

EGPA Study Group on the Third Sector

Activity report 2006

Past meetings

The Study Group has now met on three occasions, in Ljubljana (2004), Bern (2005) and Milan (2006). The number of contributions rose to 18 at the latest meeting and comprised a wide variety of themes, such as third sector-government relationships, citizen involvement in the production of services, non-profit management, hybrid organisations, accountability and social capital.

Future aims

Going into our 2nd three-year period, we are faced with a dilemma. Either we continue to expand or we focus. The current situation is unsatisfactory, since we have evolved to the point where we are no longer a focused discussion group, but fall short of a broad platform for research in our field. It is not clear whether we still have added value in relation to other conferences where our topic is on the rise. Our decision is to return to our roots and focus the bulk of our efforts on a single theme, aiming for depth rather than a broad scope. This theme will be co-production in service delivery. There will still be some room for other themes and surprise guests, but our main focus will be on regulars and invitees. The number of papers will be limited to a maximum of 12 to 15.

Cooperation with other networks

The organisers of the Study Group have been active in a variety of other networks, such as the IRSPM, ISTR/EMES, Cinefogo and the ECPR. It is important to maintain and strengthen these links. However, we see no need to institutionalise them through formal dialogues or meetings. What is more important is that we develop a clear position in relation to other initiatives and communicate it well.

Publications

These past activities have resulted in a theme issue of *Public Management Review* in December 2006 and a small edited volume, to appear with Routledge in 2007. Our next period will result in a more ambitious edited volume, aiming to be a major contribution to our field of study. We are also considering the preparation of a joint funding bid for comparative international research.

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