

SRN WORKSHOP BARCELONA 20 APRIL 2006

IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

1 Introduction

This workshop introduced the next stage of the SRN project, in which partners will be identifying and evaluating elements of good practice in the management and delivery of Structural Funds and domestic regeneration programmes.

Richard Essex outlined the aims of the session, the preparation requested from all partners, the particular brief given to the three partners asked to make presentations, and the expected outputs. The focus was on processes rather than projects, with partners asked to consider how they define good practice (what they think good practice is about) and how they identify it (which could be, for example, through formal programme reviews). We were also hoping for further material on the involvement of SRN partners in programme monitoring, evaluation and review. Paul Owens chaired the workshop and Liz Mills acted as rapporteur.

2 Presentations

2.1 Good practice in Turku, Finland

Outi Laikko and Tomi Virkkunen from the City of Turku presented the **Management and Delivery of Southern Finland Objective 2 Programme's Urban Branch** as a best practice example, focusing on arrangements for programme coordination.

A key step was agreement by the Regional Council of Southwest Finland (the Managing Authority) and the Employment and Economic Development Centre of Southwest Finland to set up an intermediary unit in the City office as both a point of contact and a source of expertise for project applicants. Called the **Linkki project**, this unit works with local residents, businesses and associations and with funding providers and public administrators as well as with projects themselves, seeking to ensure effective implementation of a cluster of nearly 40 complementary projects in receipt of Objective 2 funding. Support for both development and implementation of the projects is a central feature of Linkki's activities. Staff of Linkki give a view on project applications, but decisions as to which projects to fund are made by the programme Board.

Linkki has been subject to a formal 3-stage evaluation process, through the 'Linkki Barometer' – an assessment of the outcomes of the projects against policy objectives for East Turku, and for the City as a whole - and through an intermediate and a final report. Local actors, East Turku projects, specialists, funding providers and representatives of the administration of the City of Turku were all asked for their views to evaluate Linkki. These reports have been largely positive, especially with regard to communication actions, although there is judged to be some room for improvement in the connections between the EU-funded actions and the mainstream tasks of the City administration.

Keys to a successful programme include :

- Contacts with financiers and development organisations.
- Open communication with areas and interest groups.

- Supporting the transfer of the best operational models from the projects to the basic operations of the city and to other areas/cities. In the case of East Turku, this includes extraction of best practices from within the East Turku development projects, part of a drive to 'de-mystify' the concept of best practice for project managers.
- Taking care of programme openness/transparency and respecting the subsidiary principle, in addition to ensuring a low threshold for participation. In East Turku this applies especially to the community-based projects described below.
- Using expert services to support high quality implementation of projects, especially in communications, finances, follow-up and benchmarking.
- Participation in project steering groups.
- Following up the results of projects and regular reporting to decision-makers.
- Project activation and ensuring the connection of projects to the development of the city as a whole. In East Turku this includes pre-evaluation of all project applications using a checklist covering feasibility, likely impact and efficiency of projects, conformity with the programme strategy and relevance to the specific problems of East Turku.

Special arrangements are in place to support between 8 and 12 **community-based projects** a year undertaken mainly by groups of local residents, schools, clubs or even by individuals. Linkki project staff take care of the administrative aspects of these projects within this common intermediary body, leaving the local actors free to concentrate on delivery.

Through the 67 community-based projects undertaken between 2000 and 2006, implementation of this EU programme has been brought closer to citizens. Local residents have become demonstrably more active in tackling problems in their local area. Concrete results are helping to meet the goals of a range of different bodies (funders, the City etc), and information levels have improved. Other cities – notably Helsinki and Tampere – have taken an interest in the way of working with community projects in East Turku and have now set up similar arrangements.

2.2 Three experiences from Barcelona

Josep Rodriguez Lopez introduced three experiences from different funding programmes, one from INTERREG IIIB, one from EQUAL and a third based on a domestic programme, each illustrating the role played by the Diputació de Barcelona in supporting the main functions of local municipalities. Each example could also be said to be in line with Lisbon and Gothenburg policy goals, and each has been important in supporting cross-departmental and partnership working in the locality. All aimed to achieve lasting impact on mainstream functions of the Province and possessed elements of transferability.

The first presentation was not about Structural Funds management but rather demonstrated the added value of EU-funded transnational working in supporting local delivery. It described the INTERREG IIIB project **SITMUN**, funded under Priority 4 of the IIIB programme for South West Europe, SUDOE, which covers the whole of Spain and Portugal, 6 regions of France and Gibraltar. SITMUN is short for *Sistema territorial d'informació municipal* (Municipal Territorial Information Systems). The project, which ran from 2003 to 2004, with a total budget of about EURO 882,000, had 7 partners and a further 15 collaborators from Spain, France and Portugal. The main activity was development of a centralised system of digital cartography and GIS

support for groups of small municipalities – both urban and rural - lacking the technical knowledge and resources to implement their own systems. The GIS system is now in day-to-day use in the Barcelona area, especially supporting town councils in their town planning functions. It is clearly transferable to other localities. Moreover, the groundwork done in the INTERREG project has enabled wider roll-out of GIS in the region using the larger resources of Objective 2.

Further information about SITMUN is available on www.sitmun.org and on the SUDOE programme on www.interreg-sudoe.org.

The second presentation outlined the project **ELIONOR**, carried out in the period 2002-3 and co-financed by the ESF through the EQUAL Community Initiative at a total cost of € 3.2M. In line with the European Employment Strategy and more recent Lisbon goals, the main objective was to find ways of increasing activity rates of various types of economically inactive people (such as those active in the black economy and women taking care of children). The overall vision was the achievement of personal fulfilment in the context of family stability, 'job finding' and employer needs. The importance of locally-provided support services ('proximity services') such as child care in enabling people (especially women) to get into work is of interest also for its relevance to the sustainable development agenda. Although there is still work to do to reach more employers, this project has several 'best practice' features, including the detailed analysis of what was previously a 'hidden' problem and the networking of a range of different organisations so as to tackle a very complex issue. The project also had particular application at the sub regional level. Some of its features have been mainstreamed into education and employment actions adopted by the Diputació de Barcelona, and it has facilitated Corporate Social Responsibility actions by private sector employers.

The third presentation focussed on the **XBMQ** system, a quality management system developed by the Diputació de Barcelona to support more effective functioning of, and cooperation with, the municipalities within the city-region. All 311 municipalities have signed up to a legal framework (also termed a protocol) for the period 2004-7 which establishes a register of the needs of each locality, the actions to be developed (negotiated by an 'agreement committee'), the agreements and subventions needed to implement them, and ways of measuring the impacts of actions carried out. The system is used to guide the distribution of the domestic budget for spending on, for example, urban public space, accessibility, cultural activities and sport by the different municipalities. The first results demonstrate, in particular, the extent of teamwork needed to deliver these actions and the increased engagement of the municipalities in a range of inter-institutional and cross-sectoral networks. More details of the system are available on www.diba.cat/xbmq.

2.3 Aspects of good practice in programme management and delivery in the Piedmont Region of Italy

With a strong focus on processes, Marta Ferrero from Langhe Monferrato Roero presented examples of **good practice in methods of evaluating the impact of projects, in programming and in delivery**. She identified the assessment of the real impact of projects on the territory using indicators, the sustainability and transferability of projects, involvement of final stakeholders, and delivering projects on time and within budget as attributes of good practice.

Evaluation Methodologies

Marta first explained the application of Project Cycle Management (PCM) methodology to the implementation of projects funded through EQUAL II.

The main feature of PCM is the strong focus on defining clear project objectives and results in order to satisfy the real needs of the final beneficiaries of the interventions. This requires the involvement of final beneficiaries from the project planning stage in order to identify their problems and to establish cause/effect relationships. The next step is to express these problems 'in reverse' as objectives to attain, fostering the activities which need to be carried out in order to fulfil them.

The development of a toolkit for use by project applicants and the establishment of a management system for monitoring and evaluation of the programme as a whole were prompted by past problems, in particular the failure to involve the final beneficiaries, lack of attention to sustainability and lack of monitoring.

This methodology is now strongly recommended by Piedmont Region, the institution in charge of the evaluation of projects and programme delivery.

Programming

In the area of programming, Marta described the development of a series of Integrated Territorial Development Programmes (PISL) within an experimental programme launched by the Piedmont Region.

The process began in spring 2005, and an initial evaluation was carried out in summer 2005. The approach is characterised by a 'bottom-up' definition of policy priorities (led by local stakeholders and coordinated by the provincial authorities), cross-sectoral working, especially to develop a series of integrated actions, and some proposed new systems of financing, including public/private partnership. Local development plans focus on reinforcing the region's competitiveness and attractiveness, with priority given to innovation, environmental protection and risk prevention, accessibility, and implementation of the European Employment Strategy.

This programme delivers national resources to support feasibility studies for proposed integrated projects. Applicants are required to provide a budget breakdown showing the percentages of funds expected from various sources. At sub-regional level, the Provinces are involved in the evaluation of project bids and also provide technical assistance and support to local authorities on the coordination of the planning process.

This programme was launched with the intention to promote strategic integrated planning within local authorities and to encourage the use of this methodology in the use of Structural Funds in the 2007-2013 programming period.

Delivery

The final section of this presentation, on best practice in programme delivery, focused on ASTI, a programme of entrepreneurial development, established by the Provinces of Alessandria and Cuneo in partnership with Banca Intesa, one of Italy's largest banking groups. Following this trend, some smaller local banks have expressed their appreciation of this programme and their intention to be involved as founders.

The main objectives of the programme are to foster the renewal and growth of the productive system in South Piedmont, to support local entrepreneurship and to improve the competitiveness and quality of local services and products. The types of

interventions supported include, for example, SME start-ups, creative clusters and consortia. In establishing the programme, an initial analysis and SWOT led to a set of guidelines for calls for proposals, procedures for project selection, arrangements for support for project development (including networking of applicants through a 'South Piedmont Incubator'), methods of project evaluation and a final classification of funded projects. Bringing the programme into effect required a signed agreement between Banca Intesa and the Association of Italian Development Agencies and establishment of an initial EURO 20m loan facility. Clearly the existence of local or sub-regional financial institutions may be important in facilitating project delivery and partnership. Such facilities do not always exist in other Member States.

3 Outputs from this session

Discussion time was limited following these presentations, so there was little comment from the other SRN partners. As rapporteur, Liz Mills briefly addressed each of the proposed outputs in turn.

3.1 Set of criteria for defining good practice in sub-regional programme management and delivery

Partners from both Turku and Barcelona introduced their presentations by stating that they do not have a definition of what good practice is. However, listening to the presentations it was possible to infer the criteria being used in these cities.

In discussion it was noted that good practice can be either the quality of the product or the effectiveness of the process. However product and process are interrelated.

A first list, in no particular order, is presented here. The criteria could include :

Effective activation

Openness and transparency.

Regular reporting

Regular overview by politicians

Regular exchange of information

Generation of added value

Quality of coordination

Clear set of objectives against which to measure success

Fit with strategy/overall development goals of whole city or region

Aid to integration/joined up working

Holistic approach

Combine hard and soft interventions

Bottom up approach supports top-down objectives

Effective dialogue with project managers

Understanding of what local project managers need

Bringing together/working with a range of stakeholders

Practical involvement of different levels of government in project implementation

Development of new tools for mainstream use

Help local delivery of the municipality's normal tasks
Lasting impact of project activities on regular services

Understandable language to increase stakeholder participation
Local actors' raised awareness of EU funding/ bring EU funds close to inhabitants
Increase personal responsibility of stakeholders
Increased local cooperation

Measurable impact of projects on the territory
Involvement of final stakeholders
Delivering projects on time and within budget

Resources fit with outputs
Project sustainability (durability)

Transferability
Other places find it interesting and want to use it

3.2 Ideas about whether criteria to define good practice vary from place to place

The first 9 criteria mentioned in 3.1 are derived from the presentation by Turku, and most of the others from the three presentations about Barcelona. The criteria mentioned by Langhe Monferrato Roero (assessment of the real impact of projects on the territory using indicators, the sustainability and transferability of projects, involvement of final stakeholders, and delivering projects on time and within budget) in some cases overlap with items in this list, but seem more focused on the projects themselves. However, this impression may not be correct and it would be useful to have partners' comments on this.

3.3 Is it possible to measure aspects of good practice ?

In their presentations the partners referred to assessment of outcomes against programme objectives and to the use of indicators, especially to measure project outputs. The use of formal systems of quality management like XBMQ as a way to identify good practice may be worth investigating in more detail.

3.4 Different ways in which good practice is identified

As well as formal programme ex ante, mid term and final evaluations, partners mentioned using the opinions of local experts, actors and project personnel (Turku), using standardised quality management methods (Barcelona), and interest from other places, especially where these other places have actually implemented a method developed elsewhere. The possibility of spreading good practice using EU programmes was also mentioned, for example in discussing the INTERREG project SITMUN. A further suggestion was to involve those who had carried out previous formal evaluations so that they could give an opinion about progress made since the last evaluation.

It is worth noting that there was little reference in these presentations to compliance with EU rules or to how well programmes are meeting EU horizontal criteria (such as environmental sustainability or equality between women and men).

3.5 First list of possible examples of good practice

These might include :

- ASTI programme – for the joined up use of different funds (Piedmont)
- PISL for integrated territorial plans as a way to organise Structural Funds spending – but more information is needed to explain how this works (Piedmont)
- Use of quality management methodologies (Turku, Barcelona)
- Development and support of a cluster of community-based projects (Linkki in Turku)
- The role of intermediary bodies in supporting a group of projects (Linkki in Turku) or supporting a group of municipalities (Barcelona)
- Helping to deliver Lisbon and Gothenburg goals (Barcelona – ELIONOR project)
- Using transnational programmes to support local delivery (Barcelona INTERREG and EQUAL examples)