



The partnership principle and its application in Interreg

DG REGIO, Unit D2
9 April 2025

Content



Possible approaches when expanding partnership:

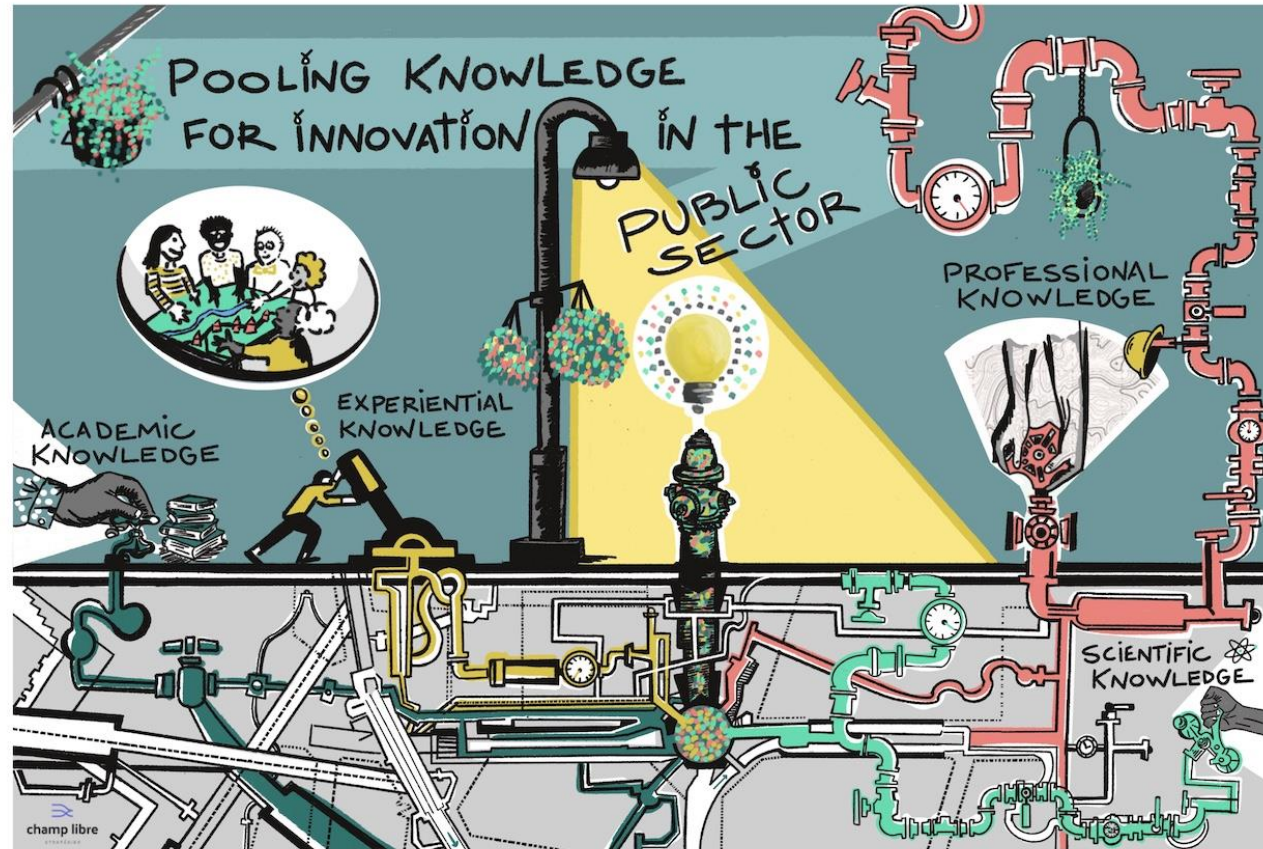
- Assessing existing partnerships, and considering new:
 - Territorial patterns
 - Thematic patterns
 - Programme relevance
 - Specific challenges/specific knowledge/data/experience

Special attention areas

Some data on conflict of interest (ECA, DAC)



We are operating in complex working environment...



...and each cross border area is unique

Territorial perspective - considerations

The partnership principle is critical in addressing the diverse needs of different regions.

This includes:

- Recognizing the unique geographic, cultural, social, and economic characteristics of each cross border region;
- Fostering cooperation between regional authorities, local communities, and other stakeholders
- Addressing regional disparities and promoting equal opportunities for all by adopting a territorial approach to partnership,
- governments and organizations can tailor their strategies to meet the specific needs of each region, ultimately promoting more effective and sustainable development.
-

Thematic perspective

The partnership principle is essential in addressing specific sectors or policy areas.

This includes:

- Promoting collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations
- Encouraging knowledge sharing and expertise exchange
- Fostering innovation and creativity in addressing complex challenges
- Addressing cross-cutting issues, such as climate change, aging, depopulation, poverty, and inequalities.

By adopting a thematic approach to partnership, it is possible to leverage the strengths and expertise of different stakeholders to achieve common goals and address pressing challenges.

How to operationalise and ensure long term involvement of partners?

- Develop clear policies and guidelines.
- Establish effective collaboration platform, communication channels and feedback mechanism.
- Foster a culture of collaboration and mutual respect.
- Provide training and capacity-building.
- Follow suggestions; be not afraid to experiment.
- Monitor and evaluate partnership outcomes and its impact



By taking a proactive and inclusive approach to partnership we can unlock the full potential of the partnership principle, ultimately achieving more sustainable, equitable, and effective development outcomes.

What are typical barriers

- language;
- different levels of capacity, expertise, and resources, which can create inequalities
- trust;
- availability and financial capacity to cover associated costs (if not ensured by the Programme);
- difficulty in measuring the partnership's impact and progress can make it hard to assess its effectiveness;
- difficulties in planning continues involvement outside programming period;
- complexity and time-consuming nature of partnership development and maintenance can lead to partnership fatigue;
- Our programme's areas overlap with mainstream programmes,
- ...

Using collective knowledge is challenging...



How to manage???

- Team building activities
- Cross cultural / cultural sensitivity training
- Equal opportunities for all
- Watch for unconscious bias
- Immediate conflicts resolution
- Active involvement
- Recognition of value of diversity
- From cultural differences to cultural intelligence
- Honest and constructive feedback



Get to know each other and avoid stereotypes:

- Minimize the culture barriers
- Avoid stereotypes and prejudices
- Appreciate your own and the skills of other cultures
- Improve your social skills
- Become a better (more active) listener
- Aim your attention on common principles rather than differences

Key considerations

- Adopting a flexible framework to accommodate evolving needs and circumstances.
- Incorporating good governance models to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficiency.
- Employing a case-by-case evaluation methodology to address the unique characteristics of each territory and administrative system.
- Following principles are important:
 - Flexibility, allowing to adapt to changing conditions and priorities.
 - Robust governance structures, which will be integrated into our operational modules to promote best practices.
 - Tailored solutions, developed through a case-by-case assessment to meet the specific requirements.

Separation of duties - dual roles

Involvement of the person in both: designing selection criteria and selection of the project (legality of expenditure);

Members of the MC/SC being part of the consultancy firms preparing project applications;

Changes in the relationships – how to overcome issue of access to relevant data bases;

Solution: fostering culture of integrity , transparency and accountability + rewarding and recognising ethical behaviour

CASE BY CASE approach applies

Best Practices to Prevent and Manage Conflicts of Interests (EC)

(Partnerships with the business and non-profit sectors)



Mechanisms for resolving Col situations must be kept up-to-date in the context of increasing co-operation between public organisations and the business and non-profit sectors. This is particularly crucial when appointing representatives to public bodies from other sectors to benefit from their particular experience, knowledge and involvement.



Engage representatives of the business and non-profit sectors in reviewing the policy in order to have their views on the problems of implementation, and possible applications of the policy.



Ensure that proposed standards reflect actual public expectations by involving the business and non-profit sectors in the design of new integrity measures. Consultations could be used to identify or negotiate mutually acceptable solutions and encourage co-operation in the implementation process.

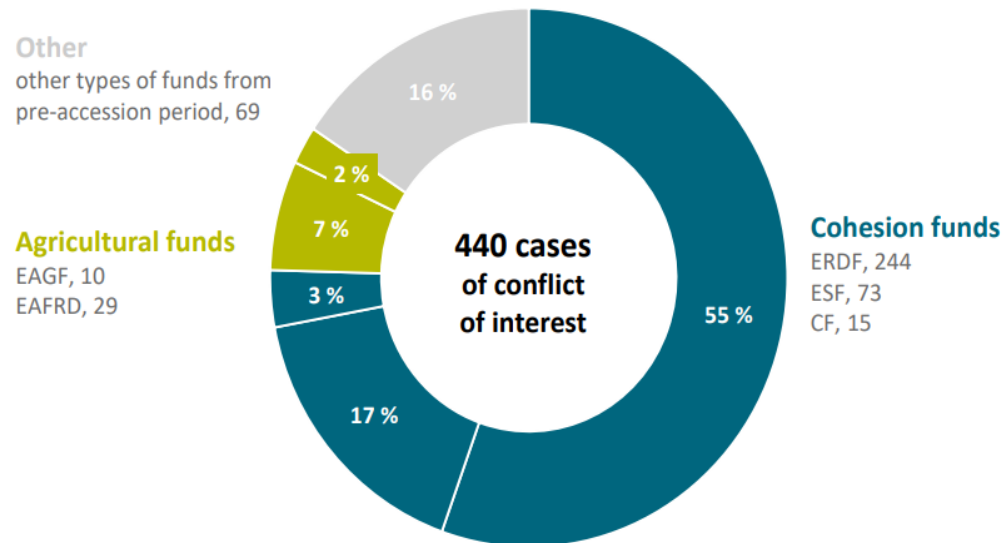
EC Approach

The Commission addresses the risk of conflict of interest in shared management in Member States mainly through system audits of the Member States' management and control systems, and by providing guidance.

System audits are intended to obtain assurance that Member States' management and control systems are effective in preventing, detecting and correcting errors and irregularities, including those related to conflicts of interest. Additionally, in the area of cohesion, starting from the end of 2021, the Commission carried out several thematic audits of measures taken under specific programmes or in specific Member States to avoid conflicts of interest.

The Commission recommends that Member States use the Arachne data-mining application provided by the Commission free of charge to help prevent and detect fraud. Arachne can prove useful in indicating conflicts of interest in public procurement procedures at beneficiary/contractor/sub-contractor level.

Special report

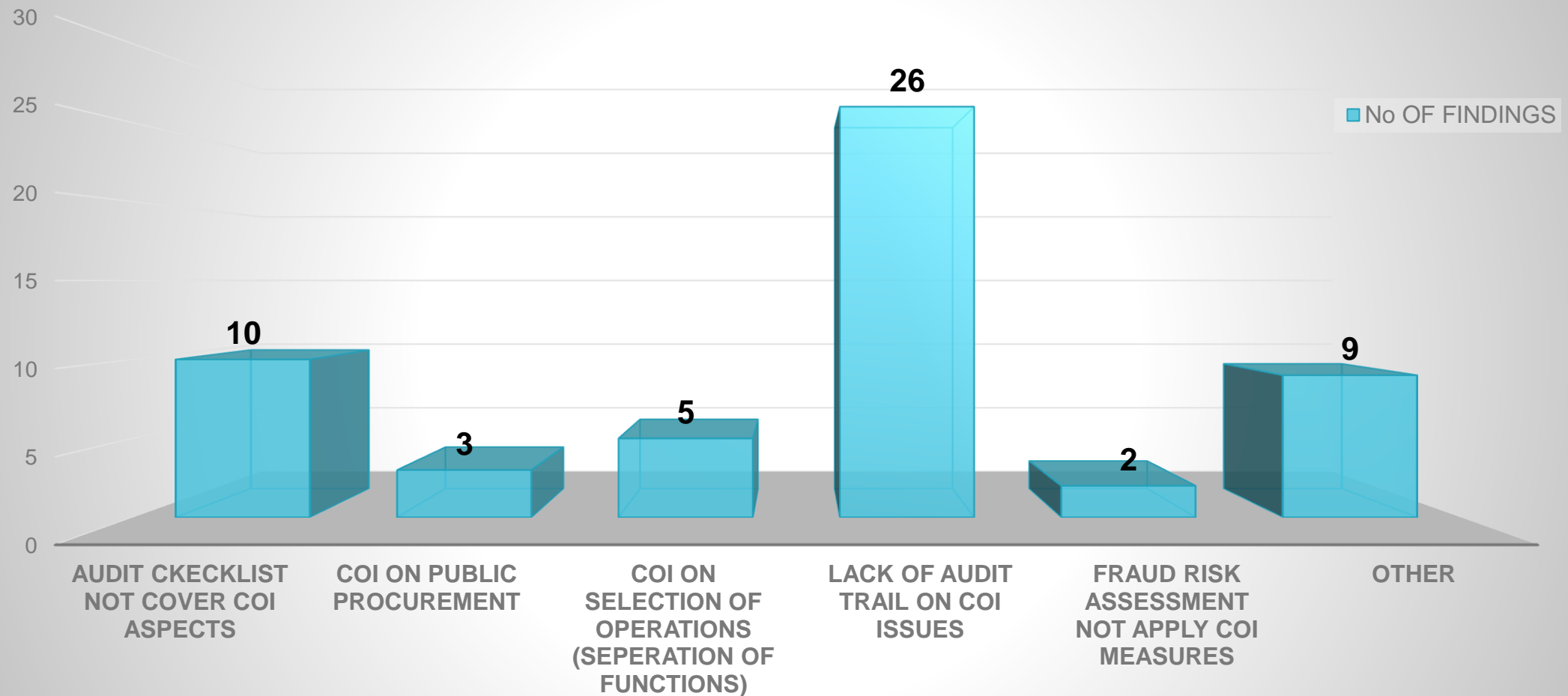
Conflict of interest in EU cohesion and agricultural spending**Framework in place but gaps in transparency and detection measures****Figure 8 – Conflict-of-interest cases in IMS by fund**

Source: ECA, based on data from IMS.

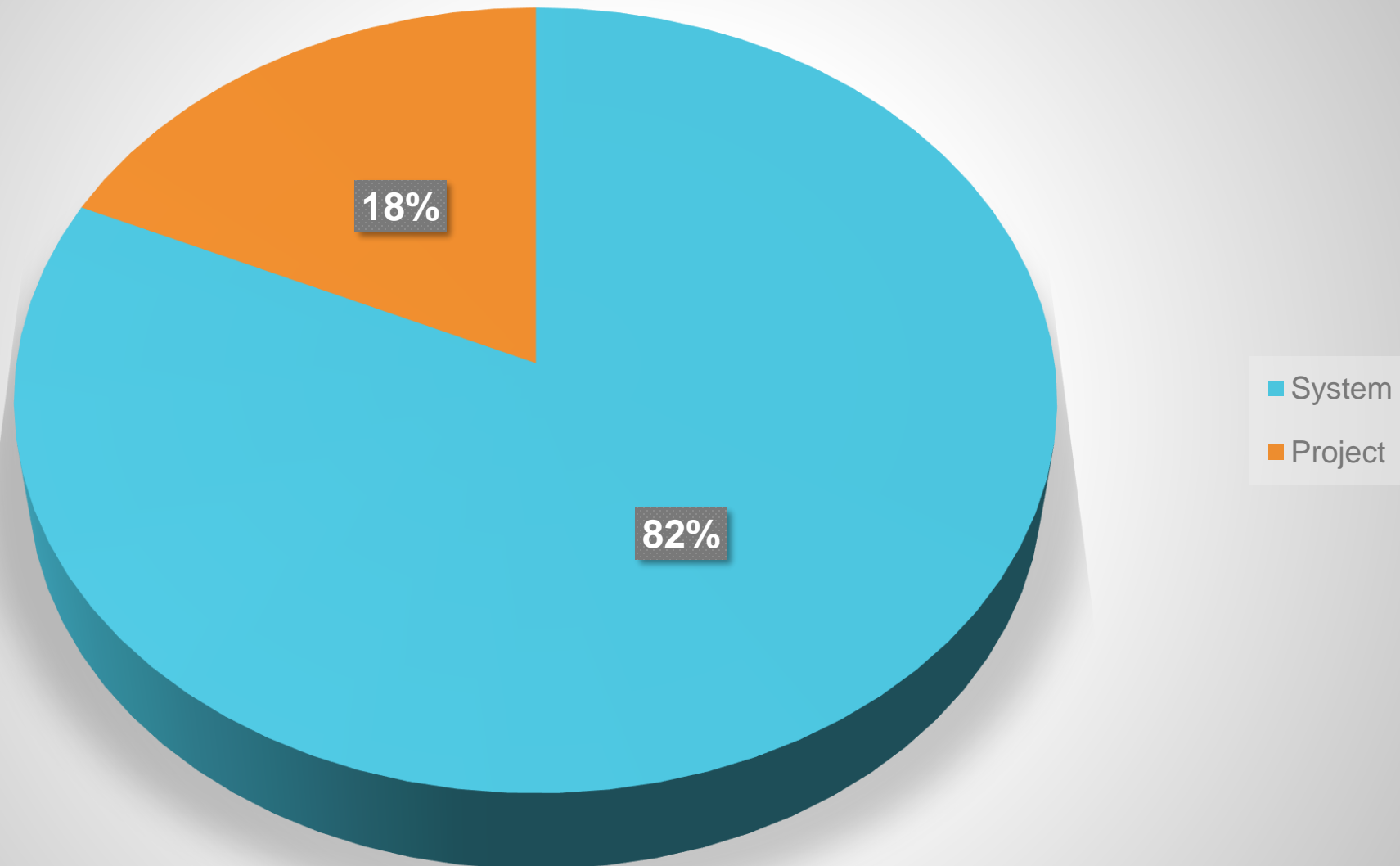
Since 2000, Member States have reported 440 conflict-of interest cases in cohesion and agriculture in IMS. More than half of those cases (55.4 %) have been reported for the ERDF, 19 % for pre-accession funds, 17 % for the ESF and the lowest number for the EAGF and the CF (2 % and 3.4 % respectively).

The conflict of interest cases recorded in IMS represent 0.4 % of the total number of irregularities reported (data as of March 2022).

REGIO FINDINGS RELATED ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST



TYPE OF FINDINGS ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST



Thank you for your attention!