

OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance

Capacity Building Seminar  
POBAL, Dublin, Ireland  
18-20 April 2007

ENHANCING THE CAPACITY OF PARTNERSHIPS TO  
INFLUENCE POLICY

Professor Mike Geddes  
The Local Government Centre, University of Warwick, UK  
[mike.geddes@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:mike.geddes@wbs.ac.uk)

# The context of this seminar:

- Capacity building seminar, Vienna, December 2006
- Vienna Action statement on partnerships, March 2007

# The what, why and how of influencing policy: issues for the seminar

- **Why** local partnerships may want to influence policy
- **What** dimensions of policy it may be important to influence
- **How** influence can be exerted effectively.

# Why influence policy?

Because local partnerships can add considerable value to the policy development process (Vienna Action statement):

- Bringing together diverse local partners and policy areas, and facilitating the development of cross-cutting perspectives and integrated approaches to multi-dimensional problems.
- Improving vertical communication between policy makers from different governance levels.
- Supporting the better adaptation of policies to local circumstances, needs and opportunities.

# Why influence policy? (Cont'd)

- Identifying the potential conflicts and synergies which exist between different policies.
- Providing leadership, building trust and consensus on priorities.
- Integrating the concerns of civil society and the private sector into strategic planning exercises.
- Sharing good practice, which has been tested on the ground, and offering know-how from practical experience on what works and what does not.

## **Some examples from Vienna**

**The Vibrant Communities Calgary Partnership, Canada is concerned with poverty alleviation, and sees influencing policy as a major objective because existing policies of government agencies are neither systematic nor systemic.**

**The Territorial Employment Pact Berlin-Neukölln, Germany, as a local alliance for economic development and employment, recognizes that acting locally has to be supported by all levels of governance, and this can need policy change.**

**The Styrian Employment Pact, Austria sees the need to ‘anchor’ employment policy in other policy areas at provincial level, in order to mainstream employment objectives across a number of policy domains.**

**The Ballyhoura partnership (Ballyhoura Development Ltd, Ireland), operating in a rural area, needs to influence policy to ensure that national policies have rural issues on the agenda and that such policies are ‘rural proofed’ at the development stage.**

# Influencing what level of policy?

- Influencing the policies of **local** partners/agencies.
- Influencing **regional and national** policies.
  - \* Policies of 'parent' departments which set the rules by which a local partnership operates
  - \* Policies of agencies which are important to the outcomes which a local partnership is trying to achieve.
- Influencing **EU** policies.

## Examples from Vienna

The **Central Uusimaa Partnership, Finland**, aims to create joint responsibility and more positive attitudes among **local** partners to support employment. This means influencing the policies of both public agencies and businesses.

**Austrian Territorial Employment Pacts** have joined together in a highly innovative way to develop a Green Paper proposing new policies for the elderly, with implications for **national as well as provincial and regional** tiers of government. They saw the need to take co-ordinated action because of the need to review policies for the elderly in a way which cut across traditional policy making processes.

The **Dublin Inner City Partnership** takes the view that the voices of the communities it represents should be heard by both **national politicians and civil servants** on policy issues such as local development and inner city regeneration.

The **Berlin Neukölln TEP** argues that it is extremely important for local partnerships to exert influence on the **EU** to ensure that new policies continue to recognize the importance of local partnership.

# Influencing different **aspects** of policy:

- the delivery of **existing** policy
  - or the development of **new** policy/programmes
  - Or influencing **resource allocation**, especially public expenditure
- 
- Influencing the **content** of policy
  - or the **process** through which policy is made, ie the relationships between partnerships and policy makers.

## Examples from Vienna

The **Ballyhoura partnership** in **Ireland** is concerned to influence both existing and new policies to ensure that they meet the needs of rural areas such as that served by the partnership. The partnership's goals include securing specifically rural-oriented policies to the flexible implementation of universal policies to influencing resource allocation, for example to improve rural infrastructure.

The **Austrian TEP** intervention on policies for the elderly has seen partnerships lead the development of new policy.

The **Vibrant Communities Calgary** partnership has worked with local and provincial government on both the development and implementation of a range of policies, from discounted transport and employment standards to policies for a living wage and assured income for the severely handicapped.

The **Dublin Inner City Partnership** takes the view that influencing the content of policy to better meet the needs of local residents is also likely to influence the process of policy making, and recognizes that this may mean conflict with government over certain issues.

# How to influence?

- By means of effective networking and exploitation of the channels of communication which exist within multi-level governance systems.
- Horizontal collaboration between local partnerships
- Exchange of staff between partnerships and policy units in regional/national governments;
- Regular meetings between partnerships and policy makers
- Protocols

## Examples from Vienna

In developing the Green Paper for the Elderly, the **Austrian TEPs** were able to draw on the strength that came from the participation of all the TEPs in the country – but it was necessary to continually work to maintain this unity (horizontal partnership).

The **Central Uusimaa partnership** has developed a number of innovative modes of networking. These include the presence on the local partnership board of several individuals with national reputations and connections, who can act on behalf of the partnership.

The **Dublin Inner City Partnership** sees its role as one of advocacy on behalf of its local community, a function which ranges from lobbying prominent politicians to mobilizing the community. One aspect of its work has been to draw up a protocol to help manage the sometimes conflictual relationship between the local authority and community groups represented in the partnership.

The **TEP Berlin Neukölln** emphasizes the importance of networking across the tiers of multi-level governance, from the European to the local level, and the importance of the multi-level brokering role which this implies.

# Implications for governments

The Vienna Action Statement recognizes that if the value of local partnerships' input to policy making is to be accepted, there will be implications for governments as well as for partnerships themselves. These include:

- the need for government policies which are flexible and adaptable to change;
- the need for channels of communication within multi-level governance arrangements that are open to inputs from the bottom up; and
- the need for a recognition within the policy process of local diversity and the value of evidence from practice.

# Implications for partnerships

The Vienna Action Statement also recognizes that on the side of partnerships there is a need to:

- ensure transparency and accountability of partnership structures;
- work on the basis of sound local knowledge and expertise, making reference to local data and indicators;
- demonstrate a strategic approach which goes beyond the delivery of projects and programmes and can adapt to changes in a globalised economy;
- demonstrate capacity to enhance policy outcomes through appropriate monitoring and evaluation; and
- network partnerships at the national level and learn lessons from international experience to ensure efficient dialogue with government.

# Key issues for the Dublin seminar

- **Why** would your partnership want to influence policy?
- **What** aspects and levels of policy is it important to influence? What value can your partnership add to the policy process?
- **How** can policy best be influenced? Which methods work well? What are the barriers?
- What are the implications for **governments**?
- What are the implications for **partnerships**?