labour market offices with other actors on the implementation of labour market programmes was reviewed in some countries by OECD resulting in the following: collaboration was seen to have the highest influence on programme delivery in the Netherlands (for municipalities) and Flanders/Belgium (OECD LEED 2011). Still, the effects that can be achieved by the different forms of relationships practiced vary:¹⁶ **Whilst bi-lateral cooperation affects specific policy areas, partnerships influence various policy fields (i.e. impact different policies, support coherence and contingency of policy aims on a multi-level scale, influence labour market policy due to shared responsibility and resources/funding), and may even lead to systemic change.** The so-called 'BEPA-study' on social innovation also confirms that *'broad-based partnerships that break boundaries are a critical ingredient in driving successful innovations. Different players – government, private sector, civil society – lead innovations, and no single sector has the unique pathway to success. The broader reach and resources availed by partnerships yield wider, larger-scale results. The wider the strategic alliance, the stronger the transformative impact in the well-being and empowerment of citizens'* (European Communities 2011, p.57).

The paper, consequently, emphasises on partnerships since this specific form of relationship has proven to contribute in an enhanced way and is of particular need in order to comprehensively contribute to achieve EU 2020 goals.

¹⁵ COP 2012, OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2013 forthcoming, 2009

¹⁶ The effectivity of the partnership principle also relies on other factors such as the ability of the partners (European Commission 2012f)

1.3 Status quo of PES engagement in partnerships

PES work with many stakeholders at the various governance levels. OECD confirms that 'local employment offices are collaborating widely and this is having an impact on their policies and programmes' (OECD LEED 2011, p. 73). When examining the PES monitor database¹⁷ and PARES country fiches¹⁸, 19 PES state that they work with municipalities / governmental authorities¹⁹ and 22 PES provide information on cooperation with NGOs. PES also cooperate with the private sector. They work with employers (enterprises, temporary work agencies, etc.) and private service providers (private employment services, NGOs, training providers, etc.) based on agreements.²⁰ However, the most common form of relationship of local employment offices is informal, ongoing collaboration, followed by multi-stakeholder partnerships and then more specific contracting relationships (OECD LEED 2011). Cooperation of PES, however, is also reported to be *unstable, unsystematic* and *involve only a small set of actors* (Danish Technological Institute et al. 2010, European Job Mobility Partnership 2010).

Although cooperating with many stakeholders, PES have been involved in partnerships in a significant way only recently (European Commission 2011a).²¹ It is interesting that **only 14 PES (in 13 Member States) indicate that they use partnership as a mechanism.**²² References to existing local/regional partnerships are frequently missing when examining the PES monitor and PARES country fiches. This is, for instance, the case in Austria, Germany, and others and may be attributed to inadequate communication between the local and the national levels within the PES, or on a lack of knowledge of the persons responsible for providing the information and/or on missing specifications by requesting information in the fiche templates, to name some potential reasons.

PES are important actors but not yet the driving force of partnerships

In the majority of multi-stakeholder collaboration arrangements reviewed, PES are important actors and engage in partnerships. **Nevertheless, the conducting role is recorded to be performed by PES in only a few partnerships under scrutiny** (see following chapter). Predominantly Federal Ministries or other actors have been the driving force for the establishment of the partnerships (e.g. within the ESF Operational Programme or national programmes). In order to adopt the conductor role on building bridges, cooperation and partnership, **PES, hence, need to increase their efforts and use partnerships as a mechanism to enhance employment opportunities, in particular when working with employers.**

¹⁷ <http://www.pesmonitor.eu/Database/DatabaseNew.aspx?Lang=EN>

¹⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=105&langId=en>

¹⁹ PES record to cooperate with municipalities/governmental authorities in AT, BE, BG, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LV, MT, NL, PT, SE, SI, SK, UK; Source: European Commission / PES monitor; PARES country fiches

²⁰ In AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK, Source: European Commission / PES Monitor and PARES country fiches. Further information on the contractual arrangements is, for instance, provided in European Commission 2011b.

²¹ PES, for instance, accounted for around 3% of partner organisations and 6% of project leaders within the first round of EQUAL (BBI et al. 2006).

²² PES inform to use partnership in BE, BG, EE, EL, FR, IE, IT, MT, NL, RO, SI, SK and UK: The PES monitor asks specifically about partnerships under the header 'organisational model'.

2. Key characteristics of partnerships

The previous chapter aimed at providing the reader with a clear understanding of why PES should engage in partnership and informed on different forms of relationship practiced. This chapter discusses two different types of partnerships: the strategic partnerships developed at the policy level and the service partnerships set up at the delivery/project level (see table 2; marked by an ellipse). Insights into policy areas, objectives, target groups, partners and forms of agreement are provided and examples included in boxes.

2.1 Types of partnership

As stressed, relationships between actors in partnerships are intense and inclusive. Many stakeholders are involved that jointly define and pursue objectives and share commitment. As stated in the introduction, the ESF Regulation refers to partnership as a governance mechanism²³ and partnerships in projects²⁴. Based upon the regulation two forms of partnerships are distinguished in the course of this paper. These relate to the rationale of partnership working and are:

- **Strategic partnerships set up at the *policy level*, i.e. partnerships to improve strategic planning and policy delivery (active labour market policy development); and**
- **Service partnerships established at the *delivery/project level*, i.e. agreements between partners to jointly improve the delivery of specific (employment) services.**

Please see also table 2 (these types refer to 'collaboration') and note that transition forms are likely to occur, i.e. service partnerships may also have a strategic orientation and vice versa.

Country-specific models are practiced within Europe

Strategic partnerships and/or service partnerships may be established as a **specific type of partnership established across a whole country, i.e. country-specific models**. Models of this kind are, for instance, the Irish Local Partnership Companies (see box 1 below), the RESOC and SERR in Flanders/Belgium (see box 6), the Swedish Structural Funds Partnerships (see box 2), the Local Employment Partnerships in the UK (see box 3), and the Austrian Territorial Employment Pacts (see box 4). Partnerships of this type are primarily linked to national/EU funding sources and are characterised by a strong cooperation with central government. The paper pays particular attention to these models due to the partnership's outstanding expertise and their clearly defined rationales, objectives and tasks.

²³Art. 5/ESF Regulation: 'The Member States shall ensure the involvement of the social partners and adequate consultation and participation of other stakeholders, at the appropriate territorial level, in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of ESF support.' European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2006

²⁴ Art. 3/ESF Regulation: The ESF shall promote 'partnerships, pacts and initiatives through networking of relevant stakeholders (...)in order to mobilise for reforms in the field of employment and labour market inclusiveness.' European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2006

Box 1: Examples of partnerships of PES at the local level: The Irish Local Partnership Companies

Ireland's long history of working in partnership has ensured the integration of 'local voices' into policy delivery through a cascade system of connections between different national, regional and local levels. Local Development Companies (LDCs) are established as independent companies limited by guarantee without share capital and have a clear framework within which to develop their activities. There are currently 51 Local Development Companies (LDCs) in place.

The partnership rationale is to **respond to the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion through a locally responsive, innovative, integrated approach, built on a partnership model, with local ownership**. The main objectives are to counter disadvantage and to promote equality and social and economic inclusion, through a partnership approach at local level. LDCs also deliver a significant number of **cross-cutting initiatives** which positively impact on tackling unemployment. **22 LDCs currently manage a Local Employment Service** on behalf of the Department of Social Protection. Local Employment Services provide **a range of services to the local community focusing on the provision of practical support, advice, guidance and information relating to employment, training and return to work and welfare rights options**.

Results: In 2011, the LCD Partnership supported **40,292 individuals**.

(Source: Stott and Scoppetta 2013 forthcoming, OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2013 forthcoming, <http://www.ildn.ie/ldc-programme/local-employment-services>)

Strategic and service partnerships

Strategic partnerships are established at the *policy level* in order to improve strategic planning and policy delivery. The formal arrangements (legally binding) that are set up between the partners comprise partnership agreements, pacts and multi-lateral contracts. An example of a partnership model set up at the regional level is provided in box 2 below.

Box 2: Example of a strategic partnership model established at the regional level: The Structural Funds Partnerships in Sweden

Sweden has a long tradition of cooperation and has used this to encourage different parties to become partners who drive and accept joint responsibility for development. In order to **link regional growth with labour market policies**, a joint organisational approach was adopted for the implementation of the 2007-2013 Structural Funds with the ESF and ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) working together regionally through eight Structural Fund Partnerships (SFPs).

SFPs are established by a law that stipulates their composition and tasks. They include politicians (who must form at least 50% of their membership) as well as representatives from labour market organisations, affected county administrative boards, **county labour boards**, interest groups and associations. The SFPs are responsible for **programme design, selection and funding of 'cooperation projects'** that operate at national, regional and local levels. These multi-actor projects address employment and exclusion issues and are expected to work actively to promote gender mainstreaming, accessibility for people with disabilities and other cross-cutting issues, as well as cooperate with projects and organisations in other Member States.

Results: By August 2012, **2,025 ESF and 1,760 ERDF projects** were prioritised by the partnerships.

(Source: Stott and Scoppetta 2013 forthcoming, OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2013 forthcoming,)

Service partnerships are developed at the *delivery/project level* as agreements between PES and other actors in order to jointly enhance policy impact of (employment) services. Service partnerships are often characterised by fewer partners compared to strategic partnerships. The actors are determined by the service to be delivered (for a territory, policy field, target group, etc.). Service partnerships are frequently set up formally and - similar to the strategic partnerships - have legally binding arrangements established such as partnership agreements or multi-lateral contracts. Box 3 provides an example of a service partnerships model, the Local Employment Partnerships in the UK. **Partnerships of this kind differentiate from business relations such as contracting out of services to service providers in their 'complexity' with regard to solving multi-dimensional problems via multi-stakeholder engagement, their intensity of relationship (close relationship), non-competitive arrangements and non-hierarchical form ('all partners are equal').**

Other examples for service partnerships established at the delivery/project level that are mainstreamed, i.e. types of partnership established across a whole country, and that improve service delivery for particular target groups are provided in box 5 (integration of older workers) and box 6 (integration of migrant workers, disabled people and elderly workers).

**Box 3: Example of a service partnership model established at the local level:
The Local Employment Partnerships in the UK**

Launched in 2007, Local Employment Partnerships (LEP) are part of the UK's 'something for something' approach. The approach offers the fullest service to employers in return for increased opportunities for customers. The 'Employer Offer' is about **matching the level of Jobcentre Plus's service to employers** with their readiness to work with Jobcentre Plus. While some employers are happy simply to use a standard vacancy advertising service, others are keen to work with Jobcentre Plus in a Local Employment Partnership. This means agreeing to give priority customers a fair crack at their jobs, and in return, Jobcentre Plus will ensure that those customers have the necessary skills and are job-ready. The LEP offer recognises that employers can be prepared to adjust their recruitment and development policies in ways that increase customers' ability to compete for available jobs. In their turn, employers want effective and efficient recruitment support – their jobs filled by people who are ready to work and learn.

LEPs are based on a 'deal' with employers in which: **Jobcentre Plus provides access to recruitment and training services (both pre- and post-employment), supported by a wide network of partners; employers with vacancies make the commitment to work with Jobcentre Plus and to open up their jobs to unemployed local talent.** Although originally designed to help Jobcentre Plus focus on priority customers, eligibility was widened in April 2009 to include newly unemployed customers as part of the UK Government's response to the global economic downturn.

Results: By September 2009, **250,000 people had found work** through LEPs since they were introduced. Over 63% were from the originally designated priority groups.

(Source: Danish Technological Institute et al. 2010)

2.2. Selected partnership details

Partnerships for delivering employment services cover central policy areas of the EU 2020 Strategy such as labour market participation, demographic change and social inclusion. The target groups for these partnerships comprise employed and unemployed as well as vulnerable individuals such as low-skilled youth, long-term unemployed and older people distant from the labour market. Their objectives include the integration of marginalised groups into the labour market and the society (social inclusion), the prevention of unemployment, reduction of poverty, regional economic development and skills-upgrading, amongst others. **Policy areas, objectives, target groups, partners and forms of agreement of partnerships are interwoven.** An example for a service partnership established at the interface of labour market and educational policy with its target group (youth) and partners is provided in box 4.

Box 4: Example of a service partnership of PES for youth: VIA-School of Production (TEP Tyrol, Austria)

The target group comprises socially disadvantaged female young people (aged 15 to 19) and young females with a migration background. (The following criteria are used: school dropouts, finished compulsory school, socially disadvantaged, unemployed or seeking work, difficulties in social adjustment, crisis in their self-development and/or lack in self-esteem, deficits in verbal skills). The VIA-School of Production supports the **access of the target group into vocational training systems or into the labour market** itself. The activities include practical work in a creative artistic area (based on vocational training and coaching, basic knowledge and the competence to learn in a self-directed way) as well as guidance of the participants through coaching, socio-pedagogical support and counselling.

The project was developed by the TEP/Territorial Employment Pact Tyrol consisting of the following partners: Provincial Government of Tyrol, **PES**, Federal Social Welfare Office, Economic Chamber, Chamber of Labour, Austrian Trade Union Federation, Federation of Austrian Industries, Chamber of Agricultural Workers, Agricultural Chamber of Tyrol, Association of Municipalities, Association of Austrian Cities and Towns, Tyrolian Educational Institute Grillhof, Tiroler Arbeitsmarktförderungsgesellschaft mbH (amg-tirol).

Results: In 2011, **111 young women** were supported, of which nearly half were successfully placed. Since January 2012 the VIA-School of Production receives funding from a 'mainstream programme'.

(Source: http://www.pakte.at/attach/Tirol_SP3b_SteyrNov08.pdf)

Depending on objectives and policy areas the partners vary within partnerships. There is no one size-fits-all approach that can be taken. The following list provides information on potential partners to which PES should pay attention to when setting up partnerships (in alphabetic order; the list is not exhaustive; Source OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2006; slightly adapted).

Business sector (e.g. large firms, small and medium-sized enterprises); Chambers (e.g. agriculture, commerce, economic, employees, labour); Cities and municipalities; Citizens' initiatives and networks; Consultants; Education or/and training organisations; Federal bodies (e.g. the Federal Office for Social Affairs and the Disabled); Federations (e.g. of trade unions, of industry); Financial institutions; Government institutions (on different levels and with different territorial responsibility, e.g. communities, provinces, countries); Non-governmental organisations (NGOs, e.g. local employment initiatives); Non-profit organisations (NPOs); Political institutions; Private Employment Services; Public authorities (national, regional, local); Regional development associations and management bodies; Representatives of employees and employers; Representatives of target groups (e.g. Offices for disabled, Youth Centres, Unemployment associations); Representatives of civil society; Research institutes, universities; Service providers (e.g. Private Employment Services, Temporary work agencies, Training providers, NGOs) School boards; and social partners.

Forms of agreements

Partnerships often apply a formal approach though disadvantages of this approach such as inflexibility, excessive administration and too much emphasis on resources are recorded by the COP/Community of Practice on Partnership in the ESF in 2012 (see table 3 below).

Table 3: Formal and informal approaches; source: COP 2012

Formal approach	Informal approach
Advantages	
Clear framework and rules for working together	Flexibility
Greater partner responsibility	Greater participation
Legal power	Greater creativity /innovation
Results orientation	Nearer to real problems of citizens
Links to regional strategies	Local level emphasis
Ability to influence policy	
Increased visibility	
Improved monitoring	
Disadvantages	
Too much emphasis on resources	Unclear focus
Excessive administration	Poor definition of roles and responsibilities
Inflexibility	

Box 5 provides information on a specific partnership model established in Germany, the Perspective 50+ pacts. Job centres can participate in the programme on a voluntary basis. The regional pacts have formal arrangements established and co-operate with external institutions such as training providers, private placement services, consultancies and a diverse array of other local actors. Formal requirements are also applied in Sweden for the Structural Fund Partnerships and in Austria for the Territorial Employment Pacts. In Flanders/Belgium the level of formality of the RESOC and SERR depends on the specific call for proposals. In some cases, a letter of intent signed by the partners involved in a proposal is required, while in other cases a partnership agreement is obligatory after a proposal is approved. In Hungary, for instance, most support from the ESF is given to partnerships that have legally binding agreements. In many cases partners simply submit a written declaration outlining their intent to work together and, after being given a grant for project implementation, prepare a more detailed partnership agreement outlining tasks (COP 2012).

Box 5: Examples of partnerships of PES for older workers: Perspective 50+ Pacts in Germany

Perspective 50+ is a nationwide programme aiming to re-integrate older long-term unemployed persons into the labour market. In addition, the programme aims to initiate and evaluate new ways of activation and re-integration.

Job centres can participate in the programme on a voluntary basis. As of 2012, **421 out of 440 job centres are implementing the programme**, reaching roughly 94% of the target population. The welfare offices and other labour market participants have come together to form **78 regional employment pacts**. Where they have elected to participate in the programme, **local job centres are lead partners in the collaboration**. As the funding recipients, they are directly accountable to the responsible Federal Ministry for the allocation of funds. The regional pacts co-operate with external institutions such as training providers, private placement services, consultancies and a diverse array of other local actors. The Perspective 50+ programme is kept focused, flexible and non-bureaucratic. Indicators that measure results are kept to a minimum and dialogue and exchange at peer level are consistently practiced. These participative methodologies have facilitated ongoing learning processes and the incorporation of innovative elements such as 'idea competitions' and the use of 'pact ambassadors' to change public perceptions of older people.

Results: In 2011, a total of more than **70,000 job placements** were achieved.

(Source: Stott and Scopetta 2013 forthcoming, OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2013 forthcoming)

Roles and functions performed by PES in particular

The roles and functions performed by PES within partnerships depend on the context and are often grounded in individual expertise and engagement of PES staff. In general, every partner within a partnership should know precisely why they are there, what they bring to the alliance, what to expect from others, and of course what is to be achieved together – or in other words, what is expected of them. **Partners can take on various functions – knowledge carriers, information brokers, financiers and policy makers; all of which are mostly performed by PES** – and various roles - champion, broker/intermediary, donor, manager, facilitator and promoter (Tennyson 2004). Each individual partner usually has more than one role and function. Though PES are active partners in many partnerships (see examples in the boxes), the conducting role is recorded to be performed by PES only in few partnerships under scrutiny such as within the German Perspective 50+ pacts. **The leading role often includes being directly accountable to the responsible authority for the allocation of funds** as it is the case for the local job centres in Germany (see box 5).

Box 6: Examples of partnership work in Flanders/Belgium: Diversity Action Plans

The RESOCs (Regional Socio-Economic Committees) and SERRs (Socio-Economic Councils of the Region) have been central actors for the **development and provision of guidance regarding diversity action plans in almost 5,000 companies**. Partners comprise local and provincial authorities, social partners, VDAB (the Flemish PES) and NGOs, presided by local or provincial authority.

The objective of these diversity action plans is to realise employment equity and diversity in the Flemish labour market focusing on the recruitment, progression, training and retention of members of target groups (e.g. migrant workers, disabled people and elderly workers). **Activities include the development and stimulation of an optimised Human Resource policy in companies** by government subsidised company action-plans (diversity plans) focusing on long-term integration of target groups into the labour market. Results comprise yearly action plans on labour market and economic policy at the sub-regional level; Regional Pacts for economic and labour market development endorsed by all partners; active role in stimulating diversity plans in companies; and several innovative projects leading to structural adaptations in policy.

Results: 750 diversity plans produced yearly.

(Source: OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2013 forthcoming)

3. Lessons learnt of PES engagement in partnerships

Options for improvement on current practices

Different types of partnerships are set up within the EU as highlighted in the previous chapter. But what are the lessons learnt for PES engagement in partnerships? This chapter provides insights into success factors for partnerships in delivering public employment services and specifically looks at how to use partnerships as a mechanism to enhance employment opportunities when cooperating with employers. The chapter, finally, concludes with a SWOT analysis of PES engagement in partnerships.

3.1 Success factors for partnerships in delivering public employment services

Analyses of collaborations for delivering PES show that **overall three major aspects are important that make partnerships successful**. These are:

- **Framework conditions** that enhance collaboration at all levels of governance and that enable innovation in the field of employment and social policy²⁵;
- **Stakeholders** that are open to learn from others, share a common vision and take responsibility in developing and implementing activities and policies together;²⁶ and
- **Actions** that provide consolidated answers to problems faced in the labour market.²⁷

In all of the three areas, PES can contribute to a large extent: PES (and policy makers, in particular) can influence framework conditions, enable stakeholders to collaborate and set actions that provide answers to the multi-dimensional problems faced in our society. PES are working with many stakeholders at the various governance levels but the conducting role within alliances is recorded to be performed by PES only in few partnerships under scrutiny. To assist PES engagement at all levels of governance, success factors for PES that are responsible for programme design and delivery (mainly at the national level) are provided below, followed by success factors for PES implementing partnerships at the local level.

Success factors for PES responsible for programme design and delivery

As the basis for exploring how the partnership principle is being implemented in ESF Operational Programmes, the COP/Community of Practice on Partnership in the ESF used the **Key Success Factor Framework (KSFF)** (COP 2012, COP 2006). The KSFF seeks to demonstrate how partnership can be endorsed by Managing Authorities of the Operational Programmes at both strategic and operative level throughout the five phases of Programme Analysis and Design, Programme Delivery Planning, Calls For and Appraisal of Proposals, Animation during Project Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation. PES responsible for programme design and delivery can largely contribute to stimulating partnership during all phases. Within 'Programme Analysis and Design', for instance, **PES can carry out a contextual analysis, promote an enabling environment, identify synergies with other programmes, and encourage stakeholder engagement in the analysis and design process** (please see box 7 below for key success factors within the other phases). The checklist 'What makes

²⁵ See, for instance, European Commission 2012a, 2012b, 2011a, OECD LEED Forum on and Local Development; COP

²⁶ See, for instance, European Commission 2012a, 2012b, 2011a, European Economic and Social Committee 2010, Tennyson 2004, COP Guidebook 2008 and OECD LEED Forum on and Local Development.

²⁷ See, for instance, European Commission 2012a, 2011a, Tennyson 2004, COP Guidebook 2008 and OECD LEED Forum on and Local Development.

partnerships in delivering PES successful?' (provided as part of the Annex) is built upon this framework and aims to assist PES in endorsing partnerships within their scope of activities.

Box 7: The Key Success Factor Framework

- Programme Analysis and Design – carrying out a contextual analysis, promoting an enabling environment, identifying synergies with other programmes, and encouraging stakeholder engagement in the analysis and design process.
- Programme Delivery Planning – integrating stakeholders into programme procedures and setting up mechanisms for stakeholder involvement in projects.
- Calls For and Appraisal of Proposals – supporting incorporation of partnership in project proposals and assessing partnership rationale and implementation mechanisms.
- Animation during Project Implementation – providing ongoing support to partnership projects and building the capacity of stakeholders to actively participate in programme governance.
- Monitoring and Evaluation – Reporting on the status of partnership projects, promoting participatory evaluation at both programme and project level, and systematically feeding back lessons about partnership into practice.

Source: COP (2008): Guidebook, How ESF Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies Support Partnership

Success factors for PES implementing partnerships at the local level

Key features for success in implementing partnerships at the local level concern a **shared common vision, leadership, continuity, commitment, flexibility and adaptability**.²⁸ In order to enable partnerships to take a long-term view on local issues and problems and contribute fully to better policy outcomes, however, a solid, sustainable financial basis for operation is a key. Such financial security needs to be linked to good performance²⁹ (OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2010).

A well-structured partnership is required for balancing the contributions of partners to this process in the best possible way. Partnerships define their organisational structure based upon needs (objectives of the partnership, actions implemented, context, etc.) and possibilities (funding, availability of partners, etc.). Most alliances have a **strategic decision-making body and an operative body**. Partners gather regularly: strategic board meetings are held between every month to once a year (depending on the need). Operational bodies usually gather more often and partners also meet bi-/multilaterally inbetween the meetings in order to coordinate the activities. The role of the partners (and those of PES) may vary in regard to the projects implemented by the partnerships. **Partnership managers** are needed to pool knowledge, coordinate activities and manage the various tasks of the partnership. Partnerships frequently implement and manage many projects in parallel.³⁰ Experience has shown that positive results are much more likely to be achieved if full-time partnership co-ordinators are appointed to manage

²⁸ European Commission 2011b; please also see European Commission 2012b, OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2006, Tennyson 2004 and the COP Guidebook 2008.

²⁹ This will normally require the possibility of renewable multi-annual funding that covers both partnership management (core costs) and specific activity costs.

³⁰ The Viennese Pact, for instance, is in charge of about 140 measures); all of which mostly have different funding requirements (reporting, accountability mechanisms, monitoring, evaluation, etc.); partnerships often address many programmes, i.e. national/regional/EU programmes.

partnerships. Whereas the partners are the core of partnerships, partnership managers are often the 'drivers'; partnership performance rises and falls with their inputs and skills. In particular, those partnerships which have managers who have been in the business for some years often turn out to be more stable than others (OECD LEED Forum on Partnership and Local Development 2006).³¹

Research also indicates that partnerships can better contribute to enhanced employment opportunities if **strong multi-level arrangements are in place** to guarantee the integration of grassroots concerns and viewpoints within them (Stott and Scoppetta 2013 forthcoming). These arrangements can be supported by **partnership brokers**: broker organisations play a vital intermediary role in integrating local concerns into partnership arrangements and enhancing top-down/bottom-up connections. The strategic assistance provided by these broker organisations also gives partnership stakeholders at different levels an understanding of 'the bigger picture' and clarity around the links between policy and local practice in relation to EU Structural Funds (Stott and Scoppetta 2013). This is confirmed by the OECD which states that government must ensure *'...effectively-functioning channels of communication within multi-level governance arrangements that are open to inputs from the bottom up'* (OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2010). Consequently, the local level concerns of partnerships must additionally be incorporated throughout relevant programme cycles. **It is therefore essential that partnership building between actors is a clearly defined objective of PES at all levels of governance: this implies setting up partnership programmes and actions that ensure innovative collaborative policy implementation.**

3.1 How to use partnership as a mechanism to enhance employment opportunities when working with employers?

Partnership is a valuable policy mechanism to help create and enhance employment opportunities. Intensified business relations with companies even helps to create additional opportunities to employ more vulnerable jobseekers (European Commission 2012c). Enhanced cooperation with employers ranks high on the agenda for most PES since matching of labour supply with labour demand is the core function of all PES. Most PES emphasise the importance of maintaining a close exchange with employers. Even so, *'this dialogue does not appear to be very systematic and in most cases involves only a small subset of employers'* (Danish Technological Institute et al. 2010, p.81). The following section gathers relevant experience gained by PES on working successfully with employers across Europe.³² The *five lessons learnt* by using partnership to enhance employment opportunities when working with employers are:

1. Allocate time, knowledge, resources: Building cooperation with employers and setting up partnerships with employers and other stakeholders such as training providers and municipalities/governmental authorities, needs time and requires knowledge and resources. **It is therefore essential that partnership building between actors is a clearly defined objective of PES at all levels of governance, that resources are allocated to this task and that enough time is given to build up trust** (see also European Commission 2012b). Since local PES staff may lack resources, time and knowledge on how to 'attract' and

³¹ Please consult the recommendations to employment services on local and regional partnerships (European Commission 2012b) as well as the OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development (2006) for information on the organisational structure, legal aspects and monitoring and evaluation and Tennyson (2004) for the phases of the partnering process and obstacles in partnering, to name some information provided in the partnership guidebooks.

³² See, for instance, Arellano et al. 2008, Koning et al. 2011, 2012 and European Commission 2012b; 2012e.

work with employers³³, PES need to ensure that the conditions are met *before* starting cooperation.

2. Start small and precise: Depending on the objectives of cooperation, employers are engaged in the cooperation arrangements as customers at the end of the supply chain and/or as partners in the design and development of the service (e.g. involvement in the design of courses for candidates).³⁴ **Starting cooperation based on clearly defined aims, timeframe, required resources (monetary and non-monetary) and involved staff (e.g. appoint a named contact person, establish regular long-term relationships) has proven to ease cooperation with employers.** Bilateral cooperation that considers the available resources of the company (adaptation regarding frequency of meetings, commitment to particular actions, etc.) facilitates the engagement. Strategic partnerships often lack employers in their boards but involve representatives of the economy such as the Chamber of Commerce and/or the Federation of Industry. Though the local level is the main 'location' of partnerships with employers, central framework agreements at the national level with large employers as practiced in France, UK and Sweden (European Commission 2012d) assist in setting up cooperation at sub-national levels.
3. Establish win-win situations: Cooperation is based on mutual understanding and commonly defined goals and tasks (respective roles of the partners are jointly agreed and should reflect the strength of each partner). All partners, hence, are equal. **It is important to pay attention to the benefits and added value of the cooperation from the start. Experience shows that establishing a win-win situation for all involved eases the cooperation.** An example for a win-win situation is that PES can find placement for hard-to-place individuals and companies obtain assistance with selection and training. It is helpful if quick milestones are achieved jointly that demonstrate the added value of partnership. Starting cooperation with large firms (in territories and sectors where a potential is seen) is a strategy used by partnerships (SMEs may be targeted at a later stage, e.g. when benefits of cooperation are clear, reputation is gained and word-of-mouth marketing takes place).
4. Pursue joint goals, pull together and reduce administrative burdens: Experiences of working with employers suggest reducing administrative burdens to a minimum. Some alliances state that verbal agreements with enterprises have proven to ease cooperation (Bellis et al. 2011). **Partnerships are likely to be successful if partners join together and pursue common goals.** Employers' motives for partnering are business need to fill vacancies, access to potential employees, skills-upgrading of staff, access to information, and others more (see, for instance, Bellis et al. 2011). Services offered comprise general services such as information, advice, guidance, counselling and specialised services such as support for HRD (European Commission 2010d).³⁵ Services may include upskilling of employed / unemployed, subsidies offered for particular target groups in case of placement and offers by assisting with recruitment process (e.g. free advertising and help with matching and screening of candidates, shifting applications and arranging interviews).

³³ Some PES have specialist teams for employers, enabling staff to focus exclusively on dealing with business needs, providing services such as acquiring vacancies and recruitment (European Commission 2012h).

³⁴ Many partnerships report difficulties in the engagement of enterprises in the strategic oriented work of partnerships. Thus, cooperation is often established operational and, hence, the majority of cases report an involvement of enterprises as consumers, in particular at the beginning.

³⁵ In case of further interest into PES services offered to employers, please consult the comparative paper on the PES to PES Peer review 'Effective Services for Employers' (Koning et al. 2012), information provided for the transfer visit 'Agreements with large companies, practices and offers for these companies' (European Commission 2012e), the analytical paper on 'how to best structure services for employers (Koning et al. 2011), and others more (see References).

5. Check results regularly: To build sustainable cooperation with enterprises, commonly achieved results have to be jointly discussed and activities adapted regularly (e.g. within the annual work programme, the action plan, etc.). **The work of partnerships has to be monitored and evaluated systematically.**³⁶ Monitoring systems that ensure that targets are met, problems are identified in good time and which assist in a satisfactory resolution of problems are regarded as success factor. Learning is endorsed if all involved are treated with respect and act at the same level. Ongoing learning from both successes and failure should be encouraged. Successful partnerships ensure that key lessons learnt are shared and broadly disseminated.

3.2 SWOT analysis

When relating the currently still limited PES engagement in partnerships with the PES vision 2020 for adopting the conductor role in building bridges, cooperation and partnership, there remains major scope for progress for PES. **In order to ease the planning process and assess PES engagement in partnerships more deeply, particularly in relation to its potential for impacting policy, the following SWOT analysis³⁷ seeks to assess its implementation, and identify strategies for further improvements** (see table 4).

By using partnership as a mechanism to enhance employment opportunities in all EU Member States, both at a strategic and at an operative level, PES could evolve into 'driving forces of change' that enable innovative and integrated approaches in solving problems faced in the labour market (SO-Strategy/a). Since PES are experienced in working with different stakeholders, they could maximise the identification of tested good partnership practice in policy planning and delivery and even act as role models for Europe by supporting partnership development at the local and regional level (SO-Strategy/b and c).

Strict policy frames, tight budgets and timescales in the Member States may threaten PES's activities in setting up partnerships and taking on the conducting role. PES, however, may still engage in already established partnerships and take a proactive role according to PES strengths (ST-Strategy/a). PES can also assist in generating a common understanding of partnership working in Member States (ST-Strategy/b) and in demonstrating learning effects of partnerships (ST-Strategy/c).

³⁶ Information on evaluation of partnerships is, for instance, provided in European Commission 2013b.

³⁷ The SWOT analysis is built on the literature review undertaken and the expertise of the author.

Table 4: SWOT analysis of PES engagement in partnerships

SWOT ANALYSIS		Internal factors	
		STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESSES (W)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PES are placed at the centre of the European Employment Systems and offer ideal basic conditions for adopting a conductor role in future • Most PES are experienced in applying different forms of relationships • Some PES are involved in partnerships established at the local/regional level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing expertise (PES are involved in partnerships in a significant way only recently, PES have not taken over the lead role of partnerships) • Flexible, communicative and open systems are not yet build • Building up partnerships requires time and resources
External Factors	OPPORTUNITIES (O) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PES as 'driving forces of change' (innovative, integrated approaches in solving problems faced in the labour market) • Anchoring new forms of collaboration, communication, participation and learning between actors in policy systems • Opening up additional spaces for holistic reflection on policy systems 	<u>SO-Strategies</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Use partnership as mechanism to enhance employment opportunities in all Member States both at strategic and at operative level b) Maximise the identification of tested good partnership practice in policy planning and delivery in order to meet EU 2020 targets c) Act as role model for Europe: support partnership development at the local and regional level, in particular at the interface of policies (for multi-dimensional problems) 	<u>WO-Strategies</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Involve in established partnerships and link with others to gain know-how and expertise b) Establish particular PES programme lines for partnership work c) Ensure innovative collaborative policy implementation by providing room for manoeuvre, time and resources <p>Continued on page 19</p>
	THREATS (T) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict policy frames, tight budgets and timescale in the Member States • Failing to convince other actors that PES are the right partner for taking the conducting role in regard to partnerships • Missing proof of learning effects by partnerships 	<u>ST-Strategies</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Engage in established partnerships and take a proactive role according to PES strengths b) Assist in generating a common understanding of partnership working in Member States c) Demonstrate learning effects of partnerships (monitoring/evaluation, enable for mainstreaming, etc.) 	<u>WT- Strategies</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Make best use of 'pool of innovations' practiced in/by Member States b) Support partnership work by providing knowledge (and other resources) c) Demonstrate improved policy outcomes when collaborating

Due to the missing expertise on partnership building of some PES, they could link with others to gain know-how (WO-Strategy/a). Ways also need to be found to establish particular PES programmes and/or programme lines for partnership work within the given systems; thereby ensuring innovative collaborative policy implementation by providing room for manoeuvre, time and resources (WO-Strategy/b and c).

By failing to convince other actors that PES are the right partner for adopting the conductor role with regard to partnerships, PES still can make best use of the 'pool of innovations' practiced in/by Member States (WT-Strategies/a), support partnership work by providing knowledge (and other resources; WT-Strategies/b) and demonstrate improved policy outcomes when collaborating (WT-Strategies/c).

4. Conclusions

Partnerships are in demand in order to jointly achieve EU 2020 goals

Partnerships are regarded as an important policy tool and action in order to achieve EU 2020 targets. Successful partnerships are in demand for delivering public employment services since this specific form of relationship – understood as **close collaboration with multiple equal partners and joint decision-making** - is only practised in some EU countries. Within these countries, PES take an active role in partnership building and implementation. Nevertheless, the conducting role is recorded to be performed by PES only in few partnerships under scrutiny. Analyses also show that overall three major aspects are vital in making partnerships successful. These are:

- Framework conditions that **enhance collaboration at all levels of governance** and that support innovation in the field of employment and social policy;
- Stakeholders that are **open to learn from others, share a common vision and take responsibility** in developing and implementing activities and policies together; and
- Actions that **provide consolidated answers to problems faced in the labour market** locally/regionally/nationally.

In all three areas, PES – next to private employment services and other actors - can contribute: PES (together with policy makers) can influence framework conditions, enable stakeholders to collaborate and can set actions that provide consolidated answers to the multi-dimensional problems faced in our society. Much remains to be done to enhance PES's conductor role in building bridges, cooperation and partnership for enhancing employment opportunities.

First, framework conditions that enhance collaboration are needed in all Member States. Partnerships should be recognised by PES as an integral part of both policy design and delivery at all governance levels: **partnerships need to be promoted by setting up partnership programmes and actions that ensure innovative collaborative policy implementation**. PES can get familiar with and enhance engagement in the varying programmes and actions in their Member States that support partnerships. Review results prove that a large number of Member States have built on their partnership expertise in either the form of contractual territorial alliances or formal governance structures in the ESF policy design and implementation cycle (the partnership principle³⁸). The endorsement and practice of partnership, however, needs to be fostered. PES should coordinate their activities with respective programme and project responsible persons and make best use of ESF opportunities to engage in related partnerships (European Commission 2012g). This should enable the use of potential synergies and avoiding overlaps. If not yet existing, PES shall set up platforms to discuss cooperation (European Commission 2012a) and act as initiators of partnership networks in relevant policy fields. Partnerships, however, also require **framework conditions that are flexible and adaptable to change and local needs**: local labour market offices rank flexibility in programme designs as top priority.³⁹ In allowing for more flexibility this *'would enable them to deliver active labour market programmes/policies more relevant to their locality'* (OECD LEED 2011, p. 58). It would further assist them to be more responsive, to be more innovative and entrepreneurial, to be more strategic and to be more efficient in the use of resources. At local level there is *'potential for strategically merging employment policy with other policy areas which are most relevant for local employment measures, e.g. employment, social welfare and health, education'*

³⁸ The partnership principle implemented within the Structural Funds aims at the development of a framework of close cooperation at various levels of governance in the economic, social, environmental or other spheres (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2006a; European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2006b, European Commission 2012f)

³⁹ Flexibility in the management of labour market policies was regarded as being the least flexible, followed by vocational training policy and then economic development policy; OECD LEED 2011

(OECD LEED 2011, p.77). PES, hence, should set up programmes and/or programme lines that demand for collaborative actions in order to foster innovation and to provide answers to multi-dimensional problems faced on the ground.

Second, good framework conditions also help to enable partners to cooperate. **Cooperation with stakeholders should be intensified and the quality of cooperation enhanced:** Though many PES work with private employment services, employers (enterprises, temporary work agencies, etc.) and service providers (NGOs, training providers, etc.), the cooperation is reported to be unstable and unsystematic in some cases. In order to establish stable cooperation with employers, PES should start 'small and precise' and develop the cooperation continuously, ensuring that joint goals are pursued and win-win-situations established. Administrative burdens should be reduced to a minimum and results checked regularly. Even though the local level is the main 'location' for partnerships with employers, PES offices at the national level play a significant role for developing a framework that supports cooperation at the sub-national levels. National PES offices, in addition, may not only act as promoters for partnerships established locally, but serve as role model for local PES (and other labour market actors) in collaborating with others (e.g. coordination with other programmes/actors, i.e. Ministries, social partners, umbrella organisations of NGOs, central framework agreements with enterprises). Since partnership building needs time and requires resources, it must be ensured that it is a clearly defined objective of PES at all levels of governance (see also European Commission 2012b).

Third, there is a need to be seen to break out of (policy) silos (OECD 2011). Partnerships offer a mechanism with the help of which actions can be set that **provide consolidated answers to the complex problems faced locally/regionally/nationally**. By stimulating partnerships, innovative and high quality actions such as integrative approaches at the interface of labour market, education and social policy are likely to be achieved. Partnership is a key instrument of collective commitment and contributes to better efficiency of public expenditure and public policies (European Economic and Social Committee 2010). Partnerships are also regarded to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources and enhance policy outcomes (OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Development 2010). **By supporting partnerships, PES, thus, can ensure that actions - designed and implemented in collaboration – respond to local demands.**

PES have to implement internal organisational change processes

The development towards adopting the conductor role also implies that PES have to implement internal organisational change processes. They have to **follow the course of a mental and cultural shift by their individual and organisational ways of working**. This includes the pro-active engagement with stakeholders, the development towards a modern service agency that enables actors to innovate⁴⁰ and cooperate at the same level (PES partners and clients; i.e. beneficiaries, employers, are to be considered as equal partners) and taking over the leadership with regard to the collective effort of different stakeholders concerning the societal challenges (facilitating and steering processes, developing networking skills, setting up of partnership programmes/programmes lines of PES, maximising the identification of good partnership practice, and others). PES have to **adapt to change by providing operating structures and processes that are flexible, open, transparent and network**

⁴⁰ Reviews and evaluations of EU programmes have highlighted obstacles to the development and mainstreaming of social innovations, including the traditional risk-averse and cautious organisational cultures of administrations, closed systems which favour single-issue solutions developed within clusters of organisations lacking mutual awareness, communication, networking and trust, fragmented capacities (resources, infrastructures and intermediaries) and skills (training, design tools, monitoring, validation and evaluation) preventing the development of a rich 'eco-system' for enabling social innovations, and insufficient stable, seamless and sustainable funding throughout all stages of the innovation cycle (European Communities 2011, p.11).

oriented and **develop towards learning agencies** that share successes and failures with others, constantly improve their services by adapting to new needs, balance competition and cooperation, enable for the learning and mainstreaming of results.

Actions to be taken by policy makers

The process must be accompanied by actions taken by policy makers (i.e. politicians, director generals), such as **supporting the development of strong partnerships at the policy and project level**, guaranteeing transparency, good communication and openness between different institutions. Please find further implications for policy makers in box 8.

Box 8: Implications for policy makers

1. Ensuring the implementation of the partnership principle across all levels of governance and the principles of good governance (European Commission 2001);
2. Supporting the development of strong partnerships of PES at the policy and project level where responsibilities are shared;
3. Develop effectively-functioning channels of communication within multi-level governance arrangements that are open to inputs from the bottom up
4. Guarantee openness and transparency;
5. Setting up of policy frameworks in the Member States that:
 - are flexible and adaptable to change and local needs;
 - foster social innovations in labour market policy and at the interface of policies in order to contribute to systemic change;
 - facilitate implementation without administrative burdens;
 - ensure a high quality of actions (e.g. apply integrative approaches, ensure a policy mix, evaluate the satisfaction of beneficiaries);
 - aim at coherence and consistency of actions (e.g. identify synergies between actions and programmes, and between territorial levels) and support multi-level exchange;
 - give emphasis to the most in need;
 - ensure the sustainability of actions (partnership building needs time)
6. Constant monitoring and evaluation of partnership practices and setting up of learning platforms of partnerships of PES.

The conclusions are based on literature review, interviews concluded with PES experts in four Member States (Bulgaria, Malta, the Netherlands and the Slovak Republic) and the author's expertise. To draw a complete picture of PES engagement in partnerships, further insights are needed. An in-depth investigation is required to map PES with regard to their partnership practices, their policy scale (project, programme and governance level) and their impact. Comparative research including case studies from the EU and beyond on PES activities concerning multi-stakeholder collaboration (strategic and service partnerships) assist in developing a solid evidence base. In general, little has been done to adequately capture most recent changes in governance structures of PES (see, for instance, Weishaupt 2010) and, in particular in regard to partnership work by PES.

Partnership is widely accepted as an invaluable instrument for stimulating more sustainable socio-economic development and the attainment of the EU's 2020 goals. Through the involvement, adequate consultation and participation of stakeholders, partnerships develop cross-cutting perspectives and integrated approaches

to multidimensional problems. Partnerships adapt policies to territorial circumstances, needs and opportunities. The added value created also involves the bringing together of diverse policy areas and the anchoring of new forms of collaboration, communication, participation and learning. Partnerships therefore enable comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of strategies and policies (COP 2011). The benefits of cooperation and the added value of partnership working is constantly confirmed: The EU programme evaluation of the EQUAL Initiative, for instance, informs *'The clearest added value lies in the promotion of further progress in new, stable, cooperation mechanisms giving rise to integrated and co-ordinated approaches (...). Co-operation (...) has sometimes led to sustainable changes in ways of delivering policies'* (European Commission 2009, p.xiv).

PES are placed in the centre of the European Employment Systems and possess a unique position that facilitates PES's adoption of the conductor role with regard to building bridges, cooperation and partnerships. **To adopt the role, PES are required to recognise partnerships as an integral part of both policy design and delivery at all governance levels, set up partnership programmes and actions that ensure innovative collaborative policy implementation and follow the course of a mental and cultural shift by their individual and organisational ways of working and develop towards learning agencies that use partnerships as a mechanism with which the inclusive society of the EU 2020 can jointly be build.**

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Box 7 The Key Success Factor Framework

Box 8 Implications to policy makers

Annex: Checklist 'What makes partnerships in delivering employment services successful?'

1. Labour market programme/s analysis and design	
1. Do you conduct a study of your particular territory context before developing programmes/projects?	✓
2. Do you consider background information on the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the territory's historical, social, economic and political situation? - the needs of different regions and target groups? - government policies and legal/regulatory frameworks that may impact programmes? - previous partnership activities in addressing social challenges? - existence of intermediary organisations able to work across different sectors? - availability of skilled individuals capable of working with different stakeholders? 	✓
3. Do you have strategies in place for reducing barriers to partnership outside PES programmes/projects such as the promotion of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive government policies? - supportive legal and administrative frameworks that address regulatory issues such as tendering requirements? - good cross-sectoral relations and a culture of cooperation? - connections with intermediary organisations capable of bringing different institutions together? - opportunities for increasing partnership skills and expertise? 	✓
4. Do you incorporate economic and labour market development analyses into your programmes?	✓
5. Do your programmes have connections to existing national/regional/local programmes, structures and strategies?	✓
6. Do you examine Structural Fund connections when developing your programmes (e.g. ESF/ERDF)?	✓
7. Do your programmes clearly provide information about the partnership approach adopted in relation to Structural Fund regulation?	✓
8. Do your programmes and implemented projects have clearly established guidelines and standards?	✓
9. Do your programmes and projects take the needs and concerns of different stakeholders into account?	✓
10. Are the incentives for different partners and stakeholders to work together clearly identified in your programmes?	✓
11. Do you encourage stakeholders to participate in the analysis, design and writing of your programmes?	✓
12. Are key stakeholders at the national, regional and local level informed about partnership requirements in order to achieve objectives?	✓
13. Do your programmes ensure that information on partnership decision-making, finances and monitoring and evaluation is publicly accessible?	✓
2. Programme/s delivery planning	
14. Do stakeholders have decision-making power with regard to programme procedures and corresponding partnership projects?	✓
15. Are relevant stakeholders involved in the monitoring procedures of programmes and corresponding projects?	✓

16. Do you have publicly accessible guidelines for stakeholders with advice on rules and procedures for working in partnership? (e.g. for planning, finances, decision-making, implementation and monitoring and evaluation?)	✓
17. Do you ensure that enough time is spent in establishing and developing partnerships before delivery?	✓
18. Do you use dedicated partnership support structures in order to assist the development of partnership at both governance and project levels?	✓
19. Do you draw on the experiences and knowledge of intermediary organisations to support partnership promotion?	✓
20. Do you ensure that partnership managers at programme and project level have all the necessary skills for working with different stakeholders?	✓
21. Do you bring stakeholders and partners together in the early stages of developing programmes and projects?	✓
3. Calls for and appraisal of proposals	
22. Do you provide information and/or training to project promoters on how to incorporate a partnership approach into a proposal?	✓
23. Do you systematically monitor and evaluate partnership criteria in applications?	✓
24. In promoting partnerships at project level, do you assess the rationale for setting up a partnership? Do you ensure that information relating to these issues is clear and accessible in application forms, planning documents, etc.?	✓
25. In promoting partnerships at project level, do you assess the appropriateness of partnership implementation mechanisms? Do you ensure that information relating to these issues is clear and accessible in application forms, planning documents, etc.?	✓
26. Do you ensure the integration of relevant stakeholder expertise when drawing up calls for proposals?	✓
27. Do you ensure fair and robust review procedures for the evaluation of appraisals which guard against conflicts of interest?	✓
28. Do you ensure that roles and responsibilities within partnerships at project level are clearly established and disseminated appropriately?	✓
29. Do members of partnership management/ Steering Groups have sufficient authority to commit their organisations to decisions?	✓
30. Are partnerships prepared to delegate responsibility for parts of their work to particular partners?	✓
4. Animation during implementation	
31. Do you provide proactive support to partnership projects during the following stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparatory work and initiation - Ongoing development - Mainstreaming and further action - Evaluation? 	✓
32. Do you provide opportunities for the development of partnership skills at both programme and project level?	✓
33. Do you encourage linkages between partnership projects with mutual opportunities for sharing experience and support?	✓

34. Do you encourage a shared partnership culture among different stakeholders?	✓
35. Do you promote capacity-building of stakeholders so that they are able to actively participate in programmes governance? Do you use technical assistance in order to enhance the ability of stakeholders to take part in programmes and projects?	✓
5. Monitoring and evaluation	
36. Do you track the work of partnerships at project level systematically? Does your monitoring system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that targets are met - Identify problems in good time - Assist in satisfactory resolution of problems? 	✓
37. Do you ensure stakeholder participation in the evaluation of partnership interventions at both programme and project level? Does the evaluation also include what the added value of the partnership has been for stakeholders and target groups?	✓
38. Do you encourage options for ongoing learning at programme and project level from both partnership successes and failures?	✓
39. Do you foster the development and maintenance of learning networks between individuals and organisations where partnership knowledge and practices can be shared?	✓
40. Do you ensure that key lessons learnt are shared and broadly disseminated?	✓

Source: COP 2012; slightly adapted for PES