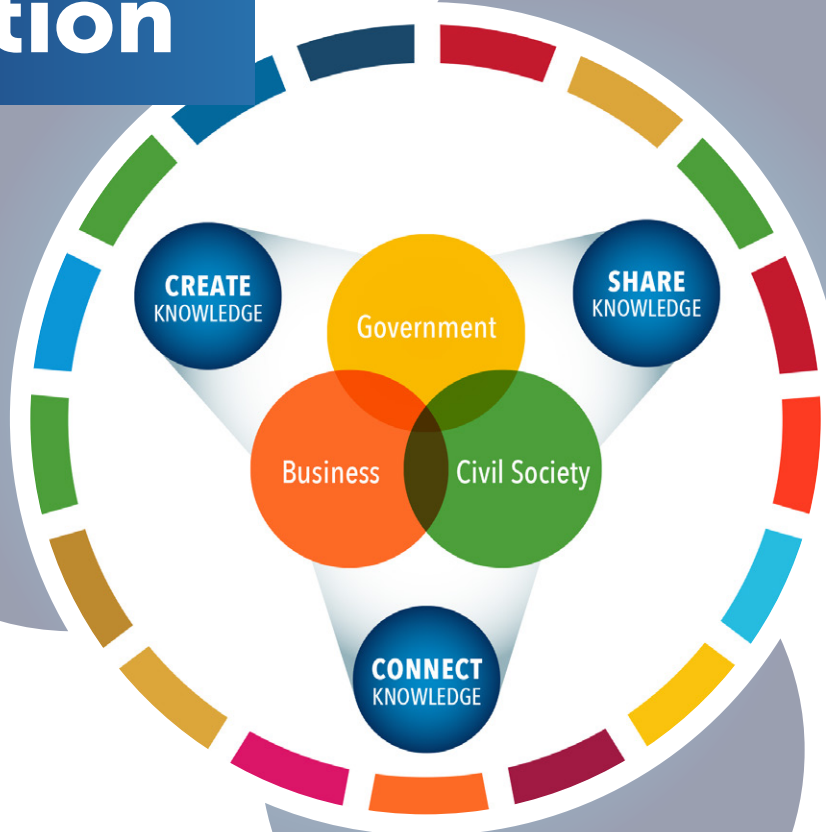


PrC Insight Series **Introduction**



**THE PARTNERSHIPS
RESOURCE CENTRE**

FOUNDED BY

Rotterdam School of Management
Erasmus University

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The **Partnerships Resource Centre (PrC)** at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University is an international centre for research and knowledge about public-private collaboration for sustainable and inclusive development, bridging science and practice. PrC aims to understand how cross-sector partnerships work and how they can contribute to sustainable transformations. Through the **PrC Insight Series**, we share evidence-based knowledge to enhance the effectiveness and impact of partnerships.

The **PrC Insight Series** is written by PrC's research team. This team translates research insights into practicable and actionable knowledge about how to work in partnerships to contribute to the professionalisation of partnerships and improve standards in effective partnering.

This **Series** provides information and tips on collaborating in cross sector partnerships (CSPs) to help address the

grand challenges of our time, such as achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**). Throughout this Series, the central issue is always 'how to work in partnerships'. We explain the partnership theme, explore dilemmas and challenges, and provide tips and tricks for effective partnering. We have also included references to practical tools and suggestions for further reading.

#1 WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW TO PARTNER?

Cross sector partnerships have been increasingly seen as a way to address a variety of sustainability challenges since the turn of the millennium. By combining the resources and capabilities of businesses, civil society organisations and/or governmental actors, outcomes of partnerships are expected to exceed those of any sector acting in isolation. Cross sector collaboration is often considered as a crucial condition for the creation and operation of

sustainable business models¹. However, cross sector collaborations are complex and may be accompanied by high transaction costs. Yet it is challenging to understand how partnerships work and how they can contribute to societal transformations. The question is not so much why partnering is important, but how it can be achieved and made impactful.

WHAT ARE CROSS SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS²?

CSPs are potentially effective approaches to address the major challenges of our time – think of issues such as poverty, inequality, climate change or a pandemic.

In this Series we discuss CSPs as a collaborative effort in which parties from different societal sectors (government, business, civil society organisations and/or knowledge organisations) pool resources to provide solutions to grand challenges.

CSPs work towards a common objective to co-create activities and are jointly governed, while the risks and benefits are shared. These partnerships are often complex for several reasons: they address complex issues, they are implemented under often uncertain circumstances, and they bring together parties that have different languages, a different culture, and different interests and strategies.

The description of CSPs contains four defining terms: complexity, sharing risks and benefits, goal alignment and co-creation – these terms characterise CSPs collaborative and transformational essence.

#2 WHO CAN USE THESE INSIGHTS?

The aim of this Series is to make research insights available to all practitioners; policy makers and partnership managers in government, civil society and business. We

have tailored the Series for these groups by collaborating with two digital platforms:



[Duurzaam Bedrijfsleven](#) is a business platform for successful sustainable businesses, providing content to inspire, inform and activate, such as result-oriented events, matchmaking, free tools and tailor-made services.



[The Broker](#) focuses on policy makers in government and CSOs, and aims to uncover knowledge, link its stakeholders, and contribute to inclusive, sustainable and evidence-based policy making.

#3 CONTRIBUTE TO THE PrC INSIGHT SERIES

If you benefit from the practical tools presented in the [Insights](#), then we're interested in your experiences. Please tell us how they helped you, and we may be able to use your experiences to help others. If you have questions or

suggestions, let us know via info@prc.nl. The [PrC Insight Series](#) can also be found on PrC's website. Please visit www.rsm.nl/prc for the other Insights sheets.

PrC Insight Series

Introduction

No. 1 Partnership Principles

No. 2 Partnership Agreements

No. 3 Partnership Skills

No. 4 Partnership Impact (forthcoming)

REFERENCES

1. Not all scholars agree on the effective contribution of CSPs to Grand Challenges, such as the SDGs. Pattberg and Widerberg (2016) analyzed more than 340 [WSSD](#) partnerships registered at the United Nations. They found that after more than five years since inception, approximately 38 per cent showed low levels or even no output. Moreover, 42 per cent of the partnerships with output engaged in activities without direct relation to their publicly stated goals and ambitions. This means that out of the 340 partnerships, 211 were inactive, lacked any outputs, or failed to match their stated ambition with their observed activities.
2. The partnership literature provides various partnership definitions. The formulation often depends on the researcher's perspective. Some definitions are formulated neutrally, such as: "Initiatives where public-interest entities, private sector companies and / or civil society organizations enter into an alliance to achieve a common practical purpose, pool core competencies, and share risks, responsibilities, resources, costs and benefits" (Utting & Zammit, 2009, p. 40). But a definition is often also limited when it tries to represent what something is, in all cases and always. That is why a description has been chosen: a summary of essential characteristics of a CSP.