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Leadership Impact on Motivation and Commitment in Interregional Collaboration

Pilot Cases of Thematic Smart Specialisation Partnerships

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2020

Company reactions to market changes (1.77)

Reforms (1.78)

Ethical behavior (2.09)

Openness to learn (2.09)

Favouritism (EI) (1.39)

Company standards an

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Abstract

Previous research has proposed an assessment framework that allows to evaluate the impact of leadership on motivation and commitment of cross-border collaborative actions (Hegyí et al, 2020). The assessment framework has been developed with the aim to assist leading stakeholders of interregional collaborative actions to ensure efficiency, sustainability and success of their projects in achieving their objectives. The proposed assessment framework highlights areas of leadership where adjustments or changes are needed in order to contribute to the viability of cross-border collaborative efforts. Regularly assessing the impact of leadership on the motivation and commitment of actors across participating entities contributes to the efficiency and sustainability of collaborative actions by signalling issues of motivation and commitment. Through such assessment, specific areas can be highlighted, where there is lack of motivation and commitment towards the collaboration, towards the leadership, the team or the work itself. Through regular re-assessments, effects of leadership practices or previous decisions can be measured. Interregional thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships led by visibly focused and determined lead regions with a well-defined governance structure are more likely to be successful in attaining their objectives of realising joint investment projects along shared Smart Specialisation priority areas. Thus, building on the experiences of the thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships, this research proposes to examine the role of good governance and leadership contribute to the overall sustainability and viability of the partnerships. Accordingly, the paper explores how the leadership of the thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships effect the motivation and commitment within the partnership by comparing attitudes of leaders and participants to explore the potential for more effective operation. Accordingly, in this paper, the previously proposed assessment framework is been piloted on two thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships; nevertheless the framework has been developed in a way that it can be applied to any collaborative actions that have a well-defined governance structure with designated leadership.

Introduction

The principles of smart specialisation offer European regions a new approach to strategic priority-setting in regional and national innovation agendas. As of today, many European regions are building and ensuring their competitive advantages in strategic areas via the implementation of their smart specialisation strategies (S3). Given the complexity of reaching strategic objectives focusing on new European value chains, many territories decide to collaborate with other territories with similar strategic priorities. These collaborations require a well-established governance structure with clear leadership roles that ensure continuous exchanges and dialogues and that secure long-term and cumulative learning process through their governance structures. To benefit the transformative nature of Smart Specialization, “the need to understand leadership in its multiplicity emerges as central” (Sotarauta, 2018). Motivation and commitment are key in achieving objectives; therefore assessing impacts of leadership in case of collaborative actions can contribute to enhanced results.

Previous research has proposed an assessment framework that measures the impact of leadership on motivation and commitment (Hegyí et al, 2020). The proposed leadership assessment framework allows the leadership to assess team dynamics and to bring corrective actions and to make the collaborative action agile towards change. The assessment framework serves to highlight areas of operation that need development that would lead to a more efficient functioning of the collaboration. Through the assessment, leadership development objectives can be defined. Through regular assessment, the impacts of previous leadership measures can be measured.

The paper explores how the leadership of specific collaborative actions effect motivation and commitment and the adaptability of the leadership, which later is crucial for the organisation (in this case the collaborative action) to be able to change and to fit to the changing circumstances and realities of markets, regulations, policies. Furthermore the assessment looks at the leaders’ ability to motivate their team, their ability to work across cultures and to facilitate change. The leadership assessment helps to achieve integral leadership that build teams, improve effectiveness and scale leadership at every level of the organisation (Anderson and Adams, 2019).

The assessment has been piloted with two thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships followed by a validation of results. The thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships offer a new approach to support European Union internationalisation and competitiveness by bringing together regions with complementary research and innovation agendas. The thematic S3 partnerships offer great cases for assessment given their strategic objectives, their well-established governance structure and strong leadership roles.

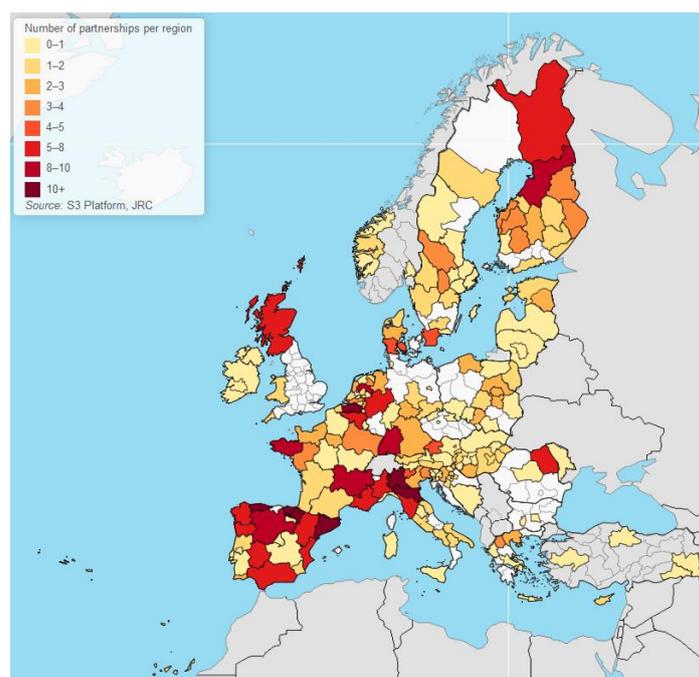
Results of the assessment show how deviation of perception between leaders and between leaders and partners affect the partnership and how areas indicated by leaders as conflicting ones are perceived in the team. Assessment of attitudes of interregional partnerships can also be an important indicator if the partnership is open or ready towards organisational changes such as admitting new participants or possible changes in terms of leadership. Effects of certain organisational changes can be measured by the partnerships, also signalling critical areas, which need to be paid attention to, aka developed. A regular assessment can help such collaborative efforts to re-visit previous decisions taken related to responsibilities, organisational set-up, goal setting, teamwork, etc.

1 Interregional Smart Specialisation partnerships

The principle of smart specialisation, introduced in 2012, offers European regions a new approach to strategic priority-setting in regional and national innovation agendas. As of today, many European regions are building and ensuring their competitive advantages in strategic areas via the implementation of their smart specialisation strategies (S3). In 2016 the European Commission's Smart Specialisation Platform has started its methodological work on the development of the so-called thematic approach to Smart Specialisation. The European Commission launched three thematic S3 platforms to support partner regions to realise joint research and innovation activities in fields related to Agri-Food, Energy or Industrial Modernisation. As of 2019, thematic S3 platforms helps over 190 European regions discover their own combination of practicable ways of identifying and exploiting mutually benefitting synergies through collaborative activities in priority areas of shared interest. Often, these activities lead to interlinking of many relevant emerging and existing knowledge and innovation networks across partner regions.

Thematic S3 partnerships represent trans-national and trans-regional networks connecting innovation ecosystems that are supported through multi-level governance approaches and are involving active participation of national, regional or local institutions. These stakeholders work together with the objective to enhance commercialization of scientific knowledge through investments in pilots and industrial upscaling, creating new paths of development and renewing existing European value chains, clusters, industries and regional economies. At the time of writing the report, there are 31 thematic S3 partnerships working under the platforms, gathering a wide range of stakeholders from over 190 regions. Numerous regions participate or lead various partnerships, as depicted on Figure 1.

Figure 1 Participating regions in thematic S3 partnerships



Source: JRC, 2019

Partnerships represent transnational networks involving a broad range of actors from all four helices (regional or national government involved in the implementation of S3, industry, academia and civil society) and affecting the fifth helix, the environment, through their work. Working towards realigning innovation roadmaps, partnerships map regional stakeholders with relevant competences. As Sotarauta argues, “to achieve truly transformative smart specialization strategies, there is a need to investigate in a more in-depth manner the multi-actor strategy processes and new forms of leadership providing them with directions, as well as to invest time and money in advancing related capabilities across European regions” (Sotarauta, 2018). For example, the high-performance production through 3D printing partnership has mapped over 1,300 actors with relevant competences in its 20 participating regions, among which there are 900 companies. In case of the medical technologies’ partnership, the partnership has identified 237 key stakeholders in its 19 participating regions, including clusters, technology transfer offices, universities, hospital research facilities.

1.1 Governance mechanisms of thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships

Good governance plays an important role in the design and implementation of smart specialisation strategies (S3) and is a fundamental component in the thematic approach to S3. Sotarauta argues that S3 calls for a more profound understanding of the ways governance systems are acted on and how stakeholders collaborate in the field of research and innovation (Sotarauta, 2018). When designing S3 strategies, regional and national governments are encouraged to put in place multi-level governance mechanisms that would support the active and committed involvement of different stakeholders. These often newly created structures would need to be compatible with similar structures created in other partner regions.

In line with the so-called Quadruple Helix model, a good governance structure should involve relevant actors representing the industry, academia (research and education), the government and the civil society (various innovation user groups). Their involvement and commitment can help ensure an interactive consensus-driven S3 process that is genuinely adapted to local circumstances (European Commission, 2012).

In the design phase of S3, the literature does not suggest any particular forms of leadership. It claims that decision related to leadership form is to be decided at regional level (Foray et al., 2012). While in the S3 implementation phase, seven key principles of good governance are defined, arguing that governance arrangements underpin most aspects of S3. According to the implementation handbook, governance mechanisms are to be agreed in ways that fosters the implementation of smart specialisation. While respecting the uniqueness of the local context, the seven principles of good governance offer general principles along which the implementation of S3 can be organised (Gianelle et al, 2016) presented in Figure 2.

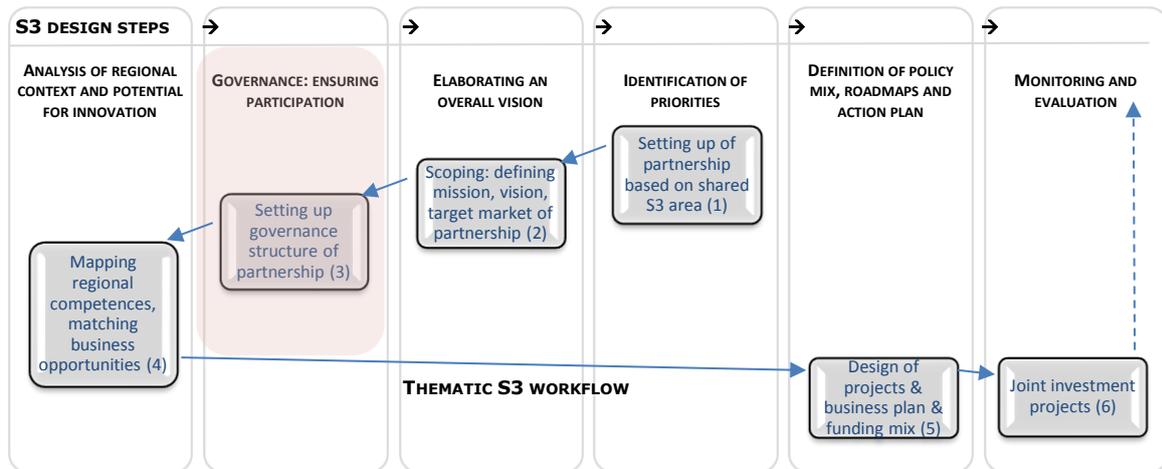
Figure 2 Principles of good governance



Source: Gianelle et al, 2016

In the thematic approach to Smart Specialisation, partnership follow a workflow methodology, which is developed in a way that contributes and supports S3 implementation and evaluation as suggested by Hegyi and Rakhmatullin (Hegyi and Rakhmatullin, 2019). In the thematic approach, the first step is scoping, which requires partnerships to define the vision, the mission of the partnership and setting up a sound governance structure. Figure 3 provides an overview of the interlinkages between the implementation of S3 and the thematic S3 approach, highlighting the steps linked to governance. The horizontal line depicts the 6 step approach to S3, while the diagonal line represents the workflow phases of the thematic approach to S3.

Figure 3 Interlinkages of S3 and thematic S3 approach

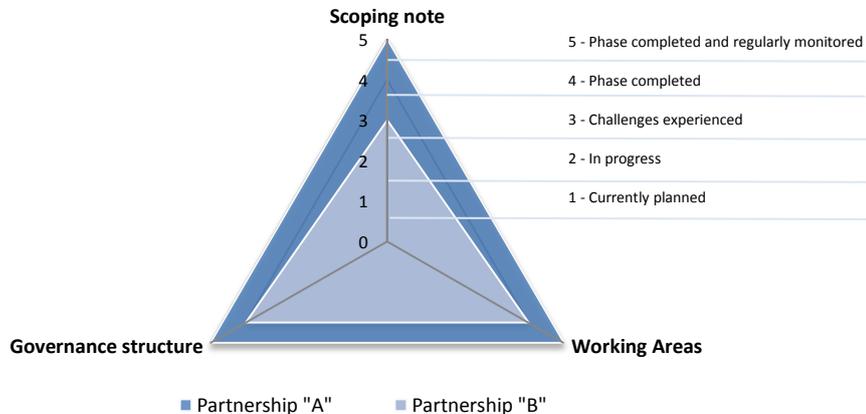


Source: Mariussen, Hegyi and Rakhmatullin, 2019

The methodological manual on thematic S3 partnerships also emphasises the contribution of shared responsibilities of tasks to the success of partnerships through a solid governance structure (Rakhmatullin, Hegyi et al, 2019).

The evaluation framework developed to monitor and evaluate the progress of partnerships bi-annually, reflects the advancement of thematic S3 partnerships related to the specific workflow steps, presented on the diagonal line in Figure 3. Under scoping, partnerships express in what stage they are in the process of agreeing on and putting in place a governance structure, shown on Figure 4.

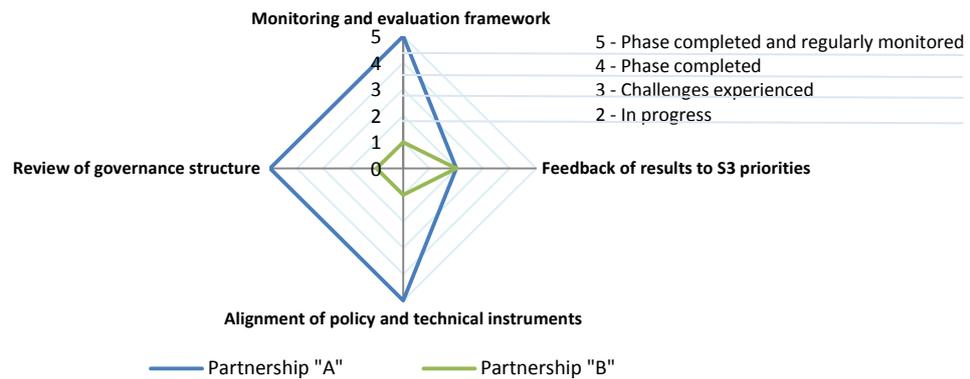
Figure 4 Assessment of scoping phase



Source: Hegyi and Rakhmatullin, 2020

Partnerships also reflect upon if a specific step is completed and the phase is regularly being monitored, thus if partnerships review if their governance structure efficiently serves the objectives of the partnership, shown on Figure 5.

Figure 5: Assessment of monitoring and evaluation frameworks of partnerships



Source: Hegyi and Rakhmatullin, 2020

Anecdotal evidence from the existing partnerships suggests that interregional thematic partnerships led by visibly focused and determined lead regions with a well-defined governance structure and are more likely to be successful in attaining their objectives. As Sotarauta argues, besides expected to construct a shared vision among stakeholders and to pool scattered resources, S3 also can also serve to strengthen poorly functioning governance systems and lack of leadership (Sotarauta, 2018). Thus, building on this experience, this paper proposes to examine the role of good governance and leadership contributing to the overall sustainability and viability of such interregional initiatives. Previous literature argues that the three most desirable attributes for leaders are “the ability to motivate staff, the ability to work well across cultures and to facilitate change,” which attributes depend greatly on adaptability, which is the ability to fit to new circumstances (Maxwell, 2019).

“Good leaders adapt. They shift. They don’t remain static because they know the world around them does not remain static.” (Maxwell, 2019)

Therefore, the paper explores how the leadership of the partnerships effect the motivation and commitment of and within the partnership and the adaptability of leadership.

1.2 Governance structures of thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships

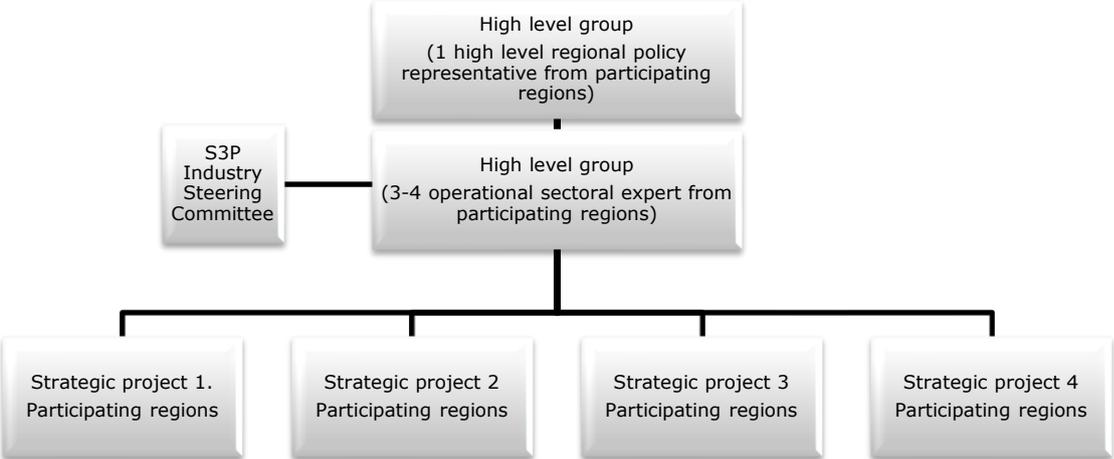
Thematic S3 partnerships are organised at partnership level, however they show diverse examples of governance structures, providing a rich input for analysis. Their governance structure are organised in a way that they facilitate members of the partnership towards their objectives in a way that it can mobilise a wide range of stakeholders. The power is shared among actors, given that most of the partnerships are co-led between one or several regions or regional stakeholders. Some partnerships have rotating leadership, and some are led by a single entity. The Vanguard Initiative – after few years of testing the initiative – has decided to set up a legal entity with a fee-based membership. Other partnerships have cooperation agreement and others build on existing consortia or network.

There are several reasons why it is important to look at the experience of thematic S3 partnerships from the perspective of governance and leadership. Firstly, they play both the role of introducing disconnected actors as well they facilitate new coordination between connected actors. The role of ‘Tertius Jungens’ is played by different actors within the partnerships, both at ‘political’ (Vanguard boards, partnership leaders) and ‘technical’ levels (network managers, demo case leaders). The effectiveness and efficiency of the ‘joining function’ (both at VI, partnership and demo case level) is therefore very much dependent on the ability, commitment and capacity of actors. The multi-level governance structure connects regional representatives, technical leaders of demo cases and network managers.

These structures require a joint effort with a clearly defined leadership role. The thematic S3 partnerships provide an important aspect to assess the impact of leadership, given the explorative nature of the thematic S3 approach, implied by some 'external' (funding solutions, etc.) and 'internal' barriers (legal status of the initiative, incentives to participate, commitment, etc.).

One example of an S3 partnership governance structure is from the textile innovation partnership shown on Figure 6. The partnership builds on a sectoral transregional, bottom-up initiative from regional stakeholders to leverage innovation through collaboration and is being led by two regions. The partnership has set four themes as their strategic directions for collaboration: textile sustainability (resource-efficiency and circular economy), industry4.0 and new digital business models, sector diversification (technical & smart textiles), and design- and creativity-based innovation (including eco-design).¹ The governance structure allows formal commitment as well as active participants and observers. Each committed region delegates one high-level regional policy representative to the high-level group. This group is responsible for the strategic direction and political backing, furthermore, it approves operational action plans and strategic projects. The support group consists of three to four sectoral experts from all active regions and observer regions. The group is responsible for – among other tasks – mapping stakeholders or preparing and implementing operational plans and projects. These strategic projects are inspired by regional, national and European sectoral strategies and defined by sectoral experts.

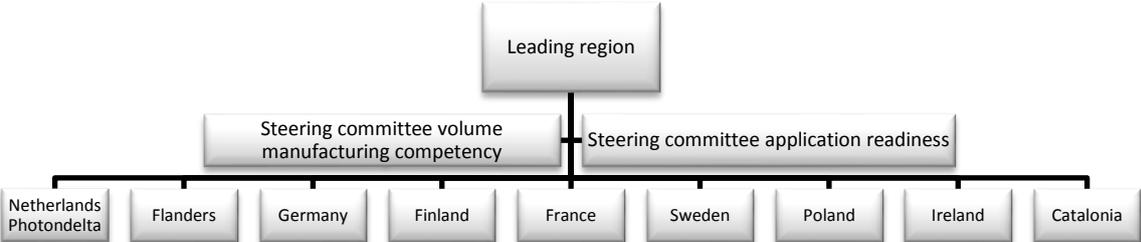
Figure 6: Governance structure of the Textile Innovation S3 partnership



Source: Mariussen, Hegyi and Rakhmatullin, 2019

The Photonics partnership is led by one region and has set the following priority areas: photonics integrated circuits, sensing, measuring and imaging, optical fibres for industry and pilot facility for photonics-based manufacturing.² The governance structure is composed of two steering committees made up of partners proposed by the partnership’s participating member states. The two committees are steering the network and their projects. The governance structure of the Photonics partnership is presented on Figure 7.

Figure 7: Governance structure of the Photonics S3 partnership



¹ For further information, see partnership page: <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/textile-innovation>.

² For further information, see partnership page: <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/photonics>.

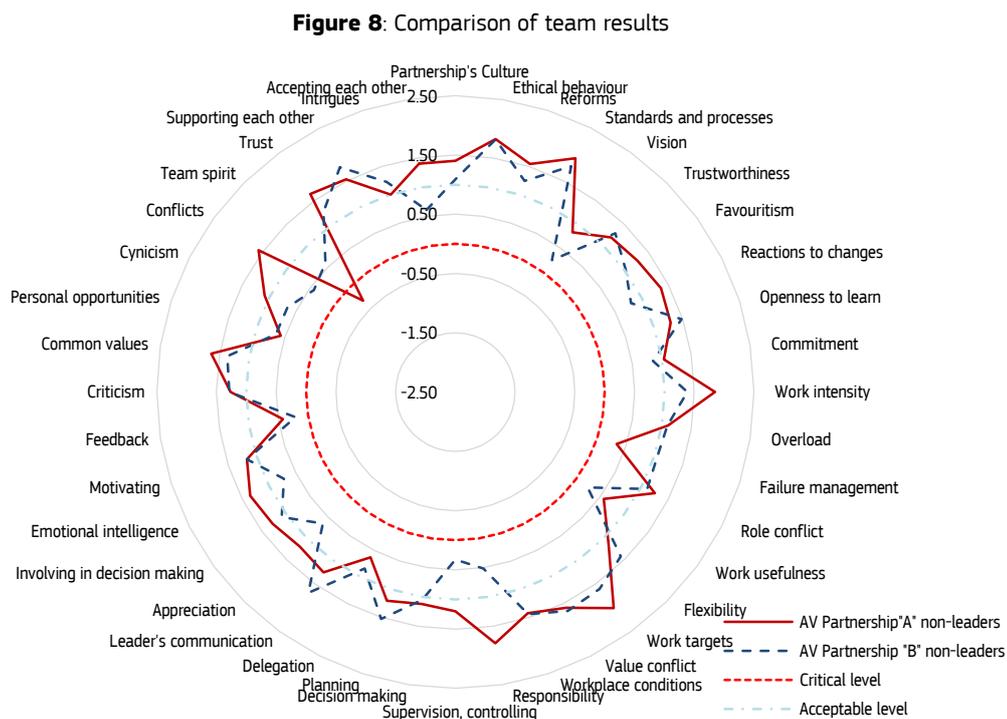
Source: Mariussen, Hegyi and Rakhmatullin, 2019

2 Pilot assessment

The assessment has been piloted with two partnerships. For reasons of confidentiality, the results of the assessment are indicated as "A" and "B" partnerships. Before discussing the results, it is important to highlight that to get an objective picture of the partnership in terms of attitude towards the partnership, the work and the leadership, all participating regional stakeholders would have needed to fill out the survey. Given, the objective of this current study was to test the applicability of the adjusted survey to the thematic S3 partnership setting; results indicate a partial and limited overview on the dimensions measured, but serve as a pilot. The results have been validated with the piloted partnerships, presented in section 2.1. The following diagrams provide an overview of the results of the pilot assessment.

The results for leaders (L1, L2) and for partners / non-leaders, indicating results relative to critical (indicated with a dashed line at value 0) and acceptable level (indicated with a dotted line at value 1.0). Averages (indicated as AV on diagrams) and deviation (indicated as DEV on diagrams) are shown. In case of average results, the closer the results are to the centre of the diagram (value of -2.5), the more negative is the perception of the specific area by respondents, meaning that their attitude, the induced work reaction and their efficiency show a negative tendency. The more results move away from the centre, the better the respondents perceive the surveyed area. In case of values of standard deviation, the lower the standard deviations, the more uniform are the judgments of the given areas.

Figure 8 depicts the team results of A and B partnerships, showing the attitudes of the partners of the partnerships in the measured areas. In this measurement results, the answers of leaders are excluded to be able to analyse the attitudes that executives evoke in their employees.



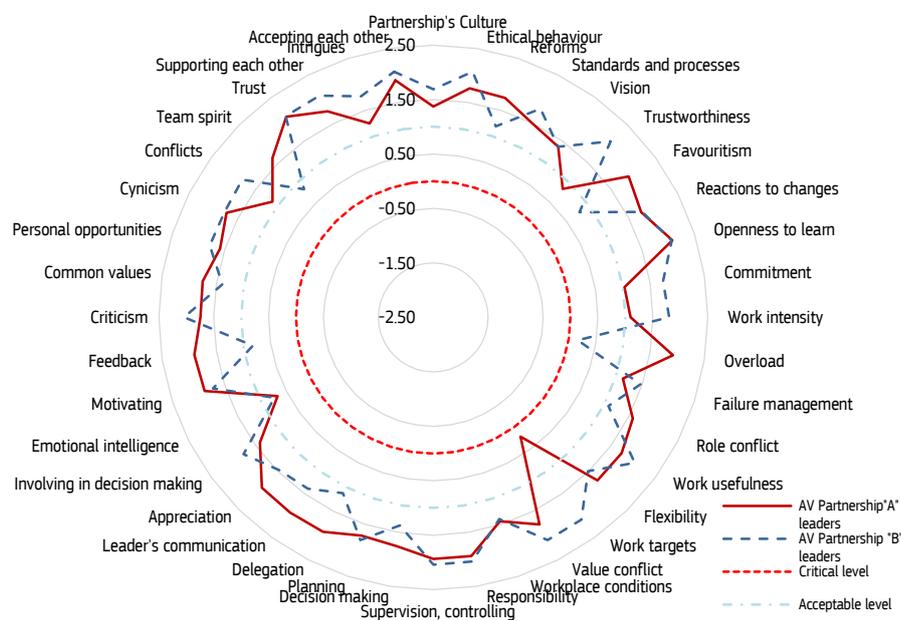
As shown on Figure 8, results of the "B" partnership are somewhat weaker than the "A" partnership in terms of values related to leadership (lower left quarter of the diagram) in the many of the areas. In case of partnership "A", the value for team spirit is beyond the critical level, while failure management, work usefulness, feedback and personal opportunities are below the ideal level. The low values for team spirit can be caused by the different, mostly negative experiences with team members. The values that are closer to the critical level in case of partnership "B" are partnership culture, vision, work usefulness, supervision and control and feedback. There is a correlation between the results of these values. One critical area in case of the "B" partnership is the vision conveyed by its leaders. In the long run, the lack of vision for the future can be accompanied by restraint in performance, loss of commitment, and a heightened sense of uncertainty. In general it can be said that in such situations the more talented, high-performing employees leave the

organization, which can also be predictable in the light of other values caused by so-called mismanagement. These are the lack of clarification of responsibilities, the way in which processes are controlled, which can cause employees becoming suspicious, frustrated. Or the lack of clear-cut delegations, recognition, and feedback lead to the same results. The effects of the latter ones are quick to manifest and greatly inhibit motivation.

The lower results for the values of recognition and feedback, as shown in the radar chart for partnership "B", are related to the lower values of the sense of usefulness at work, which greatly limit intrinsic motivation. In a leadership culture, where there is certain degree of lack of feedback, recognition, employees usually do not see their personal advancement opportunities, and their loss of faith in change can be manifested in cynicism. Presumably, the emergence of cynicism in a team results in conflicting situations that make it difficult for team members to accept each other. Nevertheless, the values of partnership "B" show a much more balanced picture based on their index numbers overall.

Comparing the results of leaders of the two partnerships, Figure 9 shows the averages results of leaders "A" and "B" partnerships, given that both partnerships are co-led by various regions.

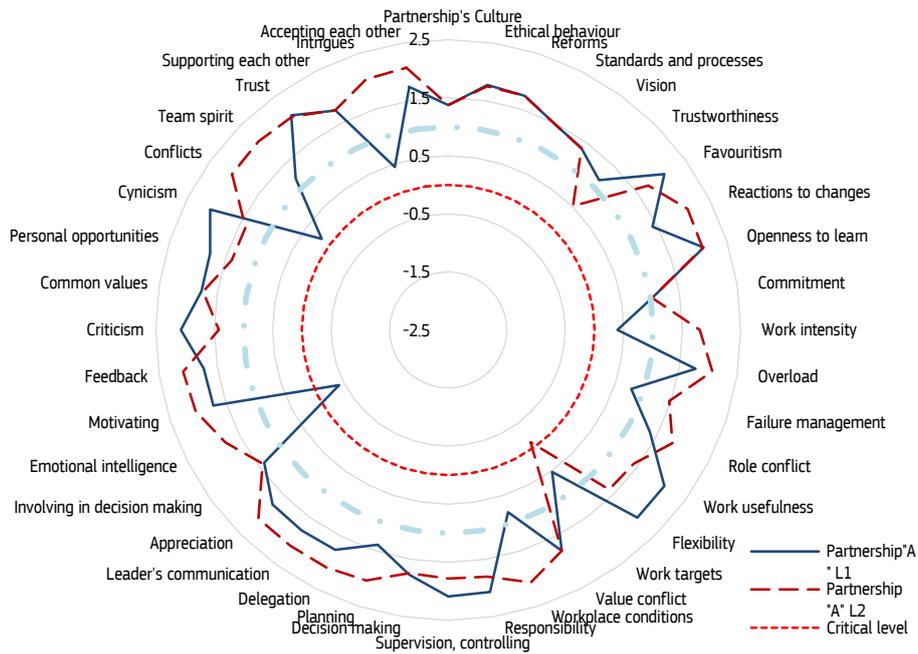
Figure 9: Comparison of leadership results



Leadership results show a much more balanced picture overall. Values that fall closer to the critical lines are important to be looked at, since they may affect efficiency, quality of work, meeting the deadlines, and the period of stress experienced in the team. When analysing the two leadership curves, there are no significant differences. Despite the values of "A" partnership are low in terms of trustworthiness, still they are within the acceptable range. The overload, reaction to change and team spirit dimensions show some deficit in case of "B" partnership. In case of work targets, the "A" partnership close to the critical level. Absence or imprecision of work targets are strong demotivating forces that may result not only in decrease of performance of the leader itself, but can also affect results and the vision of team members too (as shown previously on Figure 8). In fact, without setting clear goals and measuring all efforts towards these goals, the usefulness of work becomes questionable for the team and for the leadership too. These lead to focus on individual benefits for the accomplished work instead of working towards organisational goals, resulting in a lower level of performance.

In order to get the right picture of the leaderships, the results of individual leaders within partnerships can be analysed. Figure 10 show the results of the two leaders of partnership "A".

Figure 10: Comparison of leaders' results

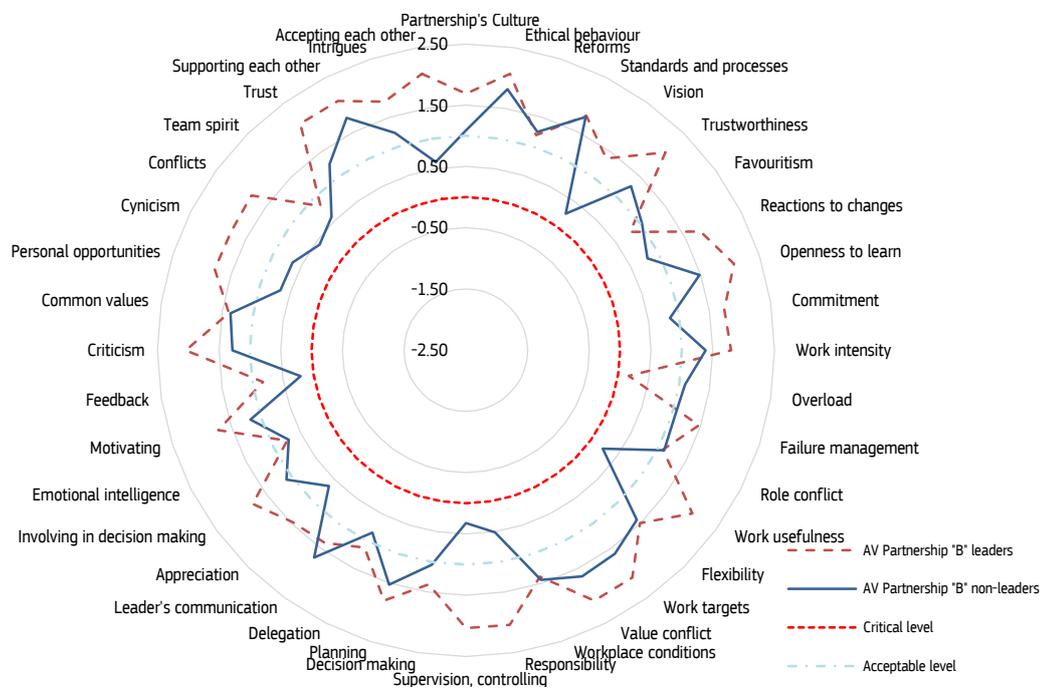


The "A" partnership's leadership, there are significant differences of perceptions regarding various dimensions. In case of dimensions related to work (lower right quarter), perceptions between leaders differ greatly in case of work intensity and workplace conditions. Important to note, that difference between perceptions of work intensity may result in conflict. In addition to this, the differences between the value of the leader as regards to emotional intelligence and intrigues may predict a perceived presence of a continuous mental attack. The most critical area in case of the "A" partnership is the lack of clarity of partnership goals. Interestingly, the results of the team shown on Figure 8 show clarity of goals, which indicates that leaders professionally cover the lack of organizational goals and, despite their internal insecurity, are able to lead their team projecting security.

Further insights can be gained from analysing the differences between perceptions of the leadership and the team as shown on

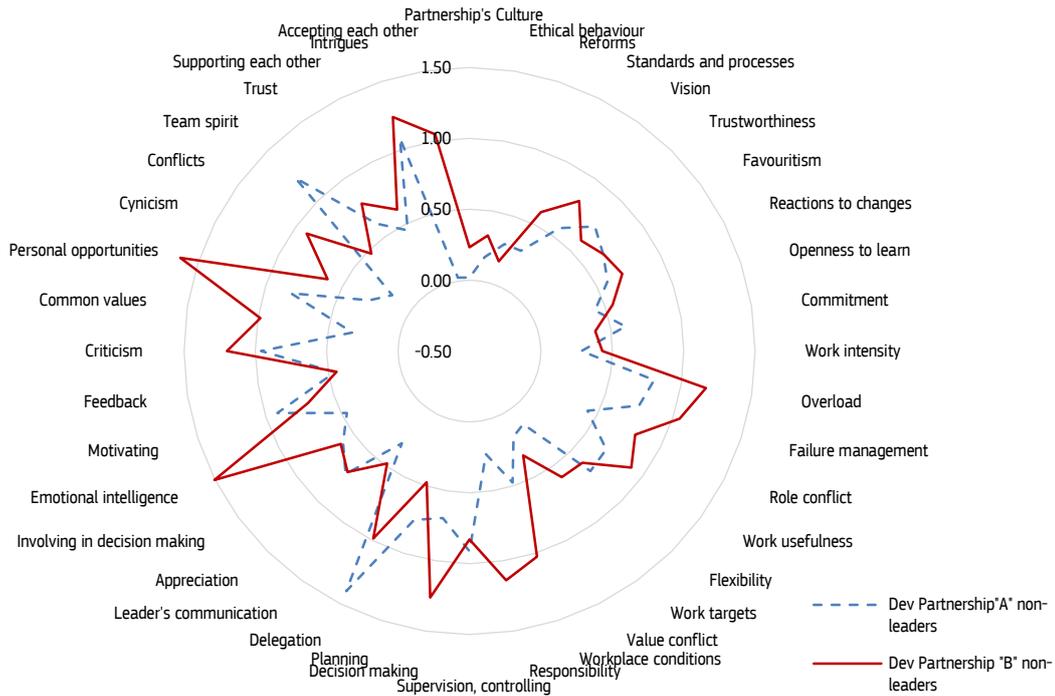
Figure 11. The differences of perception for the value of usefulness of work or the vision mean that leaders do not project the vision of the partnership towards the team that result in lack of usefulness of work. If partners (non-leaders) perceive that their leader does not value his / her own work, then the leader projects lack of credibility, which in turn hurts authority.

Figure 11: Comparison of leaders' and team results



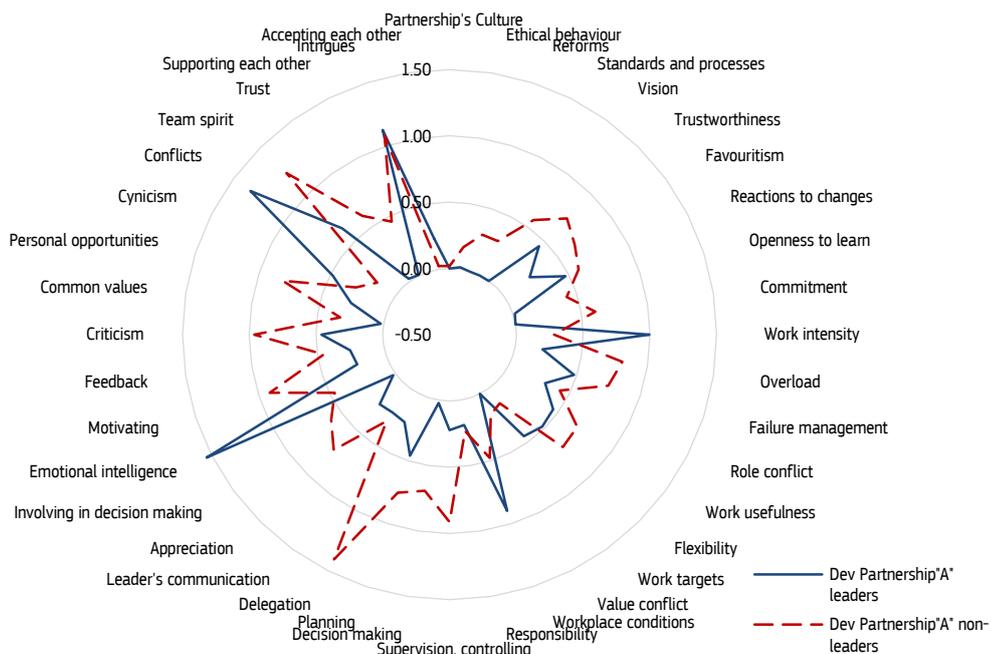
The standard deviation of answers of the non-leaders (partners) are shown on **Figure 12**. This analysis looks at the degree of accord between the answers of the members of both teams, and the degree to which their cooperation is harmonious in the light of their attitudes. The lower the standard deviations, the more uniform the judgments of the given areas.

Figure 12: Standard deviation of teams' perceptions



The differences between perceptions within the team, like personal opportunities in case of Partnership “B” or in regarding responsibility in case of Partnership “A” can mean that directions of leaders are not understood the same way by all members. In case of values that show high deviation, there is a lack of unity in the team, which is necessary to achieve enhance results. Both partnerships have dimensions that resulted in high standard deviation, that need to be dealt with. Perceptual similarities between leaders create consistency across the whole team. Or on the contrary limit or hinder consistency within the team, if there is a lack of perceptual similarity. This can be observed by looking at standard deviation results of leaders and non-leaders, presented on Figure 13.

Figure 13: Standard deviation of leadership and team results



Important correlation between dimensions can be highlighted here. Conflicts perceived by leaders appear as lack of team spirit among non-leaders. It should also be noted that, based on leaders' results, the perceptions of the two leaders with regard to the emotional intelligence in their direction show a high deviation, whereas employees do not perceive the EQ divide, i.e. team members perceive that leaders pay the same attention to almost everyone. High deviations of leaders' results are reflected in the team's results, thus lack of accordance between leaders clearly divides team members.

2.1 Validation of results

The authors of the article have organised a validation session for each of the partnerships assessed. These sessions have been organised with the leaders to discuss the finding of the assessment with the objective to validate the results.

During the validation, leaders have been informed on the purpose of the assessment. Accordingly, that the assessment serves to see the leaders' motivational level and how this motivational level is connected with the team, the leadership, the work and with the partnership itself. The validation also serves to discover the meta-data level information that shows more details than the surface data level.

The aim of the assessment is to measure how positive / negative are the leaders' perception towards the measured areas; work, team, leadership and the partnership. If the perception is positive in the measured areas, then the results are above the dashed blue line (values over 1.0), if these perceptions are negative, they are below the dotted red line (below values of 0.0).

In case of questions related to leadership, leaders were asked to express their views how they see the leadership of their own partnership.

Leaders were shown their personal results, then the differences between the perceptions of leaders, followed by the differences of perceptions between leaders and non-leaders and the deviation of results.

The first validation workshop has been organised with partnership "A". The areas discussed are detailed below.

During the validation, the assessment framework has been presented to the leader of the 'A' partnership; presenting the framework as a diagnostic tool to identify areas indicating challenging areas related to attitude.

One example highlighted is the questions related to partnership culture, where respondents had to answer if:

- Respondents would feel more useful if I could add something to the partnership's culture,
- The partnership's culture represents value for the respondents,
- Respondents feel that partnership's culture alone does not make any change,
- Respondents can shape and add something to the partnership's culture, or
- The partnership's culture is less important for the partnership.

Each response expresses the respondents' attitude towards the partnership culture that is how they relate to the partnership culture. Each response is associated with a specific stage of motivation, e.g. if the leader of a partnership likes the partnership culture or dislikes it. In between these are three other steps. All five answers are associated with specific motivational stage; therefore, there have been five different answers all connected to motivational stages (Hegyí et al, 2019)

2.1.1 Validation of Partnership "A" results

Firstly, the average results of the leaders' responses of Partnership 'A' has been discussed, as shown on Figure 14.

Figure 14: Assessment results of Partnership "A" leaders

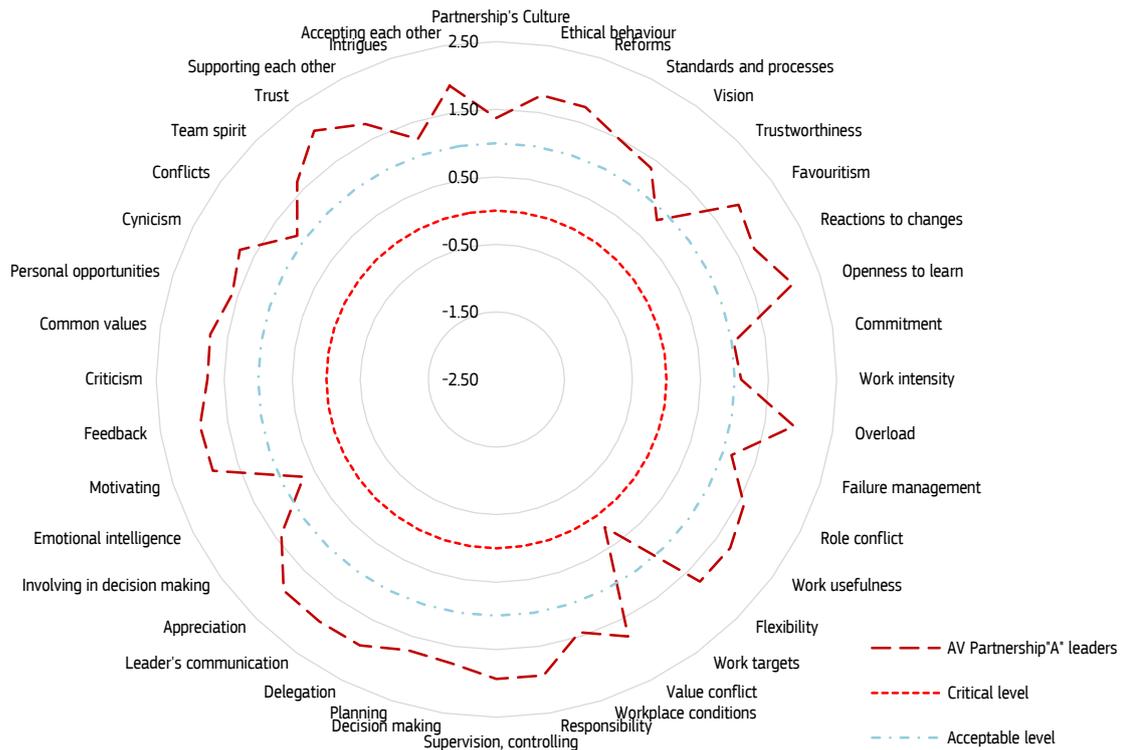


Figure 14 shows the perception of leaders related to work targets. The value falls close to the critical level. Questions related to work targets look at perceptions of respondents if they feel that they always achieve their work targets, if they feel they achieve them sooner or later, if they would need more support to achieve their work targets, if their work targets are motivating and achievable, or if they are unattainable. All these answers relate to different stages of motivation / burn out (Hegyí et al, 2019). Such results can mean that the leader does not like his / her defined work targets or does not accept them. It was agreed during the validation that it is important to note the specificities of the thematic S3 partnerships, that work targets are not as straightforward as in other spheres because there is a strong dependence on versatile external factors such as availability of funding, success at application process, etc. All these external factors can in return increase frustration and might affect other areas of the assessment. It has been confirmed on the validation that despite the vast and continuous efforts of the past years of the partnership, the lack of concrete results is what is reflected in this result. The feeling attached to this lack of result correctly depicts the frustration on the assessment.

Among the dimensions related to the attitude towards the team (upper left quarter), the results are closer to the critical level in case of the questions on conflict and acceptance. Questions related to conflicts refer to how the partnership discusses, intends to solve and settles conflicts. The questions related to accepting other team members refer to the profoundness of acceptance and the attitude of leaders / partners towards the importance of accepting each other. In the longer run, these two areas affect the team spirit of the partnership. During the assessment, it has been confirmed that the results of the assessment reflect ongoing issues of leadership, also having an effect on the partnership itself. In addition, perceptions related to various measured fields are influenced by the geographical dispersion / distance between partnership members, given that most partnerships cover a significant part of European regions.

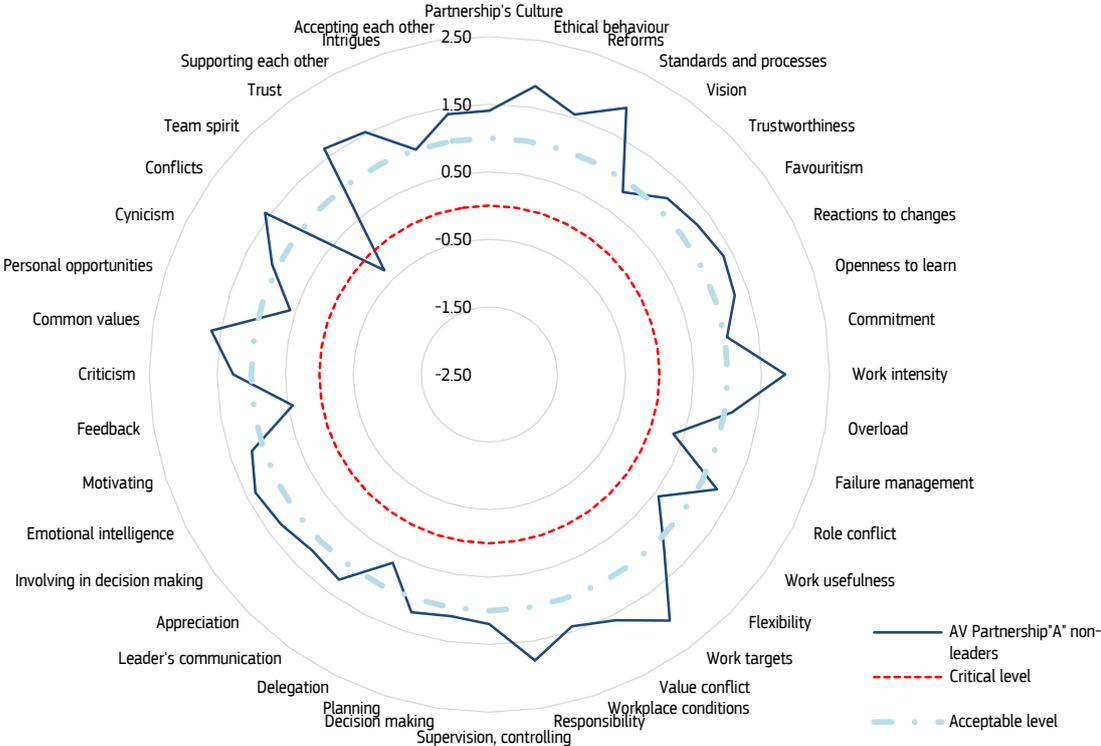
The bottom left quarter of the figure relates to the leadership of the partnership. Leaders were asked to assess how they view the leadership of the partnership. Again, the thematic S3 partnership are special in the sense that the location of leaders and partners across European regions are dispersed and meetings are organised with certain periodicity. Emotional intelligence in the assessment refers to how the leader is dealing with the emotional needs of team members, reflecting on if leaders are sensitive towards the problems affecting work, towards problems that are important to participants – including personal issues – and how emotions can be expressed. The only value that is closer to the critical level is the one on emotional

intelligence, while the other values such as delegation, planning, decision-making, appreciation or feedback are optimal. Regarding emotional intelligence, it was discussed that suboptimal results reflect unbalanced contribution to partnership tasks leading to possible internal frustration.

Questions related to trustworthiness asked about the level or misuse of trust within the partnership and one's belief in the importance of trust in this specific working environment. Regarding trustworthiness, it can be said that by strengthening mutual trust within leadership, various areas of the assessment can be positively affected. The voluntary nature of partnerships, thus that participants are not directly compensated for time and effort invested in the work of the partnership, affects how participants perceive their activities within the partnership.

Figure 15 shows the results of non-leaders. Results are partial, since not all members have filled out the assessment.

Figure 15: Assessment results of Partnership "A" non-leaders



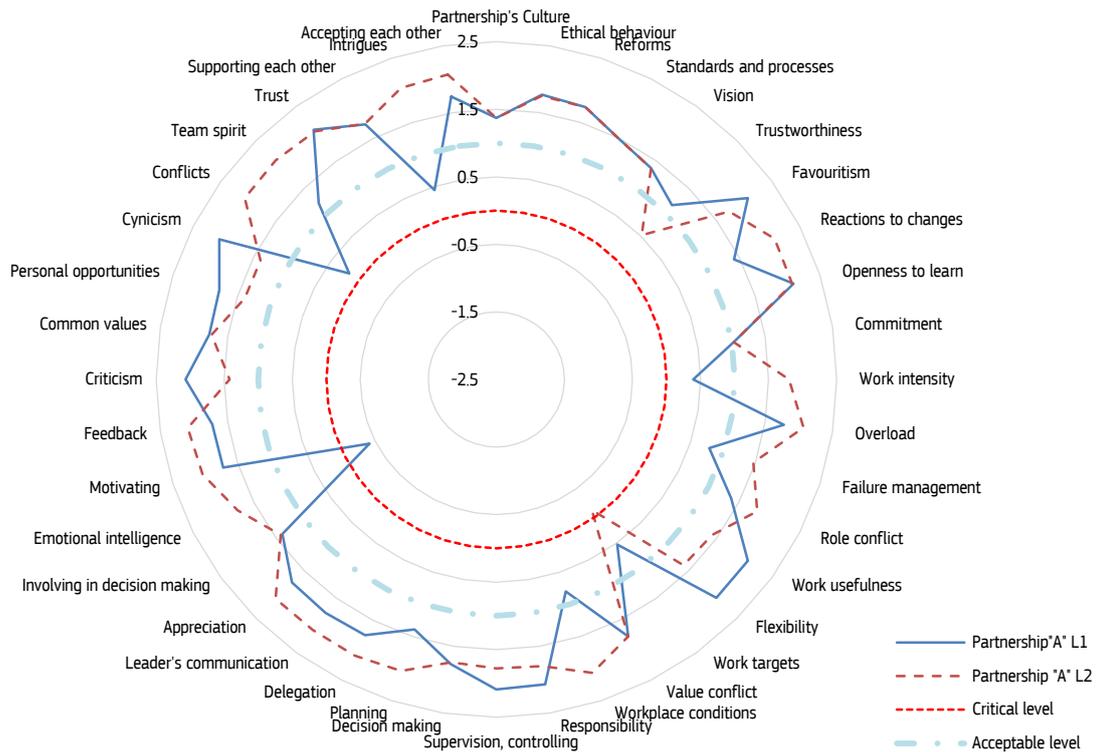
The values related to the leadership of the partnership have been firstly discussed that are the values on the lower left quarter of the figure. The results indicate how the partners (non-leaders) view their leaders. In general, the results are very positive. While still being far from the critical level, the lowest value is the value on feedback. As previously mentioned, due to some specificities of the partnerships, such as periodicity of meetings and people performing partnership related tasks in the framework of their regular job, feedback regarding partnership activities can be certainly affected. In addition, feedback can be influenced by the dispersion / distance between partnership members, given that most partnerships cover a significant part of European regions.

Non-leaders feel that there is a lack of team spirit within the partnership. During the validation, it has been confirmed that results can serve as an indication for future area to work on, thus the leadership will focus on improving (close to) critical areas. Distance can play an important role in the lack of team spirit. The feeling of lack of team spirit can affect other areas such as vision and work usefulness that both show lower results. While vision refers to the vision transmitted from the leader to the non-leaders, asking respondents how inspiring, important, useful they find the mission of the partnership. Work usefulness relates to perception of their own participation in the working process that is how useful they find their own work, how their work is perceived by the partnership. In a longer term, the perceptions of vision and work usefulness in turn can affect commitment and overload that both show somewhat lower results. From the previously mentioned areas, the results indicate that the partner regions need more personal interaction from the leaders. During the validation it has been confirmed that the work usefulness indicator is very important in the work context of the thematic partnerships, since participation in the partnership is voluntary, so it is important that participants are intrinsically motivated to be part of partnership. Therefore, the leader highlighted the importance of this specific indicator that if participants do not feel the usefulness of work for themselves and for their own partnership, their commitment will wane and disappear. Therefore, the area that the leader of the partnership sees crucial is the commitment, and the loss of commitment is to be avoided in case of thematic S3 partnerships. During the validation, the correlation between the vision and commitment has been stressed again. It has been highlighted during the validation that if participants do not have a clear vision, the leaders have to act.

In the next programming period, there is a specific financial instrument planned for interregional innovation projects (so called Component V). If there would be such an instrument, thus providing a concrete target to work for, many values of the assessment would be surely affected, such as work targets, vision, work usefulness.

The **Figure 16** compares the perception of leaders, thus how they individually view the leadership of the partnership.

Figure 16 Assessment individual results of Partnership 'A' leaders – a comparison of leaders' perceptions

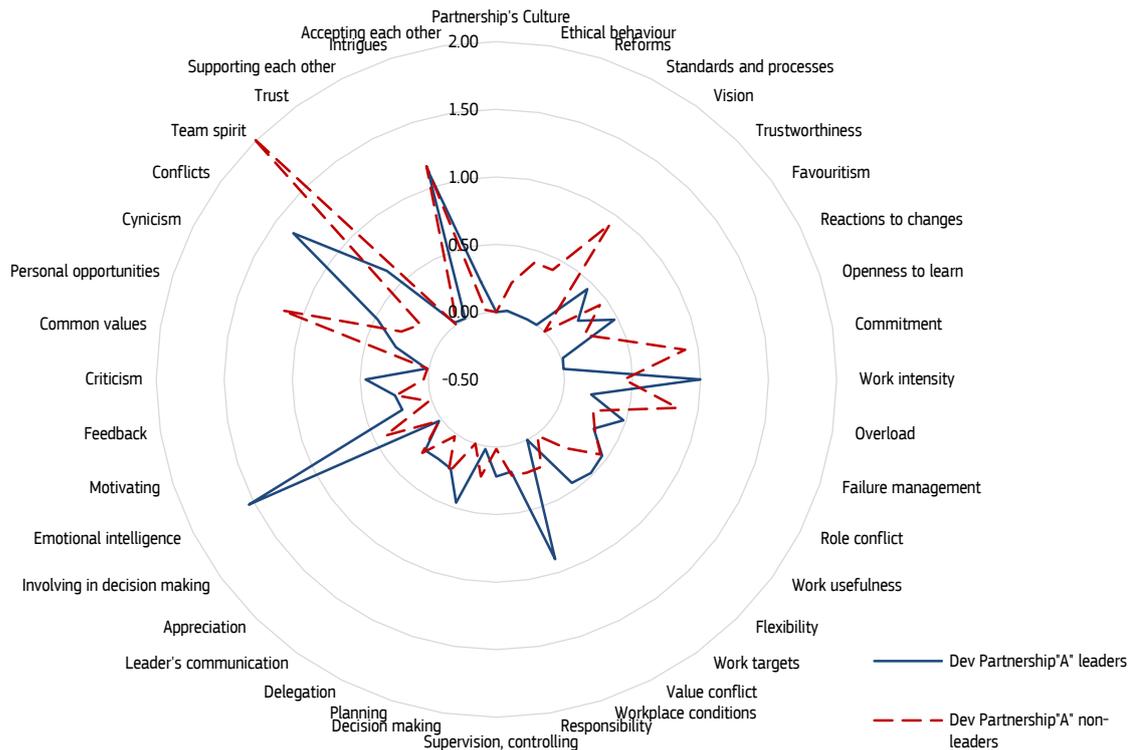


When analysing the individual results of leaders, some fields fall into the critical level, such as emotional intelligence or work targets, while others are close to the critical level, such as conflicts, intrigues or work intensity. Comparing the results of leaders is an important exercise, because in case if there is a significant difference between the perceptions of leaders that can affect motivation levels, effectiveness. In case of Partnership "A", such great difference can be stated in many of the assessed areas. During the validation, it was confirmed that the results reflect ongoing situation of the partnership because there is a very uneven division of tasks that clearly affects attitude of leaders towards many assessed areas.

The assessment has been confirmed to be a basis to reflect upon the current situation / challenges and work towards improvement of signalled critical or close to critical areas.

Figure 17 shows the deviation between average responses of leaders and non-leaders of Partnership 'A'.

Figure 17: Deviation of results of Partnership 'A' leaders' and non-leaders' responses



The figure shows how the leaders' perception differs from each other and how the non-leaders from each other. During the validation, it has been confirmed that the results reflect their own thoughts and perceptions regarding differences between leaders and non-leaders. It has been confirmed that non-leaders completely depend on the information provided by leaders given that only the leaders have the link and the connection for example to the European Commission services, which is crucial for the work of the partnership.

The partnership confirmed that the assessment is useful to facilitate dialogue between leadership, to enhance communication between leaders and non-leaders to improve the team spirit and the perception of working towards the same goals. The areas highlighted offer opportunities for developing the partnership as an organisational identity. Also results provide insights into specific competences that would need development that can lead to enhanced commitment and motivation between leaders or between leaders and non-leaders or towards the work and tasks of the partnership.

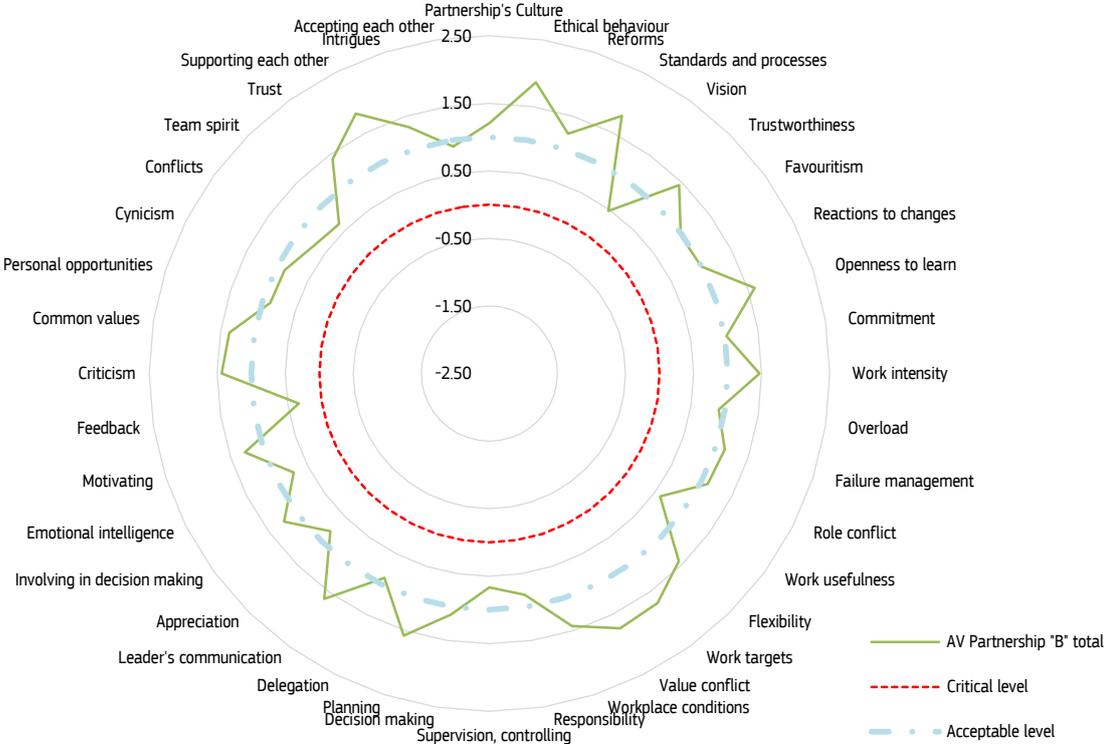
2.1.2 Validation of Partnership “B” results

Important to highlight first, similarly to the case of Partnership “A” that the results are limited by the fact that not all leaders and not all participants have filled out the questionnaire, thus results show the perception of measured areas of those, who have provided responses.

On the validation it was highlighted by the partnership leaders that when referring to motivational level of participants, it is important to be aware of the organisational structure of the partnerships, aka leaders and participants have a full time job, within which they dedicate diverse amount of time to the partnership. Also, perceptions related to various measured fields are influenced by the dispersion / distance between partnership members, given that most partnerships cover a significant part of European regions. Still, the partnerships have a structure and a methodology of work, with assigned leadership. Thus, the intention of the assessment is to measure the motivation, commitment or the loss of motivation within this specific interregional structure. Therefore, the overall objective is to see the applicability of such assessment to the thematic S3 partnerships and other interregional collaborative efforts, such as Horizon 2020 projects. The questions the assessment tries to grasp is that how much the success of such interregional collaborative actions depend on the leadership of such actions. The assessment intends to look at what kind of effects cause motivation / demotivation from the leadership or from the partners back to the leader and the identification of areas that can contribute to enhanced motivation.

First, the average results for all respondents from the partnership were shown, as depicted on Figure 18.

Figure 18: Assessment average results of all respondents from Partnership 'B'

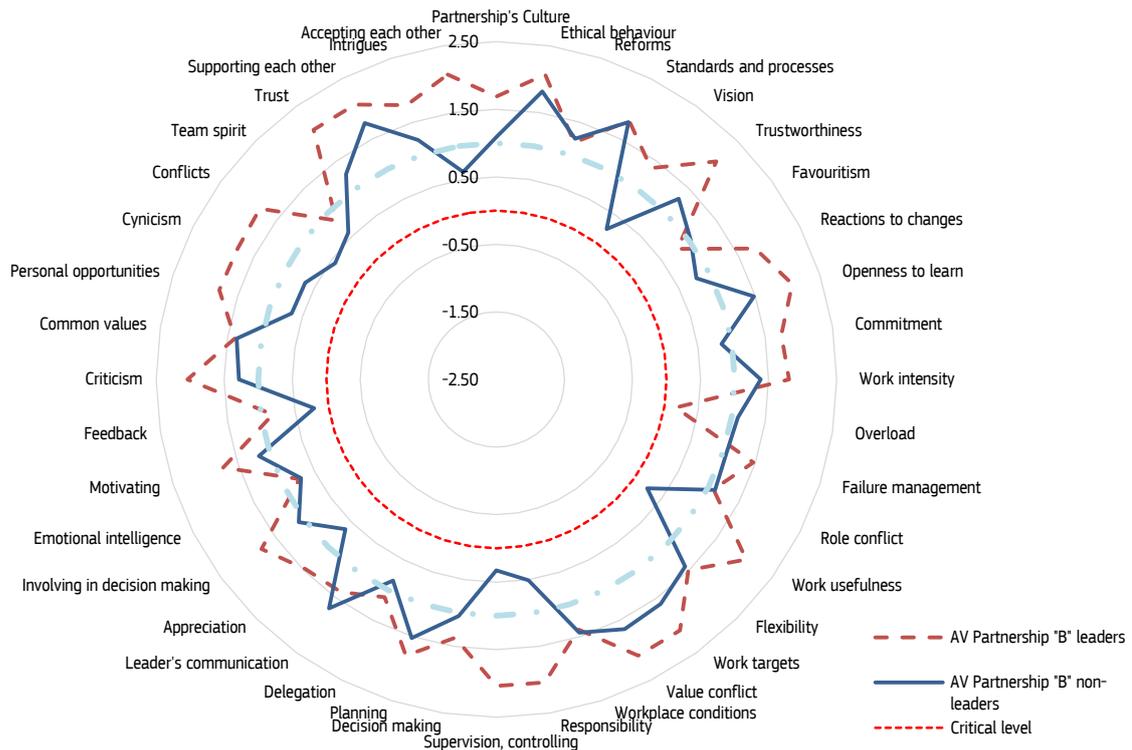


Overall results are adequate, since all are above the critical level (above 0.00), which shows good cooperation level. The level of feedback is closer to the critical level. This value measures the perceptions on the frequency, usefulness or need of receiving feedback. In other words, this value refers to the perceptions of quality feedback received. The other value closer to the critical level is the perception of vision, which refers to the vision transmitted from the leader to the non-leaders, asking respondents how inspiring, important, useful they find the mission of the partnership. Lower results in feedback can affect other values such as acceptance of each other, partnership culture or usefulness of work, which all show somewhat lower results. Work usefulness relates to perception of their own participation in the working process, meaning how useful partnership members find their own work, how their work is perceived by the partnership. This can be improved through quality feedback from leaders. In a longer term, perceptions of vision and work usefulness can affect values of 'commitment' and 'overload' too.

It is important to highlight the factor of timing. At the time of the assessment, the next multi-annual financial framework is being planned. In the draft proposals, there has been a plan for financing interregional collaborative activities such as the thematic S3 partnerships (referred to as Component V). During the validation, it was agreed that final decision on such dedicated funding instrument could significantly alter many of the measured values, such as work target, work usefulness, commitment, but even values such as team spirit. Thus, such external factors can greatly influence results.

Figure 19 shows the difference of perceptions between leaders and non-leaders of Partnership "B".

Figure 19: Assessment average results of leaders and non-leaders from Partnership 'B'

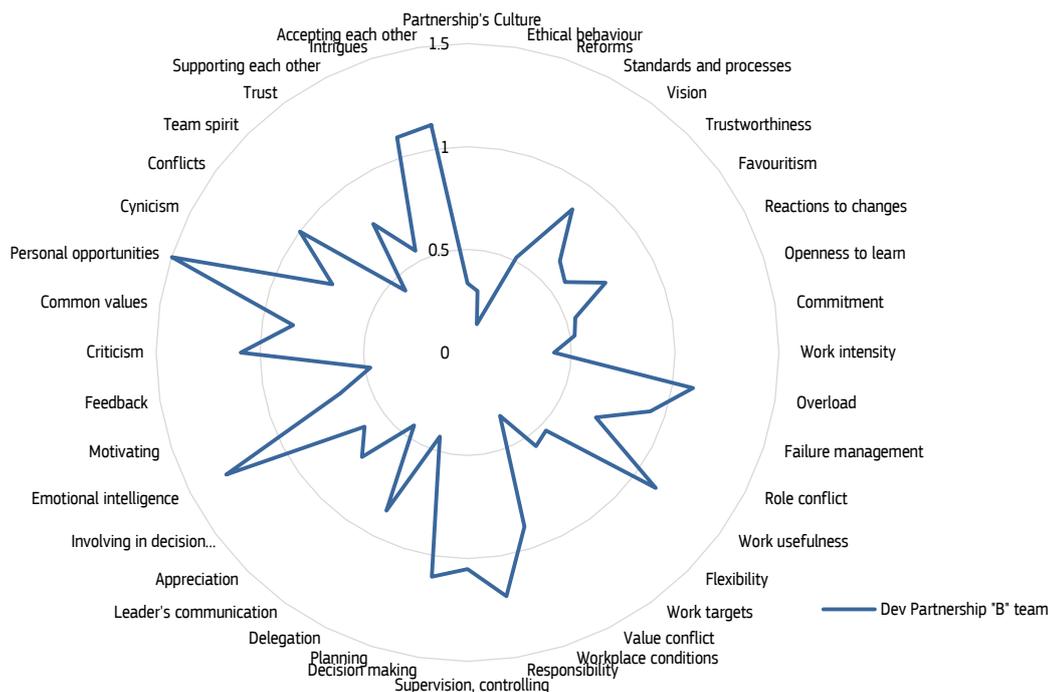


There is a great difference between the values for vision, overload, work usefulness, supervision and partnership culture between leaders and non-leaders. While for example leaders and non-leaders share the perception of flexibility, responsibility or common values. In general, the perception of non-leaders is lower than the leaders' perception. The question is how to improve the motivation level into a higher range, indicating that the leadership needs more communicative approach towards non-leaders, which is connected to some values of the team dimension, such as cynicism. It is important to note again, that there was a limited number of respondents from the non-leaders compared to the high number of participants in the overall partnership, thus results show a somewhat partial view. The leaders have confirmed that results can also reflect the periodicity of partnership meetings, that is assessment results may differ if the assessment is done before or right after the quarterly partnership meeting. This specific assessment has been performed before the quarterly partnership meeting. These meetings can have a great impact on motivation and commitment and many other values of the assessments. Also, the partnership is at the stage of development of investment project at the time of the assessment, which activity only involves a limited number of entities, again effecting overall perception of measured values. The leaders of the partnership expressed that the differences between perception of leaders and non-leaders are acknowledgeable, but might also depend on the previously mentioned factors of timing and involvement.

The leaders have confirmed their own personal commitment and motivation, which is clearly reflected in the results of leaders, thus the majority of values falling above the acceptable level.

It has also been highlighted that neither leaders, nor non-leaders are remunerated for their efforts in the partnership, accordingly there is a lot of self-motivation in the process. Thus, all participants have a kind of personal commitment towards the partnership and often personal motivation and commitment is conflicted with other professional commitments. There is a general content and agreement among leaders towards the progress of the partnership, still given the dependency of external factors, perceptions might alter from time to time. The aspects of nationally governed process of Smart Specialisation have been highlighted, how political ambitions may affect the bottom up approach of Smart Specialisation, which can also have an impact on commitment and motivation; the limitations of influencing own agenda at partnership level. All these factors in turn raise doubts on many of the measured values, such as vision, work usefulness, which may be reflected in the differences between the perceptions of leaders. The deviation between answer of leaders and non-leaders are shown on Figure 20.

Figure 20: Deviation of results of Partnership 'B' leaders' and non-leaders'



The validation exercise resulted in a discussion regarding next steps, on how to follow up the results and improve the areas that are critical or close to critical. Having the results at hand, the next partnership meetings is to be organised in a way that the partnership addresses / focuses on the critical areas, thus organising sessions that provide the possibility of transmitting the vision, provides feedback, appreciation, involvement in decision making, etc. It has been acknowledged that a stronger presence of the European Commission could also contribute improving results related to the values of vision, work usefulness, work targets and specialised trainings addressing critical issues could be also useful for partnerships.

2.1.3 Recommendations for partnership development

Based on the presented results of the assessment in the previous sections, Table 1 lists the areas that would require development in case of both partnerships.

Table 1 Partnership development recommendations

"A" partnership

| Leadership | Partners |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback culture Setting and acceptance of objectives Development of conflict management competence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team spirit development Strengthening of perception of usefulness of work Strengthening of partnership vision |

"B" partnership

| Leadership | Partners |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing accordance among leaders, which would result in a clearer situation and a better attitude Improving the culture of control Improving involvement techniques Improving delegation techniques Strengthening recognition, acknowledgement, feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening the partnership vision Defining clear responsibilities Improving conflict resolution Working on individual opportunities Sensitizing workshop series for mutual acceptance |

techniques

- Improving general communication skills
-

These recommendations serve to improve the collaboration between the leadership and partners ideally not in the form of traditional leadership skill trainings, but rather through leadership competence development combined with action learning. Action learning is a dynamic and complex team process in which problems of real life projects are dealt with (Mintzberg et al, 1998). The application of action based approaches in the interregional governance settings would offer context specific approach, seeking the means of improvement from within the organisation from a common task. The partnerships can be viewed as a learning system: continuously working out solutions to their own challenges (Senge, 1990 and McGill, 2003).

3 Conclusions

The thematic S3 platforms offer a new general approach to support EU industry internationalisation and competitiveness by bringing regions (and clusters) together to discuss common objectives and find complementarities, to map and better understand regions' industrial competencies and capabilities, to develop joint strategic action plans (building critical mass and complementary specialisations), and to align strategic investments arising from these roadmaps (Rakhmatullin et al, 2020). The approach is explicitly designed to provide complementarities to existing networks and initiatives, by addressing missing links in the innovation value chain or to accelerate market uptake through interregional collaboration (Mariussen and Hegyi, 2019).

In terms of network configuration, one key driver is being able to design and develop a network configuration that allows dealing with both political and technical aspects. Such challenge has been dealt with the creation of multi-layered governance structures of the partnerships and the involvement of different actors focusing on their strengths and connections (Mariussen, Hegyi and Rakhmatullin, 2019). Thematic partnerships are connecting diverse stakeholders of their regional innovation eco-system through their agreed governance structures and structured workflow, guaranteeing continuous exchanges and dialogues, ensuring a cumulative process of learning in the context of their communities of expertise.

The animation and management of the network rely mostly on the assigned leadership of the partnerships. Despite lacking specific funds to finance the activities of the partnerships within the programming period of 2014-2020, they remain quite active. This is mostly due to high commitment and/or resources devoted by some actors and regions to the Initiative. The effectiveness and efficiency of the 'joining function' is very much dependent on the ability, commitment and capacity of few actors.

The results of the assessment highlight those areas where leadership effects individual performance and where leadership does not motivate participants any longer, but performance is based on identity towards the partnerships or personal ambitions. Personal ambitions have a specific importance since leaders can motivate up to certain point of performance after which, leaders only demotivate and deteriorate performance (Hegyi et al, 2020). Thus, from the point of view of leaders, it is important to be able to identify that level of performance, where one needs to provide more responsibilities or freedom. To be able to define these levels, key performance indicators need to be defined and linked to the results of the assessment.

Based on the results of the assessment, the thematic S3 partnerships' leaders can identify areas in which they can motivate participants towards the objectives of the partnerships. Through the assessment, leadership development objectives can be defined, after which a re-assessment can clearly show the changes in case of each area targeted.

Assessment of attitude of the interregional partnerships, and cross-border organisations in general, is especially important in case of admitting new participants to the partnership. Also, in case of possible changes in terms of leadership, one can detect if the partnership is ready for such a change. Effects of certain organisational changes can be measured, also signalling critical areas, which need to be paid attention to, aka developed.

Assessment frameworks regularly examining effects of leadership in interregional projects could help leaders assess motivation and commitment of partners, could help leaders to make better informed decisions regarding responsibilities, leadership styles, organisational changes, could help re-examining earlier decisions and validate certain action points. The various experiences gained from regular assessment would help leaders in strategic planning process.

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List of abbreviations and definitions

| | |
|-------|---|
| COSME | Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) |
| CVI | Corporate Vitality Index |
| EIT | European Institute of Innovation and Technology |
| KIC | Knowledge Innovation Community |
| RIS3 | Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation |
| S3 | Smart Specialisation Strategy |
| TSSP | Thematic Smart Specialisation Platform |
| VI | Vanguard Initiative |

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