



THE INVOLVEMENT OF NGOS IN NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS AND IN PROGRAMMING STRUCTURAL FUNDS AT NATIONAL LEVEL



European Economic and Social Committee

The involvement of NGOs in national economic and social councils and in programming Structural Funds at national level

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INTRODUCTION

This study *The involvement of NGOs in national economic and social councils and in programming Structural Funds at national level* was carried out by SOCIAL ECONOMY EUROPE following a call for tenders launched by the European Economic and Social Committee. The objective of this study is to identify if and how NGOs are involved in the work of national economic and social councils in the Member States and the implication in the programming of Structural Funds at national level for 2014-2020.

The study provides for a mapping of current practices in the EU members states where there is a national economic and social council or committee and builds on the earlier EESC study *EU national economic and social councils and similar institutions* of 2010. In fact, this study is an update of the latter and supplemented with specific information about non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their implication in the councils or committees. In this study, NGOs are defined as „any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organised on a national, regional or local level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through the provision of information. NGOs constitute the so-called civil society.“ Representative organisations of employers and employees were explicitly taken apart from this definition, as they usually could be considered as a NGO themselves.

Social dialogue and civic dialogue sometimes are taken as one and the same. In this study a distinction is made between the two, whereas the social dialogue is defined as any communication activity involving social partners intended to influence the arrangement and development of labour related issues. This tri-partite arrangement involves employers' and employees' representatives and the government only. In the case of civic dialogue one can say that it is the social dialogue extended to the organised civil society, including NGOs and other organisations.

This study is the result of desk research, a questionnaire to all national social and economic councils and interviews. Sources of information include the internet, reports from European networks (of NGOs) like CEE Bank Watch, European Anti-Poverty Network, European Network of National Civil Society Associations, the European Economic and Social Committee, and websites of the various considered national economic and social councils and committees. Interviews have been held with representatives of (European) networks of NGOs and of national economic and social councils and committees to provide for additional information and/ or specifications and clarification of obtained information.

Brussels, May 2014

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Economic and social councils, the institutionalised platforms for social and civic dialogue in the European Union and in most of its Member States show a broad range of diversity – in set-up, composition and name. This patchwork of practices seems to stem from political, social and economic traditions in the various countries. Another source of variation is the opinion on who is considered a social partner and on how they should be represented in an institutionalised platform.

In this study 21 national social and economic councils have been examined. This concerns Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain.

In first instance, these national social and economic councils have been analysed on their mission and approach. Secondly, there has been an identification of the membership and representation in the different councils and the position of NGOs or representative groupings as a full member. At last, there has been an assesment of the role and implication of NGO in the programming of European Structural Funds on a national level.

Observations

The above described patchwork of institutionalised social and civic dialogue nevertheless shows some patterns. From the findings of this study following observations can be made:

- Most Member States with a national social and economic council or committee have a formalised and institutionalised form of social dialogue, meaning that they are based on Laws, Decrees and Acts. Only Austria has an informal form of social dialogue.
- In countries with a national social and economic council or committee, NGOs are implicated as a formal statutory member in nearly half of them. In Austria, Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Czech republic, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia, NGOs do not have a formal membership or representation in the council. In France, Ireland, Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Malta and the Slovak Republic, NGOs are a formal member.
- Most national social and economic councils or committees are relatively young. Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands have a long history of institutionlised social dialogue, that can go back untill 1925. Remarkably, most percieved national social and economic councils were established after 1990. This counts for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Malta.

- In comparing the long established national social and economic councils with the relatively new-ones, one can conclude that the involvement of NGOs is more present in the newly established national social and economic councils. From the older generation – eight examples – only France, Ireland and Italy include civil society representatives as a formal member of their national council. From the 13 national social and economic councils established after 1990, seven countries have established an institutionalised platform for social dialogue that does recognise NGO's representatives as a formal member. These are Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Malta and the Slovak Republic.
- Regarding programming European Structural Funds and the involvement of NGOs, only one national Economic and Social Council reported an active role in organising a structured way of consultation. In Bulgaria, where NGOs are represented in the national economic and social council by the Bulgarian Council of Agricultural Organisations, the Central Cooperative Union, the Independent Union of Consumers in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Water Association, the Center for Psychological Studies and the Union of Disabled People in Bulgaria, there was a formal consultation with government and council. The council adopted in 2013 an opinion *Priorities and policies for the absorption of EU funds in Bulgaria 2014-2020*.
- In other countries, like Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal and Spain, NGOs seem to be better organised to respond to the consultations than in other Member States with an Economic and Social Council. NGOs got together and teamed-up to provide input to the process, whether or not with some form of support from the national Economic and Social Council. Evidence seems to suggest that countries with a national social and economic council that do have NGOs as a formal member seem to have more response from civil society in programming structural funds.

OVERVIEW PER COUNTRY AND NATIONAL INSTITUTION

1. AUSTRIA

The Austrian Beirat für Wirtschafts- und Sozialfragen (BWS, Advisory Council for Economic and Social Affairs) exists since 1963 and can be described as a rather informal institution. It has no budget, no own premises and no written procedures or rules. The Beirat is managed by two Secretary-generals, one representing employers and another representing employees, and a rotating Presidency.

The BWS is responsible for examining economic and social policy issues, producing recommendations and proposals for improved coordination of socio-economic policies. Over the last years, the scope of attention has been enlarged and includes issues like the national competitiveness position, working conditions and workforce development.

Reports and positions are drafted by ad-hoc working groups and at the request of the Presidents of the represented groupings. After consultation of experts and internal consensus building, the reports are sent to the government.

Membership

The BWS is composed of 21 representatives. Apart from five permanent experts, among which the Director of the Austrian Institute for Economic Research, the council members represent the four main social partner organisations.

Involvement of NGOs in national ESC

None

Involvement of NGOs in programming structural funds

In Austria there has been an official and open consultation process, including a series of seminars. The government has made public all the information regarding timelines, draft documents and consultations.

2. BELGIUM

The Belgian Centrale Raad voor het Bedrijfsleven (CRB), or Conseil Central de l'Economie (CCE) in French, was created in 1948 and primarily advises on economic development issues like inflation, competitiveness and employment. It is managed by a Secretary-general and a President.

The Council's main mission is to provide opinions to government and Parliament. These opinions are given at request or stem from own initiative. Since 1968 the council also has the power to negotiate collective bargaining agreements for specific sectors of economic life or for the whole economic domain.

Reports and opinions are drafted by committees and specific working groups. These can be divided in quasi-permanent thematic committees and ad-hoc sectoral commissions and working parties. Policy opinions and proposals are issued either unanimously or decided by a roll-call vote.

Members

The Belgian Centrale Raad voor het Bedrijfsleven counts 26 members, appointed by the Crown. Seats are equally assigned to employers and employees. The members from employers' side are representatives of:

- Employers are represented by: The Verbond van Belgische Ondernemingen (VBO, Belgian Association of Companies), the Nationale Federatie der Kamers voor Handel en Nijverheid van België (NFKHNB, National Federation of Trade and Industry), the Hoge Raad voor de Zelfstandigen en de KMO (HRZKMO, High Council for Self-employed and SME), the Fédération wallonne de l'agriculture (FWA, Walloon federation for agriculture), the Belgische Boerenbond and the Boerenfront, the Koninklijke Belgische Bosbouwmaatschappij (KBB) and UNISOC
- Employees are represented by: the Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond (ABVV), the Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond (ACV), the Algemene Centrale der Liberale Vakbonden van België (ACLVB), the FEBECOOP and Arcofin
- The council is completed with six coopted members, mostly economists from academia.

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

None

Involvement of NGOs in programming structural funds

Belgium is a federal state and the programming of structural funds is commissioned to the regional governments. On official governments' websites there was generally all necessary information on timelines, draft documents, consultation and partners available.

3. BULGARIA

The Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Bulgaria was established in 2003 and can best be seen as a broad institutional platform for civil dialogue. Managed by a Secretary-general and a President, it is funded by the government to facilitate the exchange of opinions on socio-economic issues between the President, the Parliament, government and civil society.

As a public institution, the Bulgarian council is dealing with the major socio-economic issues in the country and with expressing interests and views of various civil society organisations in a social dialogue approach.

Reports and opinions are drafted in Standing Commissions, and are sent to the plenary sessions for approval. The meetings of the plenary sessions are convened by the President or upon request of at least one third of Council's members or of the Board.

Members

The Bulgarian Economic and Social Council counts 36 members and an elected President. This membership can be divided into three groups. A first group consists of members appointed by the representative employers' organisations. The second group consists of members appointed by the representative employees' organisations. The third group consists of members representing agricultural producers, cooperatives, craftsmen, professional branches, consumers, women, ecology organisations, disabled people, retired people, and providers of social welfare, and two independent scientific experts. The members are representatives of:

- Employers are represented by: the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association, the Bulgarian Industrial Association, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Employees are represented by: the Confederation of the Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria, the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria, the Confederation of Labour "PODKREPA", and the National Union of Worker Producers' Cooperatives in Bulgaria
- Civil society is represented by: the Bulgarian Council of Agricultural Organisations, the Central Cooperative Union, the Independent Union of Consumers in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Water Association, the Center for Psychological Studies and the Union of Disabled People in Bulgaria

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

In a specific ESC Act, NGOs have a formal seat in the council's Group III, called Civil organisations with various interests. Following their proposals, the Bulgarian ESC has adopted several proposals or acts concerning various issues in Bulgarian socio-economic life. These also relate to European policy issues like the Europe 2020 Strategy, social economy and social entrepreneurship, employment of vulnerable groups, and active ageing.

While elaborating the acts or proposals, consultations with all stakeholders are conducted. On a regular basis, NGOs in partnership with the council, participate in conferences, seminars and regional round tables to discuss and to exchange views to find common grounds. These consultations are also open to organisations that are not a formal member of the council.

Although NGOs are fully incorporated into the Council's organisation and work – NGOs are a full member – they do not profit from specific support or sponsoring from the council structure.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

Regarding structural fund issues, Bulgarian civil society and NGOs are rather involved in a formal consultation with government and the council. The influence of NGOs on national government institutions in programming structural funds is considered rather strong. In 2013, the Bulgarian ESC adopted an opinion called Priorities and policies for the absorption of EU funds in Bulgaria 2014-2020. The elaboration and adoption of this opinion was a result of public consultation and discussions with representatives of all Ministries and departments responsible for the development of the Partnership Agreement and the Operational Programmes for the next programming period. The NGOs' recommendations and proposals have been considered in the final document.

4. Croatia

In Croatia the Independent Service for Social Partnership is the equivalent of the Economic and Social Council and operates since 2012 as the advisory body that monitors changes in economic policies, prices and salaries, employment, pension and health insurance, education, safety at work, collective bargaining, labour law, labour disputes and all other issues of interest to social partners. On the local level, tripartite social dialogue is conducted through county level Economic and Social Councils.

As such it supports a wide range of activities in order to enhance communication between central and local government institutions, social partners, non-governmental and international organisations and to find effective and consensual solutions in the field of labour, social and economic policy.

The mission of the Independent Service for Social Partnership is to encourage the development of a long term vision concerning the Croatian model of social partnership between trade unions, employers and government representatives with administrative support provided by the Service.

Members

Each social partner nominates its own representatives as members, respecting the following attribution:

- Employees are represented by: the Independent Trade Unions of Croatia (ITUC), the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia (UATUC), the MATICA – Association of Croatian Trade Unions, the Croatian Trade Union Association (CTUA), the Association of Workers Trade Unions of Croatia (AWTUC)
- Employers are represented by: the Croatian Employers' Association (CEA)
- Government is represented by named officials

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

None

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

Local and regional level stakeholders, NGOs, social partners and other stakeholders have been participating in diverse thematic working groups for the development of the programming documents and in the partners' consultations when priority areas of funding were presented. Civil society organisations had the opportunity to express their views and opinions.

The Council for Civil Society Development, an advisory body to the government with 15 NGO members, plays an essential role in ensuring participatory programming. It conducted the selection process of NGO representatives in thematic working groups for programming the structural funds for 2014-2020.

5. CZECH REPUBLIC

The Council of Economic and Social Agreement of the Czech Republic (Rada hospodářské a sociální dohody ČR, RHSD ČR) was created in 1990 and is a voluntary body made up of representatives of trade unions, employers and the government, which engages in joint tripartite negotiations. Its operation is not legally regulated, and its goal is to reach consensus in or adopt joint positions on fundamental socio-economic issues.

Binding agreements are still not concluded in the RHSD ČR. According to its current statutes of 2004, the Council discusses selected problems of common interest, in particular economic policy, labour relations, collective bargaining and employment, social issues, wages and pay, public services and public administration, work safety, human resources development and the Czech Republic's position in the EU.

The organisation and financing of the council is shared by the participating delegations by mutual agreement. The RHSD ČR's bodies are its plenary session, presidency, working teams and working groups.

Members

The Plenary Session of the Council of the Economic and Social Agreement of the Czech Republic as the top organ of this tripartite body consists of

- Representatives of the government
- Employees are represented by: the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů, ČMKOS) and the Association of Autonomous Trade Unions (Asociace samostatných odborů, ASO)
- Employers are represented by: the Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurs' Associations of the Czech Republic (Konfederace zaměstnavatelských a podnikatelských svazů ČR, KZPS) and the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic (Svaz průmyslu a dopravy ČR, SP ČR)

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

None

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

There has been an inter-ministerial committee installed to co-ordinate and channel the consultation and drafting process. This committee was submitted to the Ministry of Social Affairs and included a platform of seven NGOs. Except from clear timelines, all necessary information about documents, consultation information and included partners was available.

6. FINLAND

Chaired by the Prime Minister, the Economic Council of Finland (Industrins Ekonomiska Råd) is an institution to facilitate the co-operation between government, the Bank of Finland and major interest groups, i.e. employers and employees.

The Economic Council, which was created in 1966, aims to strengthen and deepen broad-based, analytical discussion prior to the taking of economic policy decisions relating to the growth, balance and structure of the economy. Under a decision of Parliament, the Economic Council also acts as a forum for dialogue between the Government, the social partners and the Bank of Finland concerning the monetary policy of the European Central Bank.

Members

The Economic Council is chaired by the Prime Minister and has members appointed by the Government, some of which are also members of the Government. Currently the Council includes:

- Government is represented by: the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Culture and Sport, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Economic Affairs, the Minister of Education and Science, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Public Administration and Local Government
- Employers are represented by: the Confederation of Finnish industry and the Confederation of Agricultural Producers and forest Owners (MTK), the Central Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Finnish Enterprises
- Employees are represented by: the Confederation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK), the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees (STTK), the Confederation of Finnish industry and the Confederation of knowledge workers (AKAVA)
- the Governor of the Bank of Finland

The Economic Council also has permanent advisers.

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

None

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

The Managing Authority of The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and The European Social Fund (ESF) programmes, department of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, established a working group including all the relevant stakeholders to discuss the organisation and priorities for the future period.

7. FRANCE

The French Economic, Social and Environmental Council (ESEC) is the constitutional consultative assembly, which advises the government. Created in 1925, the Council represents the leading economic and social stakeholders, facilitates co-operation among the various representative organisations and ensures that they contribute to the government's economic, social and environmental policy.

Since 2010 the ESEC's competences and missions were extended and is currently invested with advising the government and parliament and participate in the development of the economic, social and environmental policies, promoting the dialogue between occupational groups with different concerns, contributing to the evaluation of public policies in the economic, social and environmental field, promoting a constructive dialogue and cooperation with the consultative bodies created within local governments and with its European and foreign counterparts and informing citizens.

Members

The French council consists of 233 members, all representatives of civil society and appointed for a 5 years' term. The membership is structured as follows:

- Members under the economic and social dialogue, including representatives of employees, private industry, trade and services, farmers and agricultural activities, artisans, professions, and qualified persons chosen for their experience in the economic field
- Members under the social and territorial cohesion and community life, including representatives of the mutual, cooperative and supportive non-agricultural economy, mutuality and agricultural production and processing cooperatives, family associations, associations and foundations, overseas departments and regions, overseas communities and New Caledonia, youth and students, and qualified persons chosen for their experience in the social, cultural, sports and science fields, the social housing sector or for their work for disabled or retired people
- Members under the protection of nature and the environment, including representatives of associations and foundations operating in the field of nature and environment conservation, and qualified persons chosen for their expertise in environmental and sustainable development, including at least three leaders of companies with significant activity in these fields.

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

NGOs are represented formally in the French council.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

France has a specific institution for the partnership agreements, the Instance Nationale de Préparation de l'Accord de Partenariat, to organise and structure the process. It has published a consultation document, to which more than 300 organisations responded. About 80 organisations, representing government, local authorities, social partners and NGOs, have been participating in the drafting process and participated in several seminars.

8. GREECE

The Greek OKE was established in 1994, based on the model of the ESC of the European Union: tripartite division of the interests represented, i.e. a division into three Groups, one of employers and entrepreneurs, one of private and public sector employees, and one including other categories, such as farmers, self-employed people, consumers, environmental protection organizations, disabled people's confederation, gender equality organizations, and the local government.

The objective of the ESC is to promote the social dialogue and to formulate joint positions on issues of concern to Greek society. Through its proposals and opinions, it also seeks to maximize the social benefit and to minimise any possible negative effects of decisions taken by executive and legislative powers.

Members

The Greek council is composed of a President and 60 members, split-up in three equal groups. The first of these Groups represents employers, the second the employees and a third other categories.

- Employers are represented by: the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV), the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEVEE), the National Confederation of Hellenic Commerce (ESEE), the Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises (SETE) and from the Union of the Hellenic Bank Association (EET), the Union of the Greek Shipowners (EEE), the Association of Greek Contracting Companies (SATE), the Hellenic Federation of Building Contractors and Developers (OMKOE)
- Employees are represented by: the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) and by the Supreme Administration of Greek Civil Servants Trade Unions (ADEDY)
- The third Group of members represent: the Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives (PASEGES) and the General Confederation of Greek Agrarian Associations (GESASE), the Lawyers Coordinating Committee, the Greek Medical Association (PIS), the Central Union of Hellenic Chambers (KEEE), the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE), the Economic Chamber of Greece (OEE), the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece (GEOTEE), the Consumers and environmental protection organisation, the National Confederation of Disabled People (ESAEA), Organisations on issues of gender equality, the Central Union of Communities and Municipalities of Greece (KEDKE) and the Hellenic Central Union of Prefectures (KEPE).

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

The ESC does not have any structure outside of the formal membership for civil society participation. When the ESC gathers research for its Opinions, it may form research groups that consist of specialists or experts, including civil society representatives. Another possible source of civil society input is in the relationship of the ESC of Greece with its sub-regional ESCs, called Prefecture Economic and Social Committees. The Prefecture ESCs are consultative organs to their local or Prefecture administration, and meet to enhance regional social dialogue.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

Unknown

9. HUNGARY

The National Economic and Social Council of Hungary (NESC) is a consultative, proposal-making and advisory body independent from Parliament and the government and was established in 2004. The NESC, the widest-ranging forum of representatives of Hungarian society holds consultations, delivers opinions, makes proposals, and discusses national strategies and comprehensive matters affecting the development of the economy and society.

Members

The NESC has 32 members, representing the Hungarian civil society, creating the following sides:

- Employers are represented by: the National Federation of Traders and Caterers, Agricultural Employers' Association, the National Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers, the Agricultural Co-operatives and Farmers Association, the National Association of Industrial Corporations, the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Strategic and Public Utility Companies, the Investor Council, the Hungarian Industrial Association, the Employers and Industrialists Federation, the National Association of Consumer Cooperatives and Trading Companies and the National Association of Agricultural Economics
- Employees are represented by: the Association of Autonomous Trade Unions, the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions, the Intellectuals Trade Union Organisation, the National Federation of Workers' Councils, the National Association of Hungarian Trade Unions and the Trade Cooperation Forum
- NGOs are represented by : the National Council of the Cooperation Fund
- Academia is represented by: the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Hungarian Economic Association and the Hungarian Rectors' Conference
- Churches are represented by: the Hungarian Catholic Church, the Reformed Church in Hungary, the Hungarian Lutheran Church and MAZSIHISZ

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

There are two organisations in Hungary in which the social partners participate. Besides the ESC, there's also a tripartite body made up of employers, employees and government – the National Council for the Reconciliation of Interests. It is mainly intended for social dialogue. The social

agreements are concluded there. There is some overlap with the ESC, because the same employer and employee representatives are members of both bodies. Unlike the National Council, the members of the ESC also include representatives of the Chambers of Commerce, NGOs, and scientists.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

For the preparation of the 2007-2013 period, public consultation was set up after calls from civil society. Some 4000 organisations, ranging from trade unions, business, academia and NGOs were invited to advice. Information was available through internet and seminars, although specific information about timelines, public consultations and partners was lacking.

10. IRELAND

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) was established in 1973 and advises the Prime Minister (Taoiseach) on strategic issues for Ireland's economic and social development.

NESC has a history of producing reports with strategic, long-term analyses of key economic and social development issues affecting Ireland. Its early work focused on the economy, taxation, population and emigration, and agricultural policy. It has also produced reports over the years on employment, housing and education, social policy, Ireland in the EU, public services, and well-being. From 1986 to 2006 NESC regularly produced strategy reports which were the basis for negotiating the social partnership agreements, as well as contributing to development of overall Government policy.

The functions of the council is to analyse and report to the Prime Minister on strategic issues relation to the efficient development of the economy and the achievement of social justice and the development of a strategic framework for the conduct of relations and the negotiation of agreements between the Government and the social partners.

Members

The council is composed of a broad variety of stakeholders, which are all appointed by the Taoiseach.

- Employers are represented by: IBEC, Chambers Ireland, Construction Industry Federation
- Employees are represented by: ICTU, IMPACT, ICTU, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union
- The environmental sector is represented by: Friends Of the Earth
- The agricultural and farming sectors are represented by: the Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society, the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association, IFA, Macra na Feirme
- The community and voluntary sector is represented by: Social Justice Ireland, INOU, St. Vincent de Paul, the National Youth Council of Ireland
- The government is represented by: the Department of Finance, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise, & Innovation the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Independent nominees

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

The Sustainable Development Council (SDC) was established in 1999 as the forum for national consultation and dialogue on all issues relating to sustainable development. In 2012, the sustainable development role performed by SDC was integrated into the work of the NESC. The SDC was made up of representatives from the State sector, economic sectors, environmental NGOs, social/community NGOs and the professional/academic sector.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

The Irish government has published an open invitation to submit proposals. On the basis of this consultation, the government has drafted a summary which again was submitted to an open consultation. The consultation process included information including timelines, draft documents and consulted partners.

11. ITALY

The Italian National Council of Economy and Labour (CNEL) is the advisory body of the Parliament and the Government for socio-economic matters. The council can initiate legislation and may contribute to the development of economic and social legislation. The CNEL was established by Law in 1957.

Members

The Italian council is composed of members of the most representative social forces, associations of social promotion and associations of voluntary work, and of qualified experts on economic and social subjects. The CNEL is composed of 64 Councilors:

- Employees are represented by: CIDA, CGIL, CISL, CONFSAL, CUB, UGL, UIL
- Employers are represented by: CONFCOMMERCIO, CONFINDUSTRIA, CONFSEVIZI, CONFARTIGIANATO, FEDERPESCA, CONFAGRICOLTURA, CONFETRA, ABI, CONFITARMA and CONFESERCENTI
- Associations of Social Promotion and Voluntary Organisations are represented by: the National Observatory of Associations and The National Observatory for Volunteering
- Self-employed persons and professions are represented by: LEGACOOOP, the National Council of Engineers, COLDIRETTI, CONFSCOOPERATIVE, CONFARTIGIANATO, CAN, CIA, COPAGRI, the National Council of Chemists and COLDIRETTI
- Independent experts

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

In the National Council of Economy and Labour are present, through a special procedure for appointment according to Law 936/1986, representatives of social forces in the world of business, labour and self-employment and some of the organisations' social associations and the voluntary sector.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

The open consultation in Italy was based on a governmental document called Methods and objectives for the effective use of EU funds 2014-2020. The public consultation has been echoed by government, regions, local authorities and civil society and has given input to a technical drafting team for the final proposal.

12. LITHUANIA

The Republic of Lithuania established in 1995 a tripartite social and economic council (LRTT) to deal with social, economic and labour issues and to facilitate cooperation between employers, employees and government in the implementation of social, economic and employment policy. The Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania, the main national-level social dialogue institution in the country.

Since 1999 the tripartite cooperation got a wider scope. The council also provides for a tripartite approach to develop and fine-tune draft legislation. Recommendations from the council are not binding.

Members

The LRTT is composed of representatives of trade unions, employers' organisations and the government. It has a maximum membership of 15 (i.e. not more than five representatives from each party). The members of the Tripartite Council are as follows:

- Employees are represented by: the Lithuanian Trade Union Solidarumas, the Confederation of Lithuanian Trade Unions, the Trade Union of Workers in de the Services Industry and the Lithuanian Labour Federation
- Employers are represented by: the Confederation of Lithuanian Industrialists, the Lithuanian Business Employers' Confederation and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts
- Government is represented by: the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Ministry for Agriculture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

None. In 2009, a NGO Working Group was created, which consists of 14 national youth, cultural, health and disability, and environmental associations. This coalition is recognised by the government.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds



Under the Lithuanian EU Council presidency the government has organised several events about programming, monitoring and evaluation of EU Structural Funds, which were attended by representatives from academia, socio-economic partners and other stakeholders.

13. LUXEMBURG

The Economic and Social Council (CES) of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is the permanent consultative body of the Government in terms of economic and social policy of the country. The CES is the central organ of reflection and permanent tripartite social dialogue and social and professional consultation at a national level.

The council examines the economic, social and financial problems at the request of the government or on its own initiative. It tries to find consensus and sustainable solutions to guide the government in its choice. CES also supports structured European social dialogue at a national level. The CES is under the supervision of the Prime Minister and is funded through the budget of the State Department. It was established in 1966.

Members

- Employers are represented by: ArcelorMittal Luxembourg, Business Fédération Luxembourg (FEDIL), the Federation of Artisans, the Association of Banks and Bankers (ABBL), the association of Insurance Companies, the Confederation of Commerce, the Chamber of Crafts, the Chamber of Commerce, the Order of Architects, the Institute for Internal Audit, the Centrale Paysane, the Fräie Lëtzebuerger Baureverband (FLB) and the Fédération des Associations Viticoles
- Employees are represented by: the OGBL, the LCGB, the Chambre des Salariés, the CGFP, the Fédération générale de la Fonction communal and the Chambre des Fonctionnaires et Employés publics
- Government is represented by: Ministry of Finance and STATEC

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

NGOs are consulted through occasional hearings of the CES.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

Luxembourg NGOs have had the opportunity to participate in a formal consultation process initiated by the government.

14. MALTA

The Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) is the advisory council that issues opinions and recommendations to the Maltese government on matters of socio-economic relevance. Its aim is that, following consultations held within the council, sound and concrete recommendations about socio-economic issues will be heeded by the government prior to any reforms or measures of relevance.

The MCESD was established by an Act of Parliament in 2001 as a corporate body having a legal and distinct personality. The significance of the Act is primarily the recognition by the state of the institution whose mission is to promote social dialogue and bring about consensus among the social partners and members of civil society on a number of national economic and social issues relating to Malta's development in that area.

Members

The Council is made up of a Chairman appointed by the Prime Minister.

- Employers are represented by: Malta Employers Association, the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association and the Malta Chamber of Small and Medium Enterprises (GRTU)
- Employees are represented by: the General Workers Union and the Union Haddiema Maghqudin and the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions
- Government is represented by: the Ministry of Finance, the economy and Investment (MFEI), the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry for Social Policy (MSOC), the Central Bank of Malta
- The Civil Society Committee representatives are : the Association for Consumer Rights Malta, the National Association of Pensioners, the Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations, the Malta Federation of Professional Associations, JCI Malta, Touring Club Malta, the Malta Organic Agriculture Movement, Din L-Art Helwa, Il-Federazzjoni Maltija ta' Organizzazzjonijiet Persuni B'dizabilita, the St John Rescue Corps and the Local Councils' Association

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

NOGs are recognised as a full member of the Maltese council through the Civil Society Committee, and profit from logistical support, e.g. the facilitation of meetings.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

Regarding structural funds issues, civil society and NGOs are involved in public consultations. The influence of NGOs on the programming of structural funds is called rather weak, and could be strengthened by re-organising the governmental planning and programming department and by facilitating NGOs and civil society in the administrative processes and by reducing the administrative burden.

14. NETHERLANDS

Established in 1950, the Sociaal-Economische Raad (SER) is the main advisory body to the Dutch government and the parliament on national and international social and economic policy. The SER is financed by industry and is independent from the government. It represents the interests of trade unions and industry, advising the government (upon request or at its own initiative) on all major socio-economic issues.

The SER also has an administrative role. This consists of monitoring commodity and industrial boards, which perform an important role in the Dutch economy. Industrial boards are responsible for representing the interests of particular branches of industry, and are made up of employers' representatives and union representatives.

Members

The SER is composed of 33 members, made up of three groups of members:

- Employers are represented by: Vereniging VNO/NCW (Confederation of Netherlands Industry Employers), MKB -Nederland (Royal Dutch Association of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), LTO- Nederland (Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture)
- Employees are represented by: the FNV (Federation of Netherlands Trade Unions), the CNV (National Confederation of Christian Trade Unions in the Netherlands), the Unie MHP (Trade Union Federation for middle and higher level employees of Managerial and Professional Staff)
- Independent (Crown) members, who are government-appointed experts. Crown members are independent experts. They are often university professors, holding chairs in economics, finance, law or sociology. The president of the Nederlandsche Bank (Dutch Central Bank) and the director of the CPB - Centraal Planbureau (Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis) are both Crown members.

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

None

15. POLAND

The organizational core of social dialogue in Poland is the Tripartite Commission for Socio-Economic, briefly called the Tripartite Commission. It was established in 1994 by a government decision and was the implementation of the provisions of the Covenant of the state enterprise in the course of transformation.

The Tripartite Commission for Social and Economic Affairs is a forum for social dialogue to reconcile the interests of employees, employers and the public interest. The purpose of the Commission is to achieve and maintain social peace.

Members

The Polish council is composed of representatives of government, employees' and employers' parties.

The representatives of the Council of Ministers appointed by the Prime Minister represent the governmental party in the Commission. At present, the frame of the Commission is composed of the appointed representatives of: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (at present the Minister for Labour and Social Policy is simultaneously the Chairman of the Commission), Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Treasury, Ministry of Finances, Ministry of Transport and Construction, Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Regional Development.

- Employees are represented by: Independent Self-Governed Trade Union "Solidarność" (NSZZ "Solidarność"), All-Polish Trade Union Alliance (OPZZ) and Trade Union Forum (FZZ)
- Employers are represented by: the Polish Employers' Confederation (KPP), the Polish Confederation of Private Employers (PKPP), the Polish Artisan Association (ZRP) and the Business Centre Club – Employers' Union (BCC – ZP)
- Governmental representatives are the Central Statistical Office and the National Bank of Poland

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

For its work, the Committee relies occasionally on other counselling representatives, like there are the Common Commission of Government and Territorial Self-Government, National Co-operative Council, Association for Non-governmental Initiatives Forum, Consumers Federation as well as All-

Polish Unemployed Organisation Alliance had also been invited to take part in the work of the Commission.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

The Polish government has set up an inter-ministerial group to co-ordinate the consultation process. NGOs were not involved in this co-ordinating working group, but were able to participate in sub-groups. A coalition of Polish NGOs was formed to counter-balance this unequal consultation and has formulated proposals and opinions.

16. PORTUGAL

The Conselho Económico e Social (CES) is the constitutional body for consultation and social concertation in Portugal. Its main goals are to promote the participation of economic and social agents in decision-making procedures of the organs of government, within the scope of socio-economic issues. It is the space for dialogue between the government, social partners and remaining representatives of organised civil society.

The CES has two competencies, one consultative and the other of social concertation. Its consultation competencies are based on the participation of the most representative organisations in Portuguese society and are carried out by drafting opinions, requested of it by government or upon its own initiative. Within the scope of this competency, the CES expresses an opinion on the drafts of the programs and policies for social and economic development, Portugal's positioning within the European institutions with regard to these policies, the use of European funds at national level and the regional development policy.

Members

The plenary is composed by the following membership:

- Representatives from the government
- Representatives from employees: the CGTP-IN and UGT
- Representatives from employers: the CAP, the CCP, the CIP, the CTP and the CPCI
- Representatives from the cooperative sector
- Representatives from the higher council for science, technology and innovation
- Representatives from the national council for professional associations
- Representative from the state corporative sector
- Representatives from the autonomous regions (Madeira and Azores)
- Representatives from municipalities
- Representatives of the National Associations for Environmental Protection, the National Associations for Consumer Protection, the Private Social Welfare Institutions, the Family

Associations, the universities, the National Association Young Entrepreneurs, the Family-based agriculture and the rural universe, the Equal opportunities for men and women, the Women's Associations with generic representation, the Women's Associations represented in CIDM, the organisations representing people with disabilities, the organisations representing the financial and insurance sector and the organisations representing the tourism sector

- Individuals of renowned merit

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

NGOs are formally represented in the CES.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

In Portugal the state-linked CASES is the main institution through which information and positions are channelled. CASES is a partnership between the State and the representative organizations of the social economy sector. Its objective is to promote and to the strengthen the social economy sector, deepening the cooperation between the State and member organizations, which are the Portuguese Association for Local Development (ANIMAR), the Portuguese Cooperative Confederation (CONFECOOP), the National Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Credit of Portugal (CONFAGRI), the National Confederation of Solidarity Institutions (CNIS), the Portuguese Union of Mercy (UMP) and the Portuguese Union of Mutuals (UMP).

17. ROMANIA

The Economic and Social Council of Romania, established in 1997, is a tripartite, autonomous body of public interest set-up by the Law for the purpose of achieving the social dialogue at national level between employers, trade unions and the government, and has an advisory role in establishing the economic and social strategy and policy of the country, in mitigating disputes between the social partners at industry or national level, and in achieving, promoting and developing social dialogue and solidarity.

The council operates either at the request of the legislative bodies (government, Parliament) or on its own initiative on matters falling within its competence. In specialised sections the council examines issues specific to their area of competence, draft opinions to be examined during the Plenary Session, which is supposed to provide the final opinion. The Plenary Session decisions are generally adopted by the social partners' consensus. When consensus is not reached, the decisions are put to vote and adopted by a three-quarters majority of the members of council present at the meeting.

Members

The Romanian Economic and Social Council has a tripartite structure and comprises 45 members appointed by the social partners, as follows:

- Employers are represented by: the Patronatul Național Român, The Confederația Patronală din Industrie, Servicii și Comerț, the Confederația Națională a Patronatului Român, the Consiliul National al Patronilor din România, the Patronatul Național Român, the Consiliul National al Întreprinderilor Private Mici și Mijlocii din România, the Consiliul National al Întreprinderilor Private Mici și Mijlocii din România, the Uniunea Generală a Industriașilor din România, the Uniunea Națională a Patronatului Român, the Uniunea Generală a Industriașilor din România 1903 and the Confederația Patronală din Industrie, Servicii și Comerț
- Employees are represented by: the Confederația Sindicatelor Democratice din România, the Blocul Național Sindical, the Confederația Națională Sindicală "Cartel ALFA", the Confederația Națională a Sindicatelor Libere din România – Frăția, the Confederația Sindicală Națională MERIDIAN
- The government is represented by: the Secretary-general of the Government and the Comisia Națională de Prognoză

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

None

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

The coordination was ensured by the Ministry for European Funds (MFE) and the MFE ensured the presidency of the Inter-institutional Committee for the Partnership Agreement (ICPA). It has 64 members, out of which 70% are representatives in decision making of central and local public institutions and 30% are representatives of economic and social environment, trade unions, academic institutions, nongovernmental organisations and other representatives of the civil society.

18. SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Economic and Social Committee of the Slovak Republic was established in 2005 as an interest association of legal entities, operating in different fields of economic and social life of organised civil society in the Slovak Republic.

The basic mission of the Slovakia social and economic committee is to contribute to the deepening and further development of cooperation and social dialogue between the social partners, companies and organizations in the Slovak Republic in order to increase mutual trust and understanding in improving the model of pluralistic and participatory democracy in the Slovak Republic

Members

According to the model of the European Economic and Social Committee, the members of the Economic and Social Committee of the Slovak Republic organised in three socio-economic groups:

- Group I comprises representatives of: the Federation of Employers' Associations of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak Chamber of Commerce, the Union of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications and the Slovak Agricultural and Food Chamber
- Group II comprises representatives of the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic
- Group III comprises representatives of: the Economic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Science, the Slovak Rectors' Conference, the Academy of Education, the Consumer Institute and the Standing Conference of third sector organisations

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

NGOs are represented by the Conference of third sector organisations, which is a formal member of the council.

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

Several slovak Ministries had established partnership groups including key stakeholders. Especially the Ministries of Environment, Economy, Interior Affairs and of Transport have been qualified as

good communicators regarding input and demands. The number of amendments taken over however has turned out to be low. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Slovakia has played a role as a facilitator for civil society stakeholders.

19. SLOVENIA

The Slovenian Economic and Social Council (ESC) is a tripartite body of social partners in the Republic of Slovenia, and was established in 1994 to consider issues and measures concerning economic and social policies, and other issues related to the specific fields of the partners' dialogue.

The ESC monitor monitors the situation in the economic and social spheres, raises it for discussion and drafts relevant positions and proposals concerning these areas and the areas that are of broad importance for all three partners. Apart from the areas that call for tripartite dialogue, the ESC may also discuss other issues that are not subject to tripartite dialogue but are related to economic and social matters.

The ESC may establish permanent or ad hoc expert groups in charge of preparing expert groundwork for ESC decisions. As a rule, these groups consist of independent experts. The funds for the operation of the ESC shall be provided by the State

Members

The council is composed of 24 members and their alternates.

- Employers are represented by: The Association of Employers of Slovenia, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia, the Association of Employers in Craft and Small Business of Slovenia
- Employees are represented by: the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, the Confederation of Trade Unions PERGAM of Slovenia, the Trade Union Confederation 90 of Slovenia, the Independence, Confederation of New Trade Unions, the Slovenian Association of Trade Unions ALTERNATIVA, the Trade Unions SOLIDARITY and the Confederation of Public Service Trade Unions of Slovenia
- Government is represented by: the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, the Ministry of the Economy, the Ministry of Finance, the Government Office for Growth and European Affairs, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Secretary General of the Government and the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

None

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

Slovenia is one of the few countries whose web site did not even provide information about the timeline of the process and civil society organisations (CSO) were given three days to give contributions.

20. SPAIN

The Spanish Economic and Social Council, established in 1991, is made up of employees' organisations, trade unions and other representatives of public interests, and is a government advisory body that represents different interests of the various sectors of Spanish society.

The Council issues mandatory opinions on draft bills for laws, draft legislative royal decrees regulating socio-economic and labour policy, and draft royal decrees considered by the government to be of particular significance in this field. And not just this. The Spanish ESC also studies and analyses issues of concern to our society on its own initiative.

Members

The Spanish ESC consists of 61 members, appointed by the government, and which are divided into three groups. Group I represents the workers, Group II represents the employers and Group III represents civil society.

- Employees are represented by: the UGT, the CCOO, the CIG and the ELA/STV - Euskal Langileen Alkartasuna/Solidaridad de Trabajadores Vascos
- Employers are represented by: CEOE – CEPYME
- The civil society is represented by: ASAJA, COAG, UPA, Cooperativa de Armadores del Puerto de Vigo, Federación Nacional de Cofradías de Pescadores, ONPROA, CEACCU, HISPACoop, OCU, FUCI, CEPES
- Experts nominated by the government

Involvement of NGOs in the national ESC

NGOs are formally represented in the national council. Apart from this Group III in the Spanish ESC, there is a State Council for Social Action NGOs to establish a space in which the associative movement can gather, dialogue and participate in the development of public policies. The consultative role of this state council is not obligatory and is restricted to ministries with some competency in social policy

The implication of NGOs in programming structural funds

The State Council for Social Action NGOs has been invited by government to present proposals for the programming.

ABSTRACT

This study has examined 21 national Social and Economic Councils to study NGOs membership and their involvement in programming EU Structural Funds. From the findings of this study following observations can be made:

- Most Member States with a national social and economic council or committee have a formalised and institutionalised form of social dialogue.
- In countries with a national social and economic council or committee, NGOs are implicated as a formal statutory member in nearly half of them.
- Most national social and economic councils or committees are relatively young. Most perceived national social and economic councils were established after 1990.
- The involvement of NGOs is more present in the newly established national social and economic councils. Seven countries do recognise NGO's representatives as a formal member.
- Only one national Economic and Social Council reported an active role in organising a structured way of consultation for the programming of EU Structural Funds.
- In some countries NGOs seem to be better organised to respond to the consultations than in other Member States with an Economic and Social Council. Evidence seems to suggest that countries with a national social and economic council that do have NGOs as a formal member have more response from civil society in programming structural funds.



European Economic and Social Committee

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99
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BELGIQUE/BELGIË

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