

**COST Conference Nottingham 17-19 September 2009**

**Working Group 3 Report :**

**New Perspectives for Human Rights Partnerships**

facilitated by **Dr. Wolfgang Benedek**

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1. **Dr. Benedek's prior presentation** during plenary was **used as basis for discussion**. An Agenda was put together touching on the following issues:
  - a. **Introductions**
  - b. **Experience sharing with T. Hammarberg leading**
  - c. **Definition of Partnerships**
  - d. **Challenges**
  - e. **Relationships between Partnerships and Law**
  - f. **Next Steps**
2. **Introductions** were made by the group of **15 members**, all of whom indicated an **interest in the theme** under discussion.
3. **Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe, also contributed** to the elaboration of the matter under consideration by providing insights from his experience in the area of partnerships.
4. **Issues raised** included the following:
  - a. **Definition of partnerships**. It is a term often used to refer to
    - i. **Sharing** of something whether it is resources, skills or knowledge, where there is **no imposition** on either side;
    - ii. A situation where **both parties are equal** and should gain from the process. They could share a **common interest** and the process is **mutually beneficial** to all parties concerned. This promotes **ownership** of the process and outcomes.
5. **Challenges** are linked to the fact that :
  - a. **Coordination** of such groups could be difficult;
  - b. Lack of **transparency about and dependency on money and or fundraising** could destroy the spirit of partnership
  - c. Lack of proper **division of labour**, which is essential, could be an underlying threat
  - d. **Exclusion** could complicate the process and should be avoided as much as possible
  - e. e. Sharing of money could done by **setting up of a Trust Fund with agreement on use of resources**.

6. WG considered **what** is shared among **partners** and it was agreed that they **share**
  - a. **Strategies**
  - b. **Information and Experiences**
  - c. **Knowledge**
  - d. **Skills**

Members of the Group felt that the relationship between partners **should focus on empowerment** and the value added should be geared towards the **right holders**, who are expected to play a more proactive role.

7. In relation to possible **partnership with government**, it was proposed that it was important. However, there was a necessity of dealing with them fairly but firmly, with politeness, clarity of message based on principle.
8. **Partnerships among/with NGOs** at the national and regional level is crucial to the sharing of problems and strategizing on solutions, particularly for those under threat. Could be a good forum for solidarity between partners and the sharing of best practice
9. Main Issues and **possible research areas** for consideration were highlighted as follows:
  - a. **Role of Civil Society**
  - b. **Corporate Social responsibility**
  - c. **The Private Sector**
  - d. **Business and Human Rights**
  - e. **Internet Governance**
  - f. **Dissemination through summer schools and other integrated programmes**

## 10. Research Agenda

- a. It was proposed that the underlying **theme of the research** should be **'Knowledge Transfer' between partners and capacity-building**
- b. In considering partnering with **human rights organizations versus development organizations**, it was realized that in most instances it is not only a matter of money but that of interests and or issues and the WG should therefore be guided by this.
- c. In any event, it was key to look at the **dynamics with these organizations** as well as the **leadership**.

## 11. Partnerships

- a. Some **possible areas to be reviewed** are as follows:
  - i. United Nations (UN) partnerships
  - ii. European Union (EU) partnerships

- iii. The WG called attention to the experience of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in this area of partnerships.

12. **Follow up/Next steps** outlined :

- a. **Scaling up of partnerships.** This can be done by exploring the existing channels of information and dissemination; learning from experiences of NGOs, donor's networks, etc and consider inviting them to share their experiences in this area
- b. **Measuring the impact** of partnerships.
- c. **Development of indicators**
- d. Development of **recommendations**

13. In conclusion, the WG came up with the following **action plan** :

- a. Recognising the need to have an **overview of the state of knowledge**, the Group proposed that a baseline survey and or literature search of publications on the subject should be carried out.
- b. To avoid duplication and to be able to carry out an **analysis of different existing forms partnerships**, actual and potential partners and practitioners of such partnerships should be considered and invited to **share their experience** e.g.
  - i. UNDP
  - ii. Global Compact
  - iii. Civil Society

This list is not exhaustive.

- c. To identify gaps for further action and then develop criteria for choice of partners as well as checklists on quality of partnerships
- d. In order to share the tasks, it was proposed that a **webpage will be prepared** to be coordinated by Dr. Benedek and the coordinator in Vienna, for the input of WG members to provide information on the various literature on partnerships
- e. The WG proposed **23-24 October for a follow up meeting in Graz**. However, only 4 members present confirmed their availability to participate at this meeting. In the absence of a reasonable representation, it was agreed that members of other WGs should be consulted for possible participation at this proposed meeting. The WG proposed that if the problem persists, then the meeting could be moved to the **next cycle to enable a more broad participation and more time for preparation**.
- f. It was proposed that among the **participants of the proposed workshops should also be doctoral students**.