



Workshop – Danube Social Services & Education Cluster

Dr. Martin Ivanov

The Danube region is marked by huge discrepancies in its economic, social and even educational development. The highest shares of people facing the risk of poverty and social exclusion within the EU are in Romania (40.3%) and in Bulgaria (49%). Early school leaving and youth unemployment rates especially in rural areas and among the Roma community are increasing over the last years.

The general idea of building a *Danube Social Services & Education Cluster* is to interconnect bottom-up networks of social NGOs in Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Germany and Austria which developed over the last years, thus to enlarge the perspective of the macro-strategical setup of EUSDR, but to involve into this communication process the views of the different governmental actors.

Such a Cluster should be understood as kind of interface in the multi-level governance structure of the EU and particular the Danube region, though national government structures in the social and education area are still prevailing. Hence we should reflect the different initial positions in the mentioned countries from the point of view of the NGO actors and their various experiences in this NGO-State(s) partnerships in fields as child protection and children rights, but also elderly care, vocational (dual) training in social professions etc.

From theoretical point of view NGO-State partnership can be conceptualized as either supplementary, complementary, or adversarial (Young 2000). In the supplementary model, nonprofits are seen as fulfilling the demand for public goods left unsatisfied by government. In the complementary view, nonprofits are seen as partners to government, helping to carry out the delivery of public goods largely financed by government. In the adversarial view, nonprofits want to push government to make changes in public policy and to maintain accountability to the public (advocacy).

The three perspectives are by no means mutually exclusive. Nonprofits may simultaneously finance and deliver services where government does not, deliver services that are financed or otherwise assisted by government, advocate for changes in government policies and practices and be affected by governmental pressure.

Whatever approach a NGO is taking, there is no doubt that NGOs have the potential to contribute highly to societal development and inclusion, but also need certain competences concerning the way how they not only offer their services but also how they deal with governmental institutions. At the same time the governmental policy frameworks as well as the attitudes and practices of governmental institutions and frameworks influence the services and activities NGOs can realize. In other words, whereas there is no doubt about the societal potential of NGOs, their contribution can be only fully realized when certain competences and frameworks are fulfilled.

The Workshop of NGOs representatives aim to reflect these necessary factors and possible barriers for a productive relationship between NGOs and Governments by systematically analysing common questions relating to needed competences and political frameworks along different partnership forms. The aim is to broaden the understanding of both necessary competences on part of the NGOs as well as of enabling / hindering political frameworks and cooperation models on part of the governmental actors. As a result from the workshop we would like to elaborate and propose a joint position paper, taking in consideration of the discussion on the social NGO-State partnerships in the Danube region.