

Participatory approach for rural development.

Lessons learnt from Bulgarian experience

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“CSOs participation in the implementation of rural development policies”

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What is “participatory approach for rural development”?

- Different theoretical definitions, but in general understood as a process that promotes communities full involvement in their own development, and envisages rural development as a process which values and promotes indigenous knowledge and skills while building upon their cultural and natural resources.
- Participatory approaches are particularly relevant to reach a holistic understanding of sustainable rural livelihoods in the field of natural resource management
- The strategies developed with this approach aim at finding sustainable livelihoods solutions and opportunities by working with rather than for the community.
- The PA techniques involve external and local actors/ stakeholders working together on a particular project/ strategy while strengthening the dialogue and exchange between these actors



Involvement of all interested stakeholders in rural development

Stakeholders are the people who will benefit from the development activity or whose interests may be affected by that activity

- Public sector stakeholders - ensure the synergy with other levels of planning and the support of other levels of government and public institutions
- Private sector stakeholders – contribute to business development and agriculture development. Government creates better environment for business, while businesses create jobs.
- Civil society stakeholders – contribute to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups and provide specific expertise and knowledge. They can attract additional funds.

Experience from SAPARD (pre-accession programme for rural development) in Bulgaria

- At the beginning of the programming process a programming working group was established to discuss strategy proposed, selected measures, financial allocations;
- The main purpose – co-ordination within the ministry services and inter-ministerial co-ordination and consultation with wide range of partners;
- Technical discussions with the branch associations and CSO's were done in technical sup-groups for all the measures included in the programme;
- Environmental NGOs took part in all of the working groups since the protection of the environment is a horizontal issue;
- A Monitoring Committee was established 3 months after the official endorsement of the Bulgarian NARDP by the EC – January 20th 2001.

Experience from SAPARD in Bulgaria – selection of the members of the Monitoring committee

- Members of the line ministries
- Members proposed by the social partners:
 - Representatives of all officially recognized social and economic partners (trade unions and employers associations;
 - Representatives of sectoral interests – farmers unions and branch associations;
 - A representative of the environmental NGO's;
 - A representative of the local authorities.

Lessons learned

- Big number of associations and NGO's representing sectoral interest (sometimes more than 1 in one sector);
- Big number of environmental NGOs ;
- No formally established standards for representativeness of the NGO's or for transparency of its operations;
- The NGOs that represented potential beneficiaries per supported sector, needed strengthening of their capacities to work strategically with the other NGOs,
- Some of the members of Working Groups had interest only in their own activity– no sensitivity to the problems of the sector as a whole



Simple and straightforward rules and procedures and training of social partners/ CSOs is needed!
Cooperation between the CSOs has to be stimulated!

Challenges

- Consultations can be distorted by the choice of **participants** and by **processes** used.
- In terms of participants, participation may be too narrow either by focusing on a desk review or arbitrary 'top down' policymaking, or by including only 'insiders' or close to local authorities firms.
- In terms of process, the views of participants may not be adequately based on data (may not be realistic or may be too conservative in focusing only on their current businesses rather than new opportunities).

Thank you for your attention!



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