WORKSHOP 6: **New collaboration mechanisms**
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## Background

The Third Social Sector is highly atomized and this is one of the reasons why small entities have a rather limited operational capacity. Most entities mostly focus in their target groups and in the region in which they operate. Occasionally, entities share information one with another but collaboration is scarce. In this context, national and international strategic and operational alliances are the necessary tool to modernize the sector and make it more competitive. These alliances will also lay the grounds for broadening the scope of small organizations and support innovation and public contracting.

*Federación ECAS* sponsors a program named *Alia't* for the promotion of the Third Social Sector. *Alia't* aims at the development of alliances within the Third Social Sector. Its general objectives are **improving the sector's competitiveness and supporting innovation through the development of alliances among entities.**
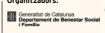
The Plan includes the following specific objectives:

- Providing the Third Social Sector with strategic and operational support for the development of national and international strategic alliances.
- Making existing and new alliances more dynamic and provide guidance.
- Developing 8 new alliances with different targets: innovation, public contracting, integral attention, efficiency and competitiveness).
- *Alia' t*is part of a program called3CREIX.cat aiming at the creation of more and higher quality job opportunities within the Third Social Sector.3CREIX.catis sponsored by the *Taula d'Entitats del Tercer Sector de Catalunya*(Third Sector Entities Board of Catalonia) with the support of several partner organizations such as ECAS, *Fundació Pere Tarrés*, *Suport Associatiu* and *Espiral-Entitat de Serveis.*

3CREIX.catis financed through the *Programa de Projectes Innovadors* (Innovative projects program) according to resolution TRE/293/2010. The program is sponsored by the *Oficina d'Ocupació de Catalunya* (Catalonia Employment Office) of the *Departament d'Empresa I Ocupació* (Education and Business Department) with the support of the European Social Fund.

One of the distinctive features of *Alia't* is that it does not limit its scope to training and raising awareness actions. The program **comprises the whole process of developing alliances and it provides rigorous support and guidance to entities at this respect** from the beginning to the end. The

participation of a neutral actor in the alliance development process makes it much easier.

**Alliances development process**

**Entities' attitude** is key for the development of collaboration mechanisms. Assessing the relationship between organizations is as important as their attitude. In fact, before starting a partnership the following points need to be assessed through objective indicators: potential conflicts, each organization's gains, duplications and complementarities, among others. The information provided through this assessment is of great value.

There are 2 kinds of motivations that drive entities to develop a partnership:

The first kind of motivation could be considered **reactive**. It usually appears in difficult or threatening situations. This could be the case of entities that face financial difficulties and decide to develop a partnership in order to survive.
It is usually also the case that entities that see their action lines threatened search new collaboration mechanisms to gain visibility and being able to negotiate with public administrations.
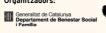Reactive motivations frequently entail a certain competition between organizations as well as difficulties in accepting a loss of power and changes in the decision-making process. This is due to the fact that reactive motivations respond to a difficult situation and not to a real will to develop a partnership.

Another kind of motivation for the development of partnerships is the **proactive** motivation. It is typical of organizations that have come up with a new idea that requires of a partner to be implemented. It can also be the motivation of those organizations that are in search of replication or expansion mechanisms of an existing project. In this case, partnerships are a good alternative to delegations.

In these scenarios there is less opposition to the changes derived from the partnership since their driving forceis the development of a project that couldn't be implemented individually by one organization.Consequently, organizations tend to look for technically sound partners with a common mission, values and operation structures.

No matter what the motivation of a partnership is, there are certain aspects that are key for its success:

Organitzadors:
European Year of Volunteering 2011
Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Benestar Social i Família
Federació Catalana de Voluntariat Social
En col·laboració amb:
Diputació Barcelona
Ajuntament de Barcelona
Obra Social "la Caixa"
PARLAMENT EUROPEU
Oficina d'Informació a Barcelona

### Having a clear objective.

The objective of the partnership needs to be clear. Collaboration should focus in reaching specific results. The objectives of a partnership can be very plural: the need of a partner to implement an ambitious project, being more efficient, saving money or aiming at having a bigger impact, among others.

### Trust

Choosing the right partner is key.The more organizations trust each other, the more robust the alliance will be. In many cases, trust is the first component of a partnership. In other cases it takes a while to build it.

### Being a committed partner.

Both parts should make sure that the terms and conditions of the partnership are observed. All parts have to comply with them. Also, it is important that all parts feel the ownership of the project. A partnership is not just another project of an organizations but a part of it.

### Time, skills and money investment

Starting a partnership is not for free. It requires of a time investment, which might involve that less time will be available for other projects. It also involves a money investment. At this point, both the investment and the cost of opportunity have to be assessed in order to determine weather the project is viable or not.

### Sharing.

A partnership involves sharing decisions that were previously taken individually. It implies a relationship in which decision-making processes, terms and conditions need to be agreed. A partnership might involve sharing resources and reducing the size of each organization in order to reach a common objective. It is not always an easy task.

In order to avoid conflicts, it is key to agreethat the project is worth it for both parts.

3creix.cat program:http://www.tercersector.cat/default.asp?idmenu=223
*Alia't* program:http://www.tercersector.cat/noticia.asp?id=257&rel={C6501B44-D3A3-48AA-ACD2-E8F150AC9F8A}

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