

INITIAL IMPACT OF CO-FINANCING ON THE INCLUSION POLICY FIELD OF ESF

In the East Midlands, led by CEFET, a variety of tools have been forged to ensure Social Inclusion Action involves, empowers and genuinely reaches excluded communities. Although these are inscribed in various Programmes (principally Policy Field Two of ESF Objective 3), are designed for specifically *East Midlands* conditions and are not yet coherently assembled together, they have potential for general strategic impact on the problem of exclusion.

They consist of:

- a Local Social Capital programme;
- a community empowerment policy at regional level;
- a special “community-mobilisation” capacity building programme;
- a project selection system that effectively finds empowerment projects;
- a set of analytical tools [the *SEND scale*] which can situate actions according to their “closeness” to excluded communities and allocate an index to a group of actions or a programme.

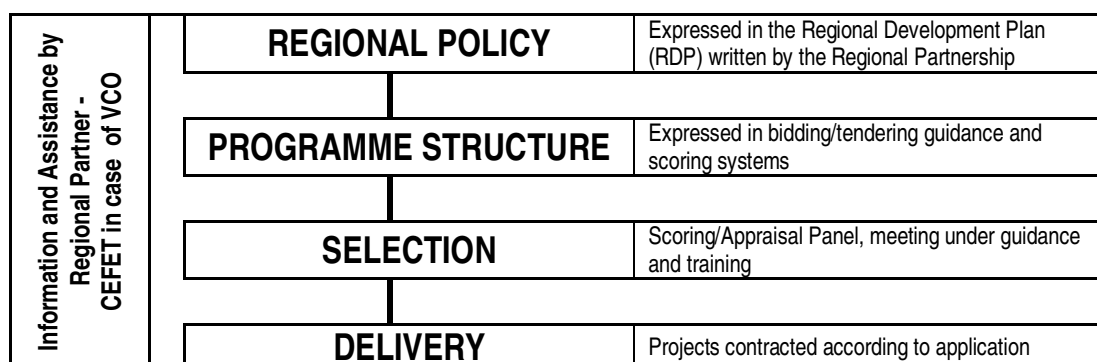
Each of these elements is backed by a mass of direct experience and consultation work, detailed and documented exchanges with partners [RDA, HE, FE, LA, LSC, JC+, social partners...], practical experience of guidance and selection work, and hands-on assistance to projects.

This work, a direct element of CEFET’s remit, has involved voluntary agencies working on inclusion down to small, unincorporated community groups working on projects that affect them directly. Since 1998 CEFET has been in constant discussion and consultation with Community organisations through events (conferences and workshops – usually reaching 150-200 groups each year), conducted 4 structured questionnaires (about 100 groups each – 2 on Capacity Building, one each on Local Social Capital and Combating Social Exclusion in ESF), and had direct, face-to-face, practical involvement with over 500 working projects, the majority very small and local.

The scope and scale of the East Midlands experience

The key experience in the East Midlands is represented by work in Policy Field Two of Objective 3 of the EU structural funds, which is a UK programme worth € 1bn in 2000-2007. The East Midlands allocation is just below £50m¹. The Programme has the “headline” ‘Promoting Social Inclusion & Equal Opportunities for All’.

The “apparatus” of this programme, similar to many others, is marked by four elements, with accompanying information and assistance provision, as shown below:



Responsibility for, and work on, the practice of this “apparatus” can be split into two periods:

- from the start of the programme until 2003 when the funds were directed by a partnership including CEFET (representing VCOs), through GO-EM,
- from 2003 onwards when programme structure and selection were devolved to “Co-Financing” Organisations [CFOs – principally LSCs and Job Centre+].

These two periods allow interesting comparisons.

¹ revised up from £45m in April 2004

In the first period the setting of regional policy, the development of regional programme guidance and selection systems, the implementation of those systems, and the dissemination of information and assistance were all delivered through the regional partnership and CEFET led for the partnership in all aspects on the Programme. Based on extensive consultation and direct working with voluntary and community groups on exclusion CEFET was able to secure agreement on a “Community Empowerment Strategy” in the governing document for the funds the “East Midlands Regional Development Plan (RDP)”. The regional guidance and scoring framework were drafted by CEFET, after discussion with the region’s VCO groups, and amended every year following input from applicants. The scoring panel, implementing the selection system, was led and trained by CEFET, providing another source of reference material to fine-tune the system. In addition CEFET was able to offer, with absolute authority, advice on how the system worked to potential applicants. This holistic system ensured that the governing principle, ensuring “projects focus on the needs of one specific community and ... include the target group in design and implementation... (and) ideally the motivation and control of the project”² actually determined the nature of projects selected.

The second period is marked by a transfer of control of the 2nd and 3rd tier to CFOs, breaking the structural link between policy and implementation.

The result was a clear retrograde shift in the volume and nature of VCO involvement. (see chart below) This – retrospectively – indicates the need for and impact of a system where the interests of groups composed of excluded people themselves are driven into every aspect of the programme from “high” policy down.

Qualitative Impact

Other aspects of the work are qualitative. These originate in the RDP policy and take three forms:

A **Capacity Building** element within the main programme, following direct input from hundred of grass roots organisations. The RDP argues that since the imperative is to locate actions within the communities they apply to, therefore these communities would extract a double benefit for work developing their operation and their participation. This strengthens them and actually “includes” the excluded in the process. Specific assessment mechanisms, again based on explicit consultation were derived directly from these principles. The result is a capacity building programme not primarily focused on developing organisational structure

In response to a specific set of consultations with grassroots groups in 2000-1 CEFET made representations to partners that the East Midlands small grant (“Global Grants”) element of the programme should be designated to a **Local Social Capital** programme. This has 3 distinctive features: that the fund applies to excluded communities and that panels drawn from those communities make grant decisions; that eligibility is restricted to projects that in their activity – as well as their aim – develop community spirit; that those panels and the projects are supported to deliver. The proposal won the support of partners and the resulting programme is called Catalyst. It will, by the end of 2007, amount to a £4.3m programme giving out something like 700 grants. It has been the subject of an independent evaluation and was described as “radical” and “fully effective in achieving its primary goal”³. It is currently the subject of a DWP study, chosen as a case study on grounds of its “uniqueness” in England.

Finally the RDP and guidance material distinguishes a raft of actions aimed at combating exclusion. As part of its work funded by the Community Fund (in a project called *SEND* in 2001-4) CEFET developed from this set of categories an **analysis scale** entitled the **SEND-scale**⁴. Provision is allocated a value according to how “hard-to-reach” or “facing barriers to participation” the community affected is. The lower the number the nearer to the most excluded, for example Local Social Capital delivery is index 1... NVQ1 is index 8. The line between a specifically exclusion-oriented action and a “mainstream” action is at index 7. It is possible to give an index to a portfolio of actions by averaging the funds allocated at each scale point. This can be done for any programme. This scale was incorporated into an analysis of England Capacity Building in the study commissioned and accepted by the DWP, and undertaken by TSEN in Partnership with CEFET and Leeds Metropolitan University, entitled “Building Capacity for What?”

It is interesting to use the SEND scale to compare pre-CFO programme, centred on grass roots groups, with the later CFO programme, assigning a value to the quality and nature of activity. This too is tabulated below.

² RDP, CH 6, Policy Field 2 p 16.

³ LRDP evaluation of Catalyst pilot year. Already lodged with EM Big Lottery, emda and GOEM is also available at www.catalystfund.org.uk

⁴ The SEND Index – the lower the number the closer to excluded people the provision. (7.00 or over would have no special relevance to exclusion).

Quantitative Impact

The figures (tabulated below) show the **quantitative** impact of an organised, grass-roots-based, mobilising communities strategy in the programme, which has the effect of:

- increasing finance reaching the sector by **57%**,
- increasing the proportion reaching small local groups **3 fold**
- increasing the proportion of projects finally run by grass roots groups, composed of and controlled by the excluded community themselves (Inclusion GROs = IGROs), **5 fold**
- increasing community mobilisation capacity nearly **5 fold**
- involving immeasurably more community organisations
- nearly doubling the number of individual excluded beneficiaries per £ through community provision

Also tabulated are values from the Catalyst programme, aggregated for the whole programme period until March 2008. Note differences in quantity and type of funded projects – Columns 1 and 3 are programmes with fully integrated grassroots influence (through CEFET) and Column 2 where there is disruption of this by non-specialist managerial systems (CFOs) at selection and implementation level.

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
	2000 - 2003	2003 - 2005	CATALYST 2002-8
Policy Framework	Community Empowerment Strategy Written by CEFET in RDP	Community Empowerment Strategy Written by CEFET in RDP	Community Empowerment Strategy Written by CEFET in RDP
Programme & Selection Framework	Regional Guidance and Scoring Framework Written by CEFET	CFO Prospectus	Global Grants working group papers Written by CEFET
Selection Implementation	Policy Field 2 Scoring Panel Trained and chaired by CEFET	CFO Appraisal Panel	Local community Selection Panels
Funds Awarded	£14.0m	£24.1m ⁵	£2m
% VCO	74%	47%	All
% Local Community	57%	19%	All
% Inclusion GROs	44%	9%	All
% Community Capacity Building	33%	7% ⁶	All Local Social Capital
Additional funds levered	£16.6m	£ 0	£2.3m
VCO Projects	148	102	700
VCO Individual Beneficiaries	11,196	9,792 ⁷ (est)	4,900
Community Groups Benefiting	454	?	700
SEND Index <i>As explained on p2, above</i>	4.25	6.80	1.00

These figures show the potential and need, here tabulated for one inclusion programme, for effective change touching the lives of dozens of communities, hundreds of community groups and thousands of excluded individuals. This is what results from genuine bottom-up organisation, networking, influence and structure within the definition of programmes by groups embedded in excluded communities. It is the missing link in the structure required to put excluded people themselves genuinely at the heart of inclusion action.

Implications of Need

This substantial success story arose from intensive work consulting with Grass Roots Organisations, and network development, originating in the period 1998-2000. This network allowed a channel for GROs to express their needs, comment on ideas, plans, policy, and draft implementation frameworks. There is no exact replica of this network in the other English regions, although a basis for it exists, just as in the E. Midlands a few years ago. The recognition CEFET has gained, in other regions and at National and International conferences for its work, reflect this.

⁵ + £ 7.9m still to be announced (2005)

⁶ probably all organisational capacity rather than community capacity

⁷ Estimate, figures not released