

Full Length Research Paper

Social dialogue in areas and times of depression: Evidence from regional Greece

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Accepted 16 August, 2008

Social Dialogue (SD) constitutes one of the most popular tools for establishing effective cooperation between social partners and one of the most highlighted formulas for resolving social conflicts and disputes in nowadays. Nevertheless, the progress, which has been made so far, was not always encouraging and it seemed that the euphemism around the term is greater than the results of its implementation. In many cases stakeholders and partners could not overcome their traditional stances on certain issues and as a result they could not consolidate their positions to mutual and genuinely participatory governance schemes. Such cases were examined here. In essence the article examines the distinct nature of SD at the local level and the pressures exerted to SD procedures by broader economic restructuring exercises and reforms.

Key words: Social Partnership, Social Dialogue, Local Partnership Schemes, Participants.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that social partnership/ social dialogue (SP/SD) procedures act both as a catalyst for the implementation of broader restructuring exercises and as a vital precondition for the success of economic and social policies. Several studies have also found that when an organization aims to guarantee the continuous involvement of social parties concerned in the decision-making process, it has first to convince those parties that its policies have taken into account their interests and

opinions. This achievement can be proved extremely difficult in cases of economic sectors and areas that explicit clear symptoms of economic stagnation and social cohesion problems due to insufficient adaptation skills according to modern market and technological conditions.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the current situation concerning social dialogue in regional Greece and to find out the main features of its related schemes at the local level in an effort to explore the dynamics that lie behind far reaching economic changes and top down social partnership approaches. More specifically in the paper is explored the SP/SD experience of two regional territories in Greece, which face constant problems of long standing economic crisis, high unemployment and earlier deindustrialization.

Before getting into the description of the examined case studies and the lessons that can be learned from them we should point out the difference between the terms of SP and SD. According to the approach of the Copenhagen School the Social Partnership - in a modern view- could be defined as follows: *...People and organizations from some combination of public, business and civil constituencies who engage in voluntary, mutually beneficial innovative relationships to address common social aims through combining their resources and com-*

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ABBREVIATIONS

SD = Social Dialogue
SP = Social Partnership
OKE = Economic and Social Committee
OMED = Organization for Mediation and Arbitration
TEP = Territorial Employment Pact EU = European Union
LESC = Local Economic and Social Committee
GDP = Gross Domestic Product
OECD = Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

Table 1. Potential benefits from SP/SD procedures.

For the participants	For the society
Development of "human capital"	Local economic development
Improved operational efficiency	Job creation
Organisational innovation	Community infrastructure regeneration
Increased access to resources	Improved quantity or quality of services and better access to these services
Better access to information	Improvements in health and education services and standards
More effective products and services	Decrease in crime and violence
Enhanced reputation and credibility	Better ethnic tolerance and celebration of any or all aspects of diversity in the community and workplace
Creation of a stable society	Overall improvements in quality of life, strengthening citizens' awareness and their ability to engage individually and collectively in dialogue and negotiation

Source: Nelson and Zadek, 2000: pp. 27-28.

petencies. (The Copenhagen Centre, 1999:5). From another point of view OKE (the Greek Economic and Social Committee) has defined Social Dialogue as follows: *...Attempts that aim to touch differing opinions and interests in order to solve common problems or efforts to explore and appoint common targets regarding related issues or simply procedures that help distinct social groups to exchange ideas...*(OKE, 1999:6).

In general SP/SD has taken many forms over the years in the European Union such as information, consultation, negotiation, bipartite, tripartite or multipartite collective bargaining and agreement, and co-decision making. Moreover, social dialogue can take place at the plant/company level, and/or the region, sector, inter-professional, national, European or international levels. Social dialogue has already been evaluated as an effective tool at the local level, as plenty of good practices have been developed in Europe and other parts of the world (Degryse, 2000). According to many researchers the main benefits and advantages (added value) of continuous and stable partnership schemes are a shared understanding, a mutual trust and greater flexibility in decision-making process.

Another point that has been mentioned by the participants of an international conference is that *"social partnership and tripartism work best when there is an open agenda to the partnership system, balancing the interests of employers and unions with a perspective on the overall interests of society and particularly where there is a degree of mutual trust between the participants"* (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2002).

However, social dialogue is considered to be an effective instrument not only at the national/ macro-economic but also at the local level, and several good practices have been developed in the European Union and other regions. More specifically, social dialogue pro-

cedures can enhance the performance of mainstream economic and welfare measures, foster innovation and experimentation and create added value by applying resources more effectively in local contexts. Apart from that, social dialogue schemes at the local level can build not only horizontal relationships among local participants, but vertical relationships with national and transnational stakeholders as well (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1998).

Some experts on social partnership issues have tried to specify the benefits that have been derived from local social partnership experiences. According to them the main benefits from social partnership could be found in the development of new skills, the obtaining of know-how on conflict resolution, the access to different people etc (Kjaer and Tennyson, 2001). Several potential benefits from SP/SD procedures -that have been described by other experts in the field- appear on Table 1.

A research study, which has been conducted by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, has found that social partnerships at the local level could contribute positively to both the processes and outcomes of measures to tackle unemployment, poverty and exclusion and optimize local policy coordination and integration (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1998). Local social dialogue schemes can facilitate a multidimensional approach to problems, drawing upon the knowledge, skills and resources of different partners. In addition, local partnership schemes can contribute to economic growth and social prosperity: i) through job creation, training, and the support of local enterprise ii) by helping to provide improved and better targeted social services and facilities and iii) by involving and empowering local communities and excluded groups (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2003).

Table 2. Prerequisites for tripartism.

Clear Goals	Tripartism requires targets, aims and objectives e.g. economic stability, competitiveness, security at work, income policy.
Visible Results	Delivery of measurable results is necessary for the agendas of the social partners, e.g. safety and health at work, vocational training, employment creation, income guarantees.
Bipartism	Well-functioning bipartism is seen as essential for building tripartite structures.
Multi-level approach	The diffusion of national models down to regional, local, municipal and enterprise levels is important.
Civil Society	Further discussion is needed on where the involvement of civil society is necessary and desirable, and on the representativeness of civil society organizations
Monitoring	Institutions and models need constant review and must develop the ability to adapt, change and be flexible
Responsibility	It is important to adopt a problem-solving approach, accept compromises and trade-offs and create a shared understanding of each other's difficulties

Source: European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions, 2002.

The main pillars that constitute the structure of a local partnership scheme are described to be the following (Nelson and Zadek, 2000):

- I. Context (socio-economic cultural and political environment, historical time);
- II. Purpose (building and working with common agendas, scope and complexity, evolving purpose and scope);
- III. Organization (organizational and legal structure, governance, communication);
- IV. Participants (leadership, people and their organizations, resources, skills and capacities);
- V. Outcomes (measurement and evaluation, ability to adapt).

It is generally accepted that some prerequisites are essential for the promotion of tripartite co-operation and partnership. Many scholars have pointed out several preconditions for successful SP/SD procedures (Jecchinis, 1988). More specifically, Sarfati (2001) has argued that the main prerequisites for an efficient social dialogue are: a) representative social partners; b) proper institutional framework; c) commitment to dialogue and to the achievement of results by the parties involved; d) shared knowledge of relevant information; e) partners' authority and ability to negotiate and to enforce decisions; f) facilitating dialogue and adapting regulations by the State (Sarfati, 2000). Another study has found that a number of prerequisites for the success of local partnerships exist: a) clear identification of the benefits to be gained by the participants; b) strong leadership; c) skilled management and project staff. d) strong shared local identity. e) active involvement of all partners in the shaping and implementation of strategies (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2003). Furthermore, Table 2 presents the most important prerequisites for an effective social dialogue,

especially on a tripartite basis, according to the proceeding of a relative conference organized by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Social dialogues at the local level in Greece

Despite the fact that some SD forms and institutions have been established since 1991, SD has not developed properly in Greece. The anomalous political situation and the paternalism of industrial relations by the State that characterized for a long time the political environment of the country are the main 'embankment' (hindrance) against the establishment of pure and authentic SD instruments with strong legitimization both by the State and the social partners. In the vast majority of cases, the established forms of SD were used to affirm governmental policy reforms. As such, the degree of bargaining autonomy was limited (Galinos and Marchington, 2006).

Nevertheless, the climate of industrial relations and collective bargaining has been improved in the last decade. The establishment of the Economic and Social Committee (OKE) and of the Organization for Mediation and Arbitration (OMED) has acted as a catalyst for such an improvement. Nevertheless it should be noted that the efforts to promote SD in Greece in the recent years had little success so far (Koutroukis and Kretsos, 2005). Typical examples of this include the introduction of Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) and the tripartite SD in 1997. In both cases the State has been accused by the trade unions that it used the relevant SD procedures to enhance labour market flexibility through the localization of pay and working conditions. In Greece, despite the gradual establishment of SD institutions, mainly in the form of the OKE, the preconditions for a successful function of social dialogue were nearly non-existent, and –as

as a matter of fact- a vast majority of social partnership institutions never worked properly (Koutroukis, 1997). The Greek Government has begun its effort to create SP/SD procedures at the local level with the adoption of Law 1836/1989. That law established a Committee for Vocational Training and Employment in each prefecture. That committee –with the participation of local social partners- has a task to study and express an opinion on any subject concerning vocational guidance, training and employment.

A second venture was implemented under the Law 2218/1994 concerning the Economic and Social Committee. According to that legal framework, Local Economic and Social Committees (LESC) are established in each prefecture of the country. The role of a LESOC is to express its opinion on issues concerning local economic and social planning and to discuss the potential for local development. LESOCs have not worked yet on a regular basis. Another form of social dialogue at the local level is the Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) . These are voluntary cooperation schemes that aim to promote employment and to create the appropriate preconditions in order to fight unemployment. It is interesting to note that OKE, the Greek Economic and Social Committee at the national level, in a report concerning the evaluation of social dialogue in Greece, has mentioned that local social dialogue (TEPs) was not efficient and there is not also an adequate activity of regional and local social actors. Furthermore, OKE believes that local actors have to be more active, through the support of experience and know-how, which could be provided by the social partners that act at the national level (OKE, 2002).

METHOD

This paper presents the basic results from a research project, funded by the EU, entitled “*PRO-DIALOGUE: Enhancing and Promoting Social Dialogue in the Agricultural Sector, including agro- industry, by developing innovative activities with regard to Employment and Sustainable Business Patterns*”. The project, which took place, was scheduled from October 2001 to February 2002 and aimed at the examination of the existing SP/SD forms, with a strong emphasis on the agricultural sector. The regions of Imathia and Messinia were selected, due to their special features as areas with serious economic and social problems. Moreover, these specific regions bear intrinsic characteristics of economic crisis caused by the constant reduction of agriculture revenue over the years and gradual de-industrialization.

A semi-structured questionnaire was used in order to collect local social partners’ views through a focus qualitative interview procedure. As such a number of interviews with representatives from local authorities, employers’ organizations, trade unions, and agricultural coope-

ratives of both regions took place. In each case, we included specific questions, thus constructing four identical types and versions of the initial questionnaire. In the first part of the questionnaire we tried to explore the socio-economic conditions under which SD takes place.

Respectively, the second part has focused on the current situation of SD and its future prospects in the area. Finally, certain questions were used in order to indicate the willingness of parties involved in SD to participate, and under what preconditions of relevant procedures they are willing to do so in the future. Interviewed organizations covered the most important collective actors at the local level. The planning for the sample was based on the notion that all organized interests of the area (employers, workers, local authorities, farmers, self-employed professional groups etc.) should be equally represented in the study in order to ensure that we will get all aspects and approaches on the issue of SD.

The social partners’ representatives were contacted in April 2002, while communication events and complementary secondary data were also collected through the completion of other parts of the Pro-Dialogue project. Finally, 52 social partners’ representatives who participated in the research interviews, the vast majority of whom expressed their interest for its findings. Tables in the annex include the social partners and the organizations that took part in the study.

Findings

The case of Imathia

Imathia is a region that faces serious economic and social problems. The most important of them are the demission of the regional area as a major transportation centre, the textile industry crisis, the structural problems of agricultural activities and the reduction of purchasing power of inhabitants due to rising trends on unemployment levels (approximately 13%). Furthermore, other aspects of the crucial economic conditions the region faces include: the closure of many fruit picking and selection enterprises, the insufficient application of work-ing conditions legislative and collective agreement framework, the great dispersion of illegal employment, the problematic and unorthodox character of industrial relations, the defective and incorrect working of Local Labour Market Inspection Authorities, the large-scale personnel reductions in certain industries (especially textiles and clothing) through early retirement schemes, the great unemployment of women and young, the down-fall of turnover in trade and commerce, the mass establishment of more price competitive commercial stores in the region, the temporal character of production in agro-industry and property loss from the stock exchange market crisis. As such, there is no doubt that Imathia qualifies as a loser in the expanding globalization discourse

Table 3. Research sample of social partners in Imathia.

Social Partners	Type of organizations
Local Economic and Social Committee	Local Government
Economic Chamber/ Local Dept.	Professional
Local Union of Municipalities	Local Government
Developmental Company of Imathia	Local Government
Municipal Enterprise for Local, Cultural and Social Development	Local Government
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Imathia	Professional
Greek Manpower Organisation/ Local Dept.	State (national government)
Workers Centres of Naoussa, Veria	Trade union (2)
Prefecture of Imathia	Local Government
Industrial Change Bureau	Local Government
Municipality of Naoussa, Alexandria	Local Government (2)
Trade Union of Canning Industry	Trade union
Institute of Labour/ Imathia Dept.	Trade Union
Union of Commercial Enterprises of Veria, Alexandria	Professional (2)
Labour Inspectors Body of Imathia	State (national government)
Territorial Employment Pact of Imathia	Local Government
Union of agricultural Cooperatives of Veria, Naoussa	Agro-cooperative (2)
National Inter-professional Organisation for peach and pear	Professional
Union Of Canning Industrialists	Professional

Source: Data from the research contacted.

(Table 3)

At the time of the study only two schemes of social dialogue used to function in the area: a) the Prefectural Economic and Social Committee and b) the Territorial Employment Pact. The function of both schemes should be considered as inappropriate, as there were not certain results and social dialogue agreements up today. Moreover, many local social actors considered that the quality of SD is extremely low, while both mechanisms did not cooperate with each other. The SP/SD bodies meet and act occasionally, and they deal mainly with issues connected with local and regional development and the local labour market (economic and regional development, unemployment and agriculture policy). The vast majority of the local social partners were in favour of SP/SD, and they proposed the extension of such procedures.

Although the SP/SD experience in Imathia has been limited, the majority of the interviewees estimated that such experience is important, and they also believed that it creates added value at no cost to them. Furthermore, the opinion of a large majority of the interviewees on social dialogue is positive, and they proposed the enhancement of SP/SD procedures on local issues as local economy development orientation, agro-tourism, the environment, rural entrepreneurship etc.

Nevertheless, according to the majority of the social parties involved in the study SP/SD procedures are considered to be:

i. Inadequate, insufficient and bureaucratic,

ii) Characterised by political factionalism,
 iii) Unable to assure social partners commitment.

Besides of great importance and significance are the opinions that consider negatively the existing SP/SD procedures in terms of:

- I. Lack of appropriate preparation of the participants,
- II. Not working systematically and preventively,
- III. Approving and legitimizing decisions that have been already made,
- IV. Gathering interest by citizens

Being characterised by little and inappropriate documentation for social partners' views. Furthermore, as reported by an overwhelming majority of social partners' representatives, the quality of SP/SD procedures in both LESC and TEP was extremely low. More specifically, LESC faces huge functional problems, because there is no adequate funding to cover its operational costs. The situation is seems to be better at TEP of Imathia, as the provided funding has acted as a catalyst for a satisfactory operation of that institution. It is also a paradox that LESC and TEP have no cooperation between them at all.

Social partners' representatives evaluate their role in SD/SP procedures as symbolic and marginal, because they do not have the ability to influence considerably an effective social dialogue. Despite these allegations and strong points of view, the social partners would accept to participate in a permanent social dialogue forum, and

Table 4. Research sample of social partners in Messinia.

Social Partners	Type of organizations
Local Economic and Social Committee	Local Government
Federation of SMEs of Messinia	Professional
Lawyer's Association of Messinia	Professional
Workers Centres of Kalamata, Kyparissia	Trade union (2)
Developmental Company of Messinia Prefecture	Local Government
Municipal Enterprise for Local, Cultural and Social Development	Local Government
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Messinia	Professional
Greek Manpower Organisation/Local Dept.	State (national government)
Prefecture of Messinia	Local Government
Federation of Hotel Enterprises of Messinia	Professional
Developmental Centre of Kalamata City	Local Government
Commercial Union of Kalamata	Professional
Kalamata Polytechnic School	State (national government)
Municipalities of Dorion, Gargalianoi, Kyparissia, Messini, Oixalia, Pylos, Kalamata	Local Government (7)
Unions of agricultural cooperatives of Messinia, Pylos, Kyparissia, Messini, Mantinia, Avia, Andania, Dorion	Agro-cooperative (8)

Source: Data from the research contacted

some of the participants believe that this forum could even be informal. Surprisingly, the social dialogue between employers and employees on labour market and industrial relations issues was evaluated (by the participants) to be satisfactory. Moreover, the role of the local services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security as a SP/SD mediator is important, as they succeeded in the establishment of a "spirit of consensus" among the parties concerned.

The case of Messinia

Messinia could be characterized as a pure deprived area of regional Greece. Currently the region contributes around 15% of national GDP. Furthermore the regional GDP stand at 70% of the national one showing a gradual decline over the last decade. This trend results in grading Messinia in the three bottom positions of regional GDP growth of Greece. At the same time Messinia indicates high, according to the national accounts, rates of unemployment and 'casual employment'. It should be mentioned also that no more than 33% of unemployed are getting a job after three months. Taking account of the limited social policy and welfare system weaknesses, and one of the lowest unemployment benefits across the OECD area, we can realize that the danger of social exclusion and poverty trap in Messinia is essentially great. (Table 4)

The basic reasons for this are related to a significant decline of manufacturing over the years, as well as serious lack of inward investments. Almost 9,000 job posi-

tions were lost in the manufacturing during the last two decades. Furthermore the industrial area of Kalamata has been desolated over the years. Besides the area is suffering from the new competitive conditions on the olive-oil market and the strict regulations of the Common Agricultural Policy. Both of them result in a significant decrease of agricultural revenue and income that affect the demographical situation and consumption rates of the local economy. It is said that almost 70 to 80% of agriculture workers is between 60 to 70 years old. A lot of young people are moving to Athens and a number of retail stores face dramatic financial problems and the prospect of closure. The induction of many foreign workers from the Balkan region in the production of olive-oil, as well as the great extent of non- paid family members work have up to now worked as a 'life jacket' for the continuation of economic activity in agriculture and the retail sector.

Regarding the issue of SD, the example of Messinia speaks volumes regarding the weakness of SD structures and procedures at the regional level in Greece. The prefectural authorities were the main driver behind any initiative on SD procedures. Nevertheless, the respective initiatives were rare and in most cases they come out as a result of ad hoc events like the recent closure of Levi's factory in the area of Kalamata. Furthermore, most SD procedures were focused on broader demands of local community to the central government as far as concerns the allocation of national and EU funds for regional development. In that framework, almost all organizations questioned were extremely frustrated regarding the pros-

pects of SD in the region. Their basic feeling was that central government neglects the serious problems they face, which most of them involve infrastructure works. In that framework the procedures and the products of SD at local level did not lead to decisive relevant actions. Nevertheless most organizations expressed a positive attitude to the idea of establishing new institutions and innovative forms of SD, especially if they obtain a permanent and official character. Specifically, the social actors reviewed suggested that the preconditions for an effective SD in the future are:

- I. Capability of concluding formal agreements at local level without necessarily the approval of the State
- II. Broader participation of social actors in Kalamata and the province area.
- III. Supportive administrative and scientific structures
- IV. Establishment of funding opportunities for SD procedures
- V. Strengthening of a pure SD culture.

Furthermore, even if they considered their experience from SD forums as beneficial and crucial for the interests they represent, most of the organizations reviewed were convinced that the future of the area depends heavily on the way social actors and central government will find coherent links of co-operation. Such links do not exist for the time being at least on an official and typically scheduled basis. For example similar initiatives and projects have been taken over together by relevant local bodies without any co-operation between them.

Respectively in Kalamata, by far the largest city of the region, there were too many training centres, a fact that indicates that there is considerable overlapping between them. Sometimes these contradictions reflect political and personal disputes that are reinforced by multiple-holder political career ladders. As such it is no surprising at all that many partnerships were followed by 'quid pro quos' drawn from existing funding opportunities either by regional developmental plans or other projects referred by EU initiatives for regional and social cohesion.

In broad terms the concept of SD in the case of Messinia revealed to be extremely problematic with most of the questioned representatives of social organizations to consider SD as a general process of exchanging ideas about general issues regarding regional development that has no impact on the actual planning and orientations of public policy. Certain important themes like commitment, trust and mutual interests are absent from the debate and as such SD took place only on ad hoc basis and with the participation of the same people that have greater connections to the local and regional administration. On the other hand institutionally established bodies of SD like the 'Local Economic and Social Committee' have fallen to inertia. According to the president of the Com-

mittee the lack of available funding and an essential administrative and scientific support were the main factors to blame for this situation.

What is more optimistic for the future of SD in the case of Messinia is the limited number of successful initiatives for the promotion of local agricultural products and especially olive oil and the common opinions for the recreation of the area. These features suggest that a broader and more genuine consensus can be met in the future if appropriate SD mechanisms are established and the local social actors agree to commit themselves to specific mutually agreed decisions. In that sense a more sophisticated culture of participating in SD and political structures is needed.

Conclusions

Imathia and Messinia can be considered as two regions confronted with serious economic and social problems, such as unemployment, mass dismissals, a decrease in the Local Domestic Product and de-industrialization. In this context, a wide feeling of disappointment and uncertainty has created additional challenges for the local SP/SD procedures. To date the existing SD experiments did not manage to consolidate an effective way of differing attitudes and opinions of social actors at the local level.

However, a common characteristic of both Imathia and Messinia is that the agricultural sector continues to be the dominant sector of the local economy. Furthermore, the traditional social partners' organizations such as employer organizations and trade unions- are quite weak due to a series of reasons such as the strong unwillingness of employers to join their organizations and the very low rates of unionization (less than 20% according to estimations given by the Greek General Confederation of Labour). The dual character of the rural economy in those areas is obvious as a majority of employers and employees not only are currently industrial relations actors, but they participate as small independent producers in the agricultural works (one way or another). Hence it is not surprising the fact that the farmers' unions and the agricultural cooperatives are usually more representative bodies of the local community than the employer and employee organizations. More specifically, SP/SD mechanisms function occasionally and has usually taken part 'ex post' without any commitment that its outcome will be applicable. There is also a considerable differentiation in the perception of social dialogue concept. In part this comes as a consequence of the fact that there is a lack of clarity on the potential role of SP/SD and its benefits. In the case of Imathia, the Territorial Employment Pact has not acted as a permanent SP/SD mechanism, but it was a 'top-down' approach in order mainly to use the potential of EU funding. A similar approach is traced on other SD

structures and attempts in Messinia.

In general, the SP/SD procedures that have been developed in both areas could be seen as outcomes of the national/macroeconomic social dialogue model. As such at local-community level (as well as at national level) basic preconditions for the appropriate function of SD are not met and important obstacles often arise, as a result of the traditional personalized and heavily political influenced system of decision-making. This political bickering displayed so far is harmful to the development of SD and the local economy. In certain cases an overlapping between the activities of several social organizations is observed and the few observed partnerships are excluded and restricted to the terms of funding projects by the EU and the national authorities. As such the main features of the latter as the lack of mutual commitment of the parties concerned still exist 'mutatis mutandis'.

Though the lack of serious prerequisites, several SP/SD procedures still exist at the local level in Greece. The necessity to utilize the essential funding possibilities given by the EU, has created an ad hoc activation of multipartite social partnerships. Thus, a type of *pseudo-partnership*, that is to say a SP/SD model without a simultaneous development of an authentic SD culture, has been implemented. That model of partnership, which has developed last few years, is EU-oriented and adapted to the preconditions of EU funding. Therefore, a social partners' 'atypical coalition' has been created to utilize the Community Support Framework money-flows and to distribute them effectively among the participants. Eventually, those local SP/SD procedures in Greece are far from genuine and effective. To sum up, the widely accepted prerequisites for efficient local social dialogue, as they reported above, continue to be nearly non-existent in Greece. A co-ordinated social partners' effort to diffuse an SP/SD culture from the national to the local level is a vital precondition for the establishment of efficient and authentic local SP/SD procedures.

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