



*Approaches to  
joining up locally,  
that prove successful*

---

The experience of  
Irish Partnership Companies

Declan Dunne CEO Ballymun  
Partnership [www.ballymun.org](http://www.ballymun.org)

# Key data on the economic and social context of Ballymun

---

Largest Government designated disadvantaged area in Ireland

Biggest high rise local authority housing scheme in Ireland

**One of Europe's largest  
Regeneration projects €2.5  
Billion**

5,000 families moving home

Twice the national unemployment rate

55% single parent families



# Key data on the economic and social context of Ballymun

---

- Substance abuse, heroin and cocaine
- 550 registered methadone users
- One in five women dependent on benzodiazepines, anti-depressant and sleeping tablets
- Alcohol abuse, poor educational attainment
- Twice the incidence of all major diseases except skin cancer
- One in five children clinically depressed

# How did the Partnership start?

---

- One of the first 11 Irish Partnership companies, established in 1991
- By 1995, 38 Partnerships in areas of disadvantage
- EU funded 1991 to 2000
- Government Funded from 2000
- Partnerships now cover the whole of Ireland
- Initially established to address long term unemployment



# What were the initial barriers and how have they been addressed?

---

- **Local politicians feared that their role in assisting local people might be usurped by Partnership staff**  
*Addressed by giving them Board membership*
- **Concern by some local state agencies that Partnerships would highlight shortcomings in their services**  
*Government policy supports “Better Local Government”  
(Opatja Recommendation: **Building local government capacity**)*
- **Existing community groups were suspicious of paid community workers**  
*Potential impact on community activism by professionalisation of the sector*

# National support to facilitate the local joining up

---

## ***What worked.....***

- Good Programme Guidelines
- Structured Reporting
- Dissemination of good practice
- Global grants & the freedom to develop local area action plans that reflect what works locally
- Effective financial monitoring
- Statistical tracking of successful outcomes collated nationally for both the EU and Government
- Building support with Government and policy makers

Opatja Recommendation:

***Use a performing public administration or external intermediary body/agency as a leading force***

# National support to facilitate the local joining up

---

## *What didn't work....*

- When guidelines become restrictions and limit innovation
- When qualitative evaluation is less effective than quantitative reporting
- When there are insufficient linkages to the National Anti Poverty and other Strategies
- When the level of financial monitoring, paperwork and internal audit is disproportionate to the sums involved
- When the focus on outputs is greater than focus on outcomes
- When the coherence between the growing number of programmes managed by the national intermediary is limited

What are today areas of work where joining up is easy and what are the areas where it is more difficult?

---

### ***Easier***

- Employers, Recruitment, training
- Children, Youngballymun, Childcare Resource Centre
- Education, Principals Network

### ***Less easy***

- Department of Education, centralised system
- Competitive and conflicting groups

**Opatjia Recommendation: *Provide investor incentives through attractive recruitment strategies and educated workforce at county level***

---



- We provide through the Local Employment Service a free recruitment service to employers
- We successfully recruited staff for new hotels from the long term unemployed
- We negotiated a local labour clause with IKEA for 50% local employees
- We have will organise the recruitment for IKEA, 500 jobs in total

# Dublin North Skillsnet

(Opatjia Recommendation:

*Improve the cooperation between training institutions and businesses)*



- New enterprise led entity
- 30 Businesses joined this new partnership
- Elect their own chair and hired staff
- €550,000 training fund secured from government
- Up to 90% of training costs free to employers
- Jointly supported by the Chamber of Commerce
- Ballymun partnership is the promoter and secured the funding from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment

**(Opatja Recommendation: *Make use of international technical experience*)**

- €15million was secured for an early intervention & prevention programme for children
- Funded by Government and The Atlantic Philanthropies
- Partnership of Local Authority, Health Service, Department of education, Partnership and local groups
- Eminent International Evaluation Committee appointed to oversee evaluation

Opatja Recommendations:

## ***“From a project-based to a sustainable strategic partnership”***

---

### **Board structure mirrors the Irish National Social Partnership Model**

- ***State Sector***

- Government Departments, State Agencies and organisations

(Opatja Recommendation: ***Technical support for partnerships***)

- ***Social Partners***

- Trade Unions, Employers, Farming Organisations

(Opatja Recommendation ***Support for leadership within partnerships***)

- ***Community & Voluntary Sector***

- Local NGOs, residents groups, communities of interest, e.g. disability, women etc

- ***Elected Public Representatives***

- Politicians

Opatja Recommendations:

## **“From a project-based to a sustainable strategic partnership”**

---

### ***Independent Local Companies***

- **The Partnership Companies are independent not-for-profit companies**
- **Core funding comes from the Irish Government**
  - Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht\* Affairs through Pobal, under the
  - Local Development Social Inclusion Programme,
  - a sub-measure of the National Development Plan.
- **Board elects its own Chairperson**
- **Multiple sources of funding**
  - In our case, Local Development Social Inclusion funds
  - Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment funds
  - Department of Health funds
  - Philanthropic funds
  - \*The Gaeltacht are regions where the Irish Language is the main language

Opatjia Recommendations:

## ***“From a project-based to a sustainable strategic partnership”***

---

Some of our Activities – *in our case:*

**(Opatjia Recommendation: *Coordination between different policy areas* )**

- Local **Employment** Service  
(Opatjia Recommendation: ***Devise a regional (county) action plan for job creation***)
- Local **Enterprise** Centre, business start up space and training
- Local **Training** budget for employers
- Early Intervention and Prevention Programme for **Children**
- Local **Childcare** information Centre and Childminding support
- Support for **Education** schools and childcare facilities

# The Irish Partnership Model

*How partnerships and state agencies work together*

---

- Irish Partnerships can help the state job agencies to work more effectively with long term unemployed
- Officials accept this method
- The Local Employment Service (LES) is run by Partnerships as part of a dual stranded national employment service
- Annual budget of close to €1m Euro in each partnership area for the LES

## Opatja Recommendations:

# ***Organise SME and start-up support to foster job creation***

---

- An NGO can work with a more **person-centred approach** than the state.
- **Voluntary not compulsory** engagement by the person reaches those in need of activation
- **Tailored and flexible** training supports
- Advice guidance, mentoring and job placement
- **Employer and trainer networks**
- Self employment and social economy initiatives

# Barriers to progression

---

***The lack of educational qualifications and marketable skills employers need are not the only barriers to progression***

- Self Esteem and motivation
- Attitude and interpersonal skills
- Self dependency vs. state dependency
- Social development and childhood development
- Mental well being
- Addiction

(Opatjia Recommendations: ***Enhance and expand knowledge- and market-based training programs***)

# How Irish partnerships can work effectively together with local agencies and officials

---

***A complex cocktail of issues for the individual needs a flexible and tailored response***

EXAMPLE:

The Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT) project

- Unemployed people without formal education
- Trained in IT Skills employers badly needed
- Selected based on competency not education
- Result: Employers skilled staff needs met, unemployed now employed
- Now a national programme co-funded by big IT companies and government

(Opatja Recommendation: ***Improve the cooperation between training institutions and businesses***)

# Why Irish partnerships are so successful

---

## ***Small investment yields disproportionately positive outcomes***

- A win win solution
- Every sectors agenda is heard and can benefit
- An Innovation /R&D space for agencies, who are bound by regulation in their own agency, to try new things out
- A place for people from the same and different sectors to find out what is going on, sometimes in their own organisation!
- Low power status threatens no-one
- Breaks down professional isolation

# Practical Problem Solving Approach

---

- Brings a practical understanding of what is happening on the ground
  - Needs driven agenda based on evidence
  - Action Orientation to address gaps in services
  - Leads to new and improved services for disadvantaged and unemployed people
  - Independence adds credibility with local people

# Brokered Multi Sector Networks build Social Capital

---

- Improved flow of knowledge between organisations
  - Better coordination of employment and social programmes
    - Area Based Plans with input from all
      - Education, Children, Economic Development, Enterprise, Employment.
    - Thematic Working Groups, are multi sector groups and focus on a single theme
      - Research Studies, followed by Initiatives
- (Opatja Recommendation: **Consider the establishment of thematic working groups at county level**)*
- Networks are single sector groups and focus on sectoral objectives
    - School Principals, Childcare Facility Managers, Employers, Trainers, etc
  - Collaborative work, joint planning, joint action

# ***Relevance for Croatia and transferability***

---

**BUILDING EFFECTIVE LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS: Croatia, January - July 2007**

***“There is a broad recognition of the need for partnership working at local level***

- to aid the process of reconstruction in Vukovar,***
- to meet the challenges and maximise the opportunities of EU accession in both localities.***

***This recognition is apparent in the partnerships which have developed around the ROPs/County Strategies in both Varazhdin and Vukovar-Sirmium***

***Understandably, the emerging county-level partnerships in Vukovar-Sirmium and Varazhdin are still at this point mostly at the stage of consolidating membership and ensuring the conditions for real dialogue.”***

# Need for Sustainable Partnerships

---

*"The partnerships in Croatia were mainly initiated through Technical Assistance (TA) projects in the context of CARDS*

## ***There are essentially two different types of formalised local partnerships in Croatia:***

- *one type includes County partnerships to develop a Regional Operational Plan (ROP). This can be found in both counties of Vukovar-Sirmium and Varazdin.*
- *The other type a partnership has been piloted as Local Partnership for Employment in some counties with the aim of finding solutions for employment and social exclusion problems. The county of Vukovar-Sirmium has been one of the eight counties where this approach has been piloted*

# Strengths & opportunities

---

***“In both Regions the actors are in broad agreement as to the main priorities:***

- *Efforts are focused on the **stimulation of economic growth** by restructuring existing or creating new companies and attracting investment and reducing unemployment by better matching supply and demand and by raising the qualifications of the less-skilled labour force.*
- *There is also **general recognition of the need for effective cooperation in using resources and in problem solving**. This recognition takes material form in several project partnerships in which most of the actors are already willing to cooperate and recognise the advantage of cooperation over competition as regards concrete objectives and actions.*
- *It seems that **a multiplicity of resources is available** either from national programmes but also from county and city level authorities.*
- *In addition, some European Funds are already available and they number 30”*

# The Partnership Structure: Organisational Challenges

---

“In addition, some **European Funds** are already available and their number **will increase substantially** in the near future following accession to the EU.

In Croatia, the nature of financial sources is particularly important since the accession to the EU opens **many possibilities for funding partnerships.**

The sine qua non is that they be clearly integrated in the within the relevant policy measures and that their implementation is in conformity with the programming documents negotiated with the Commission.

**The partnerships have no own-budget and need adequate resources.** The main funding mechanism is based on the Regional Operations Plan that will identify the projects that can draw on financial resources allocated within the national framework.

Other sources of finance arise in connection with projects funded under national or European Programmes in which Croatia can participate, such as the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.”

# Creating Employment Opportunities And Improving Employability

**“An additional challenging issue is business involvement, particularly small firms in the craft sector, but also big companies, *i.e.* those in the food, leather and metal industries, and their contribution to local or county development.**

## **Strengths and Weaknesses**

- limited scope for special bottom-up regional and/or local economic and employment development initiatives.
- The transfer of financial resources from the national level to the county and city levels
- In terms of partnerships, a two-fold approach stem from different ministries.
- Here, the recommendation is to combine and connect the different national and county approaches into one common strategy (see also below).
- In addition, both strategies link to different development agencies.
- It appears that both areas are ripe for a strategic partnership (‘umbrella partnership’) which encompasses both local and county levels.”

# Paternalism vs. Partnership

---

Ireland is no different to other places

- We face the same difficulties with agencies sometimes perceived to be inflexible
  - The Business sector learned long ago that command and control is less effective with an educated population
- A more effective modern approach to problem solving is drawn from Marketing
  - “Pull” vs. “Push” strategies
  - Leadership by attraction and vision
  - Still some resistance by our public sector to modernisation
- Our role is to demonstrate the practical benefits of joint working
  - as an effective way to meet your individual and organisational needs

# How can Partnerships activate others

---

## ***We are a place where different sectors choose to partner each other***

- We are not another empire
- You own us

## **We provide a place where**

- often difficult issues and sometimes Intransigent people come together

## **The elephant in the room will be discussed**

- Our peers will all be there
- It is less easy for us to keep our heads in the sand

# Partnerships role in policy development and implementation

---

## Partnerships in Ireland are engaged in local, county and national structures

- They bring **to** the city and national fora their knowledge of what works on the ground locally
- They bring **from** the city and national fora knowledge of existing and emerging national strategies and the challenges of implementation

# Horizontal and Vertical Integration

## *The Ballymun Partnership experience*

---

### **National Directorships**

- **The National Education Welfare Board**  
[www.newb.ie](http://www.newb.ie), the state agency responsible for school attendance in Ireland, representing the Irish Minister for Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
- **The Irish National Childcare Coordination Committee**, chaired by the Director General of the office of the Minister for Children [www.omc.ie](http://www.omc.ie)
- **Planet -The Irish National Organisation of Partnership Companies** national management committee [www.planet.ie](http://www.planet.ie)
  - The Planet Children's Policy Group

# Regional & Local Integration

---

## Regional Directorships

- **Dublin City Children's Services Committee**
- **Dublin City Childcare Committee**
- **The North Dublin Development Corporation** [www.nordubco.ie](http://www.nordubco.ie)

## Local Directorships

- **Ballymun Regeneration Limited** [www.brl.ie](http://www.brl.ie), a €2.5billion regeneration project which is rehousing 5,000 local families
- **Axis Community Arts Centre** [www.axis-ballymun.ie](http://www.axis-ballymun.ie)

### **(Chair the following local Boards)**

- The Community and Family Training Agency
- The Holy Spirit Boys National School
- The Dublin Northwest Childcare Resource Centre

# Key Success Factors

---

- **Global grants**, to develop local responses to local problems
  - *Not standardised delivery of services*
  - *Need for Sustainable Partnerships*
  - *Multi thematic focus because employability is multi faceted*
- **Reward collaboration**
  - *What gets rewarded gets done*

## **Key issues** in joining up locally, in building and maintaining the Partnership

---

### ***Move partners towards common horizon objectives***

- *To overcome conflict & competition*

### ***New thinking skills are required for partnership working***

- *New facilitation skills are needed*
- *Proven techniques are available*

### ***It takes time and perseverance to bed down***

- *Seek early wins to demonstrate benefits*

### ***Equality of power is essential to keep all partners engaged***



---

# Thank You

Declan Dunne CEO Ballymun  
Partnership [www.ballymun.org](http://www.ballymun.org)

