

Appendix 1: Overview of the Methodology

1.0 Description of the work carried out

The study adopted a case study approach designed to illuminate the processes and dynamics of partnership operation. Given the dual need to both generate and confirm theories of partnership, an inductive approach was combined with the use of proforma to facilitate the management of the data arising from the field work. The triangulation of data sources was a guiding principle of the research design.

The methodology has consisted of the undertaking of fifty three case studies selected purposefully across the 15 Member States and across the different Objectives and Community Initiatives. Two principle deliberate biases were explicitly uppermost in the selection criteria to “follow the money”, and secondly to focus on innovative programmes and partnership structures. A large number of case studies were drawn from Objective 1 areas and from the larger and middle range beneficiaries of the Union. Case studies of the URBAN Initiative, and the Territorial Employment Pacts were also included.

The methodological approach employed in the study is appended in the form of a the *Research Instrument* which was sent out to the national experts in two phases. Appendix 2.1 contains the Phase I instrument used by national experts. The Phase I study entailed the examination of the relevant documentary materials pertaining to the institutional context of partnership and to partnership forms themselves in their member state. The Phase I instrument provides the framework for the descriptive analysis which has been undertaken by the national experts. Appendix 2.2 contains the Phase II research Instrument which sets out the methodological approach adopted for the case studies. This research instrument consisted of:

- a guidance note on undertaking individual case studies,
- a standard reporting structure for writing up case studies, and
- a standard interview template for undertaking and recording interviews

The methodology was designed around the use of critical incidents as a device for eliciting dynamics and processes of partnership in an illuminative fashion. We have defined Critical Incidents as being illustrative events which provide a window into looking at the performance, operation, and philosophy of partnership. They have been case studies within case studies. The Critical Incidents analysis is designed as a bridge between the formal descriptions of what partnerships are required to do and what they actually do.

The case study approach has been therefore essentially founded on the use of critical incidents as illustrations of the dynamics of partnership. In addition, the experts have been required to develop a history of the partnership in the cases

examined. Fieldwork has been based on documentary review and face to face interviews with informants across the European Union. Multiple informants have been used in each case and for investigating each critical incident. Background interviews were also undertaken with additional stakeholders.

Triangulation of data sources has been critical to the study. In the case of the synthesis report we also have benefited from the investigator triangulation resulting as we have been able to draw conclusions across the 15 country reports which have been developed by more than 15 different national correspondents.

2.0 Strengths and weaknesses of the methodology

General points

The level of detail generated by the critical incident approach was very satisfactory. The methodology was fairly consistently applied across cases. All case studies provide detailed references and documentary evidence which ensures their reliability.

The national correspondents nevertheless faced a difficult task in applying the methodology but on the whole they successfully overcame the main constraints which included:

- time constraints, 4-6 days to conduct and report on the case studies was a constraint as was the coincidence of the study with the summer holidays,
- the size of the budget,
- the 'one size fits all' methodology was also a problem,
- the phrase 'critical incident' was unfortunate in that 'illustrative incident' may have better captured the concept, although on the whole the experts handled the critical incident very well and the result was very rich data. The case studies and critical incidents provided practical and real analytical data, and
- in addition a small number of the cases selected also had operational difficulties.

Strengths

The national correspondents, despite initial reservations applauded the detail of the methodology.

The interview template was a useful guide for the kinds of questions and issues which needed to be answered.

The dynamic dimension of the case studies enabled key areas such as learning processes to be covered well.

The data produced by the study was rich and informative. Where the correspondents applied the case study methodology correctly the findings were always of high quality and useful. The strength of the methodology is highlighted by this result.

As an exercise in directed induction the methodology has worked well. This is especially the case given the magnitude of the task and the scale of the study across the whole of the territory of the European Union.

Weaknesses

On reflection the methodology would have benefited from a section which enabled the Correspondents to separate structures from tasks – a summary approach to see *who did what* would have been advisable.

Some difficulties also emerged over the definition of key terms such as *partnership*. As the study was intended to generate theory as well as test it, the definition of partnership was intended to have been re-defined and constructed as the result of the research findings. The correspondents' understanding of the purpose of the study was not always as well developed as it should have been.

The periodicity of the programmes assumed by the methodology was flawed. Very often partnership activities were conflated across different phases of the policy cycle. The methodology had not anticipated this.

The distinction between horizontal and vertical partnerships was often blurred in the case studies so it was difficult for the correspondents to apply this distinction rigorously.

Finally we recognise that a specific question needed to be included in the instrument to ask about interim evaluation. The absence of this question may have adversely influenced our findings on evaluation. The correspondents' replies indicate a lack of precision over the evaluation phases, sometimes for example interim evaluations are discussed as ex-post evaluations.