

TRIALOG 2010 Partnership Fair Final Report

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Background of the TRIALOG Partnership Fair 2010

Following the significant success of the first TRIALOG Partnership Fair (PF) held in October 2006, TRIALOG organised a second PF on 15-17 February 2010, in cooperation with the European NGDO Confederation CONCORD and DEEEP project. Around 150 development CSO representatives from 25 EU member states gathered in the Vienna International Center aiming to learn, network, find partners and draft project proposals that will be submitted for future EC calls.

Because the first Partnership Fair had been such a success and many of the subsequently EC-funded development education projects under NSA-LA line had been conceived there, TRIALOG aimed to make best use of the experience and achieve multiplier effects from the learning, networking and project designing activities that took place.

Objectives

The primary objective of the PF was to enhance the success rate of development CSOs from new member states in the Development Education and Awareness Raising and other relevant EC calls, as the lack of knowledge about EU mechanisms and application writing as well as a lack of experienced partners at hand contributed to a low success rate of new member states in the first years of their participation in the EC calls. The Partnership Fair was conceived as a platform for finding partners for future projects as well as a bridge for the ideas, interests and knowledge between the participants from new and old member states.

In order to achieve this, the event pursued the following objectives:

- Learning: to provide an overview of EC funding mechanisms in the development field
- Networking: creating partnerships for joint projects
- Project design and planning: including proposal negotiations and signing preliminary agreements

Methods and Methodology

The **learning** process was achieved through expert presentations and discussions and workshops on:

- a) Relevant calls for proposals (NSA-LA, DE/AR, Investing in People, EIDHR);
- b) Designing and implementing strong development education and development cooperation projects;
- c) Co-funding mechanisms;
- d) Effective work in partnership.

The **networking** happened through the market place, where all participants had the opportunity to present their organisations (activities, vision, future project plans etc). This also happened during structured and informal sessions throughout the fair when participants were able to establish contacts with others and find partners for their project ideas.

The concrete **project design** and planning activity was framed by the *open space methodology*, a highly participative planning method in which participants organise themselves around projects they propose and manage. In the case of the Partnership Fair, most groups were pre-selected according to topics they registered beforehand and only a few were created spontaneously. A group of resource people supported the process of project negotiations, planning and elaboration.

Programme and Speakers

Speakers from European development NGOs, the European Commission and local authorities provided participants with their different views of European funding instruments for external assistance and practical tips on proposal writing.

On the first day, Elisabeth Schreiber (CONCORD FDR) together with Elise Vanormelingen (CONCORD Secretariat) addressed the overall situation regarding the EC funding for Development. They presented the perspective of European NGDOs and touched upon the issues NGDOs are currently struggling with (such as VAT as a non-eligible cost under EC funding).

Karina Chircu (EuropeAid) gave an overview of the latest news on the EC calls and deadlines foreseen for non state actors and local authorities (NSA/LA) while clarifying many of the practical issues raised by the audience. With her input she managed to bring the EC perspective closer to participants and gave contact details of her colleagues for the other relevant funding lines apart from NSA/LA.

Lucie Guillet from the European Platform of Local/Regional Authorities for Development gave a brief presentation of her organisation and the public dimension of Development Education.

The day was rounded up by presentations from Andra Tanase (TRIALOG) and Tobias Troll (DEEEP). Andra Tanase touched upon Working in Partnership guidelines and how to establish and nourish successful partnerships in general. Tobias Troll introduced the European Multi-stakeholder Process working on DE/AR at the European level.

The second day aimed to provide the participants with the know-how on how to write a successful project proposal. Afterwards the preliminary division into the project groups took place so that the group work could be launched later in the day.

Angela James, adviser and expert on EC application writing, clarified many of the most commonly used mistakes in her comprehensive presentation on application writing. Afterwards, Tobias Troll introduced the concept and basic rules of the Open Space Methodology to the participants. Andra Tanase explained the preliminary division into groups and invited participants to introduce additional project ideas they wanted to share with the plenary.

The project groups began their search for common ground and partnership building not only linked to a shared topic but also to the “soft facts” (like sympathy, ideals etc.) that are important in a real partnership. In this phase many new groups emerged and many participants swapped groups several times in order to see which one best fit their ideas and objectives. Resource persons joined the groups to support their proceedings and the overall work progress in the project elaboration.

The day was concluded with a feedback round from the participants’ and facilitators’ point of view, looking at the main challenges and opportunities that participants felt to be significant during the course of the working day.

During the third day, the participants proceeded with their group work and intense work lasted in some cases throughout the breaks and until the very last moment of the outcome presentations.

One of the big problems in NMS NGOs is to get the necessary co-funding for EC contracts as co-financing mechanisms from the government do not exist in all countries and private fund-raising is still quite weak. Information and ideas were provided on the third day by the presentations of Eva Kolesarova from SlovakAid and Grzegorz Gruca from Polish Humanitarian Action. They gave an overall picture by outlining some examples of state co-financing mechanisms and private funding opportunities.

During the outcomes presentation, 17 project proposals were presented covering a wide range of topics – from sustainability, consumer behaviour and corporate social responsibility to volunteering, gender equality, sexual education and conflict prevention. The organizers were pleased that so many interesting project ideas had been born, discussed and constructively elaborated upon, forming a basis for future partnerships. Even though the proposals had not been finalised, participants were safely on track identifying common ground and possibilities for project cooperation. Additionally to these 17 projects, a number of further project ideas were agreed upon among some participants but due to a lack of time were not elaborated at the fair itself. We hope that many of them however will be developed before the relevant calls are launched.

As was shown by the original 2006 event, the organisers expect that the Partnership Fair represents the start of a valuable momentum for successful project applications through learning, dialogue and concrete work.

The expectations of participants were met overall; with many expressing their satisfaction at finding new partners for future projects so it looks likely that the Partnership Fair will have contributed to positive results in future EC calls.

We therefore wish all projects good luck on their ways towards receiving EC funding and working for development and solidarity around the world and await impatiently the results of the future EC calls!

If you are interested in the complete documentation of the Partnership Fair including the presentations, the minutes and the evaluation report, all is available online under <http://www.trialog.or.at/start.asp?ID=216!>

Thank you all for your contributions!