



# Mirror Groups as a way to increase participation and inclusion in food systems governance

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How do we create a partnership of partnerships at a **broader, deeper, and effective scale for food system transformation?**

How should an ideal European Partnership – as a network of many smaller-scale partnerships – be governed and what tools and agreements need to be in place?


**We need feedback from very different actors/stakeholders to get an inclusive perspective.**


# Governance of food systems striving to reach sustainability:

*Four key elements emerge\*:*

 The interactions between a diversity of actors that defined a partnership.

 The control and power balances in food system partnerships.

 The (in)formal rules, norms, values, limits, and practices that set the scene for partnerships to operate.

 The orchestration of all activities to face challenges, jointly orchestrate actions, and reach sustainable outcomes.

\*Ref. Donner, M., Mames, M. de Vries, H. (2024). Towards sustainable food systems: a review of governance models and an innovative conceptual framework. *Discov Sustain* 5, 414. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-024-00648-x>



# Key elements of SFS governance



- **Sharing and Agreeing on common sustainability ambition(s)** via exchanging about ideas, priorities and preferences,
- **Striving for inclusiveness** inviting a diversity of actors to join forces
- **Cooperating** via interactions between diverse actors in fair and just manners (power balanced; shared decision making; ...)
- **Respecting and/or redefining** formal and informal rules, norms, ...

# What do mirror groups do?

reflect on the work happening in the project/partnership to provide useful input and recommendations to ensure that activities and decision making are as inclusive and impactful as possible





# FoodPathS Mirror Group Activities to date

**3 online meetings  
EU and Global  
policy**

**circular/environmental/climate  
health/nutrition/food safety  
farming**

**vulnerable groups (food deprived, youth, gender)**



# Mirrored visions of governance for a successful partnership...

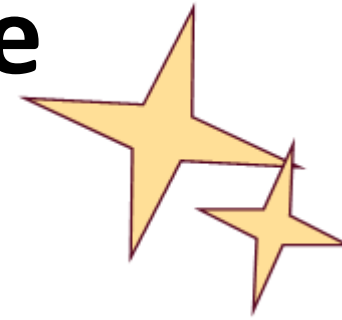


## ACHIEVEMENTS

### *Collaborative Identity, Shared Goals, Inclusivity, Equity*

- A commonly agreed definition of SFS has been established;
  - All partners - including historically marginalized groups, small scale actors, both private and public entities - are now fully represented;
  - All partners align with the Partnership identity, share goals and feel responsible for its achievements;
  - Coordination roles have been established to align the efforts of all members;
  - There is a strong focus on social and ecological justice.
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# Mirrored visions of governance for a successful partnership...



## DECISION-MAKING

### Participatory, Bottom-Up Decision-Making:

- *Effectively balancing power and addressing imbalances.*

### Transparency and Clarity:

- *Decision-making processes are now transparent, particularly regarding funding legitimacy and conflicts of interest, fostering stakeholder trust.*

### Autonomous Spaces for Marginalized Voices:

- *Safe spaces for marginalized groups to express concerns and suggestions have been created, with decision-making structures prioritizing their needs.*

### Expert Facilitation and Interpretation:

- *Expert facilitators are in place to manage stakeholder input, ensuring fair interpretations and accurate representation of all voices.*





# Mirrored visions of governance for a successful partnership...



## FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

### Efficient Feedback Loops:

- *Feedback channels have been established to be capable of adapting to shifting geopolitical and economic landscape, also during the funding cycle process.*

### Ongoing communication with partners:

- *In-person and hybrid meetings have replaced passive feedback methods, fostering active and ongoing participation among partners.*

### Multi-channel and Inclusive Communication Strategies:

- *Diversified channels are being used to reach different audiences;*
  - *Language has been simplified to enhance accessibility for those outside the EU circles;*
  - *Storytelling has become a primary method for sharing results and successes, rather than presenting raw data.*
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# food|paths

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