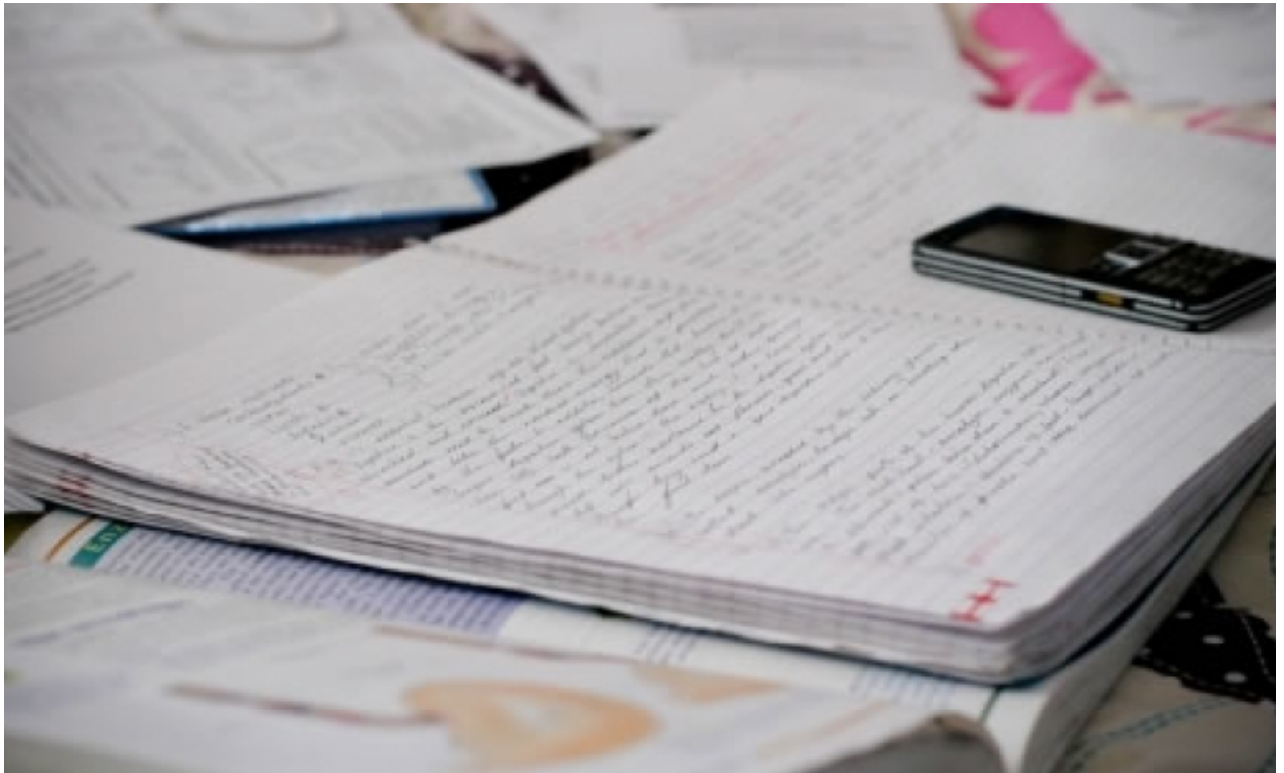


## European-style networking?



05/04/2017 - 18:16



Networking is deeply integrated into European Union's DNA. Daniel Ferrer shares with us some thoughts on how it's developed in the non-profit sector.

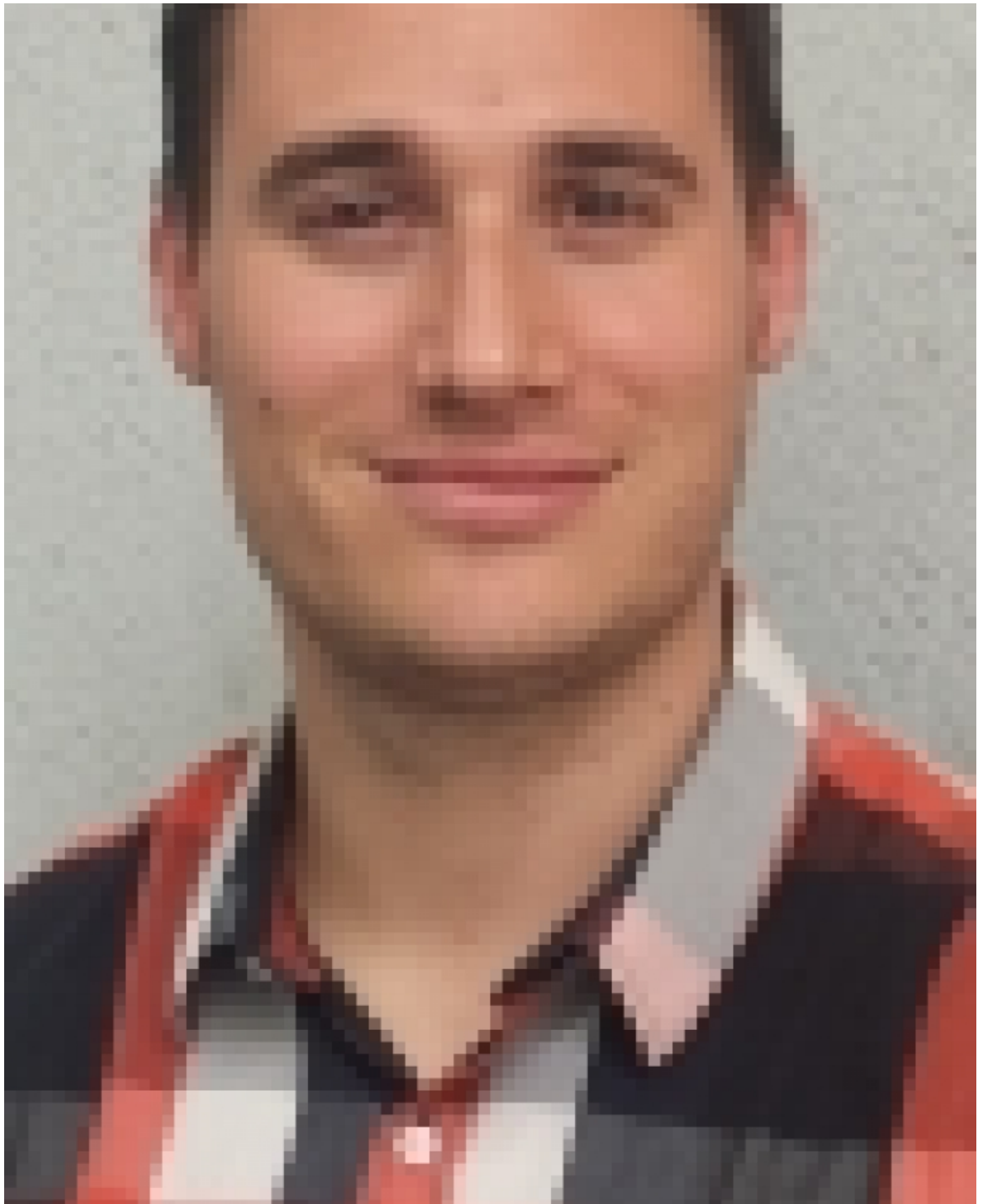
### Daniel Ferrer

Submitted by F Pere Tarrés on Thu, 05/04/2017 - 18:08

**Description:**

Degree in Sociology. Postgraduate course in Management of non-profit organisations. Working in European projects and social innovation since 2010.

**Vertical photo:**



**Square photo:**



Twitter: [@DFerrer83](https://twitter.com/DFerrer83)



Horizontal photo:

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Networking in the European Union is key and is deeply integrated into its DNA. We find networking in the calls for aid, cross-border projects, in expert committees of the public institutions, in consultations on public policies, and many other places. In a nutshell, in this article I would like to draw the reader's attention to how networking is developed in the non-profit sector, with three reflexions.

1. **Networking among organisations**, or partnerships, are vital to participate in most of the European calls for aid. Very often, this is one of the requirements for applicants and, of course, applications are assessed based on their relevance and the specific tasks done by participants in a partnership. And we even find networking in bidding processes! Partnerships enable an exchange of knowledge, expertise, the real impact and the dissemination of results, and they also avoid competition among organisations with similar purposes.

The requirement of projects in partnership is therefore a good way of improving networking and avoiding competition among these organisations when it comes to accessing funds. That said, we mustn't let ourselves be tricked: both here in Spain and in the rest of Europe, partnerships are not created in just 15 days. You need months and months to create good partnerships. So, calls are submitted several months in advance, and some of them are recurrent.

2. **There are very few calls specifically targeted to sustain non-profit organisations.** I ask what sense does it make to open specific calls of this type if the ultimate goal is to find an answer to a challenge such as energy poverty, minors under guardianship or improve training programmes. Non-profit organisations play an important role but they become one of the stakeholders, together with the public administrations, commercial companies, universities, citizens, etc. So, finding solutions to the challenges comes before organisational structures.

However, we cannot affirm that the European Commission disparages Non-profit organisations. For certain matters, non-profit organisations are a referent and become the main actors, together with the public administrations. In fact, for some calls, this translates into greater funding available (and less co-funding) in the case of non-profit organisations.

3. **Umbrella organisations** (especially the European ones) take on an essential relevance as organisations that are capable of bringing together actors that work on specific themes, connecting ones with others, explaining best practices and encouraging cooperation among these. They are also considered as key partners for certain matters. Precisely because of this role they play, there are some calls that aim to support specifically European umbrella organisations.

Therefore, we are not only talking about a model of umbrella organisation that basically aims at defending the interests of its member organisations with regards to the public administration (united to make our voices heard/to defend our interests), but which also aims at serving its member organisations, providing knowledge, best practices, encouraging the establishment of partnerships, among others (united to cooperate).

In most of the Central and Northern European countries, networking is a reality. However, in Catalonia, third sector organisations tend to compete among them and umbrella organisations are the only real networking spaces. Which steps do you think Catalan third sector organisations could take to **stop seeing each other as competitors and more as partners**?

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