

Flemish / Austrian Study visit

“Learning from each other”: International knowledge exchange between employment partnerships

The Flemish Sub-regional Committees (STCs) and the Austrian Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) met in Brussels from 29 to 31 October 2003 to exchange information on successful and non successful practices. During the study visit the co-ordinators of the employment partnerships conducted conversations about practical aspects as well as strategic developments. Similarities and differences of the two policy approaches were explored, future challenges discussed and transferable items for both countries identified. Generally spoken, the presentations and discussions focused on the following:

- a) partnership’s national and regional frameworks;
- b) and links between enterprises and partnerships.

Ad a) Partnership’s national and regional frameworks

The experts reviewed the role and the rights to vote of their partners in both countries. Due to the legislative framework in Flandern the Trade Unions are important partners of the STCs (Trade Unions are responsible for the payment of unemployment fees) while in Austria the provincial governments are the “drivers of the partnerships” (see Tab. below). Expected changes regarding the legal position of the Committees (STCs will become a legal body) and the integration of local authorities (e.g. politicians) into the partnerships were pointed out during the discussions. Furthermore, the national political and financial backgrounds of the partnership structures were compared and pros and cons identified (“partnerships without deadline”, funds for projects).

Tab. Main differences between employment partnerships in Flandern and Austria

Topics discussed	Flandern	Austria
“Driver of the partnerships”	Trade Union	Provincial Government and Labour Market Service on a provincial level
Time frame of partnerships	“partnerships without deadline”	Depending on esf, objective 3 2000-2006
Legal body	now: contract between partners in near future: STC (as NGO)	contract between partners
Expansion of partnerships	in near future: integration of local authorities	-
Financing of the partnership	Government; in near future: local and provincial authorities	ESF, Objective 3 and/or the partners of the partnership

Ad b) Links between enterprises and partnerships

Diversity plans were presented as the Flemish instrument to better link enterprises and partnerships. Without doubt the tools’ outstanding advantage is the achievement of a balance between target groups and the HR-development of the enterprises. The experts discussed the importance of a political agreement on the level of the Flemish Government for diversity management and the necessity of financial aid during implementation (funds for diversity plans).

Both expert groups decided to deepen their co-operation in future. Joint activities to be taken might consist not only on further bilateral information exchange between the co-ordinators themselves, but also on a Flemish study visit to Austria, a joint international exchange mart and a common article of the study visit.

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