



ECDPM Partnership Strategy

January 2008



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY MANAGEMENT
CENTRE EUROPÉEN DE GESTION DES POLITIQUES DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

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Background

ECDPM has long-standing experience with different types of partnerships and collaborative arrangements in Europe and the ACP. These include governmental as well as non-governmental organisations at the local, national, regional and global levels. In its strategy for 2007–11, the Centre distinguishes three categories of partnerships:

- (1) **Institutional partners** are governmental actors that play a major role in the work of ECDPM. Here, a distinction is made between **European institutional partners**, which support the Centre's mandate, strategy and programmes through multi-annual institutional and programme agreements and funding, and **ACP/Southern institutional partners** as key (inter)governmental organisations with which the Centre seeks to build long-term relationships in specific areas of EU-ACP/AU interactions.
- (2) **Strategic partners** are non-governmental institutions and networks in the European Union and ACP/South with which ECDPM cooperates on the basis of shared values and common interests. These partnerships have a long-term perspective, and their aim is to generate and share relevant knowledge and information with a view to enhancing the overall quality of key strategic policy processes.
- (3) **Ad hoc partner cooperation** takes place around specific common tasks or projects with a view to achieving results in the short term. Some of these collaborative arrangements (e.g. joint studies, conferences, consultations) have the potential to become other types of partnerships in the long run.

In line with the recommendations of the external evaluation of ECDPM in 2006 and the 3rd capacity strategy of ECDPM's institutional strategy for 2007–11, the Centre has committed itself to further develop and refine its Partnership Strategy with a particular focus on ACP/Southern partners. To that end, this Partnership Strategy document sketches five dimensions of Centre partnership: (1) objectives, (2) guiding principles, (3) criteria for partnership development, (4) the partnering process and roles of ECDPM and (5) management of partnership by ECDPM.

1. Objectives of partnership

The underlying objectives of ECDPM's partnership approach with a key focus on Southern organisations are as follows:

- **to share experiences** in terms of analysis, facilitation and dissemination of information with a view to improving the relevance, effectiveness and impact of EU-ACP/AU policies;
- **to strengthen capacities** and institutional development of ACP/AU institutional and strategic partners;
- **to assess and reduce asymmetries** in EU-ACP/AU relations;
- **to improve the quality and impact** of the work of ECDPM and its partners.

Partnerships ideally combine a variety of objectives. They therefore should increase learning and better equip ECDPM to play its role in major strategic policy processes, while at the same time achieving capacity building and empowerment objectives in the ACP.

2. ECDPM guiding principles for partnership

The following general principles guide ECDPM's partnership approach:

- ***Realism and time.*** Both realism and adequate time are essential to identify and clarify mutual objectives, needs, strategic interests, shared outcomes and resources with a partner institution. Any new partnership requires a careful scoping and assessment of options and possible alternatives prior to investing in it. A sound partnership exploration may result in slower progress than originally planned, but it is an essential prerequisite to guarantee the long-term success of the partnership.
- ***Integration of partnership in strategic policy processes.*** Partnership is not an end in itself but a means for both ECDPM and its partners to improve the quality and impact of work in strategic policy processes relating to EU-ACP/AU relations. The Centre's choice and selection of institutional and strategic partners should therefore respond to the ways in which potential collaborators can contribute to improving the quality of these policy processes and to fulfilling the ECDPM mandate.
- ***No one size fits all.*** Each development process is different, and there are no blueprints for partnership that apply to all ECDPM interventions. Lessons learnt in one partnership might be inappropriate for another. The Centre therefore stimulates a double-track approach: (i) ECDPM's policy-relevant work may require building alliances with strong partners in the South ('centres of excellence') that can add value to key strategic processes. (ii) At the same time, ECDPM invests in long-term partnerships aimed at strengthening capacities and institutional development of Southern organisations. The ultimate choice between establishing partnerships with Southern centres of excellence or with emerging organisations depends on the type of impact that needs to be achieved in the various policy processes.
- ***'All-Centre' partnership perspective.*** Thematic programmes develop and manage partnerships in line with policy processes, programmes and impact routes. At the same time, we maintain a coherent 'all-Centre' perspective. Thus, a global partnership analysis is made by the MT of the costs and benefits of the Centre's various partnerships in terms of time investment and expected results and impacts based on agreed in-take criteria (more about this below). This implies careful assessment in terms of risk, delivery capacity, opportunity costs and staff utilisation.

3. In-take criteria for partnership

Criteria guide the identification and selection of institutional and strategic partners. Prior to engaging in partnership, several checks are made in an exploratory phase:

- (1) **Strong ownership and shared interests.** The starting point of any partnership is commitment by the partner institutions to engage in a long-term collaboration. To assess this, a sound partnership exploration is undertaken with a view to identifying shared objectives and strategic interests. The partnership exploration also helps us to gain a better understanding of the roles, needs, competences and value-added of the partner institutes and the extent to which they can reinforce strategic policy processes and impact.
- (2) **Potential for multiplier effects and mutual learning.** To increase impact, ECDPM favours *networking* types of partnerships or individual institutes with a regional focus and outreach. Priority is also given to partnerships with a great potential for mutual learning. Although rigidity should be avoided, a certain balance is aimed for among the various ACP (sub)regions, language groups and types of partners.
- (3) **Commitment to sharing responsibilities and contributions.** Partnerships should not be based on unilateral transfers of funds from ECDPM, as this could lead to an imbalanced donor-recipient power dynamic which is difficult to reconcile with the principles of partnership. However, careful use of seed money may help to sustain the initial stages of a partnership. The Southern partner should make contributions as well, including non-monetary ones, as its proof of commitment to the partnership.

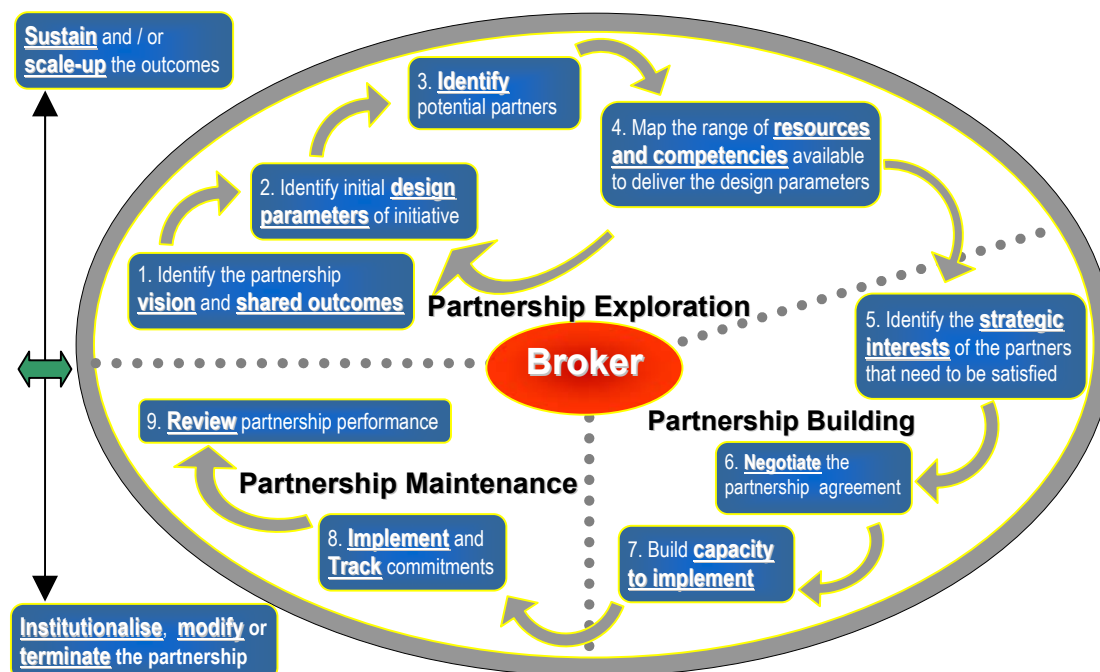
4. The partnering process and roles of ECDPM

A partnering process generally comprises several stages. The scheme in the figure below identifies three major stages (partnership exploration, partnership building and partnership maintenance) consisting of the following sequencing: (1) identification of a shared vision and outcomes, (2) identification of initial design parameters, (3) identification of potential partners, (4) mapping of the range of resources and competencies, (5) identification of strategic interests, (6) negotiation of the partnership agreement, (7) building capacity to implement, (8) implementation and tracking of commitments, (9) review of partnership performance.

Though this sequence guides ECDPM's partnership development with Southern organisations, it is not rigidly applied. Experience indicates that successful partnership processes are based to a large extent on flexibility, creativity, learning by doing, trial and error and an element of risk taking.

The role of ECDPM can be either as a broker of partnerships (e.g. a facilitator of networks) or as a partner in a one-to-one collaboration.

The Partnering Process



Source: ODI/BLF PBAS

5. Internal ECDPM management of partnerships

Decision-making mechanisms

In decision-making on partnerships, the Centre follows a bottom-up process. The different ECDPM programmes and Institutional Relations & Partnership Development (IR&PD) submit partnership proposals to the MT. After the partnership exploratory phase, programmes are invited to present an impact route analysis for each partnership. The MT discusses and approves the partnerships in which the Centre will engage on the basis of the guiding principles, in-take criteria and analysis of opportunity costs and benefits as detailed above.

Role division in the day-to-day management of partnerships

There is a clear division of roles in the management of partnerships between the thematic programmes and IR&PD. Partnerships that are integrated into one of the Centre's programmes or processes are managed by the respective programme teams. Ideally, each programme appoints a person as 'anchor point', and those staff members dedicate an

amount of time to managing the partnership. IR&PD plays a coordinating role in partnership management, maintaining the all-Centre focus in close cooperation with the thematic programmes, which assume the lead role in delivering the substantive work related to the partnership.

Roles performed by IR&PD include the following:

- internal consultation with Centre programmes;
- consultation with potential Centre partners;
- harmonising Centre proposals on partnership based on consultations with programmes and partners;
- negotiation of Centre partnerships;
- monitoring, follow-up and evaluation of Centre partnerships, including conflict resolution and possible exit strategies.

By retaining an overview, IR&PD, in close cooperation with the MT, try to ensure selectivity and balance among the various regions and types of partnerships across programmes. At regular intervals, and at least once every quarter, the MT discusses progress in the various partnerships engaged in by the thematic programmes and the Centre as a whole.

Centre seminars and the Centre intranet are used to disseminate relevant information about our partnership approach.

Partnership agreements

Each institutional and strategic partnership is based on a pragmatic set of rules and agreements. Elements that contribute to the structuring of partnerships include memoranda of understanding, joint programmes and work plans, funding arrangements and joint monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Instruments of partnership

There are no blueprints for the various partnerships in which the Centre engages. Each partnership has its own unique features and components depending on its specific characteristics. Partnerships might be developed on the basis of one or a combination of the following elements: twinning, staff exchange, seconding, fellowships, antennae, joint appointments, joint research and publications, joint programming, joint learning, and joint organisation and facilitation of events.

Partnership funding

Partnerships should aim for joint funding arrangements for joint activities. It can therefore not be the intention to base partnerships on unilateral types of funding by ECDPM, which would risk creating dependency. However, ECDPM can reserve or budget seed money to invest in partnership development at the programme and IR&PD levels, particularly with a focus on emerging institutions in the ACP/South.

Learning, monitoring and evaluation

Exchanges of experience and learning related to partnership are stimulated internally at the all-Centre level (e.g. through in-house seminars, the intranet and discussions in the PSM, MT and PC) and externally through exposure and training. In so doing, it becomes possible to systematise partnership experiences, to share and internalise partnership approaches and to methodically assess the quality and impact of the various partnerships.

Partnership initiatives for 2008 at the Centre level

In 2008, ECDPM will invest in the following partnerships at the Centre level:

- (1) ***An institutional partnership with the African Union Commission*** will be concluded on the basis of a memorandum of understanding and/or work plan. The partnership will include cooperation and institutional development of the African Union at the level of the AU Commission in Addis Ababa and the Permanent Representation of the AU in Brussels on issues such as the implementation of the Joint EU-Africa Strategy, EPAs, institutional rationalisation and African governance. IR&PD will coordinate the partnership and service delivery to the AU in close cooperation with the respective Centre programmes.
- (2) ***A strategic partnership will be established with the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)*** on the basis of a joint proposal that will be elaborated with the three Centre programmes and discussed with SAIIA in Johannesburg in March 2008.
- (3) ***The potential for partnership with strategic collaborators in the Caribbean will be further explored.*** The aim would be to revitalise EU-Caribbean relations and strategic interests by stimulating information dissemination, reflection and analysis on EU-Caribbean cooperation, including on the EPAs and their consequences for the Caribbean region. Preliminary contacts have been established with the Institute of International Relations at the University of the West Indies and with leading Caribbean intellectuals and institutions.
- (4) ***ECDPM will facilitate with IEEI the creation of a Europe-Africa policy research network (EARN).*** Building as much as possible on existing networks and initiatives, EARN will aim to raise public awareness, stimulate debate and dialogue and undertake practical policy research on key policy issues relating to EU-Africa relations and the Joint EU-Africa Strategy and Action Plans in particular.
- (5) ***Partnership with the University of Maastricht, School of Governance.*** Opportunities for establishing a fellowship programme with the School of Governance of UniMaas will be further explored.

The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) aims to improve international cooperation between Europe and countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

Created in 1986 as an independent foundation, the **Centre's objectives** are:

- to enhance the capacity of public and private actors in ACP and other low-income countries; and
- to improve cooperation between development partners in Europe and the ACP Region.

The Centre focuses on **three interconnected themes**:

- Development Policy and International Relations
- Economic and Trade Cooperation
- Governance

The Centre collaborates with other organisations and has a network of contributors in the European and the ACP countries. Knowledge, insight and experience gained from process facilitation, dialogue, networking, infield research and consultations are widely shared with targeted ACP and EU audiences through international conferences, focussed briefing sessions, electronic media and key publications.

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