

TOWARDS MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE FOLLOWING THE REFORM OF REGIONAL POLICY IN POLAND?

PAPER PREPARED FOR THE REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE – 2010 “Regional Responses to Global Shifts: Actors, Institutions and
Organisations”

(24TH-26TH MAY 2010, PECS)

Gateway D: Regional policies: government and quasi-government initiatives

First draft – please do not quote without permission.

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Introduction

The reform of regional policy in Poland is currently being prepared by Polish government in cooperation with regional authorities. The reform, introduced in the National Strategy of Regional Development for 2010 – 2020, assumes a change in roles and relations between all stakeholders of regional development. This change is reflected in a new delivery system of this policy and aims at realisation of multi-level governance – treated normatively as one of the main principles governing the reform of regional policy in Poland. This paper observes new allocation of competences in the field of the regional development between central, regional and local authorities as well as between these authorities and their non-governmental partners, as proposed in the strategy. As the importance of pre-existing schema of actors' relations for the future changes is often stressed, this article will provide the background of prior-reform regional policy institutional formula in Poland. The analysis of the change of different actors' roles and relations in the whole delivery system of the regional policy in comparison to the system applied so far serves as a basis to answer the following questions:

How is multi-level governance principle interpreted and translated into practical solutions concerning the delivery system of regional policy by Polish authorities?

To what extent will the proposed solutions effectively change the relations between different stakeholders of the regional policy in the direction of multi-level governance?

What mechanisms are planned to be introduced supporting the change in relations between authorities and partners at different levels of government?

Under what conditions will these mechanisms bring Polish regional policy closer to the realisation of multi-level governance in Poland?

And finally, if it is justified to treat the new regional policy making system as a materialisation of the multi-level governance concept then what type of multi-level governance does the delivery system of new regional policy in Poland represent?

I. Theoretical framework of the study

The purpose of this paper is to analyse changes in the relations between main stakeholders of regional development by using as a theoretical framework the concept of multi-level governance. To answer the question set in the title a clear indication of what multi-level governance stands for is needed. Therefore, the definition and features of the concept must be first clarified and the conceptual benchmarks established against which the emergence of multi-level governance can be proved in empirical analysis.

The difficulty in application of the multi-level governance as a theoretical framework stems from its evolving content, characteristics and scope of application, which results in variety of definitions of the term and its various ability to capture changing reality. In theoretical terms it is used as an analytical model or as a normative concept, namely “a normatively superior mode of allocating authority”(Bache and Flinders 2004:195). In the first case its usefulness as an analytical framework is variously assessed, e.g. as an approach at a pre-theoretical stage, a description of a policy making in the EU, an organising perspective or a contrastive concept (overview: Bache and Flinders 2004: 203).

The lowest common denominator of all approaches to multi-level governance seems to be a concern to explain emergence of new actors along central state in the decision-making processes. From this observation the concept was first conceived by Gary Marks who on the basis of a case of joint supra- and subnational action under EU structural policy, developed hypothesis of an emerging ‘multilevel policy arena’ (Marks 1993:403). Such a statement raised questions concerning the nature of relations between different actors and the way in which they are organised. The simplest way to describe the organisation of relations between state and other non-state actors (stemming from the very notion of multi-level governance) is to draw two lines along which different actors interact: the vertical one between supranational, national and sub-national levels and the horizontal one between state and non-state actors at different territorial levels. Thus, ‘multi-level’ refers to a vertical dimension of the concept whereas ‘governance’ relates to a horizontal one (Bache 2004:3).

Whereas the multi-level governance concept directs attention towards interrelations between actors at different territorial levels, the core interest of the literature on ‘governance’, ‘new governance’ and ‘new modes of governance’ concerns the nature of relations between different actors. It stresses the non-hierarchical, polycentric, voluntary and mutually dependent character of relations between state and non-state actors, In addition, the main function of the new system of governance is to be regulation not redistribution (Hix 1998, Börzel 2007).

The character of the relations between actors at different territorial levels seems to become a central question in further studies on multi-level governance. Particularly two issues capture more attention: the changing position of state in the complex environment and the impact of this change on the state-non-state actors relations and demarcation line between the multi-level governance and other ways of non-state actors involvement in policy-making processes.

In the first case the discussions circulate around the question whether partial and gradual loss of state power is an inherent characteristic of multi-level governance. Some loss of state power is assumed if the term of multi-level governance is related to a “dispersion of authority away from central government – upwards to the supranational level, downwards to sub-national jurisdictions, and sideways to public/private networks” (Hooghe and Marks, 2001:4). The dispersion of power does not necessarily imply that the state authority loses its central position in the decision- making, rather it assumes that the state monopoly is broken and its activity is complemented by other participants of

policy-making processes. Therefore multi-level governance provides different than state-centric perspective on policy-making both in national and supranational context (Marks, Hooghe, Blank, 1996).

In the context of European integration, this development triggers a question whether this dispersion of power is state-steered or falls outside its control powers. Taking the view that some control “has slipped away from them to supranational institutions” (Marks, Hooghe, Blank, 1996:342) stipulates at least partially involuntary loss of state sovereignty (e.g. because of qualified majority voting in Council of Ministers). On the other hand, it is the state which decides on the transfer of competences to other levels of government, its scope, organization and conditions upon which this transfer proceeds. Thus, the state at least tries to retain control over the transfer process to such an extent to be able to revoke this process.

In this context, the voices appear that the empowerment of other government levels or non-state actors does not necessarily entail weakening of the state. It is argued that the state may consciously agree to dispersion of its power in order to build its capacity or to achieve more efficiently its policy goals. The state may also counteract the shift in power by its increased involvement in ‘meta-governance’, namely the creation of rules which underlie the governance processes (Jessops 2004). As interesting as it may be to contribute to a debate on the position of state and the re-definition of its role in multi-level governance, the discussion proves that the loss of state control or power is not a prerequisite for multi-level governance emergence. Nevertheless, the debate shows that the intrinsic feature of multi-level governance, namely dispersion of power entails re-definition of the state’s role. In view of this process the state develops various strategies and mechanisms in order to secure its central role in decision-making process.

How can be the relations between different territorial levels described if altering state’s position under multi-level governance does not give clear indications as regards directions of these changes?. Policy-network approach seems to be a helpful tool to explain the relations between different participants of policy-making process in multi-level governance, particularly if one takes into consideration the fact that these two concepts are intertwined from the very first deliberations on multi-level governance. Already in 1993 Gary Marks referred to policy network to describe new developments in EU structural policy stating that “supranational, national, regional and local governments are enmeshed in territorially overarching policy networks” (Marks 1993:402-3). According to policy network approach different levels of government interact because they are dependent on each other for resources. In case of multi-level governance the interdependences between organisations participating in the policy-making process result from redistribution of domestic power resources (financial, informational, political, organizational and constitutional-legal) from national to supranational and sub-national actors. The dispersion of power, thus, leads to growing interdependence between actors of policy-making process.

The issue of demarcation line between governance and different forms of participation in policy making sheds more light on the nature of relations between state and other participants of policy-making processes. The line is drawn along capacity to influence outcomes of the policy making process: “(...) *participation* refers to engagement in the decision-making process, while *governance* infers the engagement involves some influence over the outcomes of the process.” (Bache 2008:31). Therefore, the involvement in policy formulation and implementation can be of different intensity measured e.g. by the degree of autonomy of private and public actors in decision-making processes and may take different forms varying from simple consultation to self-regulation by private actors (Börzel 2007:6).

The above overview of main discussion points in multi-level governance literature allows to draw attention to most important question when analysing the change in relations between all stakeholders of regional development resulting from the reform of regional policy in Poland. First of all, it is important to observe the change in horizontal and vertical dimensions of the policy making system in this field, namely:

- What levels of government are to be involved at different stages of policy-making processes (vertical dimension)?
- What non-governmental partners are to be involved at different stages of policy-making processes (horizontal dimension)?

Secondly, it is important to ask about the position of different actors in a delivery system of regional policy, namely:

- What are the roles and tasks of state and non-state actors at different stages of policy making in the reformed delivery system of regional policy?
- What kind of competences are assigned to different actors of regional development in the delivery system of regional policy in Poland (main competence, supporting competence, mere involvement in the system, no competence)?

Thirdly, it is important to ask about the degree of impact of non-state actors on the policy outcomes. The degree of impact depends not only on the position of partners in the system (their role and kind of competence) but also on the following conditions:

- What form will the involvement of non-state actors take in the system?
- What is the capacity of non-state actors to exercise impact?
- What mechanisms are provided for strengthening the capacity of non-state actors to exercise impact?

The answers to these questions allow to draw conclusions concerning the change of character of relations between state and non-state actors from hierarchically imposed authority in a centralized system to non-hierarchical system of voluntary networks organized in a MLG system. The direction of changes introduced by the reform of the regional policy in Poland is more visible when presented on a background of prior-reform regional policy institutional formula in Poland.

This case study takes a domestic view on multi-level governance development in Poland. Although it tries to cover changes in relations between state and all other stakeholders in regional development, it concentrates on the changes in relations of two main actors in the process of formulation and implementation of regional policy – state and region. The state is understood here as government and central state administration, whereas regions are treated as regional self-government, their political representative bodies and regional self-governmental administration.

I.

II. **Development of sub-national structures responsible for regional development in Poland in the years 1990-2010**

2.1. *Decentralisation processes in a post communist era*

The post-communist era saw important decentralisation processes, which were foremost an element of democratisation of the state in Poland and resulted in the development of vertical levels of authority in Poland. The first reform from 1990 concerned introduction of a self-government on a lowest territorial level – gmina and consequently created basis for strengthening local communities and for meeting local needs by local administration responsible for provision of basic services. The second reform introduced in 1999 created both 16 self-governmental regions at the sub-national level granted with the responsibility for the regional development and a second, after gminas, level of local self-government – powiat, which took over many governmental tasks carried out territorially. Whereas the period before 1999 was characterised by a strong centralisation and by a sectoral approach to development carried out by in-line ministries, the period afterwards saw decentralisation of competence concerning regional development and limitation of the role of Voivode – the representative of central government in the region.

The adoption of a new territorial division in Poland including delimitation of 16 large regions created an adequate territorial scope as well as institutional and legal conditions for the conduct of regional policy in Poland. The regions were granted responsibility for regional development, including obligation to prepare the regional strategies for regional development. Nevertheless, the newly created regions were confronted with two main problems in the field of regional development. Firstly, the lack of own adequate financial resources made it difficult for regional self-government to become financially independent from the central government in the field of regional policy. For example, region's revenues transferred from the state budget amounted to 84,3% of the whole regional revenue in 2002 (MRD 2007b:43). Secondly, the dual system of authority at the regional level (central government's authority represented by politically appointed Voivode and self-government's authority represented by regionally elected bodies) made it difficult for newly created self-governments to independently fulfil their role of representatives of regional interests.

Before 1999, Poland's territorial policy consisted essentially of support for industrial regions undergoing restructuring, which took form of the development of special economic zones after 2004 (OECD 2008:18). Since 1999, regions have played an increasingly strategic role for regional development. Before the structural funds arrived to Poland, the regional development was financed under regional contracts (main operational tool of regional development strategies between 2001 – 2007) negotiated between central government and regional self-government and implemented on the ground by the regions. The impact of contracts on regional development is assessed in a differentiated way. On one hand, it is stressed that the contracts were an important learning tool in preparations for the management of EU funds, as well as the main tool for enhancing regions' position as responsible for regional development and as important partners of local government, central government and the EC in this field. On the other hand, the impact of contracts was limited to financing short-term goals and small projects concerning mostly provision of public services than support for economic development (OECD 2008:180-181, MRD 2007b:101). In result, one can risk a statement that the regional policy hardly existed in Poland before 1999 and that it started to develop into a fully-fledged policy only after the EU cohesion policy was introduced in Poland.

2.2. The role of EU cohesion policy in Poland in strengthening the position of regional authorities

The launch of the cohesion policy in Poland after its accession to the European Union in 2004 opened an opportunity to strengthen the role of regions in Poland not only by giving them access to financial resources but also by granting them competences for EU funds' management. The role of regions in the EU cohesion policy has been strengthened in the following programming period 2007-2013 both in terms of amount of financial resources at their disposal and their function in the delivery system of the policy.

In the first programming period 2004-2006 the role of regional authorities in structural funds' implementation was limited. The delivery system for the EU cohesion policy implementation was designed by the central state as a centralised one in order to diminish the risk of losing structural funds in consequence of potential dysfunctions of the system on the regional level as well as to concentrate resources on the most urgent macro-problems. In result, the responsibility for programming the support for the regions from structural funds was allocated at the central level, where one Integrated Programme for Regional Development (IROP) for all 16 regions was prepared.

The regional programme was managed centrally but implemented regionally. The managing authority was located in the Ministry for Regional Development (till 2005 Ministry for Economy and Labour), which delegated part of its managing functions to state's representatives in the region – Voivodes. At the same time Marshal Offices – regional self-governmental administration- were indicated as institutions participating in programme implementation. In consequence a dual structure of implementation was created on a regional level with regions responsible mainly for project selection and governmental administration in the region for control and monitoring of implementation as well as for providing financing for selected projects. This situation gave raise to many tensions between the representatives of government and self-government in the regions because of doubling of functions between these authorities, which appeared in practice. This increased administrative costs of structural funds' implementation and decreased efficiency of the system. In addition, the system privileged the Voivodes which often had a final word in inter-institutional relations at different stages of the implementation processes. In the end, this system tended to strengthen the position of central state's structures in the region and could undermine the legally anchored role of regional self-government as responsible for regional development.

On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that in situation of a limited capacity and experience in the field of regional development, this period served as a training and test ground for future solutions. The system, in which regional self-government played a limited role was treated as an interim solution or a transition period before granting it with enhanced responsibility for preparation and implementation of regional development programmes under EU cohesion policy in a forthcoming period 2007-2013.

The next programming period 2007-2013 brought with it a major reform of the EU cohesion policy delivery system in Poland in the new programming period 2007-2013, as compared to the years 2004-2006. The regions were granted more responsibility for programming and management of regionally allocated structural funds. The *rationale* behind the decision seems to be consequent fulfilment of the obligation, already inscribed in the IROP (MELSP 2004:4-5), to grant regions with an enhanced competences and increased autonomy as regards participation in EU cohesion policy in the programming period 2007-2013. The decision has been also justified in official documents by the enhanced administrative capacity of regional structures proved by effective implementation of structural funds under IROP in 2004-2006 (NSRF 2007:100). This decentralisation of EU cohesion delivery system was positively received by the European Commission (Beschel, 2007:24).

As result of this decision, each region exercises function of managing authority responsible for setting development priorities, preparation of the programme (called regional operational programme (ROP)) and for its implementation on ground. Thus, 16 ROPs were prepared by regions instead of one IROP in 2004-2006 period. All the main stages of programme delivery, such as project selection, monitoring, control, evaluation are placed in regional self-governmental administration - Marshal Offices although the regions as managing authorities may delegate part of their tasks to other bodies. The role of Voivodeship Offices has been limited to certification of expenditure spent regionally, what should definitely ease the tensions between the regional and central state's authorities in the voivodeships. It must be stressed that regions carry now a direct responsibility for efficient and effective delivery of development goals, successful implementation of development programmes and proper expenditure of SF resources.

As regards financial resources channelled to regions under EU cohesion policy - one-quarter of EU funds has been decentralised since 2004. Taking into account a substantially increased allocation provided for Poland in 2007-2013 period, the amount of resources for regional development programmes increased in comparison to 2004-2006 period from almost 3 billion euro to almost 25 billion euro. Nevertheless, this amount represents a similar share in the whole structural funds allocation in Poland as in 2004-2006 period. It must be stressed that EU funds represent the bulk of Poland's budget for regional policy. As a result of that, and of the weakness of previous national arrangement concerning regional development in Poland, Polish regional policy has been strongly subordinated to objectives, priorities and procedures adopted under EU cohesion policy.

2.3. The role of partners in delivery of regional policy

The EU cohesion policy introduced to Polish regional policy the obligation for realization of partnership principle. The assessment of the degree of realization of this principle is difficult. Consultations used as main tool for realization of partnership are widely applied. But they have been often treated as a burden - prolonging processes of policy formulation, or as an obligation, which has to be fulfilled because of legal requirements. Moreover, the reservations concern the transparency of the process of consultations. In effect, it is difficult to assess the impact of consultations on final provisions included in the programming documents, particularly when the documents consulted undergo major reformulation after consultations.

Other important issue concerns inclusion in the delivery process of non-state actors. So far the involvement of partners in the delivery system of cohesion policy in Poland has been limited, except for the monitoring process (involvement of partners in monitoring committees required by EU regulation). In 2004-2006 period, the systemic solutions allowed for participation in the system of institutions not belonging to public sector, namely regional financing institutions. In the programming period 2007-2013, the proposals to involve banks in the delivery system as implementing institutions (intermediary bodies) has not been accepted at the central level. The legal requirements concerning the necessity to organize public tender in such a case cause that the role of private institutions in the system is limited because of the risk of lengthy process of selecting such institutions by the means of tender.

III. **Changes introduced by the reform**

3.1. *Normative understanding of MLG in a new paradigm of regional policy*

The reform of the regional policy now being prepared by the Ministry for Regional Development in the National Strategy of Regional Development (NSRD) introduces a new paradigm of the regional development in Poland. The reform aims at the liberation of the Polish regional policy from the EU cohesion policy and the subordination of the latter to national objectives and development priorities. The new paradigm consists, among others, of following elements (MRD 2009:7-8):

- transition from regional policy of redistributive character to the policy, which aims at the use of endogenous potentials of different territories by the means of multiannual, decentralized development policies,
- adoption of a place-based approach to regional development,
- integration of development goals concerning territory in one policy by means of coordination of public policies having territorial impact with the goals of regional policy (multisectoral approach to regional development),
- increasing efficiency of regional policy by a thematic and geographic concentration of regional interventions, by introduction of mechanism of conditionality and competition in access to public financial resources,
- **a transition from top-down model of governing to a strengthened multi-level governance,**
- **further decentralization** of public affairs' management and rationalization of the financing system of public policies through delimitation of the most efficient level of providing public services according to the subsidiarity principle.

What appears from the above listing is that multi-level governance forms an intrinsic part of a new paradigm of the regional policy. The reading of the strategy indicates that the understanding of multi-level governance by the authors of the strategy is twofold. Firstly, it is treated normatively as a principle underlying the organization of relations between different actors of regional development (MRD 2009:76). Secondly, the delivery system of the regional policy is described as multi-level governance /multi-level management system, which basically means that the processes of formulation and implementation of regional policy are realized at different levels and by different actors with inclusion of state and non-state partners in the processes. Or in other words that the responsibility of different actors for different stages of formulation and implementation of regional policy is spread across various levels of government.

Bearing that in mind, one can extract from the text the elements of multi-level governance treated as a principle of the new regional policy in Poland:

- the organization of relations between different actors of regional development (government-regional self-government; Voivode- regional self-government; government-other partners; regional self-government – other partners) should be based on partnership and cooperation in pursuit of common goals concerning territorial development,
- the main competence and responsibility for regional development belongs to both minister for the regional development at the central level, and the regional self-government at the regional

- level, treated equally in the system and cooperating with each other as main partners in the system,
- the role and competences of main stakeholders of the regional policy – namely, - minister for the regional development at the central level, - and the regional self-government at the regional level, in the delivery system should be strengthened,
 - the delivery system of regional policy should be constructed in such a way to involve in development processes wide array of public and private partners acting at different levels,
 - the main public partners in the development processes should be other ministries responsible for policies affecting territory at the central level and local self-government responsible for the local development at the sub-national level,
 - the partners should be organized in networks,
 - the minister for the regional development at the central level and the regional self-government at the regional level should be the centers of the nets, responsible for creation of conditions for networking and enhancing the capacity of public and private partners to get involved in the networks,
 - the delivery system of regional policy should allow for enhanced accountability for achievement of the development goals.

In general the MLG principle concerns the way of organization of the delivery system of the regional policy indicating the changes in roles of main actors of the system and their relations. In a result, the delivery system of the regional policy is built on the above mentioned assumptions of the MLG principle, what is visible in detailed provisions concerning the organization of the system (inclusion of different administrative levels and different public and non-public actors), the roles, competences and tasks of the actor as well as their relations (and following that the importance of different actors in the system), the institutions and mechanisms created to support the inclusion of state and non-state partners in the system.

3.2. MLG as a description of the regional policy delivery system

The delivery system of the regional policy is designed in such a way to take into consideration the elements of the MLG principle as provided for in the NSRD. In result, the system takes account of roles and competences of actors placed at different levels of government, namely:

- at the supranational level – the European Commission,
- at the central level – Prime Minister/Council of Ministers, minister for the regional development and its ministry, other in-line ministers and their ministries, in particular the minister of finance and minister of infrastructure,
- at the regional level – regional self-government, the Voivode (governmental administration in the region),
- at the local level – local self-government, with special role attributed to city councils,
- partners of different status – socio-economic partners, NGOs, representatives of universities/ research institutes, private actors acting at all levels of government.

It must be stressed that these actors have different status and importance in the delivery system of the regional policy. The main responsibility for the delivery of this policy lies within the ministry of regional development (at the central level) and the regional self-government (at the regional level). Although their role in the system is not identical (because of different competences in the system) they

are generally treated as the actors of equal status – carrying direct responsibility for the success of regional development strategies – their formulation and implementation, whose mutual relations should be based on partnership. Other actors are of two kinds – the ones who are assigned roles and competences in the different stages of processes of regional policy making and those who are involved as partners in these processes. One can distinguish also between actors who have main competence at certain stage of policy-making and carry a direct responsibility for the success of the process and those, who have supporting competences, and have responsibility for part of the conduct of the processes. In contrast with those actors carrying main responsibility their actions may support or hinder the result of the processes but they may not prevent the process from realization. The role of different actors in the regional policy, as provided for in the NSRD, is shown in table 1.

In line with the adopted by the NSRD typology, the processes of regional policy making include:

- meta governance – formulation of rules and procedures concerning the organization of policy-making processes in the field of regional policy,
- programming of regional development – preparation of strategic and operational documents,
- management of development processes, including implementation of development strategies and programmes,
- coordination of development actions having territorial impact,
- supervision of the course of development processes - control, monitoring and evaluation of development processes.

Meta-governance is almost exclusively competence of the ministry for regional development. This includes preparation of changes in legal, organizational, procedural framework of the policy, changes necessary for the realization of a new paradigm of the regional policy. This includes responsibility for creation of conditions and capacity for building networks of partners. The regions are important partners in these processes but the final decision as regards – formulation of rules and procedures concerning the organization of policy-making processes in the field of regional policy belongs to the ministry. At the same time regions have opportunity to adapt the general framework adopted at the central level to their needs and circumstances (e.g. the final form of the contract, the way to reconcile local and regional development priorities in strategic documents etc.). The NSRD provides also for many provisions which leave it to the regions to decide if and how they are to adopt institutions created at central level (e.g. the creation of regional territorial forums). At the same time the regions have sole competence for creation of net of partners at the regional level. As far as supranational level is concerned, the debate on the future of the cohesion policy post-2013 is a reference point for the regional policy framework in Poland but European Commission itself isn't directly involved in this process on the national ground.

Programming of regional development is a part of a wider system of planning of development processes in Poland. In this system strategic development goals defined by the Council of Ministers are translated into practical solutions in strategies and operational programmes. The key actors in the programming process are: minister for regional development responsible for the preparation of the NSRD – and regional self-government responsible for the formulation of the strategy of voivodeship's development. These two kinds of strategies are of crucial importance for setting goals, priorities and defining directions for regional development in Poland. At the same time, other actors prepare documents which are of importance for the territorial development policy. This includes strategies of local development adopted by gminas/communities and different sectoral strategies prepared by the in-line ministries, which should take into account the territorial dimension of planned policies. The European Commission has competences concerning the programming of the structural funds'

expenditure including adoption of Community Support Framework and negotiation of OPs. Although the process of strategic programming is open for involvement of different partners, the role of partners is differentiated. The regions take an active role in the preparation of the NSRD participating in working groups and in consultations. The role of local authorities in preparation of regional strategies will depend on the decision of regional authorities – it may vary from cooperation on setting common strategic framework to mere consultation of ready documents. Other partners are usually involved in the process in the form of participation in consultations.

The responsibility for management of development processes belongs to actors, who are to prepare development strategies – MRD- and in-line ministers at the central level, regions – at the regional and gminas/communities at the local level. It means that these actors are responsible for arranging the system of implementation of the strategies, for choosing mechanisms of granting the resources for the beneficiaries and for selecting the projects to be implemented, for monitoring the progress in programme implementation. At the same time, local authorities and other partners may be involved in the process of implementation, mainly as beneficiaries of the resources granted from regional operational programs responsible for implementing the projects prepared by them. For the regional development it is of crucial importance to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the NSRD and the regional strategies. Thus, the ministry for regional development and Marshal Offices are assigned main competence in this area. The supporting competence belongs also to the Coordination Committee working under Prime Minister, which may take decisions crucial for programme management like the changes in delivery mechanisms introduced in order to enhance the efficiency of development programmes realization. The European Commission is involved in the management of OPs financed from structural funds.

The MLG system, in which the competences for different stages of territorial development is spread across different levels of government and among different actors requires strong coordination mechanisms. The system provides for many mechanisms which should ensure the coherence of the development goals and their effective realization. That's why the Council of Ministers and directly a Committee for Coordination of Development Policy plays important role in ensuring the proper functioning of the system. The minister for regional development is directly responsible for coordination of all policies having territorial impact at the central level, both at programming and implementation stage of policy-making. The regions carry similar responsibility for actions of all regional development actors at the regional level. The Voivode may support the ministry for regional development in coordination process.

The process of supervision of the course of implementation processes consisting of control, monitoring and evaluation is extremely complicated as it does not embrace only the regional policy itself and the realization of all strategies and programs of territorial impact but also wider development processes, which may have an impact on territories. The general monitoring of development policies' realization is carried out by the Coordination Committee for Development Policy, which is also responsible for periodical assessment of effectiveness and efficiency of development policies, including regional policy. Whereas the direct responsibility for the realization of strategies and programs belongs to actors competent for their preparation and management, the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of wider development processes belongs to the minister for the regional development at the central level and the regional self-government at the regional level. The partners are involved in these processes, in particular representatives of local self-government. The control competences are exercised according to legal provisions concerning the control and supervision of public finances spending, with the possibility to grant the Voivode with a special role in the system, as it is with the

control of structural funds expenditure. The European Commission takes part in monitoring, evaluation and control of structural funds' support.

Table. 1. Role of different actors in processes of regional policy making according to the NSRD

ACTORS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS/PROCESSES	SUPRANATIONAL LEVEL	CENTRAL LEVEL			REGIONAL LEVEL		LOCAL LEVEL	PARTNERS
	European Commission	Prime Minister/ Council of Ministers	Minister for regional development/ MRD	In-line ministers and their ministries	Regional self-government/Marshal Offices	Voivode	Local self-government	
META-GOVERNANCE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
PROGRAMMING	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
MANAGEMENT/ IMPLEMENTATION	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
COORDINATION	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
CONTROL/MONITORING & EVALUATION	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Legend:

- - main competence
- - supporting competence
- - involvement in the process
- - no role in the process

3.3. The impact of different partners on policy outcomes

The ability of partners to exercise impact on policy outcomes depends among others on the forms of their involvement in the policy-making processes. The adoption of Börzel's framework concerning new modes of governance and non-hierarchical involvement of partners in decision making to existing arrangements under Polish reformed regional policy allows to determine upon following forms of involvement in the policy –making processes:

- consultation,
- joint decision- making (through participation in common institutions e.g. Monitoring Committees, National and Regional Territorial Forums, through negotiations of common arrangements e.g. in contract),
- delegation of tasks to partners (with participation of public authorities by e.g. standard setting and control arrangements)
- partners' self-initiative (but involvement of public authorities e.g. financial support for the initiatives).

The list of partners included in the NSRD include: socio-economic partners, NGOs, representatives of universities/ research institutes, private actors. But they are called as other partners. The reason behind it is that central government considers self-government at regional and local level as the most important partners. At the same time, local authorities are important partners for regional self-government in regional policy.

As regards involvement of partners in rule setting and creation of general institutional and legal framework for regional development (meta-governance), it is usually limited to mere consultation of arrangements prepared by the government. Nevertheless, the ministry for regional development tries to involve regions in a more advanced way in the process of preparation of new solutions by creating working groups, in which regions may advocate their own proposals. The form of such an involvement is close to joint decision-making, as the ministry is open to adopt the regional proposals. If the ministry decides to adopt regional proposals depends mostly on the willingness and capacity of the regions to present their point of view as well as on the quality of the proposals. In practice, it is often the case, that the regions wait for the ministry to propose something and then give their opinion on the topic, which is then closer to consultations.

The similar situation is observed in the process of programming. The regions took active role in preparation of the NSRD by participation in working groups on territorial contract, monitoring system, institutional arrangements and financial issues, where they tried to develop common solutions and understanding of how the delivery system of the regional policy should work. But at the same time, it must be stressed that the final decision always belongs to the ministry and in case when the ministry strongly advocates its own approach it may in fact impose it on the regions. As far as programming at the regional level is concerned the degree and form of involvement of partners in the process depends on the regions . The ministry advocates tight cooperation between regional and local authorities from the very beginning of strategic planning in order to ensure coherence of objectives and priorities in regional and local strategies. But it is quite possible that the regions will continue to merely consult their strategies with other partners only at the final stage of programming. Other partners participate in consultations of the documents which is now required by Polish law.

Table 2. Different forms of partners' involvement in processes of regional development

ACTORS/PROCESSES	REGIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT	LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT< INC. CITIES	SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTNERS	NGOS	ACADEMICS	PRIVATE PARTNERS
META-GOVERNANCE	●/●	●	●	●	●	●
PROGRAMMING	●/●	●/●	●	●	●	●
IMPLEMENTATION	●	●	●	●	●	●/●
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	●/●	●/●	●/●	●/●	●/●	●

Different forms of involvement in processes of regional development (adaptation of T. Börzel framework):

- - consultation
- -joint decision- making (through participation in common institutions e.g. monitoring committees, working groups)
- - delegation of tasks to partners (participation of public authorities by e.g. standard setting and control arrangements)
- - partners' self-initiative (but involvement of public authorities e.g. financial support for the initiatives).
- - no involvement in the process

The programme management is not mentioned in the NSRD as a process which could be realized by partners. It seems to be reserved for ministries and the regional self-governmental administration. But in practice, it happens that the responsibility for the part of the management tasks is transferred to other bodies, particularly under EU cohesion policy. The arrangements for management of programmes serving the realization of strategies at the operational level, particularly OPs prepared for EU structural funds implementation allow for the transfer of part of the tasks to other than central governmental administration and regional self-governmental administration bodies. If it concerns transfer of tasks to private bodies it must be done according to Polish law on public tender, what makes this solution unpopular. The part of management of Human Capital OP is transferred to the regional authorities, which play a role an intermediary institution under EU regulations. In contrast, the implementation of development programmes is, by the nature of this process, carried out quite often locally. In result, the responsibility for this process might be delegated to private partners by the means of public tender or in a result of public-private partnerships, the solution which is strongly advocated by the NSRD. Self-initiative is also encouraged by the strategy aiming at creation of partnerships, task groups or consortiums of different partners, like local authorities, NGOs or private partners whose projects may receive financing under regional contracts or other resources under development programmes.

Finally, the provisions of NSRD concerning monitoring and evaluation create many opportunities for involvement of partners. First of all, new institutional bodies, such as National Territorial Forum and Regional Territorial Forums as well as national and regional development observatories are open for participation of partners ranging from regional and local authorities to socio-economic partners, NGOs, academics, and experts from private field. Their expertise is important for monitoring development processes and for evaluation of progress in realization of development programmes. For the time being there are no detailed provisions concerning the form of their involvement in the workings of these bodies, but this may concern consultation or joint decision-making. As far as monitoring of progress of structural funds implementation is concerned the partners are to participate in the monitoring committees where they have joint-decision right in line with the EU regulation on involvement of partners in monitoring processes under EU cohesion policy. The monitoring and evaluation activities may be also taken on by partners on their own initiative. The NGOs may play the role of watchdogs, exercising social control over public actions in the field of regional development and the academics may conduct evaluations, which are part of their scientific research. These activities are now taken into account by the NSRD as important elements of monitoring and evaluation system.

IV. Mechanisms serving realization of MLG in Poland

The importance of different actors in MLG system of regional policy delivery in Poland depend not only on the role and competences assigned to them in the system but also on the capacity of those actors to use the opportunities the system creates for them. The NSRD assumes that it is necessary to support the actors by introducing special mechanisms. Three mechanisms introduced by the NSRD are particularly interesting in this regard: territorialisation, new territorial contract and new institutional instruments supporting cooperation with partners .

The process of territorialisation refers to reorganization of territorial distribution of financial resources from the central budget. This includes the assessment of allocation algorithms, the efficiency of sectoral financial instruments as well as competences exercised by in line ministries as regards territory. In result, the process assumes partial elimination of sectoral financial instruments and

competences and their transfer to the budget of the ministry for regional development for financing territorial contract or their transfer to the regional budgets. In this way the territorialisation process supports decentralization processes. But the main aim of this process is to provide adequate resources for the regional development and empower the regions to conduct the processes of regional development by strengthening their financial capacity. The success of the process of territorialisation depends strongly on the willingness of all stakeholders possessing financial resources of territorial impact (mostly in-line ministers) to cooperate with the ministry for regional development in the process of reforming the system of territorial spending and its consolidation under territorial contract or in the hands of regions. The position of the minister for regional development in the Council of Ministers is also of importance and his/her ability to convince other ministers to give up on their sectoral instruments for the aim of enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of territorial intervention.

The new territorial contract is a tool for supporting both coordination and partnership. It is designed to coordinate actions of all actors of territorial development as well as to actively involve as many partners as possible in realization of development activities. The negotiations of the contract between minister of regional development and regional authorities with participation of other crucial partners like in-line ministers and the city authorities should permit to adopt common objectives and priorities for the different territories within voivodeships. This should ensure complementarity of actions undertaken at central and regional level. At the same time, contract should allow for matching financial resources from different budgets, including private resources for realization of common development initiatives. In result this mechanism strengthens in first place the regions by enhancing their ability to finance regional development in the voivodeships. The regions may prepare subcontracts, which should serve to mobilize all regional resources (including private resources) for financing common undertakings. But the decision to do that is left to the regions. The contract opens also other windows for participation of partners: they are to be consulted at the preparatory stage when the priorities to be financed under contract are chosen by regional authorities, some of them may participate in negotiations of the contract, some will be granted the competence for implementation of selected undertakings under contract. The success of the contract depends strongly on the ability to mobilize so far spread resources and their channeling into financing of common priorities and undertakings, as well as capacity and willingness of regions to involve different partners in the process of contract preparation and implementation.

The NSRD provides also for new institutional tools for supporting cooperation with the partners. These include creation of National Territorial Forum and Regional Territorial Forums as institutions supporting strategic dialogue and discussions on territorial development. The forums are to be created in order to initiate and foster debate on directions of regional development, assess the progress in delivery of regional policy, and provide for strategic guidance on the goals and forms of the regional development support. In this way public and non-public partners are offered an institutionalized way to express their visions, opinions and to share their experience in the processes of regional development.

The proposed composition of the national forum includes:

- representatives of the ministry for regional development,
- experts and practitioners,
- scientists,
- representatives of self-governments,
- representatives of NGOs
- representatives of Main Statistical Office

- representatives of EC, OECD, World Bank, foreign countries administrations, regional observatories responsible for monitoring of development processes (specially invited for given meetings)

The planned composition of regional forums is similar to national one with greater consideration for representation of regional and local authorities. The composition of the forums indicate that they are created to form a space for practical realization of partnership principle. The success of its role of an instrument empowering public and private partners depends strongly on their capacity to actively participate in the workings of the forums. Of foremost importance is their knowledge, experience and expertise that they are able to provide, and which the central and regional government may translate into practical solutions in processes of regional development programming and management. Other institutional arrangements, which enable participation of partners include monitoring committees and regional observatories, which serve the monitoring of development processes, in which partners may participate.

In the end, NSRD sets as one of its objectives realization of general actions aiming at building social capital for regional development based on mutual trust and cooperation of all actors of regional policy. These actions include: strengthening the ability of both public and non-public actors to cooperate in networks at all levels of government, increasing the flow of information between all actors of regional policy, supporting learning processes , building capacities for realization of public tasks by partners. The realization of these actions seem to be an important supporting tool for creation of proper conditions for realization of MLG in the field of regional policy in Poland.

V. **Multi-level governance system emerging from the reform of the regional policy in Poland**

The recent debates in Poland on domestic effects of the EU cohesion policy and its future in a post-2013 period show that the central administration representatives stress the role of multi-level governance together with the principle of partnership in promotion of modern and efficient ways of policy making at the same time advocating its further strengthening (MRD 2007a, MRD 2008). The provisions of the National Strategy for Regional Development drawn by the ministry for regional development are a reflection of this conviction. It sets an ambitious goal of creation of multi-level governance in the field of regional policy in Poland. But how is MLG principle translated into practical arrangements? Does the provisions of the National Strategy of Regional Development for 2010-2020 concerning the delivery system of the regional policy in Poland provide for a revolutionary change from a centralised system to a decentralised one based on partnership with wide array of participants in regional development placed on different levels of governance? Or maybe is it just a cosmetic change – another tiny step particularly for the regions towards a little bit more independence from centrally planned and delivered regional policy?

The NSRD takes account of importance of various actors placed at different levels of government for the success of development processes, and of their roles and involvement at different stages of territorial policy making. But the change introduced by the strategy is not of quantitative character. The same actors have already been involved in development processes under EU cohesion policy, in which they have played similar roles, at the same territorial levels and at similar stages of policy-making. The experience of cohesion policy implementation gained in two programming periods is now transferred to Polish regional policy. What changes is that the same actors will be now involved to greater extend in realisation of national development goals and national development strategies.

The changes introduced by the reform of regional policy in Poland are of qualitative character and concern:

- the importance of the actors in the system measured by scope and weight of competences granted under regional policy,
- the character of relations between different actors resulting from application of new forms of involvement in the processes,
- new organisation of relations between some of the actors in the system in comparison to the system applied so far.

The comparison of the current system of regional policy delivery strongly influenced by the EU cohesion policy with the system planned in the NSRD the importance of actors changes in the following directions:

- central government maintains its central role in regional policy-making, by strengthening its competences in meta-governance, by increasing its competences in the field of coordination and by its greater capacity to mobilise resources of partners cooperating with the government in more or less institutionalised way,
- regions rise to the position of main partners of central government in regional policy and strengthen their position as main actors in regional development at the regional level in result of greater access to joint decision making with the central government, particularly in the field of meta-governance and strategic programming; territorialisation processes and reorientation of its role from “money dispenser” to the centre of cooperation with partners mobilising regional social capital for realisation of common goals,
- the role of in-line ministries in realization of territorial development policy is increased by their greater involvement in programming actions having territorial impact, their implementation on ground, monitoring and evaluation in order to take into account to greater extend territorial dimension of the sectoral policies,
- the local authorities rise to the position of crucial sub-national partners for regional authorities by their greater involvement in setting development priorities at the regional level, strategic programming and implementation of development actions, in result of the recognition of their importance in fostering endogenous development,
- the importance of partners in regional policy is strengthened by greater opportunities to get involved in decision-making at every stage of policy making.

The character of relations between all actors of regional development changes towards more participatory, contractual and voluntary as a result of

- greater opportunities for all actors to influence outcomes of decision-making by greater application of consultations, creation of possibilities for joint decision making and encouragement for partners’ self –initiatives,
- introduction of territorial contract functioning on a basis of negotiations between state and regions and on participation of different actors in its preparation and implementation.

The organisation of relations between some of the actors in the system in comparison to the system applied so far changes as a result of:

- introduction of new coordination mechanisms and institutions e.g. Coordination Committee of Development Policy,

- creation of new institutions supporting strategic programming, management, monitoring and evaluation of development processes e.g. national and regional observatories, national and regional territorial forums,
- introductions of new modes of cooperation e.g. common central state – regional working groups on preparation of the NSRD.

The delivery system of the regional policy designed in the NSRD will function in practice as a multi-level governance system characterized by the above mentioned features only if several conditions are met. First of all, the position of regions in the system depends strongly on the results of territorialisation processes. The regions need to gain financial independence from the state in order to play a role of the equal partners of the central government in development processes and in order to build their position in the voivodeship as crucial decision makers in the field of regional development.

Secondly, the effectiveness of the mechanisms provided for partners' involvement must be strengthened. The provisions of the NSRD do not create strong obligation and mechanisms for the central government and regions for cooperation with partners. The declarations concerning the importance of partnership for the MLG might turn out to be a wishful thinking if strong partnership mechanisms are not created. The contract might be a tool to mobilize regional partners but the concrete proposals concerning how to achieve it are missing. The form and scope of partners' involvement is left for the regional authorities to decide. In result, the partners might be only consulted in the process. The same concerns the form of partners' involvement in new strategic institutions. In particular, there are no ready solutions concerning greater application of public-private partnerships. What may be a great obstacle for active involvement of partners is the lack of capacity on both the side of regions (unable to encourage, mobilize and convince regional partners to get involved in development processes) and regional partners (unable to cooperate). The problem rises from the low social capital, lack of trust and lack of cooperation culture, which may make it difficult to undertake common actions and to get involved in development processes. Although objective 3 of national regional strategy aims at strengthening social capital, this process is lengthy and will surely not bring immediate results.

If the above mentioned conditions are met and obstacles overcome, then the MLG, which may emerge from the reform will be characterised by:

- **duo-centric system** , with two main centres of coordinating actions and managing relations with all actors involved in the processes of territorial development,
- **more participatory, voluntary and contractual relations,**
- **growing interdependences between all actors,**
- **better accountability of public actions,**
- **pressure on increased coordination capacity of central and regional authorities.**

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