

Concept

Partnership

Definition

Partnership is a framework for relations between sectors in society aimed at achieving their common goal. Partnership is based on the assumption that it is beneficial for the government to cooperate with employers, employees and NGOs in the decision making process.

Leading principles

Partnership is based on the following principles:

- **A continuous discourse** – Partnership is based on a continuous discourse and not individual instances of cooperation.
- **The involvement of the key players** – The key players in the public sphere, the government, representatives of employers associations, representatives of trade unions and representatives of NGOs, participate on a regular basis.
- **A Common Vision** – During the discourse the players don't represent their own sectarian interests and act together to achieve their common interest.
- **Long term** – The discourse focuses on strategic issues with long term effects.
- **The exchange of information** – As part of the process the players exchange data and information.
- **Cooperative learning** – The players analyze policy alternatives and their systematic effects together.¹
- **Structure** – The 'Central Mind' which maintains a systematic understanding of the policy environment from the Prime Minister's perspective, leads the discourse between sectors.²

The advantages of partnership

Partnership promotes governability – A permanent mechanism for partnership increases the legitimacy of government policy. By means of preliminary coordination with other players, the government is able to identify obstacles and confront them before the implementation stage.

The experience of European socio-economic councils that maintain a constant discourse between the government, employers representatives, trade unions, and NGOs shows that:

- **Partnership promotes a culture of trust** – Trust in the public sphere is built through cooperative policy design.³ Trust is a necessary condition for a socio-economic leapfrog.⁴

¹ R. O'Donnell, "Ireland's Economic Transformation: Industrial Policy, European Integration and Social Partnership," **Univ. of Pitt., Center for West European Studies**, Working Paper No.2, Dec 1998.

² According to the Reut Institute a 'socio-economic central mind' is the structure for planning units in the Office of the Prime Minister. For example: the National Economic Council.

³ In Finland the discussions of the economic council are held behind closed doors in order to create common understanding among the players due to open and truthful discourse.

- **Partnership builds a platform for creating a common vision of the future** – Partnership and the culture of coordination can create the platform for a discourse regarding society's future. Issues related to social mores and values, such as individual or group definitions of Quality of Life, can be expressed in the partnership framework.
- **Partnership creates a discourse about "tomorrow before today"** – This discourse promotes willingness to accept short term sacrifices in the name of investment in social assets such as improving Quality of Life.

End.

⁴ See Reut institute paper: [Triangle of Trust as a Condition for a Leap in Quality of Life](#).