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## **Cross-sectoral cooperation for rural development in old and new EU member states: a comparative case study of English and Polish area-based partnerships**

### **Abstract**

*This paper comprises a comparative case study of rural partnerships in the United Kingdom and in Poland. The research is based on a questionnaire survey of representative key personnel (leaders) of partnerships and a background assessment of project and partnership documentation. The main differences and similarities of partnership features are described with conclusions as to possible implementation strategies for cross-sectoral cooperation for local development in rural areas in new European Union member states.*

**Key words:** local governance, cross-sector cooperation, area-based partnerships, rural areas, LEADER type programmes, Poland

## **1. Introduction**

In contemporary practice and theories of local development, especially in rural areas, cross-sectoral partnerships and voluntary cooperation between local communities are considered as crucial for achieving beneficial economic and social outcomes. The establishment of formal institutional groups collaborating for the realisation of common targets is considered as a largely self-organizing process by which local stakeholders gain greater independence from the national government and play a more prominent role in local social and economic development. It is considered that bottom-up cooperation is frequently more efficient in solving local development challenges than the top-down efforts of central administrations (Westholm 1999). These decentralisation processes are evident especially in the more highly developed democratic countries (e.g. in USA or United Kingdom and other Western European countries), but similar ideas are now being implemented in new European Union member states, most commonly based on Western democracies' experiences (as in Poland).

The meaning of the term “partnership” is not altogether clear and it had been used in a number of different contexts (Stenlas 1999). According to the OECD (1999, p. 18), partnerships are systems of formalized cooperation, grounded in legally binding arrangements or informal understanding, co-operative working relationships, and mutually adopted plans among a number of institutions. They involve agreements on policy and programme objectives and sharing of responsibility, resources, risks and benefits over a specified period of time. In this research, we use the similar term of area-based partnerships which is defined as more or less formal long-term cooperation in realising common aims in a specific geographic region, between public, private and volunteer (civil) sector actors, accepting the principle of sharing responsibility, risks, costs, as well as benefits (Stenlas 1999, Biderman et al. 2004).

In this paper, we compare the main features of local partnership development in rural areas in Poland undergoing transformation with local partnerships in highly developed country with a long democratic tradition, with rather delocalised forms of local democracy (United Kingdom). The main object of research interest was a comparison of the functioning of area-based partnerships aimed at environmental planning and local development and acting in broadly similar rural environments. The main aim of this paper is to identify the main differences between British and Polish partnership features which have the strongest influence on the scope for cooperation and the public participation in common works. It is especially interesting because most of research made before has been based only on West European cases, e.g. PRIDE project (Esparcia et al. 2000, Cherrett & Moseley 2001, Moseley 2003) and other highly developed countries (Baker 1993, Freshwater et al. 1993).

To identify the main features of Polish and British partnerships, we undertook comparative case studies of partnerships (in LEADER: Local Action Groups) in two regions located in two river valley lowlands, not far from regional urban centres. The partnerships worked entirely independently, so any similarities are not the outcomes of cooperation. In the UK, the two partnerships investigated were The Levels and Moors Partnership and Levels and Moors LEADER+ Partnership in Somerset near Bristol in South West England. In Poland, the two partnerships investigated were the Middle Odra River Valley Partnership and twinned Middle Odra River Valley Partnership LEADER+ in Lower Silesia near Wroclaw.

The main research is based on documentary analysis of unpublished documents (e.g. partnership strategies, annual reports) and questionnaire surveys of representative key personnel of the partnerships. Questions dealt with general information: policy territory, members of partnership, partnership formation etc. We also inquired into organisational structure, resources, project initiators and actors and aims and constraints.

The first part of the paper deals with the theoretical advantages and threats postulated in the literature. Next, we compare the main features of partnerships, and, finally, we conclude how the LEADER-type programmes procedures could be improved to better facilitate partnership working and beneficial effects in post-socialist countries, like Poland.

## **2. The advantages and threats of cross-sector cooperation**

In traditional governance systems, local authorities have carried out their responsibilities through their own organization. But this is not the only possible relationship. There may be advantages for learning and adaptability in the plurality of methods of service provision involving both the local authority and range of other organizations (Clark and Stewart 1994). Partnerships are a tool by which the new local and regional governance is managed (Tomaney and Pike 2006). Local cooperation between different entities can bring many positive outcomes. At the local level, Nunn and Rosentraub (1997) identify such types of improvement associated with all interjuridical cooperation as: economic development (e.g. improved business climate, “the capture” of wandering business companies, more entrepreneurial activity); municipal service (e.g. improved cost effectiveness and better public services); physical environment (e.g. improved environmental quality); social and political benefits (such as higher citizen participation in public decision making and more inclusive representation).

All these results can influence each other. For example, increased citizen participation and involvement in solving social problems can influence the quality of services in an administrative area. The higher quality of services may contribute to improving local resource management and may contribute to improving the quality of the environment. The typical advantages of group work (collaboration) include economies of scale, reaching the “critical mass” in specialised activities, the synergy effect, the avoidance of replication of effort (and the avoidance of making the same mistakes). The establishment of community networks helps promote a critical mass of engaged individuals and organizations so that new opportunities for engagement open up and those who act as representatives on partnerships, and similar bodies, do not become isolated and divorced from their communities (Bayley 2003, Tomaney and Pike 2006).

Partnership, as a form of local cooperation, can potentially create added value, budget enlargement, new networks, better mutual understanding (shared vision) and a reduction in duplication of provision (Hutchinson 1994). In the context of EU policy, partnerships are expected to be: consensus building, promoting the building the local strategies, facilitating co-ordinated actions, giving access to different skills, promoting innovation, and strengthening local identity and competitiveness (Westholm 1999). The involvement of the community sector has allowed partnerships to tap into valuable resources such as local knowledge through genuine local and community experience and views (Scott 2003).

From the alternative perspective, some authors identify some threats arising from multi-sectoral formal collaboration. According to Considine (2003) density of ties between a group of firms and government agencies may well enhance economic development, but it can also be a means by which outsiders are kept from participating, some classes of insiders are restricted to limited roles and information flows are confined to one or two well-worn pathways.

Sometimes “partnership” groups can give voice and power to those who seek to exclude particular groups from rural spaces (Kovach 2000, Yarwood 2002). Stöhr (1993) says that broad decision-making processes in local initiative networks are usually an important precondition for the broad local distribution of benefits, but they can also, however, lead to inefficient resource allocation and rigid local structures. The growth of partnerships tends to exacerbate problems of poor coordination and organisational proliferation, which the partnership model is supposed to solve (Peck and Tickell 1994).

An additional problem, which can make partnerships with the voluntary and community sector difficult for both business and local government, is the sheer diversity of the voluntary sector. It can be very hard to know which group should be engaged in the process of partnership building in the field or locality that leaders want to work in. Especially in rural areas, issues of isolation can make it hard to identify the relevant groups to work effectively on common goals (Osborn 1998). With central government promoting the creation of partnerships, it is often able to define ‘rules of the game’ by setting targets, requiring the preparation of strategies and delivery plans, and by ensuring that only some partnerships become eligible for additional resources if their membership and other criteria are met through a process of accreditation. In other words, they could be a top-down intervention aimed to achieve local network formation, which sometimes does not lead to a lasting impact at the local level (Bayley 2003). Sometimes partnership support programmes can create barriers to entry. If a government programme limits partnerships only to those communities that meet specific criteria, such as those with a high level of unemployment, number of inhabitants etc., the neighbouring communities, even if strongly connected in various ways, will be excluded from the benefits that the participation in a programme brings. Partnerships can also be used to reduce government costs, while creating the illusion of continued support, or may be merely a tool to compensate for the withdrawal of state provision of services (Freshwater et al. 1993, Shucksmith 2000). In this case, they do not really produce added value, except where they outperform the state service in terms of efficiency. The source of partnership project financing is very important. Peck and Tickell (1994) assert that partnerships tend to foster a short-term non-strategic approach, which can have the effect of insulating decisions from the arena of local accountability. Especially if partnerships have limited resources, they often realise projects which could be financed by external funds (the realisation of sponsors’ policy), but which are not necessarily important for realisation of common partnership goals (the realisation of their own partnership goals).

### **3. Main features of Polish and British partnerships**

In our study, we intentionally chose local partnerships located in rural areas in low lying areas of significant river basins. The general features of landscape (with the special role of river in the centre of the area) were the factors underpinning the local economy and enhancing the group identity and

'closing the network', which is typical in area-based partnerships, where the physical geographical features have big influence on socio-economic activities (Baker 1993).

The Levels and Moors Partnership (LAMP) and Somerset Levels and Moors LEADER Partnership (SLM LEADER) lies in a coastal region south of Bristol, surrounded by higher ground and divided up by the low hills and ridges of the Mid-Somerset Hills. The area is characterised by a flat open landscape of wet pasture, arable and wetland divided by drainage ditches, in which the peat workings and nature reserves contrast with the rectilinear planned agricultural landscape of the Moors. In the surrounding hills, woodland, hedges and orchards predominate. The nutrient poor wet grassland, species-rich fen meadows and flood pastures are immensely rich in wildlife and are protected as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. The traditional peat industry (used for horticultural purposes) is currently under strict control. The region has no significant tradition of tourism.

The Middle Odra River Partnerships (MORVP and MORVP LEADER) are located in the middle Odra river valley, near Wrocław regional capital city. In the partnership territory, there are valuable areas with regard to the natural environment, including fragments of the valley with a number of old river beds and broad areas of riparian forests. Some parts of these areas qualify to be protected by the EU NATURA 2000 system. The flat area has never been a well known tourist region; and there was no tourist infrastructure at the start of the partnership (no marked tourists paths and roads, few accommodation places and attractions).

The LAMP partnership in the UK is an older structure, which was created in 1995, as a Countryside Agency<sup>1</sup> initiative. It could not apply for a grant from EU LEADER programme, because it covered an area of some 64,000 hectares inhabited by approx. 120,000 people and was therefore deemed too large. As a result, in 2001, the Somerset County Council decided to promote a new structure (SLM LEADER), based on almost the same group of the parish councils, only with the exclusion of 10 northern parishes, which enabled a decrease in the number of inhabitants to approx. 78,000 people and, in this way, to meet the LEADER requirements. This was approved as a LEADER + project.

The Polish MORVP was created in 2002 with support of the Environment Partnership Foundation from Krakow which realized a bigger programme financed from the Polish-American Freedom Foundation. The partnership area covers 16 municipalities (228,000 hectares) in the Odra River valley between Wrocław (the regional capital city) and Głogów. It is inhabited by approx. 205,000 people, with Głogów town with nearly 70,000 citizens. The MORVP LEADER, created due to LEADER constraints, is smaller and covers 10 municipalities (160,000 ha) inhabited by approx. 91,000 people, with farming visually dominant in the landscape but by no means dominant in economic terms.

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<sup>1</sup> The Countryside Agency was a national level public sector body responsible for landscape protection, informal recreation and rural development. It was restructured in 2006 into two new bodies.

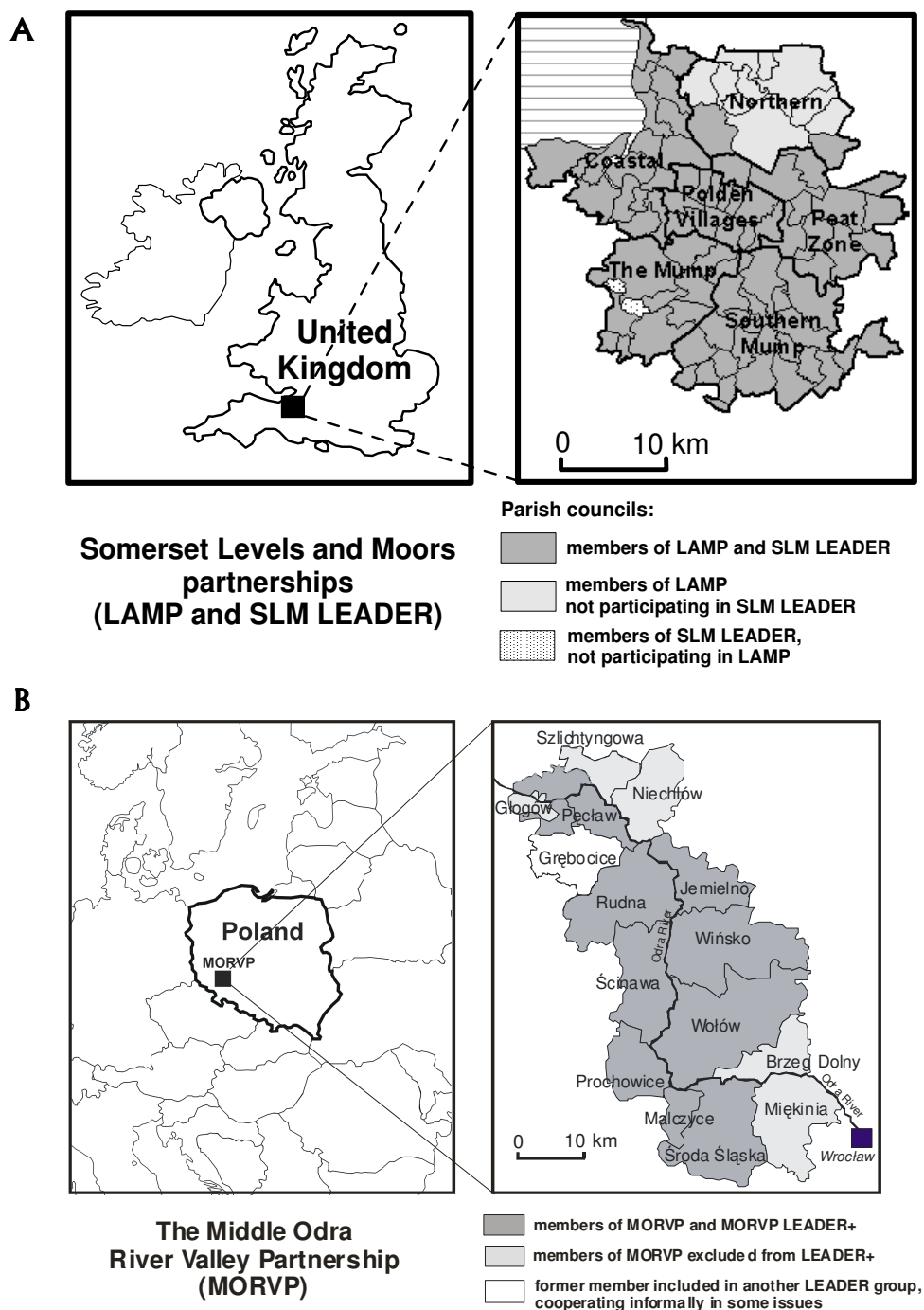


Figure 1: The schematic map of British (A) and Polish (B) Partnership.

The UK LAMP and SLM LEADER groups are informal, unincorporated partnerships with Somerset County Council acting as 'legal body'. The LAMP serves the Somerset Levels and Moors Parish Councils<sup>2</sup>. There are 86 full member parishes, which make up the Levels and Moors Parish Council Forum which meets annually. The Parish Councils represent local interests including

<sup>2</sup> A parish is the lowest level of administrative unit in Britain, but has many less functional responsibilities than the Polish 'gmina' and typically has a smaller area.

those of farmers, landowners, traders, young or retired residents, rural businesses and the unemployed, but have few statutory powers. They have organised themselves into six 'Parish Groups' based on their distinct landscapes and common interests.

The initial MORVP has no formal legal status and was based on signed declarations of cooperation with secretariat managed by Ecological Foundation "Green Action" from Legnica (out of the partnership territory) as a legal body. All the institutional members form a Partnership Assembly which meets once a year. The supporting (advisory) bodies are subject-oriented work groups which consist of all representatives of member or non-member institutions, experts and volunteers, but most of them are not in regular work and the real level of attendance at meetings was low before the LEADER programme implementation. The project and partnership policy is implemented mainly by the partnership secretariat (EFGA) based on general discussions, Partnership Assembly resolutions and work group advice. The secretariat administration has been financed from realised projects so far (not by members of partnership) and has no stable source of financing.

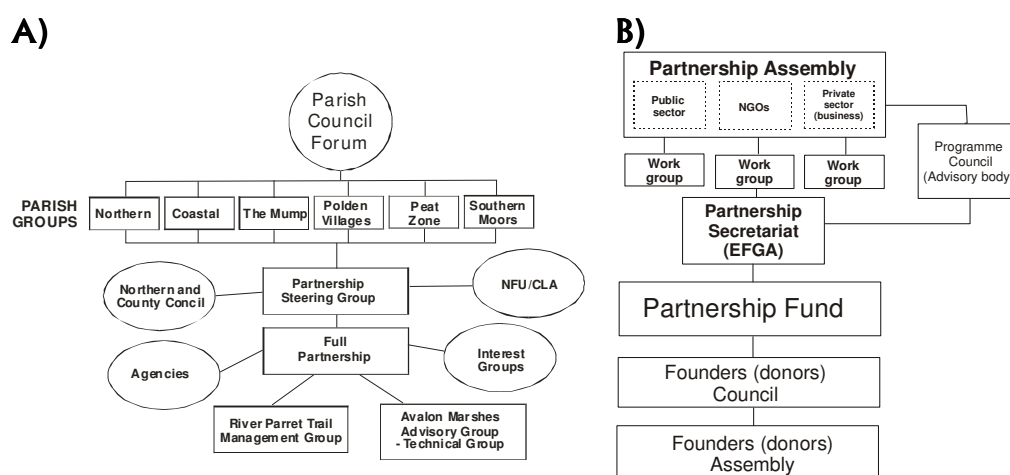


Figure 2: The schematic structure of LAMP (A) and MORVP (B)

An important tool of the MORVP policy is the Partnership Fund (PF) of the Middle Odra River Valley. It gathers internal and external financial resources from free donations, subsidies etc to support local initiatives undertaken in the partnership area. The financial management and secretariat is provided by EFGA, but is managed by a public Funder's (donors) Council. The mission of the PF is to stimulate and support sustainable development of municipalities and local communities, in a manner consistent with the protection of nature and environment of the Middle Odra River Valley.

In 2004 EFGA received a grant from LEADER Pilot Programme (PPL+) Scheme I to enhance the partnership organization and to create a common Integrated Strategy for Rural Areas Development. According to programme requirements, all partnerships which wanted to apply for grants from Scheme II (local projects realisation) had to register as a foundation, association or union of associations, so in 2006 part of MORVP members registered as a new

Foundation MORVP LEADER, with the settlement in the same place as old MORVP secretariat (EFGA settlement in Legnica). So, in general, it is almost the same partnership, but smaller due to PPL+ constraints. The personnel of the MORVP LEADER are almost the same as in MORVP and the two work together.

In the membership structure of the researched partnerships, we see a greater share of local NGOs in LEADER-type partnership, and some external institutions more dominant in initial partnerships (similarly in Polish and British case). In Polish partnerships we have no state institutions in the collaborative structure. It is difficult to compare the English parish council and Polish municipalities (gminas), but the group of parish council have a similar area and number of inhabitants as a "gmina". In Polish partnerships we observe a lower number of business units engaged in local cooperation.

Table 1: The structure of partnership members in the end of 2005

Partnership members:	LAMP	SLM LEADER	MORVP	MORVP LEADER**
NGOs with the main office located in the partnership territory	4	13	11	8
NGOs with the main office located out of the partnership territory	8	0	6*	2*
State institutions (state agencies, ministries)	6	0	0	0
Local government : gminy (PL)/parish councils (UK)	86 (in 6 groups)	78 (in 6 groups)	16	10
County (UK) / powiat (PL) government	1	1	4	3
Local private business (entrepreneurs)	0	8	1	1
Other bodies with interests in area (e.g. forest inspectorates, regional agencies etc.)	0	0	2	3

\* the partnership leader (EFGA) has settlement in Legnica, out of the partnership territory.

\*\* registered in court as a foundation in 2006.

The research on the sources of partnership resources show some differences (table 2). In MORVP, the role of internal NGOs is of similar importance to the local government role in partnership actions. The NGOs were the initiators of partnership creation and have the leading role in project creation and implementation. In the British partnership, the local or county government had the greater role in supplying resources. The biggest difference is in business engagement – visible in British partnership and almost wholly absent in the Polish one (the national forest inspectorates in MORVP can not be treated as the typical business).



Table 2: Source of internal partnership resources at the end of 2005  
(without external support programmes).

The average of evaluation in issues of capital, personnel, equipment and knowledge from questionnaire survey (0-min, 1 – max)

Partnership members :	LAMP	SLM LEADER	MORVP	MORVP LEADER
internal NGOs	0.25	0.25	0.75	0.75
external NGOs	0.25	•	0.50	0.50
state institutions (state agencies, ministries)	0.38	•	•	•
local government	0.50	0.38	0.75	0.75
county (UK)/poviat (PL) government	0.63	0.13	0.75	0.75
local business	0.13	0.25	0.00	0.00
other public bodies with interests in area (e.g. forest inspectorates, regional agencies etc.)	•	•	0.38	0.38

• it does not occur

In all cases, the dominant source of funds was from the public sector either at national, regional or local government level. In the Polish partnership the secretariat (EFGA and its personnel) also had big role in partnership work. It was very effective at gaining external grants, but in this leadership model the participation of other local units and local communities in decisions and project implementation was lower than in the British partnership model.

In LAMP nearly 50% of projects were developed by working groups in which there were representatives of Parish Councils (table 3). They were followed by initiatives proposed by the county council administration in board members groups. In SLM LEADER, 80% of projects were developed by members or units working in partnership. In MORVP almost all main projects (90%) were devised by partnership office staff (EFGA). If we take into consideration only board members - in LAMP all the projects were developed by local government representatives, but in MORVP NGOs were the most common type of project proposer. In older partnerships, the role of leader-initiator (county council in LAMP and EFGA in MORVP) in resource contribution and project development is bigger than in the younger LEADER networks. The change is positive – the role of other group members grows in time, in a way which meets with a more all-embracing partnership concept.

Table 3: The units developing/proposing main partnership projects to realization (estimated share in %) according to partnership key officers (2005)

Unit:	LAMP	SLM LEADER	MORVP	MORVP LEADER*
Stable working groups	50	20	0	-
Partnership office staff	25	0	90	0
Board members	25	0	10	40
Partnership members	0	80	0	60

\* The parts of one projects submitted in June 2006 to Scheme II PPL+.

The main projects in the LAMP are chosen by the Steering Group. In SLM LEADER they are approved in the six Programme Management Group meetings, where the projects are appraised using a standard scoring system (using points as devised by the partnership) based upon objectives, quality and conformity with LEADER requirements. Projects recommended are then sent to the regional Government Office for final approval and to contract and run the project. In MORVP the projects were chosen by the secretariat (EFGA) and the declarations of participation in them were signed and most commonly sent by post. The projects for LEADER PP Scheme II were proposed at meetings by members of partnership and board members of MORVP LEADER Foundation. The general list of projects was chosen by board members and submitted to the PPL+ implementation institution.

The partnership decisions are implemented in LAMP through the actions of the staff employed by the County Council for this purpose and through the action of the other Partners. SLM LEADER has a Business Plan which sets out the types of project they invest in (local product development, sustainable tourism and land management). The Business Plan includes objectives, targets, outputs that guide decisions made by the partnership. Decisions are made through discussions at meetings. Matters requiring a vote are subject to an election (e.g. for the Board – this can be done by post). In the Polish MORVP, the decisions are taken by the secretariat (EFGA) after consultations with Partnership Assembly and implemented by EFGA. In MORVP LEADER the decisions are taken by Foundation Council (their members are the representatives of partnership) and they are implemented by secretariat, or by local beneficiaries realising their own projects, chosen by the MORVP LEADER Foundation committee, and financed from PPL+.

In case of the Polish MORVP, very small scale projects, some of which were very important for local participation, were realised by local groups under the framework of Partnership Fund (PF). This is a stable initiative financed from different sources, e.g. first tranche (2004) was financed only from local authorities' budgets, and the two next ones from external sources under the "Act locally" project framework granted from the Polish-American Freedom Foundation (USA funds). The local grants were small: from 150 to 1,300 EUR, but they have enabled local groups to undertake small initiatives with their voluntary work (local NGOs, schools, cultural centres, folk bands etc.). A total of a few hundred local citizens has been engaged in different forms of local social activity like: local events connected with the promotion of rural products, the redecoration of a historic Calvary in a small village, educational events connected with local history, local nature protection (landscape stewardship), the organisation of a different educational events for schoolchildren, the promotion of wickerwork and producing the straw decorations, support for renovating or creating tourist shelters, information tables, promotion materials and others. Similarly, the SLM LEADER has Somerset Levels & Moors LEADER+ Small Grants Scheme "Our communities, our landscape, our products, our action" which support small local initiatives. It co-financed more than 50 projects by the end of 2005, with grants ranging in size from about 300 to 84,000 EUR

supporting local events, local products promotion etc., so the resources were much greater, but the type of realised project similar.

In their aims and future plans, both the British and Polish partnerships valued environment and nature protection as most important but the officers' assessment of the effects of these activities were that they were relatively unimportant. Both Polish and British organizations realised projects on nature and landscape stewardship, but the context was different. In case of MORVP local communities and NGOs are lobbying for the creation of nature protection areas (National Landscape Park and NATURA 2000 areas) and the main opponents who were against any protection were the national central administration that managed river transportation and dealt with flood-control. In Somerset there were plans for moors protection, which met - contrarily - with the opposition of many local landowners, which arose because of the desire of conservation groups to raise the water table and restrict more intensive forms of animal or crop husbandry. The area is the setting for a long-standing disagreement between farmers and nature conservation groups about the optimal management of the low lying wetland habitats.

The second most important issue to local partnerships in Poland and Britain was tourism, both in terms of infrastructure provision and promotion. Both partnership areas were not well known tourist regions, and it is difficult to foresee any radical change with respect to this, but effective promotion and the development of local attractions could enhance the role of tourism in the local economy. The Polish partnership values its achievements with respect to this issue more highly than is the case with the British partnerships. The first shared project of municipalities and EFGA was the project "Cycling, hiking, and horse tourism in middle Odra River valley" financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In the opinion of MORVP representatives, an almost completely unknown region was transformed into a tourist region which can be used especially by the inhabitants of neighbouring agglomerations (Wrocław, Legnica and Głogów). Similarly, in British partnerships, important projects were connected with developing and promoting walks and trails of interest on and around the "River Parrett Trail".

Investment and business promotion and programmes for the restructuring of farming were important for all the researched partnerships. The partnerships most commonly enhance some types of traditional forms of rural business (e.g. craft, local or ecological products). The British partnerships considered that they had generated more beneficial effects for local businesses. The MORVP could not persuade local businesses to use common regional promotion and create a regionally specific product labelling scheme up to 2006. The representative of only one firm participated in the working of the partnership, so it was difficult to create any local business development programme. There was no comprehensive programme with the capacity to affect the general situation of the region (high unemployment rate, so called hidden unemployment in rural areas, the passivity of local communities in some areas). The MORVP representatives are aware of these problems and promotion of local products is an important issue in Scheme II PPL+ project (2006-2007).

In both areas, culture was quite important (e.g. support to local culture centres, local culture groups, artists, country bands, culture events etc.), but was of greater significance in the British LAMP than in the Polish partnerships. Common planning was of similar importance to respondents in both the UK and Poland (especially realisation of common strategy and plans, or consultations in spatial planning). The Polish MORVP had not developed a common strategy since the PPL+ implementation, mainly due to financial constraints. The first strategy was built in 2006 with PPL+ financial support.

The greatest visible differences between Polish and British partnerships were in relation to social issues. Addressing social problems (e.g. support to anti-alcohol and anti-drugs actions, countering crime etc.) and education (e.g. education, support to schools of all levels, projects for youth and children etc.) was important in MORVP aims and activities, but valued as unimportant in both British partnerships. It could be connected with higher level of social exclusion in Poland.

The limited resources (of staff time and funding) were considered as the main obstacles to the effective cooperation of partnership members in both the Polish and British partnerships. In the Polish ones, the engagement in small common works/activities of members and the limited effectiveness of gaining funds from external resources were a greater problem than in the British cases. On the other hand, the LAMP project pointed out conflicts between partners/disagreement on key issues as a significant problem, which was not evident in the other partnerships researched. The Polish partnerships exposed the difficulties of applications to some programmes, and the lack of funds to cover minimum own share (co-financing) in projects, and even more strongly the issue of retrospective financing by EU funds. It was a big problem for the Polish partnership to cover all the costs of PPL+ projects, before the EU grants were paid. It was not mentioned as a big constraint by UK partnerships but has been noted in some Leader evaluations in the UK (Moseley 2003).

#### **4. Summary and conclusions**

In comparing the British and Polish rural partnerships, we should remember that they were created in very different social, cultural, economic and legal systems and they are only specific cases. Other partnerships would be likely to have other features. But even from this modest comparison we can make some observations, which might be useful for “partnership” programme support policy planning in future, especially for LEADER type programme implementation in new member states.

The Polish partnership was based on a network of local institutions, which in the LEADER programme had to create a new legal body. So the partnership is embedded mainly in local institutions, not in local communities. The UK organizational model, with its embeddedness in local Parish Groups, has stronger participatory features. The participation of local communities in Poland could be enhanced by giving a role in partnership decisions for the representatives of groups of ‘sołectwo’ (villages with an administrator office), through seeking

endorsement in local meetings. It is an important feature, because rural actions will only be relevant if it relates to local inhabitants needs (Dower 2006).

In the Polish case, we can see the strong influence of the group leader (EFGA) on targets and projects and partnership policy, without any real participation of other local NGOs up to the end of 2005. According to Shucksmith (2000), there is a tendency for endogenous development initiatives to favour only the most powerful and active local actors. This may lead to elites or sectional interests capturing the initiatives. More marginalized groups are less able to participate or engage with the programme. Scott (2004) states that it was evident also in the Northern Ireland that the leading partner or the initiator of the LEADER group (whether a local authority or a community sector) had to a large extent the ownership of the process at early stages of common strategy formulation and actions. In our case studies we can observe slow, but positive process of local stakeholder engagement in partnership works.

The EU funds mostly only refinance the actual costs (and not in-kind contributions) and have a much higher lower limit of project value and tough documentary requirements, so it is often impossible for small rural organisations to apply for grants when they have no resources of their own. In new member states, the rural partnerships with weak resources need some additional support in order to pre-finance projects or at least to have possibilities to get money on account in several smaller stages.

Both the Polish and British partnerships found that the redistribution of resources to very small local groups was a very effective means of enhancing social participation. In Poland the local rural non-formal groups or very small NGOs, usually do not have their own resources, and the ideas and their own work are the only resources they have. In this context, such small initiatives were very important, because they enabled the involvement of local groups into a range of social activities, which is far more important than the imperceptible economic results of these projects. The similar "small project fund" could be a good case for implementation and should be a standard in local partnerships in new member states. These funds can help to build the social capital which can be a very important result of cooperation.

The requirement for matched funding has facilitated the capture of LEADER by other bodies than just existing partnerships thus hindering truly endogenous development. The LEADER type programmes were an important source of financing and enhancing local activities, but its constraints affected both Polish and British partnerships. The initially created partnerships (LAMP and MORVP) were not helped to develop, and new structures had to be created to meet with LEADER requirements (SLM LEADER and MORVP LEADER). The creation of new, partially independent structures to meet support programme requirements is not advantageous for realisation of long-term aims and it is considered as the main fault of LEADER programme. For instance, in the UK 81 percent of LAGs were newly established for LEADER II and had to begin operation from a zero base, so we can doubt the longevity of this Community Initiative (Shucksmith 2000). The current model does not enhance existing partnerships, but often generates the creation of short-term "shadow"

LEADER-dependent organizations. They are in essence '*mariages de covenance*'-relationships which are promulgated merely to draw down funds and little else. However some partnerships that have unpromising beginnings may create longer term embedded social and economic relationships amongst actors. Future programmes should enable the realization of projects in rural areas by existing partnerships, by embracing rather than replacing local networks and by avoidance of over-limiting criteria for project eligibility and which legitimise membership from those inhabiting nearby urban areas.

The Polish LEADER+ Pilot Programme had even more constraints than the real EU initiative. It forced all partnerships to register as an association or foundation and any urban municipalities could participate. It was associated with membership constraints, because in Poland the legal forms required do not enable local governments, NGOs and business organizations to collaborate as subjects with equal rights (as it is asserted it should be in the idealised 'true' partnership model). The PPL+ does not allow the support of partnerships based on the voluntary agreement of different types of body in which only the secretary is managed by member formal institution. In the EU LEADER Initiative there was no such constraint. In UK nearly 50% of partnerships had no special legal form in 1999 (Cherrett 2000). In Poland in future LEADER type programme, a new convenient legal entity will be important to establish cross-sector cooperation, or another means to enable partnerships to work without legal form (like in the UK case) must be found.

According to Freshwater et al. (1993), partnership groups enable us to understand that community development encompasses more than economic development. Wealth is an important element of the overall quality of life but it is only an element and community development requires that quality of life issues also be addressed. The efforts to overcome passivity of local groups by enhancing the scope for very small local actions and events seem to be as important as the support of labour market. Polish partnerships are young organisations, without long experience of local cooperation and trust between NGOs and local government. We can agree with Shucksmith (2000) that we must accept the long-time horizon over which social capital is built, and second, the importance of focusing on social development and norms and networks of civil engagement, rather than the more typical economic project delivering employment and financial profit.

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