DERREG

Developing Europe's Rural Regions in the Era of Globalisation

An interpretative model for better anticipating and responding to Challenges for regional development in an evolving international context.

WP4:
Work package 4: Capacity building, governance and knowledge systems

Deliverable 4.1

Overview of learning and innovation support strategies
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1   INTRODUCTION

Globalisation[1] increasingly frames the challenges for regional development in
Europe. As the European Commission has observed, "globalization is seen to
touch every walk of life – opening doors, creating opportunities, raising
apprehensions", such that "our response to globalization has moved to the heart
of the EU policy agenda" (CEC, 2007). The delicate balance of threats and
opportunities presented by globalization is particularly significant for rural
regions – which constitute 91% of the EU land area, house over 50% of its
population, generate 45% of Gross Value Added and provide 53% of employment
(CEC, 2006). Traditional industries such as agriculture and forestry are
vulnerable to global competition and deregulation, rural communities are
exposed to the effects of transnational migration and increasingly
internationalized property markets, and established practices of environmental
management are challenged by the intervention of global actors and concerns. At
the same time, however, globalization has reordered notions of 'core' and
'periphery' that have historically marginalized rural regions (CEC, 1999), and has
opened up new markets for rural enterprises and attracted new investors to rural
areas. The adoption of appropriate responses to both the challenges and
opportunities of globalization is critical to the future development of rural
regions, yet the evidence base on which such strategies can be founded is
currently limited.

Work package four will progress the 'state of the art' of understanding the
capacities of rural regions to respond to the challenges of globalization, and in
particular, the role of knowledge systems, innovation and learning in contributing
to these capacities. The research will build on the now extensive literature on
rural governance, which has traced the move towards partnership working,
deliberation and individual responsibility (Moseley, 2003, Wiskerke et al., 2003,
Woods and Goodwin, 2003, Derkzen and Bock, 2007, Edwards, 1998), and on
the equally extensive literature on the roles of community capacity-building and
social capital in rural development (Rau and McDonagh, 2007, Baerenholdt and

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[1] The introduction chapter has been adapted from DERREG (2008) Annex 1: Description of work.
Seventh Framework Programme FP7-SSH-2007-1.

Aersaether, 2002, Edwards et al., 2006 Juska et al., 2006, Kairyte, 2005, Lee et al., 2006, Van der Ploeg et al., 2002, Wolfe, forthcoming). To these it will add perspectives drawn from the concept of the 'learning region' (Morgan, 1997, Wiskerke, 2007), which describes regions with an institutional environment that encourages private and social learning by individual workers, firms and government bodies. The concept is premised on the assumption that global firms need to be embedded in innovative social production systems, and that regions with such institutional structures will be more attractive to global investment. It is increasingly employed in regional studies, yet has only had a limited application to rural regions, possibly because the institutional structures that it prioritises are more clearly visible in urban centres. The research will hence seek to apply and adapt the concept for rural regions. In taking forward this broad conceptual framework, this work package will specifically advance the 'state of the art' in this field by developing understanding of:

- The significance of globalization in shaping new governance and capacity-building strategies, by examining the orientation of capacity-building and training initiatives towards the needs of a globalizing economy, and the role of international policy-transfer in shaping governance reforms and influencing regional development strategies.

- The role of knowledge systems in building capacities, and of the circulation of knowledge between and within rural regions, including processes of learning from other regions, internal self-reflexivity, and knowledge transfer to diverse actors within regions.

- Key factors in the functionality of training and learning options by investigating the role of partnership working between the state, private agencies and local actors in triggering learning and innovation.

- The position of local actors as not only the users of knowledge, but also as the producers and disseminators of knowledge, including the role of so-called civic entrepreneurs who bring people together and stimulate to collaborate in the interest of the local community, by examining the linkages between the producers and users of knowledge in regional development initiatives (Borsig et al., 2007, Melnikiene and Vidickiene, 2006, Wolfe, forthcoming).

- The potential of capacity-building, learning and training initiatives to improve gender equality in rural regions, noting the continuing disparities in levels of women's employment between rural regions in Europe (Bock and Shortall, 2006, Bock, 2004a) but also shifting gender relations in rural labour markets and social systems under globalization.

- The potential of women to act as agents of change (Demoissier, 2004, Limstrand and Stemland, 2004), including their participation in development policies and politics (Derkzen and Bock, 2007) as well as in various development initiatives (Bock, 2004b).

1.1   Research outline WP4

The research undertaken in WP 4 will be conducted across six case study regions: Alytus County in Lithuania (3), Comarca de Verin in Spain (4), Regierungsbezirk Dresden (9), County Roscommon in Ireland (2), Saarland in Germany (10), and Westerkwartier in the Netherlands (8). The respective case study areas illustrated with their corresponding numbers in Figure 1.1 and have been extensively described in the deliverables of WP 5.

Importantly, the different case study areas are highly diverse which provides a good study environment to illustrate and highlight differences in governance styles and to contribute to inter-regional learning processes that are based on learning from differences.

The research involves three stages which will lead to three deliverables. The present Deliverable 4.1 contains the findings of the first research stage which involved the documentation, mapping and analysis of planned and formal strategies to support learning and innovation in regional development strategies in the case study regions. Research tasks included the exploration of aims and priorities of regional policies and governmental strategies; the regional infrastructure supporting research and capacity building institutions; engagement of gender equality issues; and the internal and external networks of relationships between public and private agencies.
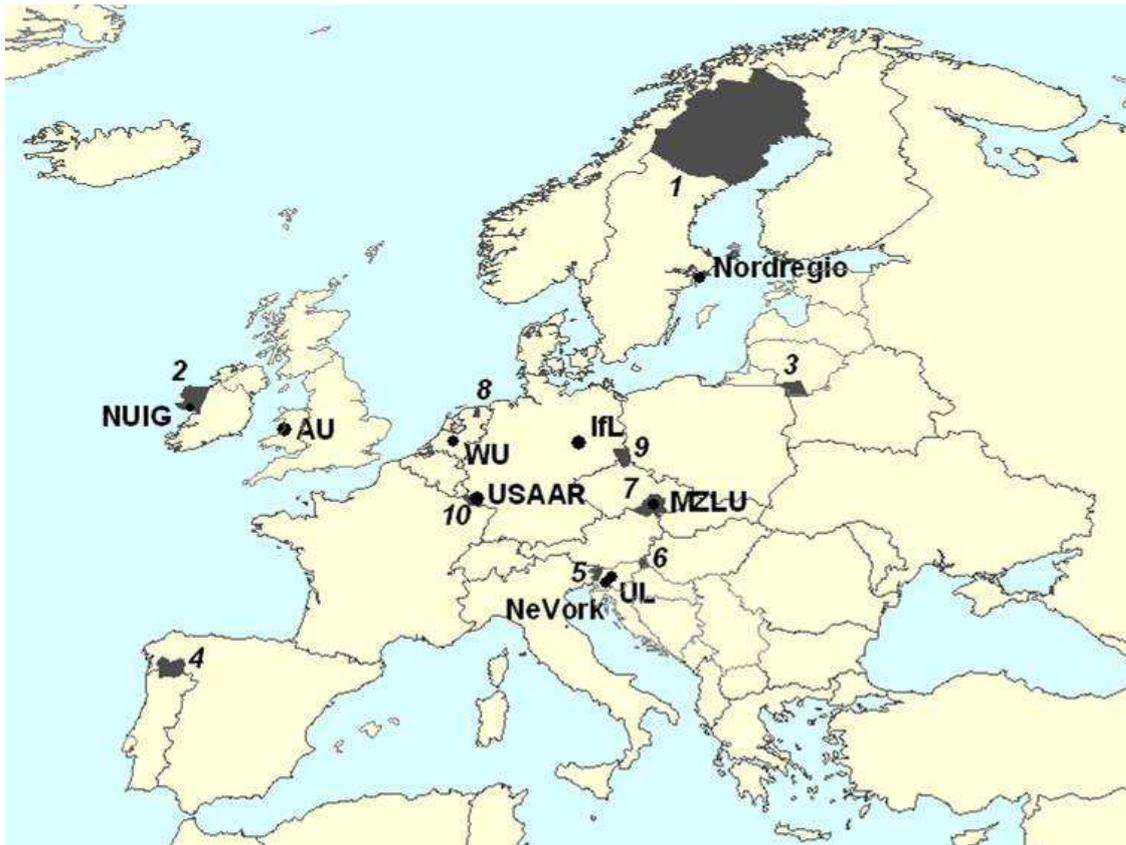
Figure 1-1 Case study areas involved in DERREG (DERREG, 2008)

In Deliverable 4.2, the second research stage will be presented. It will involve an analysis of specific examples of regional development initiatives in the case study regions, with an emphasis on those initiated by grassroots local actors (e.g. rural community groups). This will examine the role of individual private actors not only as users of knowledge but also as producers and disseminators of knowledge, through various formal and informal means. This stage of the research will comprise an overview, mapping and documentation of grassroots initiatives drawing on key informant interviews and document analysis, the construction of a typology of initiatives and development of a selection matrix from which 4-6 initiatives will be identified for further study, and the in-depth analysis of these 4-6 initiatives through individual and group interviews and document analysis. The examples will include initiatives specifically aimed at capacity-building, but will also include other initiatives addressing regional development problems (e.g. provision of community transport in Ireland), examined to explore the circulation and application of knowledge and learning. At least one selected initiative in each region will have an explicit gender dimension

to its work and consideration of gender issues and the gender balance of participation will be explored for all the selected initiatives.

In Deliverable 4.3, the third stage of the research will be presented. In this research step we will collate and compare findings across the case studies, identify examples of good practice, and formulate policy advice on how to support regional learning and innovation. Throughout WP4 particular attention will be paid to gender issues and to initiatives aimed at addressing gender inequalities. This will include specific analysis of the treatment of gender issues within regional development strategies aimed at capacity-building and innovation; and of the involvement of men and women in the initiatives studied.

1.2 Outline content of D 4.1

In the following chapter, we review literature on capacity building, social learning and governance with regard to rural regional learning and innovation. We will then present a (revised) conceptual framework that is used to frame and investigate the governance of rural regional learning and innovation in our six case study areas. We will close the chapter with an outline of methodological implications. In chapters three to eight, results of the investigations carried out in research step one in the respective case study areas are summarised. In chapter 9, the research results of the respective case study areas will be compared and the findings summarised.

2 GOVERNANCE OF RURAL REGIONAL LEARNING AND INNOVATION

In this chapter, we review literature on capacity building, social learning and governance and proceed to introduce our (revised) conceptual framework that will be used to frame and investigate the governance of rural regional learning and innovation in six case study areas. The chapter will conclude with some methodological implications to operationalise the revised conceptual framework.

2.1 Towards a conceptual framework of the governance of rural regional learning and innovation[2]

Knowledge-based economies are argued to be dependent on successfully implemented regional learning strategies (Lawson and Lorenz, 1999). These are meant to ensure a leading role in the globalising economy though creating innovations by facilitating a rapid exchange of new scientific, tacit, regionally embedded knowledge and human capital (Lawson and Lorenz, 1999). Following the triple helix thesis (Etzkowitz, 2003), successful regional learning strategies require a close collaboration between the industry, university and government, which is facilitated through spatial proximity (Asheim, 1996).
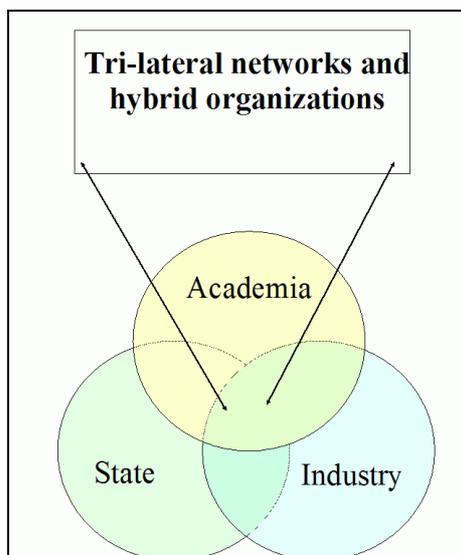
Figure 2-1 The triple helix thesis (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000)

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[2] This section is based on papers presented at the ESRS 2009 conference in Vaasa and the IFSA 2010 conference in Vienna (Wellbrock, Roep and Wiskerke 2009;2010)

As outlined in figure 2.1, although all elements have clearly defined roles- the industry, for example, is associated with the site of production, universities act as sources of new knowledge and human capital and the government ensures stable and contractual relationships- they interact with each other similar to the DNA strings of a triple helix (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000). Regional learning processes have thus been argued to take place in spatially clustered 'learning regions (Storper, 1993, Rutten and Boekema, 2007), defined as "[the space where] *regional actors engage in collaboration and coordination for mutual benefit, resulting in a process of regional learning. Regional characteristics affect the degree to which the process of regional learning leads to regional renewal*" (Rutten and Boekema, 2007 p.136). There are two interpretations of learning regions:

The first interpretation is concerned with knowledge spill-over and volarization of knowledge from universities towards industries in order to commercialise it into innovative products (Morgan, 1997, Storper, 1993). In this regard, the role of Cambridge University in creating competitive advantages for regional businesses in Cambridge (Keeble et al., 1999) or the knowledge transfer between Stanford University and the science park of Silicon Valley, California (Rutten and Boekema, 2007) have been studied. This focus has also influenced the formulation of many regional (and to some extend rural) development policies, attempting to copy-paste the 'Silicon Valley' example (Gustavsen and Ennals, 2007). Accordingly, Cooke (2007) argues that 'learning regions' do not deal with learning but with transforming new scientific expertise into commercial goods.

This interpretation has received much criticism, amongst others from Wolfe & Gertler (2002) who argue that the development of skills and capacities within regions is crucial for understanding and using new, scientific knowledge that can lead to a successful competition in the globalising economy. Consequently, Wolfe and Gertler (2002) argue that knowledge-economies should be referred to as 'learning economies' and that the key to success does not lie in knowledge spill-over and volarisation but in providing firms with the abilities to develop skills and capacities to filter and use new, scientific knowledge to their competitive advantage. There are also policies that follow this interpretation of 'learning regions', as for example the 'Lernende Regionen' concept in Germany, Austria and other European countries.

Importantly, in both cases, the term 'region' does not refer to administrative units but it frames the boundaries around different actors with shared problems or interested (Nyhan, 2007). Accordingly, a learning 'region' can even cross administrative boundaries within and between countries and is usually smaller than an administrative unit to account for the spatial proximity of the actors involved (Gustavsen and Ennals, 2007, Nyhan, 2007).

2.1.1   How can learning regions contribute to rural development?

So far, the focus of learning regions has been on the production and transfer of new, scientific knowledge and human capital within high-tech, science, media, communication and information industry (Woods, 2009). With regard to this, the learning region seems to have been considered as a normative concept with guaranteed success for industrial areas if replicated (although practise has shown otherwise).

However, to become a competitor in the global economy, also requires rural regions to be innovative and to have a strong support system for innovation, including structures that facilitate knowledge transfer between research, education and the industry (Crevoisier and Jeannerat, 2009, Doloreux, 2003, Doloreux, 2004, Skuras et al., 2005). At the same time, however, in rural regions local and lay knowledge is also important, for instance, to encourage novelty production and to develop endogeneity (Ploeg and Marsden, 2008) or to secure the enrolment of local resources in global networks by using knowledge about local markets, cultural preferences and sustainable resource management (Jasanoff and Martello, 2004, Skuras et al., 2005, Woods, 2007).

Furthermore, rural regions and -consequently- rural economies are highly diverse. Some rural regions are referred to as "cold-spots" of development and are often faced with problems such as becoming interchangeable and losing their regional identity in the globalising economy (Wiskerke, 2007). The consequences are perceptible in multiple ways. For example, economic and non-economic activities become spatially disentwined (Wiskerke, 2007). Inhabitants feel less connected to their living area and are less interested in investing time and capital in sustaining the liveability of their rural habitat. Furthermore, possibilities for inhabitants to seek attractive employment opportunities in disadvantaged rural

regions are small, forcing them to leave their areas in search for job opportunities (Stockdale, 2006). In this regard, it was argued that highly educated persons are often the first to leave, causing a so called "brain-drain". Left are rural areas with low potentials to develop and a lack of opportunities to participate in the globalising market (Stockdale, 2006). Other rural regions are performing well in seizing opportunities arising from globalisation and are thus referred to as "hot-spots" of development (Wiskerke, 2007). These regions are often characterised by population and economic growth (Terluin, 2003). In both cases, however, it is argued that in order to enhance rural economies, producers and consumers need to be reconnected within the region, products need to be re-embedded in the region, economic activities diversified and non-economic and economic activities entwined (Wiskerke, 2007).

Development in rural regions is thus made up of a complex set of interactions between different actors and processes (Roep et al., 2009). Furthermore, the type of knowledge and human capital that is needed to facilitate and support innovative rural development activities depends, for instance, on cultural, social, economical and governmental differences. In contrast to industrial areas, the type of institutional arrangements needed to support regional learning and innovation can therefore differ between different locations, goods and services and each rural area may show a unique dynamic (Roep et al., 2009). On the same lines, Tovey (2008) argues that regional learning and innovation processes in rural regions are highly context dependent and problem specific. Processes contributing to the quality and vitality of rural areas can thus be of natural, social and technical value (Roep et al., 2009). Furthermore, development processes co-evolve in rural regions with social, economic and ecological processes (Stagl, 2006).

It has thus been questioned whether the current normative focus of learning region concepts can account for the diversity of rural regional learning and innovation processes in rural regions (Tovey, 2008). It has been argued that rural development processes do not only require technological, expert knowledge but at the same time indigenous knowledge about local places and locally-embedded resources (Tovey, 2008). Studying rural regional learning therefore requires a shift from focussing on forms of knowledge towards focussing on knowledge processes, exploring dimensions of knowledge building, collaborative

social learning and the re-emdedding of knowledge (Bruckmeier and Tovey, 2008). The current focus of regional learning and innovation processes on scientific, technological expert knowledge must therefore be challenged (Dargan and Shucksmith, 2008, Doloreux, 2003, Terluin, 2003).

In response to this criticism, we want to extend the concept of regional learning to learning and innovation activities related to rural regional development. The current conceptual frameworks will be revised in such way that it can be used in describe, analyse and evaluate rural regional learning and innovation support and facilitation strategies operational. Account will be taken of a) the diversity of activities contributing to the development or rural regions, b) the variety and number of different actors and processes involved in rural regional learning and innovation and c) the different types of knowledge needed as a result of the different activities. To revise the existing conceptual frameworks, the following research questions will be considered:

1. What is the strategic backbone of successful learning regions?

2. What features characterise the revised conceptual framework that allows the researcher to first describe and analyse the support and facilitation of rural regional learning and innovation processes operational in a rural region and subsequently evaluate if the support and facilitation is arranged effectively?

3. How can the conceptual frameworks be revised in such a way that they can be used to describe, analyse and evaluate different governance styles of rural regional learning and innovation systematically so that the results can be compared in and across different rural regions?

2.1.2 Strategic backbone of a learning region

The strategic backbone of successful learning regions is the establishment of effective, co-operative and operational partnerships between those actors of industry, universities and government who are able to jointly support and facilitate learning and innovation processes (Asheim, 2007, Florida, 1995). Since the introduction of rural development into the European CAP, partnerships have also become an increasingly common mean to govern rural regional development processes (Derkzen, 2008). So far, however, the governance of rural regional

learning and innovation processes in rural development has not been given attention.

Partnerships are based on agreements in which negotiated goals, values, norms, behaviours- hence a code of conduct- are manifested. Codes of conduct, norms and values are referred to as institutions: "[Institutions are] *a set of common habits, routines, established practises, rules or laws that regulate the relations and interactions between individuals and groups*" (Edquist and Johnson, p.4 as cited in Wolfe and Gertler (2002)). The success of regional learning and innovation processes is therefore highly dependent on the quality of established institutional arrangements and their operationalisation. Instead of focussing on the commercialisation of knowledge and human capital, the key focus of the revised framework will be the (re)establishment of institutional arrangements and their operationalisation.

The process of (re)establishing and operationalising arrangements involves negotiations of different expectations and interests and requires compromises of the different partners involved in order to come to a mutual agreement on what and how to work together with regard to development of their shared territory or region. This process of coming to an mutual understanding and agreements in more or less formal partnerships regarding the uptake of rural regional development involves both exchange and negotiations on meanings, objectives, stakes and strategies as well as (social) learning among the participating actors. This ongoing process of negotiation and learning results in partnerships dedicated to certain joint activities, in jointly built social or collective capacities, in the course of which individual capacities are raised as well, and in general of new or renewed institutional arrangements. This process is also referred to as institutional learning (synonym for institutional reflexivity) as it requires the ability to reflect on existing shared ways of doing and thinking or prevailing institutions (Wolfe and Gertler, 2002). The importance of institutions and institutional renewal or innovation has been acknowledged by early scholars in sociology and economy incorporating an institutional perspective. According to Gertler (2010), Storper and Morgan were the first to highlight the importance of institutions in the field of economic geography and emphasised the importance of talk and discussions in the process of coming to institutional agreements and governing regional learning processes.

During institutional learning, actors reflect on their codes of conduct and change them accordingly. Institutional learning is therefore referred to as a learning-by-learning process (Wolfe and Gertler, 2002). Considering the high diversity of activities that contribute to rural development today (Roep et al., 2009), one can argue that changes in institutional arrangements are vital and must occur frequently. The focus of the revised conceptual framework is therefore on the learning-by-learning process through which institutional arrangements are (re)established and operationalised.

This learning-by-learning process is based on discussions and negotiations amongst actors who have established and/ or are supporting and facilitating regional learning and innovation processes according to certain institutionalised codes of conduct (Wolfe and Gertler, 2002). These learning-by-learning processes can therefore not be understood as formal learning settings with a sender and a receiver but they are informal, interactive, social, learning-by-doing processes (Asheim, 2007, Glasser, 2007, Roep et al., 2009). According to Nyhan (2007), the learning region that embraces this kind of regional learning and innovation processes is a learning region with emphasis on situational, informal and collective learning processes that leads to innovation and institutional change. Although social learning-by-doing processes are at the centre of attention, education and research and training facilities are still key nodes in the mediation processes, therefore taking an important role through engaging the supporting and facilitating of learning and innovation processes (Nyhan, 2007). Education, training and research facilities are thus regarded as "spiders in the web", able to engage actively in facilitating and supporting learning regions (Nyhan, 2007). The focus of the revised conceptual framework is therefore on the underlying interactive, social learning process that leads to a questioning of thoughts and assumptions behind actions and decisions taken and providing the basis for seeking alternative action, decision modes, mutual understanding and shared conventions (Tilbury, 2007).

2.1.3   *A revised conceptual framework*
Following up on the previous discussion, we will revise the existing conceptual frameworks in such way that they can account for a) the diversity of activities

contributing to the development of rural areas b) the variety and number of different actors and processes involved in rural regional learning and c) the different types of knowledge needed as a result of the different activities. Furthermore, the main focus of our revised conceptual framework is the institutional arrangements made between actors of different helix strings and the learning processes they are engaged in.

Institutional arrangements between partners of different helix strings are formed in so-called operational interfaces (Etzkowitz, 2003). Interfaces can be defined as "*critical focal points (in systems which act) as channels for dialogue and cooperation, enabling people to learn together and from one another*" (Nyhan, 2007). In order to study the process of (re)establishing institutional arrangements in the rural development context, we need to focus on these operational interfaces. Central to the revised conceptual framework as outlined in figure 2 are therefore the interconnections (i.e. institutional arrangements) made between the actors of the different strings (we term them pillars since they represent the backbones of a learning region skeleton) involved in a learning region. These are depicted as arrows a-c in figure 2.2.
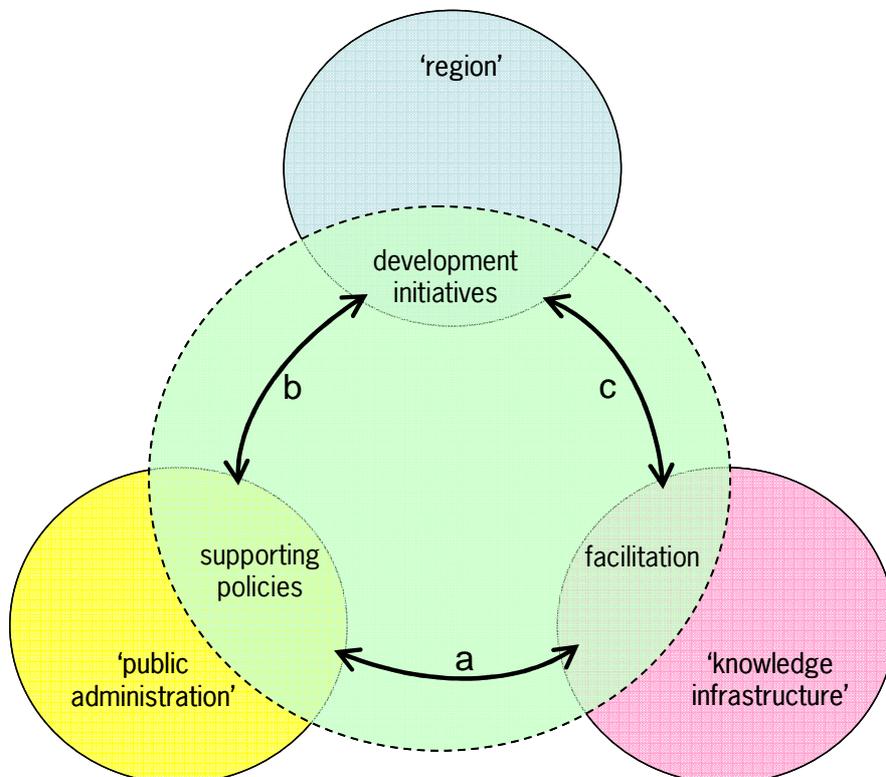
Figure 2-2 Governance of rural regional learning and innovation: a conceptual framework

Furthermore, following Roep et al. (2009), the pillars of the revised conceptual framework must be able to account for the wide range of actors and activities contributing to rural renewal processes. Relevant actors that are involved in rural development processes and hence need to be addressed by rural regional learning and innovation processes include, for example, citizens, municipalities and administrative functions, entrepreneurs, politicians as well as knowledge specialists. As illustrated in figure 2.3 these different actors all operate within an "arena" and their actions jointly contribute to the development of a particular rural region (Roep et al., 2009).

versatile and vital countryside   *development (of area)*

↑   ↑
diversity of practices   ↓
various actors & all sorts of processes   *arena*
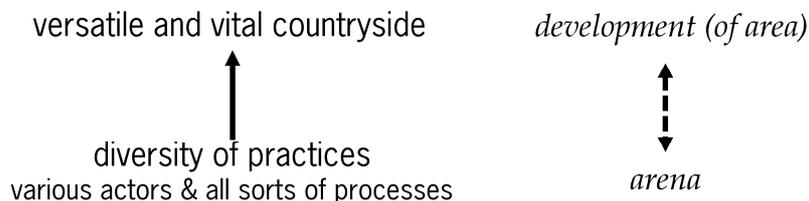
Figure 2-3 Diverse actors and processes engaging in rural regional development (Source: Roep et al. 2009)

Following this thought, the different actors and their actions are connected through a shared problem or interest concerning a certain rural region. The string 'industry' of the triple helix thesis (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000), should therefore be replaced by a term that encompasses the activities of a wide range of actors in rural development processes. Following Nyhan (2007), the pillar referring to actors and activities contributing to rural development will be termed 'region', being defining the region as an arena which comprises different actors with shared interest and problems.

As stated by Nyhan (2007), education and training facilities are consider being the "spider" in the web of supporting and facilitating rural regional learning and innovation processes. Arguably, education and training- as well as research- cannot only be provided by universities as the triple helix thesis (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000) suggests. Education, training and research is also carried out by other public and private education facilities, as well as private consultancy services. Instead of using the string 'university', the revised conceptual framework will include the pillar 'knowledge infrastructure' to be able to account

for the different kind of ways in which knowledge institutes can facilitate rural regional learning and innovation processes.

Finally, in the pillar 'public administration' the focus will be on regional learning policies and actors that implement these in order to facilitate necessary arrangements for regional rural learning processes in the rural region. In contrast to the element government in the triple helix thesis, the term public administration allows us to include a wider scope of actors able to formulate and implement policy objectives and instruments that are facilitating knowledge arrangements and hence governance of learning and innovation in the rural region.

The aim of the revised framework is to subsequently describe, analyse and evaluate the quality of institutional arrangements and their operationalisation that are meant to contribute to the development of rural regions through supporting and facilitating learning and innovation processes. Accordingly, the focus in each pillar will only be on those parts that are relevant for establishing the respective agreements between the pillars. In the pillar 'region' the focus is thus on various initiatives meant to develop the region, in the pillar 'knowledge infrastructure' on facilitation activities of learning and innovation and in the pillar 'public administration' on learning and innovation supporting policies. Finally, a learning region will emerge from the interfaces created between the learning and innovation of diverse actors in regional development initiatives, the way these are supported by policies and facilitated by the engagement of research, education and consultancy.

By taking account of the high diversity of actors involved in rural regional development processes and the various ways in which they can come to a joint agreement and form institutional arrangements and partnerships amongst each other, the revised conceptual framework will also be able to account for the various types of knowledge needed to support and facilitate rural regional development processes.

2.1.4   *Research methodology*

The conceptual framework on governance or rural regional learning and innovation presented will guide the research in the case study. The focus is on

the interfaces established between development activities in the region, rural regional development policies and public knowledge institutes (education, research and advice) and private agents and agencies. More specifically: how joint learning and innovation in various rural regional development activities initiated in networks of various regional actors is supported by policies and facilitated by the engagement of (public funded) research, education and advice. We will investigate and map how in varying partnerships the support and facilitation of joint learning and innovation in regional development networks is actually arranged and operationalised, whether this is rather informal or occasionally or if it has become a common practice sustained by formal agreements (i.e. being institutionalised), and how the arranged operational support and facilitation is actually evaluated by the initiators of regional development activities in the respective networks in close consultation with their supporters and facilitators. Next to a map of networks, partnerships and arrangements operational in a region, that can actually be situated in the playing field between the three pillars of the conceptual framework (a map reflecting the 'geography' of governance of regional learning and innovation in a region), this provides evidence on the operational quality of arrangements in the different case study areas: if they work effectively and how they can be further improved (lessons learned). Next the identification of good practices, this might also reveal failing arrangements or even a lack of proper (institutional) arrangements. A comparative analysis across the different case study areas will further enhance this.

Based on the presented framework on the governance of rural regional learning and innovation, a combination of descriptive, (comparative) analytical and evaluative research methods are applied more or less differentiated in three consecutive stages and specified in research tasks:

a) Mapping of learning and innovation supporting policies, facilities and grassroots initiatives

To begin with an overview is made of policy arrangements (schemes, measures, instruments) and (public-private) coalitions or partnerships that support rural regional development activities initiated in the case study area and more specifically policies that support joint learning and innovation in regional

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development networks: what development activities are supported and what activities or regional actors are willingly or not excluded or overlooked, the type of support and how the support is arranged. Secondly, the overview is made of the regional knowledge infrastructure, such as public funded schools, institues for higher education, universities and research institutes but also also non-governmental or private agencies or consultancies that are already engage in or potentially can facilitate joint learning and innovation in the case study area. The involvment in turn can learn more about about specific regional questions and the expertise and capacities needed to deal with and establishing a regional development programma. A structural involvement can be arranged as part of research or educational programs. Thirdly, an overview of current grassroots development activities will be generated with their aims, the initiators, the netowrks the are operating in and the support they get or need. Here, emphasis will be placed on those initiatives that aim to bring people together with a shared interest in rural regional development issues in order to facilitate learning and innovation for rural development. As argued in 2.1.3, this process is a joint, social learning process, where people with different interests in the region will need to approach each other and negotiate common development ground. Through sharing ideas and experiences, social learning is further promoted and the development process enhanced. Arguably, these kinds of development processes are promoted with initiatives such networks, organisations, associations and foundations that aim to bring people together with a shared interest in development issues of the region. How joint learning and innovation in these grassroot initiaves is supported and facilitated by regional policy and knowledge or learning arrangements is at the centre of the investigation. Such initiatives and their involved actors may be highly diverse and may include members of the agricultural sector, the industry sector, service sector or voluntary citizen initiatives.

Information on relevant grassroots development initiatives, actors and policies are collected through reviews of secondary data (e.g. policy reports, development reports, student reports, literature etc.) and by interviewing relevant stakeholders using semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews will later facilitate a comparative analysis across different case study areas.

b) Mapping and comparative analysis of operational partnerships and arrangements

The second research step will focus more in depth on identifying and describing operational institutional arrangements and partnerships between the different actors that are aimed at supporting rural regional learning and innovation processes. The type of actors involved and the aims of different institutional arrangements and partnerships will be described. Furthermore, the underlying codes of conducts shall be unravelled. Similar to research step one, data will be collected using secondary data (e.g. policy reports, development reports, student reports, literature, etc.) and by interviewing relevant stakeholders of different pillars using semi-structured interviews.

c) Interactive and comparative evaluation of operational arrangements

In the last research step, the quality of institutional arrangements and partnerships will be analysed and evaluated. To do so, it shall be investigated who is (not) included in the partnerships and why? For which rural initiatives is rural regional learning (not) facilitated and supported and why? How were the institutional arrangements established? What are the opinions about these by the different actors who established the institutional arrangements and those that have to act upon them? To deal with the last research step, focus groups with actors of different pillars involved in specific institutional arrangements and partnerships shall be formed and studied.

Data of all research steps will be of qualitative nature. In research step a) and b) data will be collected through documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. Data in research step c) will be gathered using focus group studies. The gathered data will be analysed through coding, categorising and interpretation methods.

The chosen research method will allow a comparative analysis and interactive evaluation of efforts to support and facilitate rural regional learning and innovation across different (and the same) case study regions (amongst others as part of the EU project DERREG). The revised framework will facilitate this analysis and evaluation by providing a map to locate problems and good

practises for governing rural regional learning and innovation in rural areas and by contributing actively to the learning-by-learning process. Furthermore, the chosen research method will provide various stakeholders involved in rural regional development the opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of operational arrangements within their region (lessons learned). This reflection will be facilitated on an individual level through semi-structured interviews and on a collective level through focus group participation. Finally, the chosen research methodology and conceptual framework will provide opportunities to evaluate and compare different modes of governance in rural regional learning and innovation across different rural regions, to identify good practices and recommendations how these practices can be tailored to fit the specific context of a region.

2.2 Methodological implications for D4.1

In the current report (D4.1) the findings are presented of the research done so far, mainly the findings of research task defined at a) and some preliminary findings of research tasks b). The investigations of the two first research tasks are not fully completed yet, but a first state-of-the art of the governance of rural regional learning and innovation in the different case study areas will be given. In this section the research methodology and techniques are shortly outlined.

2.2.1 Research Design

The research presented in D4.1 was carried out in two parts and dealt –in parts- with research tasks a) and b).

- In M4.1, we investigated the public administration pillar and documented and analysed <u>regional (public) policies to support regional capacity-building, learning and innovation (strategies, instruments)</u>.
- In M4.2, we focussed on available knowledge facilities and documented and analysed the <u>regional (supportive) infrastructure</u> for capacity building, learning and innovation: education, research and consultancy (agents and agencies). We further analysed <u>intra/extra regional networks of co-operating</u>

<u>public and private agents/agencies</u> involved in regional capacity-building, learning and innovation.

2.2.2 Research questions

In order to document and analyse <u>regional (public) policies to support regional capacity-building, learning and innovation (strategies, instruments)</u> (M4.1), the following research questions were considered:

- what kind of support is offered to which sectors and which actors?
- which fields of knowledge and sets of skills are prioritized?
- what is the extent of collaboration with local organisations in the formulation and implementation of these governmental strategies and initiatives?
- is gender-equality among the objectives and how is it operationalised?

To investigate available knowledge facilities and documented and analysed the <u>regional (supportive) infrastructure</u> for capacity building, learning and innovation: education, research and consultancy (agents and agencies) (M 4.2), we considered these questions:

- which fields of knowledge
- for which sectors
- directed towards which kind of actors

To analyse the <u>intra/extra regional networks of co-operating public and private agents/agencies involved in regional capacity-building, learning and innovation</u> (M4.2), the following research questions were considered:

- the extent and kind of cooperation between (public and/or private) agencies within the region
- the extent and kind of cooperation between (public and/or private) agencies between (neighbouring) regions
- the extent and kind of cooperation between (public and/or private) agencies across national borders
- the accessibility of supra-regional agencies for regional actors in which fields of knowledge for which sectors

2.2.3 Research method

In each case study area, the research was carried out by the respected project partners. In each milestone the research consisted of two parts, a document

analysis and semi-structured interviews. By using the same methodology and semi-structured interviews across all case study areas, a comparative data analysis was facilitated.

In M4.1, policy documents were inventoried to find documents and policy agendas relevant for supporting rural regional learning and innovation processes in the case study areas. Furthermore, 10-15 key informants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews (depending on size of the region, see Appendix II for interview guideline), to address the implementation processes of different policies and problems encountered in doing so.

In M4.2, we analysed secondary data (reports, studies, etc) and interviewed key informants using semi-structured interviews (see Appendix II for interview guideline) in order to describe different possibilities for knowledge facilities to get involved with rural development initiatives.

2.2.4   Data analysis

The results were complied and presented in a descriptive text. Interview results were used to add information to results obtained from secondary data and to deal with upcoming questions and needs for clarification. Afterwards, results of the different case study areas were compared and particularities in the findings noted.

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 'ALYTUS COUNTY (LT)', EMILIJA KAIRYTĖ

This chapter summarises the research findings in Alytus county. First, learning and innovation supporting policies and strategies, existing within current rural and regional development programming framework in Alytus county are analysed. Then examples of available rural regional learning and innovation support structures are presented. The chapter ends with a synthesis in which different operational interfaces (interconnections between the actors of different pillars, Figure 2-2) are highlighted by describing institutional arrangements and partnerships implemented in Alytus county.

3.1 Learning and innovation support policies and strategies

In M4.1, we considered policies which were formulated to support rural regional development initiatives in Alytus county. These policies frame the administrative and operational space for rural regional development by putting forward development objectives and suggesting strategies to meet these objectives by initiating and supporting rural regional development activities. In line with our aim to study rural regional learning, we focussed on strategies and policy measures that facilitate rural regional learning and innovation processes.

Lithuania and Alytus county are covered by EU cohesion policy objectives shown in box 3-1. Geographic eligibility of the region is based on it's statistical data.

LITHUANIA, THE WHOLE TERRITORY:
Cohesion Fund
Member States whose Gross National Income is lower than 90% of the EU average can benefit from Cohesion Fund.
Convergence objective
Regions at level 2 of the NUTS classification whose Gross Domestic Product per inhabitant is less than 75% of the Community average are eligible for funding under the Convergence objective.
LITHUANIA, ALYTUS COUNTY:
European territorial cooperation objective
- **Cross-border cooperation** addresses NUTS level 3 regions along all internal land borders and certain external land borders and all NUTS level 3 regions along maritime borders separated by a maximum distance of 150km.
- **Transnational cooperation**: the list was adopted by the Commission in its decision of 31 October 2006
- **Interregional cooperation**: all regions in Europe are eligible.
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/region/index_en.htm

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Box 3-1 Geographical eligibility for structural support (A, LT)

EU structural assistance for Lithuania for the period 2007-2013 is allocated in accordance with National general strategy: the Lithuanian Strategy for the use of European Union Structural Assistance for 2007-2013 and with four operational programs for implementation of this strategy. Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources for 2007–2013 is dedicated to mobilization of all employable Lithuanian citizens, since investments to knowledge, competence, activity and enterprise of people of Lithuania ensures long term economical growth. 13.8% of EU structural funds are allocated to this program (European Social Fund). The largest part of funds – 45.72% - is allocated to Operational programme for the Economical Growth for 2007–2013. 10% are allocated to scientific researches and technological development of competitiveness and growth of economy (European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund). Operational Programme for Promotion of Cohesion for 2007–2013 should embody a vision of more harmonious society. For improvement of environment and quality of residency, by minimizing differences between separate regions, it is allocated 39.08% of total funds from EU structural assistance for the period 2007-2013 (European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund). Technical assistance Operational Programme for 2007–2013 – is a special program for administration of thematic programs of actions. 1.4% of EU structural funds are allocated for this programme (European Social Fund).

(i) National programmes:

Operational Programme 'Development of Human Resources'

Operational Programme 'Economic Growth'

Operational Programme 'Promotion of Cohesion'

Operational Programme 'Technical Assistance'

(ii) Cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation:

Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013

Operational Programme 'South Baltic'

Operational Programme 'Lithuania – Poland'

Operational Programme 'Latvia - Lithuania'

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/prordn/index_en.cfm

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Box 3-2 Operational Programmes 2007-2013 (LT)

Box 3-2 shows Lithuanian operational programmes adopted by the European Commission. The programmes present the priorities selected by the national and regional authorities for the programme period in effect (2007-2013). They are

financed by the **European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund** and **Cohesion Fund**. According to chief specialist of Regional Development Department, Governor Administration of Alytus County Irena Ivanauskienė, Alytus county is a participant of three European Territorial Cooperation Objective programmes: **Lithuanian – Polish Cross-border Cooperation Programme, Baltic Sea Region 2007-2013 Transnational Cooperation Programme** and **Interregional Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVC,** project "Evaluative Review of Sustainable Eco-regions in Europe PRESERVE". Alytus county is also participating in **Poland - Lithuania - Russian Federation European Neighbourhood and Partnership Measure Cross-border Cooperation Programme** and **European Economic Space and Norway Support programme**.

From our WP 'Capacity Building, Governance and Knowledge Systems' perspective it is also interesting to look at ESF programme priorities (box 3-3). The European Social Fund in Lithuania focuses on ensuring high-quality employment and social inclusion, promoting lifelong learning, increasing the capacity of researchers and boosting the efficiency of public administration.

The Lithuanian ESF programme aims to address quality labour force shortages by mobilising available human resources and upgrading skills and qualifications. This includes investment in the neediest sections of society: people in areas of high unemployment and those who have been out of work for over a year. Helping workers adapt to new market conditions by providing tailored training schemes is therefore key – as is improving the quality and accessibility of this training. Lithuania is also looking to exploit the high end of the employment market, investing more money in research and development and science professionals, as well as attracting more young graduates to the field and boosting their mobility. Investing in young experts, while encouraging an international outlook, is crucial to keeping them in the country and helping them put Lithuania on the map. It is seen as a key way to beat the 'brain drain' effect.

In addition, the programme aims to improve Lithuania's civil service, increasing administrative efficiency, while cutting red tape so as to help business grow without hindrance. More public-private partnerships are also on the agenda, as well as

improving capacity to implement the EU acquis and programmes. Box 3-3 presents ESF priority areas chosen in Lithuania.

<div style="border:1px solid black; background-color:#d0d0d0; padding:10px;">

Operational programme: Development of Human Resources

Priority 1. Quality employment and social inclusion
ESF Priority Area:
  Integrating disadvantaged people into employment
  Increasing migrants' participation in employment
  Developing lifelong learning
Priority 2. Lifelong learning
ESF Priority Area:
  Developing lifelong learning
Priority 3. Strengthening researchers abilities
ESF Priority Area:
  Developing human potential in research and development
Priority 4. Fostering administrative competences and increasing efficiency of public administration
ESF Priority Area:
  Improving institutional capacity
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/esf_projects_117/result.cfm

</div>

Box 3-3 EFS priorities in Lithuania

Partnership, international cooperation, (the sharing of information, good practices and people, joint inter-institutional actions) and promotion of innovations are used as horizontal principles in implementing activities of the priorities when the application of these principles is an efficient way of achieving the set goals.

Alytus, Lazdijai, druskininkai and Varėna Labour Exchange Offices are actively implementing ESF financed projects in Alytus county.

Actors and policies that influence the design and implementation of policy objectives related to regional learning in Alytus county can be categorized into five governmental levels: the European Union, the state (Government of the Republic of Lithuania), the region (Governor Administration of Alytus County), municipalities and lastly the smallest administrative level seniūnijos. It is important to note that Lithuania represents NUTS 2 administrative level and is considered as one region from the EU policy perspective.

Our case study region Alytus county is one of the 10 Lithuanian counties (NUTS 3) situated in the South of the country, bordering two neighbouring countries – Poland and Belarus. Alytus county is comprised of 5 municipalities (NUTS 4) – one city municipality and four district municipalities. Figure 3-1 presents rural and regional development representatives and policies in public administration.
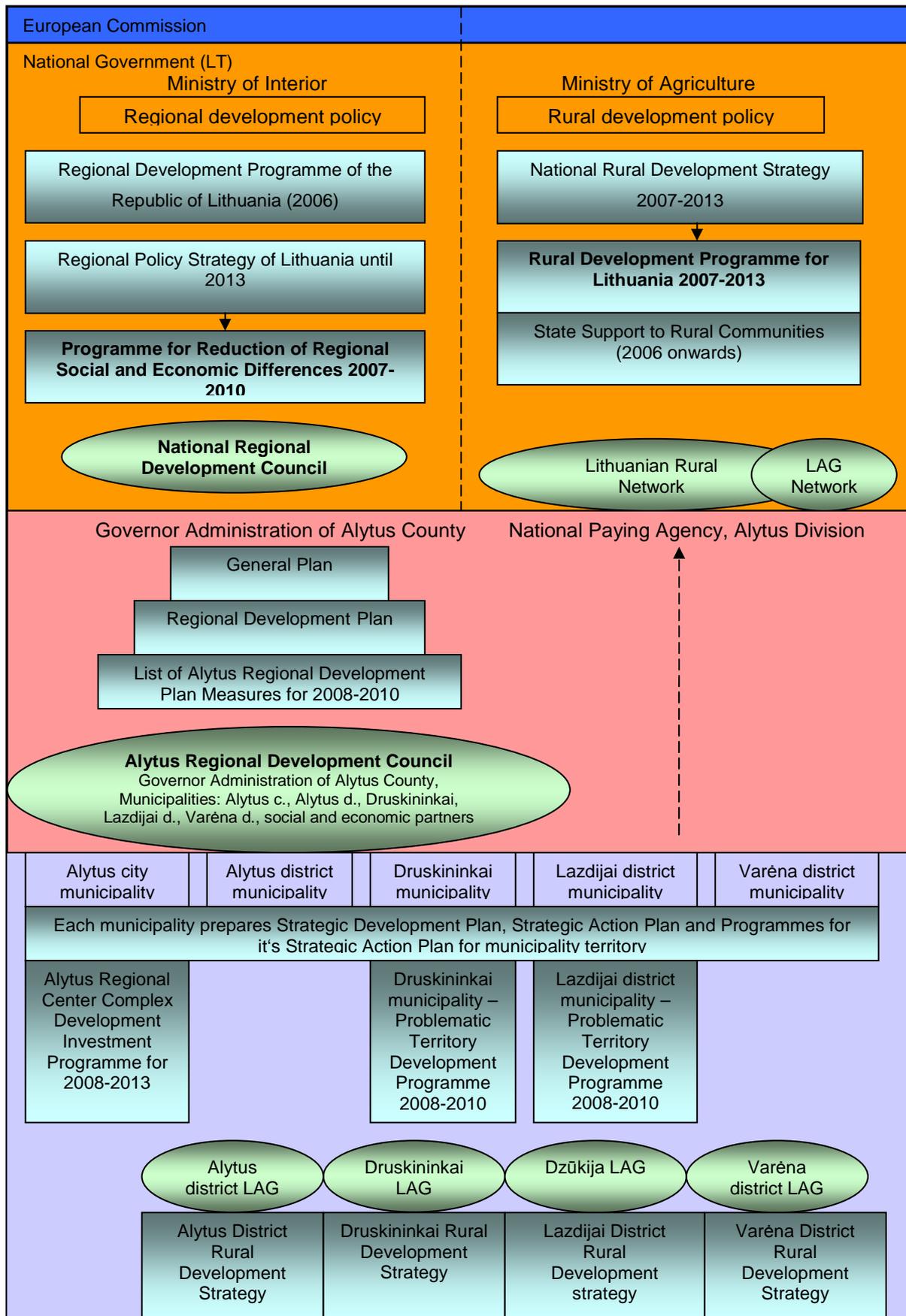
Figure 3-1 Relevant representatives and policies in public administration (LT)

Strategic goal of Lithuania's regional policy until 2013 is to improve territorial social cohesion. The strategy suggests that 5 regional centres surrounded by the territories of low living standards, which, due to their economic potential may perform the functions of regional growth centres, namely Alytus, Marijampolė, Utena, Tauragė and Telšiai, with integrated surrounding territories would be developed by 2013 (Alytus Regional Center Complex Development Investment Programme for 2008-2013). Besides this it is aimed to improve quality of life in 14 problematic municipalities (with worst social development indicators) of the country through implementation of Problematic Territory Development Programmes. Such municipalities in Alytus county are Druskininkai and Lazdijai district (box 3-4).

Druskininkai municipality and Lazdijai district municipality
Problematic Territory Development Programmes
Problematic territory development strategic objective – to ensure quality of life close to national average, i.e. to achieve that in these municipalities by 2010:
1. average annual proportion of registered unemployed and employable age population would not be higher than 50 pct of national average;
2. average annual proportion of social allowance receivers and other population would not be higher than 50 pct of national average.
Problematic territory development tasks are:
1. in a complex way to develop urbanistic infrastructure and to increase attractiveness of living environment;
2. to renovate blocks of flats and to develop social accommodation;
3. in a complex way to develop infrastructure of inhabited rural localities;
4. to promote local community initiatives;
5. to develop social infrastructure;
6. to subsidize establishment of workplaces, to give special attention to the long term unemployment problem solutions;
7. to improve administrative capacities of municipality administration officers and workers.
http://www.vrm.lt/nrp/index.php?id=163

Box 3-4 Problematic Territory Development Programmes

In box 3-4 we can see that problematic territory development tasks include support to local community initiatives, development of social infrastructure by renovation/adaptation of public objects for the local community needs and similar. Thus it incorporates regional learning element in municipality level regional development.

As already pointed out in the boxes above, major Lithuanian regional development policy programmes are: Operational Programme for Promotion of Cohesion for 2007–2013, Regional Development Programme of the Republic of Lithuania (2006), Programme for Reduction of Regional Social and Economic

Differences 2007-2010 and Regional Development Plans. The vision of the **Operational Programme for Promotion of Cohesion** is a more integrated Lithuanian society which, irrespective of place of residence, is surrounded by a similar environment and quality of life. Implementation of the vision defined above will be pursued via these main aims of the Operational Programme for Promotion of Cohesion:

1. To provide all conditions necessary for strengthening and revealing local development potential.

2. To ensure available and high-quality essential public services of health care, education, institutions implementing state employment policy, out-patient social services and services to the disabled.

3. To pursue better environmental quality by giving special attention to increasing efficiency of using energy.

The vision covers both economic and social aspects of cohesion. Economic cohesion is directed towards reduction of economic differences in the development of the country both between separate territories and within them, whereas social cohesion means the need to ensure that the residents of Lithuania would feel a part of one society and separate social layers of the society would share the benefit provided by economic growth.

The aim of **Regional Development Programme of the Republic of Lithuania** is to create favourable conditions for implementation of national regional policy. The tasks are:

- to provide conditions for improvement of regional development planning system in the Republic of Lithuania;
- to create possibilities for regions and municipalities to receive EU structural support for projects, which are implemented as part of the regional development plans and comply with measures of EU support programming documents for 2007-2013;
- to support international collaboration in the field of regional development.

The purpose of the **Programme for Reduction of Regional Social and Economic Differences 2007-2010** is to create conditions for implementation of purposeful national regional policy in Lithuania. It includes two objectives. First objective is to create conditions for increase of territorial social cohesion between the regions and within them and second objective is to increase

integration of urban and rural inhabited localities. Despite the programme is directed to development of all the regions in Lithuania, biggest attention is given to development of 7 Regional centers (including Alytus) and 14 Problematic territories (figure 3-1, box 3-4).

In Lithuania national regional policy is implemented and regional development planning is done in counties through regional development plans (Box 3-5).

Alytus Regional Development Plan 2008-2010 priorities and objectives:
I PRIORITY: GROWING ECONOMICS
1.1. OBJECTIVE: Improvement of business and investment environment
1.1.1. Task: To create favourable conditions for business modernization and development
1.1.2. Task: To improve quality of public service provision to business
1.1.3. Task: To promote links and collaboration of science and business organizations
1.2. OBJECTIVE: Enlargement of tourism potential
1.2.1. Task: To develop tourism infrastructure and recreational territories
1.2.2. Task: To ensure conditions for tourism development in Alytus region
1.2.3. Task: To develop tourism marketing and information dissemination
1.3. OBJECTIVE: Sustainable development of modern countryside
1.3.1. Task: To develop and update rural infrastructure
1.3.2. Task: To stimulate initiatives of rural communities
1.3.3. Task: To improve quality of life in rural countryside, through promotion of economic activity diversification
II PRIORITY: HEALTHY AND COMPETITIVE SOCIETY
2.1. OBJECTIVE: Improvement of education quality and accessibility
2.2. OBJECTIVE: Health and social services quality and accessibility improvement
2.3. OBJECTIVE: Improvement of labour competence in order to achieve labour market needs
2.4. OBJECTIVE: Development of culture and sport infrastructure and services
III PRIORITETY: SAFE AND CONVENIENT TO LIVE ENVIRONMENT
3.1. OBJECTIVE: Improvement of communication infrastructure and living environment conditions
3.2. OBJECTIVE: Electricity, heating and gas economy modernization
3.3. OBJECTIVE: Improvement of environment infrastructure (modernization of drinking water supply, sewerage, waste management systems)
3.4. OBJECTIVE: Sustainable territorial management and development.

Box 3-5 Alytus County Regional Development Plan

Policy objectives formulated at higher governmental level, including those related to learning and innovation here are reformulated and specified in Alytus county regional development plan. For regional learning and innovation particulary interesting are measures 1.1.3 and 1.3.2 and projects under these measures, which can be analysed further in the next steps of this study.

Strategic Lithuanian rural development goal is to ensure growth through improving the competitiveness of agrifood and forestry sectors as well as creating possibilities for diversification of economic activities and improving the quality of life in rural areas meanwhile enhancing the human, environmental and other countryside values and reducing disparities between rural and urban areas

as well as separate regions (RDP 2007-2013). The overall objectives were chosen in accordance with the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) and the National Strategy Plan and are:

- To develop modern and competitive agri-food and forestry sectors,
- To improve environment and landscape *to stop decline of biodiversity* through rational use of land resources and promotion of sustainable development of agriculture and forestry,
- To improve the quality of life and increase the employment of rural population in rural areas,
- To promote rural development through local initiatives and partnership.

Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 is prepared for the Republic of Lithuania and covers the entire territory of the country. National Paying Agency and its divisions in counties administrate rural development support and facilitate implementation of RDP (**European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development**).

In the Rural Development Programme implementing the National Strategy horizontal priority criteria will be applied during the actual project selection processes. Between these criteria there are some supporting rural regional learning and innovation – priority for: implementation of innovations; joined, cooperative initiatives (including producer groups); improving marketing and production of high value added products; increasing broadband coverage in rural areas; activities benefiting the environment (including protection of biodiversity, well-balanced water supply and production of the energy by sustainable usage of renewal energy resources); actions creating new working places, additional income sources with a special focus on the regions lagging behind; diversification of activities in the less favoured areas as well as less economically developed regions; actions strengthening human capital in rural areas; actions promoting local initiatives; actions strengthening the business development skills and abilities.

From our WP 'Capacity building, governance and knowledge systems" perspective, particularly interesting are RDP measures under Axes 3 and 4. In Lithuanian RDP the implementation of the local development strategies is linked to all the measures under axis 3 on improving quality of life in rural areas. LAGs

are able to provide in their local development strategies all the measures from the list of measures of axis 3. Moreover, LAGs have possibility to envisage new measures targeted at achieving axis 3 objectives which are not provided in the Rural Development Programme. The LEADER approach might be extended to include additional measures under other axes during the programme period, when more experiences and lessons learned have been collected (RDP 2007-2013).

The overall Axis III objective - *'to improve the quality of life and increase the employment of rural population in rural areas'*. The objective will be reached through implementation of the formulated main priorities addressing the following key problems identified for Axis III:
1. Low income and lack of sources of income (overdependence on agriculture)
2. Insufficient social and physical infrastructure
3. Need to preserve rural heritage

The following priorities are set for the actions to be financed under Axis III and Leader:

Priority III.1: Creation of alternative jobs and income sources **(**75,83 pct. of Axis III and Leader)

Priority III.2: Improvement of social and physical infrastructure, protection and enhancement of rural heritage **(**24,17 pct. of Axis III and Leader)

Measures implementing priority III.1:

III.1.1. Diversification of economic activities

III.1.2. Support for business creation and development

III.1.3. Encouragement of rural tourism activities

III.1.4 Implementation of local development strategies (designed to achieve the aims of Axis 3)

Measures implementing priority III.2:

III.2. Village renewal and development (including sub-measure "Development of broadband network infrastructure in rural areas")

The overall objective for the *LEADER* is *'to promote rural development through local initiatives and partnership'.*

The Priority will address the following key problems:

1. Lack of local governance, trust and partnership between municipalities and rural communities,

2. Lack of necessary capacities at local level,

3. Lack of financial sources to run local organizations,

4. Insufficient experience of preparing applications and developing projects

5. Insufficient abilities to use advanced IT technologies.

The following priority has been defined for the *LEADER* approach:

Priority IV.1: Promotion of local initiatives and cooperation, development of human capacities in order to develop and successfully implement local development strategies (100 pct. of Axis IV)

Measures implementing priority IV:

IV.1.1. Implementation of local development strategies

IV.1.2. Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation

IV.1.3. Support for running the local action groups, acquiring of skills and animating the inhabitants of LAGs territories

Rural Development Programme for Lithuania 2007-2013

Box 3-6 Axis III and IV: The Quality of Life in Rural Areas and Diversification of the Rural Economy and LEADER (LT)

Similarly like in agendas of different governmental levels objectives in Rural Development Programme are operationalized from broad to very specific ones at particular measure level (box 3-6).

3.2 Learning and innovation support structure (facilities)

In M4.2, we reviewed the availability of support structures (facilities) for rural regional learning and innovation processes in Alytus County. There are various potential support facilities for rural regional learning and innovation in Alytus county in forms of education facilities, research facilities, consultancy services and advice bureaus, information centres, project development agencies, business incubators, associations. It is not possible to name all available support facilities, so instead we present an example list of them in order to see the various types of facilities and forms of (potential) regional learning and innovation support. Since Alytus county is quite a big region (5 425 sq km, 182 851 inhabitants), we tried to focus on knowledge institutes within the region, in order to get a snapshot of internal regional learning process. The findings are summarized in the Box 3-7.

Alytus College, Merkinės Str. 2B, Alytus

In the three faculties of Management, Technologies and ICT the students develop academic and professional competences in the study fields of Management and Business Administration, Informatics, Informatics Engineering, Transport Engineering and Civil Engineering. The College is involved in the life of regional business society, through active participation in regional science application activities and research development, fostering the community skills of working under the conditions of rapid change of technologies. The Business Incubator provides the students with excellent premises for development of their practical skills. Alytus College co-operates with foreign institutions of higher education, business and education associations and businesses, it also works on science application in the study areas of social sciences, technological sciences, humanities and physical sciences fostering curriculum development, adult education and distance learning.

In terms of international relations Alytus College develops co-operation with its international networks as well as research and development programmes creating favourable conditions for innovations (taking part in the LLP/ERASMUS, GRUNDTVIG, LEONARDO DA VINCI, INTERREG IIIA, PHARE SIDA, and few more programmes).
http://www.akolegija.lt/

Alytus Business Advisory Center S.Dariaus ir S.Girėno str. 2, Alytus

Center's mission **-** to promote and develop small and medium-sized businesses, providing business training, counselling, information, new business development initiatives in the development and implementation of development co-operation networks in Alytus region. ABAC is a participant creating a regional development strategy for Alytus regional, international development cooperation in regional development with the Swedish Jonkompingo county, Polish, Danish, Hungarian, Italian regional institutions, business development agencies existing in Lithuania, initiator of the municipalities and associated structures in Alytus district, founder of the Association of Entrepreneurs in Alytus region (in 1995), founder of the Association of Alytus Regional Accountants (2007 10 24).

ABAC **-** initiator of the Mutual Assistance and Cooperation Network (2005 06 01) between organizations of training / business enterprises/business support and employment institutions. To develop the collaboration is created the informational portal www.medienospartneriai.lt (wood partners). The development of "Mutual assistance and cooperation network", implementation of the wood cluster model „knowledge - competence - product" have also related to the development perspectives of Alytus city, introducing the new training programs, adapted for the needs of the market, created of new competencies and new product quality.

Center provides the following services:

- Business training: starting a business, planning, marketing, management, business accounting standards, finance;

- Organization of seminars on issues of business: finance, accounting, tax, labour law and occupational safety, corporate law issues;

- Establishment of companies, restructuring, reorganization of legal documents and projects;

- Enterprise business rules, clerical documents, job descriptions;

- Enterprise website development, maintenance and hosting information portal www.medienospartneriai.lt;

- Business plans and projects; Income and asset declaration.

http://www.avkc.lt/index_en.html

Business Association of Alytus Region / Business Cooperation Center of Southern Lithuania, Rotušės sq. 16/220, Alytus

Association was found to stand interests of small and medium business companies. Currently association has 290 companies from different branches of business. Alytus Region Business Association current functions are as follows: preparation and supervision of projects for business environment development, implementation of cooperation ideas, participation in project "Establishment of Wood Industry Technologies Demonstration Center in Alytus". The main goal of this project - improvement of qualification skills of employees of wood processing companies, establishment of wood cluster in Southern Lithuania. Alytus Region Business Association in 2002 had founded "Business Cooperation Center of Southern Lithuania". Main functions of cooperation centre are to help companies in cooperation making their businesses, searching new customers, purchasers and markets, new employees and other services.

Currently BAAR is taking part in project partly financed by EU Community Initiative "Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme" „Development of Wood Enterprises Cluster and Promotion of Cross Border Co-operation". Other recent project – "Alytus Business Situation in 2007 and Business Development in 2007-2013 Study".
http://www.akva.aktv.lt/english/index.html

Public institution **"Alytus Business Incubator"** Merkinės str. 2a, Alytus
Copartners: Ministry of Economy, Alytus city municipality, Alytus College and public institution Alytus business innovation center. Currently experiencing financial difficulties, since Ministry of Economy stopped it's funding already for a second year.
http://www.alytusvi.lt (does not open at the moment)
Public institution **"Alytus Business Innovation Center"**, Merkinės str. 2B, Alytus
Business consultations, research. Center established in 1998. Its mission is to promote science and business innovations and to support their implementation in business practice. Main fields of activities include information about business innovations collection and use in training, qualification improvement programmes and business practice, applied nature scientific research work organization, participation in various projects seeking for new business connections, investment and international collaboration possibilities.
In 2002 public institution "**Business Angel**" was established in Alytus, Naujoji str. 3, III stage. A lot of possibilities to establish new business emerged when Lithuania started to work by conditions of market economy instead of planned economy. Inhabitants of Lithuania were not ready for such process. They didn't have neither theoretical nor practical knowledge in this field. It was decided to establish institution, which could help people to prepare business plan and evaluate their business idea realistically. In this case Swedish model of "Jobs and Society" was very suitable, because everyone who had business idea could be consulted confidentially and for free. During consultations client is an active partner and the manager of "Business Angel" is only an adviser and information supplier. It's board consists from representatives from municipalities, mass media and businessmen. It's objectives - to provide free from charge advisory help to people who intend to start business, to teach young people basics of business in order to get primary skills and to develop activities that would stimulate emigrants to return to the native region from other cities and countries, to live and work in Alytus region.
http://www.versloangelas.lt/en/
Public institution **Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service.** The largest farmer advisory organization in the country, 48 offices in each district (municipality). Agricultural, rural, environmental consultation, formal and informal training, services and projects related to agriculture and rural development, collaboration with governance, science, education institutions and foreign partners. http://www.lzukt.lt/en/about.asp
Alytus District Advisory Bureau, Pulko str. 5, Alytus,
http://www.lzukt.lt/apie/biuras.asp?id=0903
Lazdijai District Advisory Bureau, Vilniaus str. 1-304,
Lazdijai, http://www.lzukt.lt/apie/biuras.asp?id=0917
Varėna District Advisory Bureau, Vytauto str. 5 Varėna,
http://www.lzukt.lt/apie/biuras.asp?id=0942
Administration of Dzūkija National Park, Miškininkų str. 62, Marcinkonys, Varėna district. Landscape, nature heritage, cultural heritage management, administration. This Park is the largest protected territory in Lithuania with an area 58.519 ha. It's **Visitor centres** provide information about places of intrerest, tourist stock lease, accommodation, feeding, guided tours, excursions, videos (films about Lithuania's and World's protected teritorries), various brochures about Dzūkija National Park. http://www.dzukijosparkas.lt/kontaktai-en.htm
Meteliai Regional Park Administration, Meteliai, Lazdijai district. The purpose of the Meteliai Regional Park: to preserve the landscape of the pool of the great lakes of southern Lithuania with lakes of Dusia, Metelys and Obelija as well as with their surroundings; the unique moraine solid of Teizai, and the solid of peripheral moraines in Žagariai surroundings; to preserve the values of cultural heritage, from them – complexes of mounds and street villages; to preserve the stability of natural eco-system, unique fauna and flora, important places of rest and sitting of water birds during their migration; to restore destroyed and violated natural and cultural complexes and objects; to carry out researches and observations, to gather information on protection of ecology, cultural heritage, and other spheres; to capacitate the development of cognitive tourism and rest in particular zones and places; to regulate economic activity as well as development of urbanisation according to a planning scheme of the regional park; To pursue educative and cultural activities, to propagate natural and cultural heritage as well as its protection. www.meteliuparkas.lt
Public institution "**Lazdijai Business Information Center**", Vilniaus str. 1, Lazdijai, http://www.lvic.lt
Public institution "**Druskininkai Tourism and Business Information center**", Gardino str. 3, Druskininkai, http://www.info.druskininkai.lt/en_tvic/
Public institution "**Varėna Tourism and Business Information Center**", Basanavičiaus str. 9, Varėna, www.varenainfo.net

Lithuanian Folk Artists Society (The Union of Lithuanian Folk Artists), Dzūkija Branch, S.Dariaus ir S.Gireno Str. 3. Fostering of Alytus region traditional crafts and folk arts. http://www.lietuvostautodaile.lt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=103&Itemid=50

Alytus Labor Market Training Authority, Pulko str. 23, Alytus

Key tasks are to increase competitiveness of young people and adults, including unemployed persons and persons notified of the dismissal of the social risk groups, persons with disabilities, and other supported persons in the labour market; to ensure Alytus region residents of vocational guidance and counselling services, maintenance and technical supply; to ensure the continuing vocational training and the quality of the labour market system; ensure the certification of social workers and social work workforce skills development system; implementation of occupational safety and health training and educational quality of the policy; the development of social partnership and cooperation to the quality of employment and social activity. http://www.alytausdarborinka.lt/index.html

Alytaus kraštotyros muziejus, http://www.alytausmuziejus.lt/en/

Alytus Labour Exchange, Vilniaus str. 21, Alytus

The main objective of Lithuanian Labour Exchange is to help registered people and other job seekers to find job according to their qualification and profession. For those who do not have profession or have non-marketable profession or for individuals who find it difficult to integrate into labour market, labour exchange offers to take part in active labour market policy programs: vocational training, public works, works financed from the Employment Fund, starting of own business, job clubs, etc.

http://www.ldb.lt/TDB/alytus/Puslapiai/default.aspx

Druskininkai Labour Exchange, Vilnius ave. 30, Druskininkai

http://www.ldb.lt/TDB/druskininkai/Puslapiai/default.aspx

Lazdijai Labour Exchage, Kauno str. 6A, Lazdijai

http://www.ldb.lt/TDB/lazdijai/Puslapiai/default.aspxv

Varėna Labour Exchange, Dzūkų str. 16, Varėna

http://www.ldb.lt/TDB/varena/Puslapiai/default.aspx

Public institution "**Alytus Labour Market Training Center**"

Pulko g. 55, LT-62135 Alytus

Main activities: re-skilling, vocational training, improvement of qualification, refresher course

http://www.alytausdrmc.lt

Druskininkai Craft School, Gardino str. 45, Druskininkai. Vocational training, continuous grown-up training, qualification improvement, additional training, etc.

http://www.dam.lt/

Alytus Fine Craft School, S. Dariaus ir S. Girėno 27, Alytus. Vocational training.

http://www.amatai.lt/

Simnas Agricultural School, Ateities str. 10, Simnas, Alytus district. Vocational training,

www.szum.simnetas.lt/

Veisiejai Technology and Business School, Kailiniai village, Veisiejai sen.

Lazdijai district. Education, vocational training, http://www.tvm.veisiejai.lm.lt/news.php

Varėna Technology and Business School, Basanavičiaus str. 1, Varėna

Daugai Technology and Business School, Ežero str. 30, Daugai, Alytus district

http://www.dtvm.tai.lt/

Alytus Vocational Training Center, Putinų g. 40, Alytus, www.aprc.lt

Vocational training, continuous grown-up training, consulting, project preparation and implementation.

Accredited farming/rural development/LEADER consultants (by the Council for Accreditation of Consultation Institutions and Consultants, established according to the law of the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania):

Farm accountancy management questions:

Edvardas Makšeckas, E. Makšeckas Individual Enterprise, Kalniškės str. 25-9, Alytus

Auksė Makšeckienė, E. Makšeckas Individual Enterprise, Kalniškės str. 25-9, Alytus

Virginija Mazėtienė, V. Mazėtienė Individual Enterprise, Makariškės village, Lazdijai district

LEADER method implementation questions:

Edgaras Gardziulevičius, E. Gardziulevičius (registered individual activity), Sodų str. 4-37, Lazdijai, Lazdijai district

Virginija Mazėtienė, V. Mazėtienė (registered individual activity) Makariškės village, Lazdijai district

Business plan preparation and project administration questions:

Edgaras Gardziulevičius, E. Gardziulevičius (registered individual activity), Sodų str. 4-37, Lazdijai, Lazdijai district

Edvardas Makšeckas, E. Makšeckas Individual Enterprise, Kalniškės str. 25-9, Alytus

Box 3-7 Public and private knowledge institutes in Alytus county

Naturally, majority of available regional learning support structures are concentrated in the regional center Alytus city and smaller towns of the region Druskininkai, Lazdijai and Varėna. It can be concluded, that a lot of regional learning support structures are available for rural/regional business (SMEs). A lot of innovation ideas were tried in practice through these business support facilities in Alytus county. However, during the economic decline period their activities are more limited. The region has no university, but higher education and professional schools play important role in rural regional learning process through participation in regional councils, development projects, consulting, vocational training orientation to labour market, continuos grown-up training, events, etc. These are capacity building and social centers in the region.

Concerning rural development consultants it can be noted that so far such private enterprises or individual consultants are only in 2 municipalities of Alytus county: Alytus city and Lazdijai district municipalities (Druskininkai and Varėna district municipalities don't have them), which to some extent reflect geographical rural development support availability.

The forests occupy 247, 2 thousand ha (44 per cent), rivers and lakes - 24,3 thousand ha (4,3 per cent) of Alytus county territory. It is the most forested region of Lithuania famous for its unique nature, peculiar architecture and authentic folk art and craft traditions. There are two protected parks - Dzūkija National Park and Meteliai Regional Park (box 3-7) in Alytus County. Dzūkija National Park is the largest protected territory in Lithuania. Another important attraction center is wellness springs resourt town Druskininkai. Druskininkai is a year-round international resort offering mineral bath, mud and climate therapies, a wide variety of health treatment services. These natural, cultural and recreative resources provide favourable conditions for tourism - cognitive hiking, water, bicycle tours and many other activities. Consequently, the regional learning and innovation process in Alytus county is linked to forestry and tourism, i. e. some regional objectives, policy measures, development projects, local initiatives as well as certain regional learning support facilities are targeting these activity areas. Examples of such projects are: informational portal "Wood Partners" established by Alytus Business Advisory Center, INTERREG III B project "Development of Wood Enterprises Cluster and Promotion of Cross Border Co-operation", "Establishment of Wood Industry Technologies Demonstration Center in Alytus" by Business Association of Alytus Region, etc. Governor Administration of Alytus County

together with Ltd. "Urbanistika" currently implement the project „Preparation of Alytus County Tourism and Recreation Special Plan".

Second biggest city of Lithuania Kaunas is 66 km away from Alytus city and has several important learning and innovation support facilities at a wider level. Such institutions are: Lithuanian University of Agriculture, Kaunas University of Technology, Vytautas Magnus University, Chamber of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, and some others. The latter is a non-political self-government organization of farmers, which seeks to represent common interests of all rural inhabitants at national and European Union levels. Chamber is working by seeking welfare of both its members (agricultural associations) and all rural inhabitants (http://www.zur.lt/index.php?2017732947). It provides consultations, trainings and events to farmers and rural dwellers from all Lithuania. Of course these knowledge institutes do not focus specifically on Alytus County, but may provide support if needed.

3.3 Synthesis: Examples of operational interfaces, partnerships and arrangements

In this section we focus on the governance of regional learning in Alytus County. We describe in which ways and to what extent partnerships between different pillars – public administration, knowledge institutes and regional (business) initiators participate in the governance process of Alytus County, what sort of learning and innovation activities are supported and the ways in which these activities are supported. We also look at the purpose and objectives of such regional partnerships by analysing their establishment and/or strategic documents.

The ways in which regional learning is supported in Alytus County were already presented in the section 3.1 Learning and innovation support policies and strategies. In Alytus county, similarly like in other Lithuanian counties there are **no separate programmes for regional learning and innovation**. Instead, the concept is incorporated into general (as well as in special) development programmes of the region and manifest in forms of separate policy objectives, tasks, measures and selected projects. Regional learning and innovation are articulated already in the national operational programmes and strategies, but at regional level they gain a solid ground. Among Alytus Regional Development Plan tasks there are two addressing regional learning and innovation: task 1.1.3. To

promote links and collaboration of science and business organizations and task 1.3.2. To stimulate initiatives of rural communities. Problematic territory development programme tasks at municipality level include 4. Support to local community initiatives, 5. Development of social infrastructure. So it can be concluded that regional learning and innovation is addressed and promoted within other regional developement strategies and programmes in Alytus county.

Rural regional learning and innovation is also practised in the form of approved **councils** (for example, Alytus County Professional Training Council, Alytus County Culture and Art Council, etc.) and/or **working groups** with different partners involved (public administration, knowledge institutes, economic and social partners). Such groups are formed for specific themes or questions, in order to solve certain issues learning from each other and coming to an agreement during regional planing, identification of needs, evaluation, etc. Local action groups, rural communities, NGOs, knowledge institutions often represent social partners of the region (pillar 'region').

Important such structure in the regional governance is **Alytus Regional Development Council**, consisting of representatives from Governor Administration of Alytus County (Governor), Alytus city, Alytus district, Druskininkai, Lazdijai district, Varėna district municipalities (Mayors) and delegated members of municipality councils (figure 3-1). It discusses and approves Regional Development Plan, provides conclusions about its implementation to Ministry of Interior and National Regional Development Council, gives them proposals concerning the Programme for Reduction of Regional Social and Economic Differences, problematic territories and other programmes, makes decisions about regional projects, forms working groups, etc. Thus, partnership element is included in regional (and rural) development policy design and implementation.

In Rural Development Programme rural regional learning and innovation in forms of partnerships, collaboration and innovative local project proposals are also promoted by **priority points** (horizontal priorities) given at the project selection for funding stage. Priority is given for: implementation of innovations; joined, cooperative initiatives (including producer groups); improving marketing and production of high value added products; increasing broadband coverage in rural areas; activities benefiting the environment (including protection of biodiversity, well-balanced water supply and production of the energy by sustainable usage of renewal energy resources); actions creating new working places, additional income sources with a

special focus on the regions lagging behind; diversification of activities in the less favoured areas as well as less economically developed regions; actions strengthening human capital in rural areas; actions promoting local initiatives; actions strengthening the business development skills and abilities.

Partnership between public administration (Governor Administration of Alytus County or municipality administration) and knowledge institutes also happens through collaboration in **regional development/research projects** or by **sharing responsibilities for implementation of certain Regional Development Plan measures**. For example, Measure 17. Development of creative industries, responsible institutions Varėna District Municipality Administration and Varėna Tourism and Business Information Center. Arrangements between regional initiators and knowledge institutes are mainly made through the use of available **public and private advisory services**. Thus, there are various ways in which actors of different sectors formalize their collaboration.

The only exception – a separate rural learning and innovation programme is **LEADER**, implemented as a special Rural Development Plan Axis. LEADER is a bottom-up approach aiming at strengthening the coherence of the decisions made at the local level, increasing the quality of management and contributing to the strengthening of social capital in rural area and benefiting the quality of life (RDP 2007-2013). The actions under LEADER aim at promoting local initiatives and partnership through involvement of local communities as well as representatives of business and local government. There is an obvious need to encourage and develop capacities of rural population to act together in order to develop and implement the integrated local development strategies through combination of the resources, knowledge and skills of representatives of public sector, economy and social sector, which form the basis of local action groups.

The support granted through the LEADER approach during 2007-2013 is focused upon three main activities, namely 1) implementing local development strategies, 2) cooperation projects and 3) operating the local action group, acquiring skills and animating the territory.

LEADER initiative was introduced in Lithuania as LEADER+ Type Measure in 2004, when the country joined EU. It was new to Lithuania after the centralized (Soviet) governance and coincided with the civil society building movement. In our study region Dzūkija LAG was established the same year and at that time covered the

whole Alytus county rural territory (Alytus district, Lazdijai district, Druskininkai and Varėna district municipalities, excluding Druskininkai and Varėna towns). During the period 2004-2006 it prepared and implemented pilot integrated strategy according the selected theme "Improvement of Quality of Life in Rural Areas". The strategy priorities were: 1. Entrepreneurship development of rural inhabitants, 2. Dzūkija region cultural identity and environment preservation, 3. Integration of less active rural population groups into community life.

Since 2008 there are 4 LAGs in all 4 rural municipalities of AlytEus county. They prepare and will implement their local development strategies (figure 3-1).

Alytus District Rural Area Development Strategy 2010–2013
Priority 1. Creation of developed, attractive, motivating to live and work in the countryside living environment.
Measures:
1.1   Rural renewal and development.
Priority 2. Development and nurturance of rural traditions.
Measures
2.1   Increase of rural population social and economic self-expression possibilities, inducement of public spirit.
2.2   Stimulation of young people motivation and initiatives.
http://leaderprograma.lt/index.php?id=256

Lazdijai District Rural Development Strategy 2010-2015
Priority 1. Rural Renewal and Improvement of Infrastructure
Measures:
1.1   Rural renewal and development
Priority 2. Promotion of Rural Business
Measures:
2.1   Support to business creation and development
2.2   Promotion of rural tourism activities
Priority 3. Non-governmental sector development and educative activities
Measures:
3.1   Strenthening non-governmental organizations
3.2   Non-commercial publishing
3.3   Passive rural people activation and integration into community activities
3.4   Promotion of international and interregional collaboration
http://www.dzukijosvvg.lt

Box 3-8 Priorities of Rural Development Strategies in Alytus and Lazdijai district municipalities (prepared by LAGs)

LAG functions in Lithuania are:

- to prepare rural development strategy and to be responsible for it's implementation;
- to represent the interests of local social, economic actors and residents (at local, regional and national levels);
- to take decisions concerning the priorities of rural development strategy and concerning funding of the projects for it's implementation;

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- to take care of rural area development: to mass, recruit, stimulate local rural actors to take their position and to create inter-relationship;
- to inform, to improve qualification, to consult;
- to take actions, when it is important to achieve agreement;
- to define main rural development actors and to promote project preparation;
- to stimulate integration of local actors and sectors at all levels.

LAG functions at community (project) level - support at every project stage, information and consultation (for rural communities and other NGOs), qualification improvement of project organizers, mediation and search for funding possibilities, project supervision.

LAGs function as new rural development agencies complementing municipality regional development activities. The rural development strategies and projects of LAGs are rural regional learning and innovation evidences at municipality level.

In conclusion, it can be mentioned, that:
- there are various forms of partnerships and collaboration between different sectors (public administration, regional initiators and knowledge institutes), as well as various support mechanisms for regional learning and innovation. LEADER is the only separate rural regional learning and innovation (partnership based) programme in Alytus county.
- Both rural and regional programmes support rural initiatives.
- Majority of identified operational interfaces are created for small and medium business development support.
- Operational interfaces are often created through participation of various pillar institutions in common projects and they last for the project periods (not continual regional learning structures).
- Majority of identified knowledge institutes in Alytus county function both as individual learning and as social learning centers since they accumulate expertise and regional knowledge.

4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 'COMARCA DE VERIN (S)', LOLA DOMINGUEZ GARCIA

This chapter summarises the research findings in The Comarca de Verin (The Comarca, from now onwards) as regards the goal of work package 4 (WP4): *understanding the capacities of rural regions to respond to the challenges of globalization, and in particular, the role of knowledge systems, innovation and learning in contributing to these capacities* (see introductory chapter).

The governance of rural regional learning the Comarca is approached by analysing the interaction between different actors of the public administration sector, knowledge sector and the region stakeholders (see figure 2.2, p. 18).

We will give an overview of the public policies, strategies and instruments used to develop regional capacity building and regional learning and innovation in The Comarca. In order to do so, in section 4.1 we first mapped the aims and priorities of policies and governmental strategies that within a more global context (European, national, regional) might influence and/or are specifically oriented to support strategies of rural development in particular areas as it is the case of The Comarca. Next, we will focus on the specific measures and policies that have been or might be implemented in The Comarca, as well as the main public stakeholders involved. Section 4.2 is devoted to show available learning and innovation support structures. Finally, the chapter ends with a synthesis where different operational interfaces among public administration sector through policies and the knowledge sector are highlighted.

4.1 Learning and innovation support policies and strategies

Milestone 4.1 had the objective show public administration action to promote development. This action is carried out through policies. Therefore, we focus on finding policies that were formulated to support rural and/or regional development activities in The Comarca.

In general, in Spain there are three main levels of governance: European, National, and Autonomous Community/Region. Furthermore, there are also provincial and municipal administrations that govern and may depend on National and/or

Community levels: one central government (National), 17 Autonomous Comunities, Ceuta and Melilla (Regional); at the provincial level: 41 diputaciones provinciales (county councils), 7 cabildos (county councils in the Canary Islands), 3 Consells (county councils in Balearic Islands), *diputacion foral* in the Basque Country; 8108 municipalities (La Voz de Galicia, 1997).

As our study area is a *comarca*, some explanation about what we understand by *comarca* is needed. Thus, a *comarca* is (i) a territory, in a country or a region, which shares specific physical or cultural characteristics, and/or (ii) an administrative entity composed for a plurality of municipalities in the context of a province (advance edition 23th, see www.rae.es). According to the regional government, the *comarca* is a stable territorial group of municipalities being a reference for the historical memory as well as for the organisation and planning of the current Galicia[3]. By law, the Comarca is a "specific territorial intermediate environment formed by a set of neighbouring municipalities with an internal cohesion among them based on geographical, historical, economic and functional facts" (Law 7/1996 of 10th June). The Comarca has not administrative competences.

In this case the Comarca is an administrative entity formed by 8 municipalities (Castrelo do Val, Cualedro, Laza, Monterrei, Oímbra, Riós, Verín and Villardevós[4]). They share some history but keep their own character and characteristics. The Comarca is a rural area, and from the organising perspective and intervention, is subdue to different levels of "public" governance: municipality (*concello*), province (*Diputación provincial de Ourense*), Autonomous Community (Galician government or Xunta de Galicia), Central (Spanish) government, and European Union. As regards development, two main political and funding "public" sources contribute to it: regional development policy and rural development policy, which is formulated by the region, central administration or Europe.

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[3] http://www.xunta.es/galicia2003/es/inicio.htm

[4] Although we operate at the level of the municipality, we must know that as it is typical in Galician settlements of population, besides the 8 municipalities which are the centre of decision, there are 175 Singular Entities4, belonging to them, which are "any habitable area within the municipal area, inhabited or not, clearly differentiated within the area and know by its specific denomination which makes impossible to confuse it with other".

As "Convergence Region[5]", Galicia will benefit from the initiatives and financing of the European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), as well as the Cohesion Fund in the period 2007-2013. Those funds will mainly drive rural and regional policies in our area of study.

Regional development policy has been implemented through Regional Development Programmes. As regards Regional Development Programmes, Galicia might benefit during the period 2007-2013 from several national (Spain), multiregional, regional (specifically for the Galician region), and Cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation programmes[6].

(i) National Programmes:

      Operational Programme "Technical Assistance"

      Operational Programme 'Cohesion Fund – ERDF'

(ii) Multiregional Programmes:

      Operational Programme 'Knowledge-based Economy'

      Operational Programme 'Research, Development and Innovation for and by Enterprises - Technology Fund'

(iii) Cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation:

      Operational Programme 'Spain - Portugal'

      Operational Programme 'Atlantic Area'

      Operational Programme 'South West Europe'

      Operational Programme 'Mediterranean Programme'

      Operational Programme 'France - Spain - Andorra'

(iv) Regional Programmes: the Operational Programme 'Galicia'

Box 4-1 Regional Development Programmes 2007-2013

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[5] The rationale of the **Convergence objective** is to promote growth-enhancing conditions and factors leading to real convergence for the least-developed Member States and regions. In EU-27, this objective concerns – within 18 Member States – 84 regions with a total population of154 million, and per capita GDP at less than 75 % of the Community average, and – on a "phasing-out" basis – another 16 regions with a total of 16.4 million inhabitants and a GDP only slightly above the threshold, due to the statistical effect of the larger EU. The amount available under the Convergence objective is EUR 282.8 billion, representing 81.5 % of the total. It is split as follows: EUR 199.3 billion for the Convergence regions, while EUR 14 billion are reserved for the "phasing-out" regions, and EUR 69.5 billion for the Cohesion Fund, the latter applying to 15 Member States
(http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/object/index_en.htm)

[6] http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/index_en.htm

Especially interesting for learning and innovation are the programmes: operational programme knowledge based-economy, the operational programme Spain-Portugal (POCTEP), and the Galician operational programme, which is indeed the most specific for the region as regards both regional and rural development.

Priority 1: Development of the knowledge-based economy (R&D, information society and ICT) [around 8.5% of total investment]

Priority 2: Development and entrepreneurial innovation [approx. 16% of total investment]

Priority 3: Environment, protection of natural resources, management, distribution and treatment of water, risk prevention [around 22% of total investment]

Priority 4: Transport and energy [around 41.5% of total investment]

Priority 5: Local and urban regeneration (development) (approx. 10.4% of total investment)

Priority 6: Social infrastructure (approx. 1.4% of total investment)

Priority 7: Technical assistance and the strengthening of institutional capacity (around 0.2% of total investment)

Box 4-2 Priorities of the Galician Operational Programme

Galicia is a convergence region. It has a total population of 2,762,198 inhabitants, 29,575 km² (approximately 6% of the Spanish territory), thus a population density of 93.40 inhabitants/ km2. Although it varies significantly from more than 100 inhabitants per km2 in the Atlantic Axis to less than 25 inhabitants per km2 in other parts, as it is in the case of our area of study.

Following the Regulation (CE) 1698/2005, the European Agrarian Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and due to Spanish territorial and administrative structure, RD policy is implemented through rural development programmes (RDP) established at regional level by the Autonomous Communities. In this respect, 17 regional programmes, and 2 horizontal programmes related to the national framework and the rural network have been submitted to the Commission's services. The *Fondo Español de Garantía Agraria*, FEGA (Spanish Fund of Agricultural Guarantee) is the autonomous organism belonging to the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Environment (MARM) in charge of controlling the right application of the CAP funding to the specific goals. The *Dirección General de*

Desarrollo Sostenible del Medio Rural is in charge of coordinating the managing authorities of the different Rural Development Programmes co-financed by EAFRD; the management and control of the *Plan Estratégico de DR y del Marco Nacional de DR* (Strategic RD Plan and National RD Framework, respectively); it cooperates and collaborates with the Autonomous communities and other entities related to these matters, as well as elaborates Spanish proposals of RD for the European Union.

Regional rural development programmes, as it is the case of the Galician one, may only contain additional information in respect of the six horizontal measures, complying with the requirements of Annex II to the Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 of 15 December 2006.

In the period 2000-2006 Rural Development Policies operated through The Integrated Operative Programme of Galicia 2000-2006 financed by the EFRD and the EAGGF-Guidance and the ESF; the multiregional Operative programme for Objective 1 regions financed by EAGGF-Guidance, the LEADER+, also financed by EAGGF-Guidance, and the horizontal programme of the CAP Accompanying measures (a national program that can be applied in any Autonomous Community and finance by EAGGF-Guarantee.

In the period 20007-2013 the Regulation (EC) 1698/2005 has the aim of implementing a simplifying normative framework for rural development policy. The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) will finance rural development (which includes LEADER). In Galicia there will be an organism, the FOGGA (Galician Fund of Agricultural Guarantee) that will administrate the funds from the EAGGF-Guarantee and the EAFRD.

Furthermore, the aims and priorities of the RD policy in the period 2007-2013 are in the Rural Development Programme of Galicia (RDP-Gz). The managing authority as regards the RDP-Gz is the *Dirección Xeral de Desenvolvemento Rural da Consellería de Medio Rural* (General Direction of Rural development of the Galician Ministry of Rural Environment).

The overall objective of the RDP, which derives from the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) and the National Strategy Plan, is to "resolve the imbalances between the Atlantic Axis, where growth is concentrated, and the trend to abandon the rest of the Galician territory, especially the mountain areas and inland territories". Do not forget that the Comarca is considered a Mountainous (and it is

an inland) territory. The overall aim is Galicia is to achieve a sustainable, strong and viable rural environment by 2013. In order to do so, the Plan defines the following strategic objectives or axis and measures[7].

1. to improve the competiveness of the agrarian and forestry sector
   1.1. Measures oriented to promote knowledge and to improve human potential
   1.2. Measures oriented to re-structure and to develop physical potential and to promote innovation
   1.3. Measures oriented to improve quality of agrarian products.
2. to improve the natural environment and rural areas
   2.1. Measures focused on a sustainable use of farming lands
   2.2. Measures focused on a sustainable use of forest lands
3. to improve the quality of life and the economy diversification of the rural areas
   3.1. Measures to diversify rural economy
   3.2. Measures oriented to improve life quality in rural areas
4. to implement the LEADER methodology

Box 4-3 Strategic Axis and Measures of the Galician Rural Development Plan 2007-2013

The support for selected integrated strategies according to the Leader principles shall contribute to the accomplishment of the objectives of axes 1, 2 and 3 by 25%, 5% and 70%, respectively. The main priority is Quality of life/Diversification. Inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation is envisaged.

The LEADER programme is one of the four strategic axis of the RDP. It is a programme promoted by the European Union since 1991 and in Galicia has operated since 1991, specifically in the periods 1991-1994, 1994-1999 and 2000-2006 (LEADER, LEADER II, and LEADER+). Besides the LEADER initiative in Galicia other programmes of development have been carried out (PRODER, PRODER II and AGADER), specially in those areas that did not benefit from LEADER. Therefore over the period 2000-2006 the whole territory was covered by one or another programme. As we have already introduced LEADER and PRODER programmes, we

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[7] Translated from RDP of Galicia, in
http://www.mapa.es/desarrollo/pags/programacion/programas/Galicia/Galicia.pdf

give some insights of AGADER. This Rural Development programme was created as an instrument of economic diversification and development in the rural areas, based on the principles of endogenous, sustained and integrated development. The main goal was to contribute to an integrated rural development through the implementation of different measures. The programme has strategic aims in five different fields: social participation, improvement of life standard conditions, promotion of human resources, environment and improvement of local economic activity[8]. AGADER is similar to PRODER and LEADER, but totally financed by regional funds.

In general, for the period 2000-2006 Galicia benefit from the three following programmes:

- Leader+: 16 projects with a budget of around €136 million; benefiting 184 councils and 730.000 inhabitants, over 18.285 Km2.

- Proder II: 11 LAGs got approved their programmes, subsidised by €99.204.000; benefiting 71 councils, 827.000 inhabitants over 4.200 Km2.

- Agader: 10 LAGs were selected with €82.447.767; 47 municipalities, 230.000 inhabitants over 4.900 Km2, con una población de 47 ayuntamientos.

There were moreover another three inter-regional LEADER+ programmes (Os Ancares, Pena Trevinca y Ponte dos Santos). Galicia was the only region within the EU with its whole territory under Programmes managed by LAGs.

4.2   Learning and innovation support structure (facilities)

The goal in this section is to summarise the main findings as regards the availability of support structures (facilities) for rural regional learning and innovation processes in The Comarca.

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[8] http://www.xunta.es/galicia2003/es/20_04.htm

Public and private knowledge institutes and associations in and around The Comarca

University of Vigo, in Vigo city:

support and involvement in different research projects of regional and rural development.

Centro de Desenvolvemento Agroforestal (Center of Agroforestry Development), in Riós municipality:

with the goal of promoting chestnut, mushrooms and olive grove research and production in the area. Other municipalities "out of" (A Gudiña, A Mezquita and Vilariño de Conso) and "in" (Vilardevós) The Comarca collaborated in the project. The regional ministry of *Medio rural* (rural environment) supported the project.

Centro para a recuperación de razas autóctonas (Centre for recovering of autochtone breeds) located in Fotenfiz, Ourense:

Supporting initiatives of organic production in the area based on autochthonous breeds. It is the case of Bioocoop.

Centro de Dsenvolvemento Cooperativo de Verín (Center of Co-operative Development)**,** located in Verín and **AGACA** (Galician Association of Co-operativism)

Promoting cooperative movement in the area.

Cámara de Comercio de Ourense and Antena Local de Verín (Chamber of Commerce of Ourense and local office in Verin), located in Ourense and Verín respectively:

These are public corporation with the aims of representing, promoting and defending general interest of commerce and industry in the province of Ourense; managing public resources following entrepreneur criteria; and providing different services to enterprises. Studies on The Comarca: Plan of Action 12009-2014, impact of the current global crisis in the automotive industry and the state and evolution of the retailer sector.

Femuro, the federation of rural women associations of Ourense, located in Verin:

Non profit organisation with the aim of promoting gender equality as well as equality, empowering, training and information.

Consello Regulador da Denominación de Orixe Monterrei, located in Verin municipality

Besides its main functions as Regulatory council of one of the five Galician wine Origin Designation, the council is actively involved in any activity related to the development of the area.

MONTEVAL, located in Verín municipality:

the LEADER managing non-profit association and the stakeholders and non-profit organisations (Mesas) involved: of wine and horticulture production, of other farming activities, of industry, of construction, of retailers, hotel and tourism and other services

Center of Rural Development Portas Abertas, located in Vilardevós, Verin municipality:

Non profit organisation, very active in the area, always involved in the LEADER programmes and other rural development initiatives

Centro de interpretación da castaña, located in Trasestada (Riós municipality)

It is a museum in the restored old rectory house where visitors may find all sort of information about chestnuts and some other cultural and traditional aspects of the municipality of Riós

O Grelo Verde, located in Verin municipality:

Non profit association whose goal is to inform about organic production.

Eixo Atlántico:

It is a cross-border cooperation association of the main cities of North of Portugal and of Galicia

Caixa Nova and Caixa Galicia, located in different municipalities within the Comarca:

Both regional banks are actively involved in all type of programmes to promote development in rural and urban areas.

There are numerous private agencies in and around The Comarca which are also relevant for rural regional learning and innovation processes. It is the case for example of consulting offices that carried out the proposals or reports about the Comarca in order to know about the state of the area or to concur into European, national or regional project calls.

4.3 Synthesis: Examples of operational interfaces, partnerships and arrangements

Based on the information given in the previous section, we focus now on the operational interfaces arisen from the possibilities of development driven by public and private knowledge and implementation. That is, which sort of activities and how they are being supported in our case study area. In order to do so, and following the goals and methodology of the project, we should identify different operational interfaces between representatives of public administration, representatives of knowledge facilities, and regional initiators by describing the different actors involved and their purposes. Specifically, we will highlight interfaces operating the area by recalling the running projects in the area and stakeholders related to them.

4.3.1 Regional rural programmes

The Comarca has benefitted from different regional and rural programmes which have been implemented mainly through the action of the LAGs (currently RDGs), which is the most important hub for different local organisations, public and private[9] stakeholders. The support of the *municipality* and the *Diputación* providing information and technicians in order to facilitate the knowledge and access to development programmes financed by European, national and regional funds is also important.

The RDGs[10] work as any other non-profit association and must obey the principle of "open doors", i.e., any organisation of the area that wish to participate in the project has the right to be admitted. Any professional, non professional, agrarian, commons may join the RDG. Only individuals may not join directly the group. Stakeholders from the private sector must be majority within the GDR. This group must elaborate a strategy of comarcal development where main possibilities, opportunities and necessities of the territory must be included, as regards

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[9] The significance of private stakeholders' actions is explained and shown in next phase of the Project.

[10]http://mediorural.xunta.es/fileadmin/arquivos/desenvolvemento/leader/programa_leader.pdf

productive, socio-economic domains and services. They application must be addressed to Agader (Galcian Agency of Rural Development)

LEADER and LAGs or RDGs are nevertheless the main and oldest responsible when objectives and strategies of development had to be defined.

From LEADER to LEADER over the last two decades

The experience of **LEADER II** in the area starts in 1994 and extended to 1999. Seven municipalities (The Comarca except Riós), around 27,000 people and 892.4 km2 benefitted from that programme. The main goal was to acquire capacities and transnational *cooperation* (Asociación de Desenvolvemento, 2009).

Two private enterprises, the NGO Portas Abertas, one hunting association, the University of Vigo, four cooperatives, and Caixa Vigo (a regional bank) formed the structural organisation DICOM (Integral Development of Monterrei Comarca) with the responsibility of asking for and organising the LEADER implementation.

The executed budget was of 1,227,525,942 PTA (€7,377,576.79).

For the period 2000-2006, **LEADER+** through the LAG ADECOMOVE (Association of Development of Comarca Monterrei-Verin) was implemented. The mayors of the 7 municipalities (all except Riós that was included the Conso-Freiras Comarca where an AGADER programme was running), and the Foundation for development of The Comarca de Verín were funding partners. The Managing council includes besides a member of the different sectorial associations (Mesas): NGO´s, wine and horticulture production, other farming activities, industry, construction, retailers, hotel and tourism and other services. The thematic priority was to *fix population in The Comarca by improving life quality through the improvement of economic and socio-cultural conditions.* The budget was €6,120,341 (including private and public funding).

Currently there is a **LEADER** running within the RDP of the Community for the period 2007-2013. MONTEVAL is the Rural Development Group 13 (RDG-13) in charge of the programme. The whole Comarca is now included (1007.1 Km2 and 28,541 inhabitants, data from 2008), plus the municipalities of A Mezquita (104 km2 and 1,383 inhabitants) and A Gudiña (171.4 km2 and 1,586 inhabitants). The slogan for this programme and period is "*building up a new rural*"; and it focuses on projects specifically oriented to cover the *new needs of rural population that*

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respond to a comarcal vision, besides following the main strategic axis of the RD programme (see section 4.1).

Other projects running

Furthermore The Comarca is also benefiting from other projects financed by European Funds[11], from different European programmes as Interreg III and Urban[12]: the VIARRAIA project, the Eurocity Chaves-Verin project, and the ARRAIANO project.

The VIARRAIA Project has the goal of connecting the border villages of Montealegre-Chaves-Oimbra-Cualedro. Thus partially benefits The Comarca through the villages of Oimbra and Cualedro. The budget is of €2,490,000 (75% financed by ERDF).

The *Eurocity Chaves-Verin Project* with a total budget of €1,333,578.20 (75% financed by ERDF) through the Operative Programme of Territorial co-operation Spain-Portugal (POCTEP) 2007-2013. The project starts around the global goal of *creating the water-Eurocity* and is based upon three main axis:

- Building up the euro-citizenship, involve local population in the project to make them aware of cross-border cooperation advantages and potential

- Sustainable development common inventory, to preserve and boost common natural heritage

- Economic Promotion by developing competitiveness and entrepreneurship

The axis were establish to achieve the following strategic objectives: enforcing social cohesion, promoting human resources qualification, natural and cultural heritage reassessment, consolidating and developing the local entrepreneurial sector; developing tourism sector (specially thermal springs/spa); integration and promotion of the logistic sector; rural areas development by promoting local

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[11] http://www.depourense.es

[12] INTERREG is a programme that focuses on the cooperation between EU regions. The goal in INTERREG III is to promote socio-economic cohesion in the EU by promoting cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation. URBAN is one of the main tools of urban policy and basis of the socio-economic cohesion success in the EU. This Community Initiative is an instrument within EU Cohesion Policy, dedicated to the regeneration of urban areas and neighbourhoods in crisis. In the case of The Comarca both Programmes help the Eurocity Chaves-Verin.

production, among others. The working group is mostly institutional and includes representatives of the Community Work of Northern Portugal-Galicia, the Galician Government (Xunta da Galicia), Diputación Provincial de Ourense, CCDR-N (Commission for Regional Coordination and Development of the North of Portugal), Eixo Atlantico association, and Chaves and Verin Municipalities.

ARRAIANO project or Rural and Urban Development of the Raiano (in the border) municipalities in the province of Ourense (Comarcas of A Limia, and Monterrei-Verin), with the goal of implementing different actions in order to promote, and improve life standards in the area. The main actions within the ARRAIANO project are: promoting the society of information and new technologies (€930,000); Improvement, rehabilitation or first installation of small local shops and artisanal talliers (€ 120,000); Improvement of the natural environment and environmental quality (€ 2,473,700); Improvement of accessibility and mobility (120,000€); Protection and preservation of cultural estate (€480,000)

Recently (December 2008) a Plan of Actuación (Plan of Action) for The Comarcaa was elaborated for the period 2009-2014 (SFE, 2008). This study was done by a Consulting by initiative and financing of the Chamber of Commerce/Antena Local, the municipality of Verin, and the European Social Fund.

The Plan includes a socio-economic analysis of the Comarca (territory, demography, economy and the tourism supply and demand); a Strategic analysis by considering different sectors (agriculture, industry, commerce); and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

The goal is to know (diagnose) about the resources and potentials of The Comarca, considering the perspective of the local people and stakeholders, in order to increase life quality and welfare of the population. After the SWAT analysis, a strategic plan is proposed with different measures depending on the sector. An innovative plan for the area is the creation of an agri-food industrial park, an entity that develops tourism based on spa (using the thermal resources of the area) and wine resources, a plan to improve telecommunications, promotion of training and education in The Comarca, and the cross-border collaboration.

As it is concluded in other summaries included in this report, the above overview provides already good evidence of the support for rural regional learning and innovation, but is not yet complete. It is to be highlighted the significance of the

European Social Funds, or the Rural development and Regional Funds in the process of development experienced by the Comarca. So far, the operational interfaces are between public and private partnerships. Next steps will lead us to study them in depth, as well as to consider private and individual stakeholders who are promoting development in the area. Last but least, that information will serve us to draw a more complete picture of the networks, initiatives and synergies related to rural regional development in the area.

5 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 'DRESDEN (G)' MICHAEL KRISZAN, ROBERT NADLER AND JOACHIM BURDACK

In the following chapter, the research findings of the Dresden region are summarised. Under 5.1., learning and innovation supporting policies and strategies that provide a frame for rural regional learning and innovation processes to take place in the Dresden region and the subregion 'Upper Lusatian Land of Heaths and Ponds' (*Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft, OHTL-Region*) are considered. Afterwards, under 5.2., examples of available learning and innovation support structures within the Dresden region and OHTL-Region are presented.

The chapter concludes with a synthesis (5.3) in which different operational interfaces are highlighted by describing different arrangements and partnerships.

5.1 Learning and innovation support policies and strategies

Generally there are three major political fields which define opportunities for rural regional learning and innovation. All these political fields are organized in a hierarchical way: with the European Union defining very general topics and providing large parts of financial resources; the national level filling these topics with guidelines and – depending on the programme – providing also substantial financial aid; the regional level which develops concrete measures and distributes the financial resources being transferred from higher administrative levels; and finally the local level (municipalities, counties, associations, private companies, or individual persons) using the financial resources to implement strategic measures. The three relevant fields of policies are rural development policies, regional development policies, and innovation and learning policies. Figure 1 gives an overview about the hierarchical organisation of the policies and the main resulting operational interfaces, partnerships and arrangements (the latter will be presented more detailed in section 5.3). It is worth mentioning that the *Direktionsbezirk* Dresden is subject to the 'Convergence' policies criteria. This means that the GDP per capita in the region was below 75 per cent of the EU-25. Therefore, in the EU structural funds period of 2007-2013 financial resources will be provided according to the aims of 'convergence of the regions'.
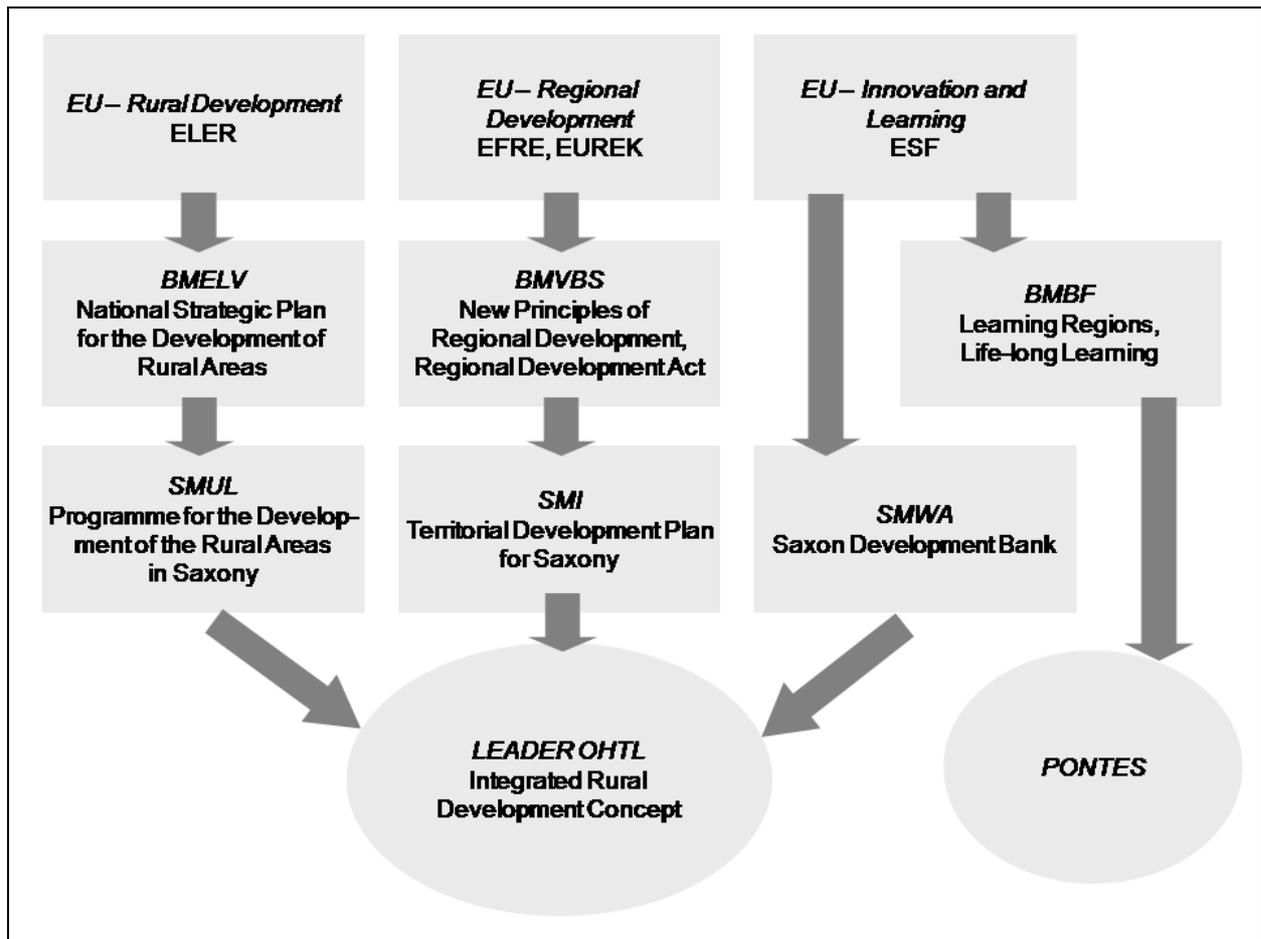
Figure 5-1 Organisational scheme - Learning and innovation policies and strategies in the *Direktionsbezirk* Dresden

5.1.1 Rural development policies

The **EU Commission** is the most important agent when it comes to setting up guidelines and frameworks for the rural development policies in the member states. The most important, recent document is the **ELER Act** (approved in September 2005). In this act, the EU Commission declares three main objectives for the development of the rural areas in European Union: (1) the improvement of the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sector (by development of knowledge and skills of rural areas' workers, 'human capital', restructuring of capital equipment, facilitation of innovation, increase of the quality of agricultural production and products). (2) the improvement of the environment and landscape (by protecting biodiversity, water, climate and soil, fostering sustainable cultivation of farm land and forests, spatial differentiation); and (3) the improvement of the quality of life and the diversification of economic base. In the period from 2007 to 2013, these aims are supported with Euro 69.75 billion, of whom Euro 8.11 billion

are available for Germany. The *Bundesland* Saxony will receive Euro 927 million for development initiatives which are compatible with the ELER criteria.

An important actor in the national level is the **Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV).** The Ministry is involved in the organisational management of the '***Nationaler Strategieplan zur Entwicklung Ländlicher Räume 2007-2013***'[13], which is the national level interface between the EU financial packages according to the ELER Act and the regional level development concepts of the *Bundesländer* in Germany. Therefore, the Ministry also runs the 'Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle Ländliche Räume - DVS'[14], which hosts the 'Netzwerk Ländliche Räume'. So, the Ministry is actively taking part in implementing the ELER strategies. Furthermore, the Ministry hosts the action task **GAK** (*Gemeinschaftsaufgabe zur Verbesserung der Agrarstruktur und des Küstenschutzes*[15]). In 1969, this task was developed as a conjoint working field between the Federal Government and the regional *Bundesländer* governments. It aims at financing local public or private institutions which are involved in rural development initiatives dealing with the increase of the competitiveness of the rural region, the organization of an ecological and efficient production, the marketing of agricultural products from the region, flood protection and finally measures of public interest in the rural area.

The **Saxon State Ministry of the Environment and Agriculture (SMUL)** develops the strategy concerning the future of the rural areas in Saxony. The rural regions make up to more than 80 per cent of the Saxon territory[16]. Thus, the general aim of the Ministry is to support efficient use of the rural regions' potential, to foster equality of opportunities between urban and rural regions, and to strengthen the relationships between urban and rural regions. On the level of the *Bundesland* the main political task is called the '*Integrierte Ländliche Entwicklung*' (integrated rural development). As tools to follow this objective, the local level administrations (counties, municipalities, etc.) had to develop '*Integrierte Ländliche*

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[13] National Strategic Plan for the Development of Rural Areas:
http://www.bmelv.de/cln_173/cae/servlet/contentblob/383168/publicationFile/50583/Strategiepapier.pdf (visited February, 9th 2010)

[14] German Centre for the Networking of Rural Areas which hosts the Network Rural Areas

[15] Joint Agreement for the Improvement of Agrarian Structures and Coastal Protection

[16] http://www.smul.sachsen.de/laendlicher_raum/ (visited February, 9th 2010)

Entwicklungskonzepte' (*ILEK*: integrated rural development concepts). Given the problematic demographic change in the last decades, the major aim of the integrated rural development is 'adapted and flexible development instead of resignation'. Within this aim, measures which foster economic restructuring and reorientation are promoted. The Ministry supports 23 sub-regional level *ILE*-areas, whose development concepts have been approved. Main criteria for the approval of the integrated rural development concept (*ILEK*) were: a focus on regional cooperation; economic, cultural and social development; climate and environmental protection; and to strengthen the regional identity. Next to this, the **LEADER** community initiative encourages the implementation of integrated, high–quality and original strategies for sustainable development with a strong focus on partnership and networks to exchange experiences. The guideline for the measures is the programme for the development of the rural areas in Saxony (*Entwicklungsprogramm für den Ländlichen Raum im Freistaat Sachsen 2007-2013 - **EPLR***). The *EPLR*, in its current version from December 2009, defines the major goals for an integrated development of Saxony. In Saxony are available (2007-2013) for these measures Euro 411 million. In 2008 the financial budget for LEADER and *ILE* amounted to Euro 47.7 million. There are seven *ILE*-regions and three LEADER-regions in the case study area *Direktionsbezirk* Dresden. The Ministry evaluated the integrated rural development concepts (*ILEK*s) of the sub-regional level and declared 12 areas as official LEADER regions, according to the EU programme guidelines.

5.1.2 Regional development policies

The main reference for regional development is provided by the **EU Commission**'s **EFRE** structural funds. Saxony will be funded with Euro 3.1 billion by the EFRE funds in the period of 2007-2013. The **Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS)** is the responsible authority on the German federal level for developing policies concerning the regional development.

The BMVBS is involved in the definition of Germany's **New principles for regional development** ('*Neue Leitbilder der Raumentwicklung*'). These guidelines, in the updated version from June, 30th 2006, express three major axes: Growth and innovation; securing service provision in all regions; protection of the natural

resources and development of cultural landscapes.. It is an expressed aim of the BMVBS to secure equal quality of life in every region in Germany. This is the coherent policy to the cohesion and convergence aims of the EU Comission. So, especially rural regions with difficult economic and demographic character such as the Direktionsbezirk Dresden might profit. Furthermore, the aim of enhancing urban-rural partnerships represents the implementation of the concept of the 'Regionale Verantwortungsgemeinschaft' (mutual regional responsibility between large metropolises and their rural surroundings). Further aims are to cope with the demographic change in Germany and to preserve the natural habitat. These guidelines for the spatial development strongly influence the German Raumordnungsgesetz (**Regional Development Act** - the major legal framework for regional development). In this legal package the guidelines are represented, and it is the legal basis for the Raumordnungsplan (Regional Development Plan) for Germany.

The **Saxon State Ministry of the Interior (SMI)** is responsible for the territorial development strategies of Saxony. The most important political framework is the Landesentwicklungsplan (LEP: **Territorial Development Plan**). The LEP contains the overall regional development strategy for Saxony.

5.1.3 Innovation and learning policies

Since 1957, the **EU Commission** engages in regional innovation and learning processes with the tool of the European Social Funds (**ESF**). For the ESF period of 2007-2013 the major motto is termed 'investing in people'[17]. The Direktionsbezirk Dresden is considered a region within the second major activity field 'convergence'. This means it is chosen because of a regional GDP per capita below the 75 per cent level of EU-25. Saxony in general will receive 9 per cent (Euro 872 million) of all ESF financial aids given to Germany; thus it is the most funded of the Bundesländer. These financial resources could be given to public administrations, NGOs, socio-cultural associations or private enterprises but also private persons in case of being part of or dealing with a target group (unemployed, elderly, young, women, disabled).

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[17] http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/members/de_en.htm (visited February, 9th 2010)

The **Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)'s** programme ‚**Learning Regions – Providing Support for Networks'** was initiated in 2000, integrated into the Ministry's broader research action programme of **'Lifelong learning** for all'. In an open call, regional partners could suggest their networking projects for to learn innovating within their region. The aim of the programme was to create sustainable organisational forms of co-operation, entrepreneurial thinking, and convincing business models for these networks. It ran until 2007, with a financial budget of Euro 118 million, of which Euro 51 million were co-financed by the EU-ESF budget. From the 71 network proposals in 2000, only 24 reached the final stage of the programme, with the actual implementation of regional learning networks. The addressees of this programme are declared as follows by the BMBF:

'With its programme, 'Learning Regions – Providing support for networks', the Federal Ministry of Education and Research promotes regional co-operation and networking. The objective is to bring together important players from different educational sectors in order to jointly develop new offers for Lifelong Learning within the scope of a regional strategy.'[18] In the *Direktionsbezirk* Dresden two projects had been funded by the 'Learning Regions' project: the cooperative project '*Regionales Lernforum im Wirtschaftsraum zwischen Elbe und Elster e.V.*' (Regional learning forum economic region Elbe-Elster), set up in the two neighbouring *Bundesländer* Saxony and Brandenburg, and the PONTES project in the East Saxon district of Görlitz.

On the regional level, the **State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport (SMWA)**, and the *Sächsiche Aufbaubank* (**Saxon Development Bank**) as executive agent, interpreted the ESF guidelines and identified seven specific tasks. Within these seven tasks, projects will be funded for different durations. Furthermore, the SMWA engages with own funding in the fields of promotion of innovation and technological development for the regional enterprises.

When looking at the political framework for innovation and regional learning, it becomes obvious that the topics dealing with technological innovation,

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[18]

http://www.lernende-regionen.info/dlr/1_141.php?PHPSESSID=8318532319f1e74e42a4b5f93f93b2c6
(visited February, 9th 2010)

organisational innovation and the development of human capital show up across all the three sub-fields of policies – rural development, regional development, and innovation and learning policies. Furthermore, the opportunities for developing strategies and implementing policies and political measures on the local level are strongly dependent from the thematic orientation on the EU Commission's level. This is due to the fact that large parts of financial subsidies are transfer capital which originates from the major EU funds. One could thus imagine that this mechanism is somehow restrictive for the design of local innovation and learning strategies, because all development projects on the local level have to fit standardised EU criteria, although the local circumstances vary strongly.

5.2   Learning and innovation support structure (facilities)

Table 5.1 shows a list of different publicly funded knowledge institutes which are or could be relevant for supporting rural regional learning and innovation in the OHTL-Region. These institutes are involved in education, research or advice. Furthermore, the knowledge institutes presented in table 5.1 are either in close vicinity to the OHTL-Region or involved in regional development initiatives.

In Saxony, it is in the duty and jurisdiction of the State Ministry of the Environment and Agriculture (SMUL) to organise and support basic and advanced training in the field of green jobs (i.e. on-going education in agriculture, home economics and forestry; continuing education in rural areas; agricultural and house economics college systems). This is realized by its subsidiary bodies:

- *Sächsisches Landesamt für Umwelt, Landwirtschaft und Geologie* (Saxon State Agency for Environment, Agriculture and Geology)
  The *Lehr- und Versuchsgut Köllitsch* (Farm for Teaching and Research Köllitsch) offers practical training and advanced training in the field of agriculture throughout Saxony, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt.
  The *Fachschulen für Technik und Gartenbau Dresden-Pillnitz* (College for Engineering and Horticulture Dresden-Pillnitz) offer vocational training and advanced training in the field of horticulture throughout Saxony.

- *Sächsische Landesstiftung Natur und Umwelt* (Saxon Regional Conservation Foundation)

The foundation offers further education for particular target groups (e.g. researchers, managers, opinion leaders and decision makers) and organises the exchange of information and experience. Besides, the foundation coordinates scientific projects in the fields of nature conservation, environmental protection and landscape management.

There is a wide range of educational facilities and publicly funded/privately funded institutions in the Dresden region. They offer advanced training for rural actors and support the rural development by scientific and applied projects or consulting services.

Table 5-1 Public knowledge institutes in and around the OHTL Region

Name	Location	Relevant research fields	Website
Technical University Dresden Department of spatial development	Dresden	Training and research in the fields of spatial development and natural resource management with thematic priority on urban and regional development;	http://tu-dresden.de/
Technical University Dresden European Institute for postgraduate education at the TU Dresden	Dresden	Training of regional managers.	http://www.eipos.de/
University of Applied Sciences — Faculty for Agriculture / Landscape Management	Dresden-Pillnitz	Training and research in the fields of agriculture, horticulture, environmental education. Rural development projects.	http://www.htw-dresden.de/pillnitz/
University of Applied Sciences Zittau/ Görlitz	Zittau / Görlitz	Training and research especially in the fields of tourism, healthcare management, renewable energies. Regional development projects (including cross border projects). The *Zentrum für Wissens- und Technologietransfer (ZWT)* (Centre of Knowledge- and Transfer of Technology) supports particular regional entrepreneurships.	http://www.hs-zigr.de
Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development (IOER)	Dresden	The institute carries out interdisciplinary research into issues of sustainable spatial development from an ecological perspective across all scales (local, regional, national, European, global).	http//www.ioer.de/
Berufsakademie Dresden (University of Cooperative Education Dresden)	Dresden	The Berufsakademie transferred the traditional system of vocational training to the level of tertiary education and integrated activities of the state institutions of higher education and training facilities of the employment sector in a joint effort. Amongst others BA offers the course of study 'Agri-Business Management'.	http://www.ba-dresden.de/
Berufsakademie Dresden (University of Cooperative Education Bautzen)	**Bautzen***	BA offers the following courses of study: Financial Management, Public Management, Economics and Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Medical Technology and Business Informatics.	http://www.ba-bautzen.de/

Name	Location	Relevant research fields	Website
Saxon State Agency for Environment, Agriculture and Geology	Dresden, Nossen, Köllitsch, **Königswartha*** …	The agency supports the State Ministry of Environment and Agriculture in its work as supreme state authority. A main task is the support of rural and agricultural development (e.g at the location Königswartha in the fields of fishery and Biosphere Reserve Administration)	http://www.smul.sachsen.de/lfulg/
Saxon Regional Conservation Foundation	Dresden, Lichtenwalde, Tharandt, Leipzig	The foundation carries out projects in rural areas and is engaged in environmental education.	http://www.lanu.de
Saxon Energy Agency – SAENA GmbH	Dresden	Knowledge centre for energy efficiency and sustainable energy supply.	http://www.saena.de/
Chamber of Commerce and Industry Dresden (CCI) – regional office Bautzen	**Bautzen***	The CCI is a service agency that promotes the regional industrial sector in the Bautzen district. It performs the following services: o training and education, training consultancy o service to business regarding portfolio management, innovation and technology, management, promotion, information o Mediation of international business contacts	http://www.dresden.ihk.de/
Saxon State Board of Trustees for Rural Areas (Sächsiches Landeskuratorium Ländlicher Raum e.V., SLK)	**Nebelschütz OT Miltitz***	SLK supports local actors with the initiation and implementation of regional projects for rural development throughout Saxony.	http://www.slk-miltitz.de/

Institutions in the OHTL-Region.

5.3   Synthesis: Examples of operational interfaces, partnerships and arrangements

The territorial level of the Dresden region (*Direktionsbezirk* Dresden) is not an administrative scale at which relevant rural development policy is formulated or implemented. As was pointed out in the previous section, the most important regional scale for policy formulation is the *Bundesland* level, i.e. the *Bundesland* of Saxony. A relevant level for the implementation and bottom-up learning based development initiatives is formed by the integrated rural development regions (*ILE*-regions) and the LEADER–regions. There are 10 such regions in the *Direktionsbezirk* Dresden. For a detailed analysis we chose one of these regions the 'Upper Lusatian Land of Heaths and Ponds'- Region ('*Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft*'- OHTL). The OHTL-Region is formed by 17 independent municipalities. The region stretches over an area of 611 km^2 and has a population of 86,400 inhabitants. Like all of rural Eastern Saxony, the region suffers from population decline. A large part of the population lives in the regional center, the city of Bautzen, which has 41,100 inhabitants and is an important administrative and industrial center. The OHTL-Region is Germany's largest commercially operated pond region, with about 1,000 ponds, that specialises in carp fishing. About one third of the region is located within environmental protection zones. The most important one is the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve '*Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft*' which covers about 14 per cent of the region but also extends beyond the LEADER region's limits. Another unique feature of the area is its heritage of Sorbian culture. This cultural minority's customs and traditions are well preserved in the bilingual region between the cities of and Hoyerswerda. The 'Upper Lusatian Land of Heaths and Ponds' (OHTL) is not a pre-established administrative unit in which cooperation and regional learning take place, but it is in itself the product and outcome of regional learning processes. The OHTL-Region is in a way an emerging region in the sense of (Paasi, 2009) who conceptualised regions as outcomes of social processes that develop their boundaries, symbolisms and institutions in a process of **institutionalisation***.* A region thus emerges and may become established and gain its status in the broader regional structure. It may consequently become a significant spatial unit for regional identification. It is not yet clear how far the process of regional institutionalisation of the OHTL-Region will advance and if the present organisational and territorial shape will prevail.

Several communities that are now part of the OHTL-Region had cooperated successfully in a working group on tourism (*Touristische Gebietsgemeinschaft "Heide und Teiche im Bautzener Land e.V."*). More importantly, 16 of the 17 communities that currently form the OHTL-Region were between 2000-2006 parts of a LEADER+ Region initiative that included a total of 29 rural communities. During that time experiences in cooperative practices were made and trust ('social capital') was generated among the partners. The regional partners in the 16 rural communities were joined by the city of Bautzen and developed an integrated rural development concept in a cooperative approach. The network of local partners thus succeeded in becoming a LEADER region for the period 2007-2013. The OHTL-Region is responsible for the use of the finances and management. The local management teams support and encourage the cooperation of the people in the region and assist in designing and implementing new development models for the rural region. The organisational structure of the OHTL-Region is presented in Fig. 2.

The guiding principle of the development concept is expressed in the slogan 'Tradition and future in the bi-lingual Upper Lusatian Land of Heaths and Ponds' and focuses on topics of demographic and economic development and environmental issues. Four fields for action are identified:

- Urban-rural relations and the preservation of the quality of life in rural areas: Specific activities that are planned concern an improvement of public transport in rural space.

- Strengthening of regional economic circuits (theme: 'Yellow mustard and blue carp – employment through increased regional value added production').

- Environmental protection and protection of cultural heritage: Sustainable use of environmental resources and a development of the region in connection with the UNSECO Biosphere Reserve.

- Tourism as an important factor of the regional economy: The history of the region, the Sorbian traditions and the attractive landscape of the region are to be accentuated in efforts of regional tourist marketing.

A wide range of projects was proposed in the OHTL-Region (Fig. 3) and first project proposals are already being implemented. Some examples of the more important so-called 'lead projects' include events, infrastructure projects and marketing efforts, for instance:

- An information centre for the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve,
- The open air museum '*Produzierendes Museumsdorf Weicha*',
- An annual artist workshop 'KRABAT-Stein'
- The promotion of regional products, in particular the local carp production, was already a theme in the first development phase (2000-2006). An annual festival is organised around this local product ('*Lausitzer Fischwochen*') to support the marketing efforts.
- A bi-annual international Sorbian folklore festival is planned to support tourism in the region.
- The extension of tourist bicycle and skate routes and the development of a motocross circuit
- Improvement of the cooperation of local fire fighting squads.

Partnerships exist between the Local Action Group ('*Verein zur Entwicklung der Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft e.V.*'), the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve '*Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft*' and the local heritage association KRABAT e.V. A network node outside the region is the public regional marketing agency for Upper Lusatia (*Marketinggesellschaft Oberlausitz-Niederschlesien GmbH*). It is intended to continue the integrated rural development process beyond 2013. Regional partnerships would thus have the opportunity to grow and to stabilize.

Figure 5-2 Organisational structure of the 'Upper Lusatian Land of Heaths and Ponds'- Region

Local Action Group – (association 'Verein zur Entwicklung der Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft e.V.')

Regional management

Board of coordination

Representatives of the municipalities, organisation and local enterprises (26 members)

Scientific and professional advisors

Forms networks with regional partners

Marketinggesellschaft Oberlausitz

UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Oberlausitzer Heide- und

KRABAT e.V.

Thematic working groups

'Inter-municipal cooperation'

,Regional value added production'

,Rural tourism'

,Youth and future'

,Nature and culture'

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

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Apart from LEADER, there are other arrangements between knowledge facilities, public administration and regional initiators in the spatial framework of the OHTL-Region. In the following, two rural development initiatives will be presented which support and initiate rural regional learning and innovation activities:

An example for operational interfaces between representatives of public administration, representatives of knowledge facilities and regional initiators can be found the so-called **Krabat-Region**. It is represented by the registered society for the regional promotion of the bi-lingual Lausitz (‚*Auf den Spuren des Krabat - Verein zur regionalen Entwicklung der zweisprachigen Lausitz e.V.'*, *KRABAT e.V.*). Main topics of the association are the promotion of the regional brand "Krabat" (a figure in a Sorbian legend), the development of regional products for tourism purposes and the support of regional development, e.g. as initiator of network projects such as ***Bioenergy region 'Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft'.*** The bioenergy region covers an area of 909 km² and comprises altogether 18 municipalities, including the towns Bautzen, Hoyerswerda and Kamenz. 16 of the 17 municipalities of the OHTL-Region participate in the initiative. So there is a strong overlap of actors in the two networks. About 30 km² of the bioenergy region are UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The objectives of this initiative are an enhancement of energy efficiency and an increased utilisation of renewable energies by the development of joint projects and the exchange of experiences. The realisation of these objectives contributes to the establishment of regional economic cycles.

Another important organisation in the spatial frame of the OHTL-Region is the **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve 'Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft'**. Main aim of the biosphere reserve is the establishment of an exemplary nature reserve for (I) the demonstration of sustainable forms of economic development, (II) environmental research and observation and (III) an active environmental education. In contrast to the concept of 'Nature Parks' inhabitants and their economic practices are actively involved in biosphere reserves. Following projects serve as examples for activities within the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve:

- 'Children of villages' is a project for environmental education that is realised by the 'Förderverein für die Natur der Oberlausitzer Heide- und

Teichlandschaft e.V.' on behalf of the administration of the biosphere reserve. The project consists of several events, especially for children and the youth who are living in or nearby the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

- 'Nature markets' offer possibilities for regional producers of agricultural, gardening and handicraft goods to present and promote their products. Every year in September there is a nature market in Guttau/OT Wartha am Olbasee (district Bautzen) offering a diversity of market activities with performances in handicraft and culture. The nature market has the motto 'Market and culture between heath and ponds' and lays a special focus on Sorbian culture and traditions.

Further relevant development initiatives and networks in the Dresden region that can be used for future studies are the initiative '*Umgebindeland*' and the cluster initiative 'Wood'. Another interesting network that can be analyzed in-depth is the transborder educational network **PONTES**. It is located in the Czech-German-Polish EUROREGION Neisse-Nisa-Nysa and can serve as an example for the establishment of a 'learning region' in rural peripheries. PONTES is one of 75 model projects in Germany that were funded between 2003 and 2007 by the National Ministry for Education and Sciences within the programme 'Learning Regions – Providing Support for Networks' (already mentioned under 5.1.). By means of PONTES a better and transborder networking of educational facilities and a further development of educational infrastructure is to be achieved. The PONTES network consists of about 300 partners from sciences, education, training, economy and politics of all three countries in the EUROREGION.

6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 'ROSCOMMON (I)' MARIE MAHON AND MAURA FARELL

This chapter summarises the research findings for the West Region and County Roscommon area. The first section discusses the significance of public policies and strategies that support rural and regional development through the promotion of learning, innovation and capacity-building. This is followed by a review of the findings relating to publicly-funded knowledge institutes and agencies/organisations that are relevant for supporting regional and rural knowledge and learning in the West region and the Roscommon study area. The final section concludes by drawing together the main points, which it situates and interprets within the conceptual framework devised for WP4.

6.1 Learning and innovation support strategies

This section of the research focuses on the nature and range of policies identified as having a learning and capacity-building remit. It makes a distinction between policies devised and delivered at different levels: i) those set at national level with a presumed dissemination of associated funding supports to the regional and local (either directly or through intermediary bodies); ii) those with a more explicitly-declared regional focus; iii) those with a specific local remit. As well as revealing the range of policy proscriptions, this is also relevant to an illustration of the different decision-making levels that pertain in an Irish context, and the potential impacts of governance structures that are predominantly top-down when devising and delivering certain development strategies to the regions and to the more local levels. In this regard, it also draws attention to the nature and impact of funding sources, particularly the significance of EU funding.

At the national level the principal, overarching strategy for economic and social development in Ireland is the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013. It has a budget of €184 billion and is drawn up by central government. It contains four main strategic policy themes, two of which are Regional Development, and Rural Economy. Within this there are five key investment priorities : 1) Economic Infrastructure; 2) Enterprise, Science and Innovation; 3) Human Capital; 4) Social Infrastructure; 5) Social Inclusion. Although broadly set, all of these are relevant in certain ways to learning and capacity-building; however, in

the context of WP4, the two strands reflecting a more specific and significant range of commitments to enhancing learning, knowledge and capacity-building are identified as no.s 2 and 5. The various subprogrammes associated with these two priorities are summarised below (Table 6-1).

Table 6-1 National Development Plan, 2007-2013 – details of Priority Programmes

Programmes under Enterprise, Science and Innovation Priority	Total € million
Science, Technology and Innovation	6,112
Enterprise Development	3,323
Tourism Development	800
Agriculture and Food	8,028*
Rural Social and Economic Development	844**
Gaeltacht and Islands Development	457
Marine and Coastal Communities	442
Total for Enterprise, Science and Innovation Priority	**20,006**
Programmes under Social Inclusion Priority	
Children programme	12,290
Working Age – Education	4,201
Working Age – Social and Economic Participation	1,160
Working Age – Justice	300
Older People	9,725
People with Disabilities	19,250
Local and Community Development	1,862
Horizontal Programme	848
Total for Social Inclusion Priority	**49,636**

Two of these arguably hold specific relevance for rural areas, including the West Region – the Agriculture and Food subprogramme, and the Rural Social Economic Development subprogramme. The latter contains a number of measures of direct relevance to the West Region. This includes CLÁR, providing for regeneration measures targeted at rural areas of specific population decline. Most of County Roscommon is under the remit of CLÁR. Another measure, the Western Investment Fund, is also specifically directed towards the West Region.

It is designed to provide capital to assist enterprises in the region. The fund is delivered by the Western Development Commission. LEADER funding is also channelled through this subprogramme. Roscommon Integrated Development Company is the single entity delivering LEADER for County Roscommon.

In terms of spatial planning strategies, the National Development Plan does set out a framework for the promotion of regional development through the strategic investment in larger urban centres, or 'Gateways' and smaller centres, or 'Hubs'. This approach is based on the country's National Spatial Strategy (NSS), which is in turn linked at European level to the European Spatial Development Perspective and the concept of polycentric development. As the main economic and population centre, Galway City has been designated the Gateway for the West Region, with targeted development in key infrastructure, including transport, education and industry. Within the West Region, a series of 'Hubs' have also been identified; however, Roscommon Town, as the main town in the County, is not included.

6.1.1 Regional-level development perspectives

The policy strategy most clearly identifiable as pertaining to the West Region is the BMW Regional Operational Programme[19]. The BMW Region currently qualifies for assistance under the EU's Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (i.e. for the period 2007-2013). The amount of funding in question is €458 million, of which 50% is from the ERDF. The BMW Operational Programme is itself underpinned by a number of national-level strategies which incorporate the objectives of building a competitive economy through the development of learning and innovation. The three principal strategies are: a) the National Reform Programme (Building Ireland's Knowledge Economy); b) the National Research & Development Action Plan; and, c) the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006-2013.

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[19] Border, Midland & Western (BMW) Regions cover 13 counties, amongst which county Roscommon. The Regional Assembly comprises 29 elected members nominated by 14 the constituent local authorities, within the BMW region.

Since its establishment in 1999, the BMW Regional Assembly has undertaken several reviews to establish the region's status across a range of socio-economic and structural dimensions which would in turn impact upon its ability to be competitive within an increasingly globalised environment. One of the most significant reports was its Audit of Innovation, conducted in 2004. This report highlighted a range of factors that potentially mitigated against the region's capacity to sustain and further expand innovative and entrepreneurial activities within the region. Its Regional Foresight Exercise 2005-2025 particularly mentioned the need to enhance the existing role of third level institutions within the region, especially the Institutes of Technology which traditionally had a weak research remit.

The BMW Operational Programme itself focuses on three key development priorities:

1) Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy
2) Environment and Risk Prevention
3) Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks.

Of most relevance for WP4 is Priority No. 1, with a focus on 5 key interventions:

a) Applied Research Enhancement, Incubation Facilities and Related Collaboration Initiatives
b) Building Research Capacity
c) Microenterprise Innovation and Entrepreneurship
d) Broadband Provision and Demand Stimulation
e) Experimental Innovative Actions.

In this programme, support for innovation and capacity-building is strongly associated with enterprise development and economic activity. There is also the clear association with third level institutes within the region in terms of developing these capacities. Learning or innovation and its potential in the context of social or cultural dimensions of regional or rural development is not emphasised in policy pronouncements.

Other organisations and agencies indirectly supporting learning and innovation policies and strategies within the region do so at a smaller scale, and with interventions that are more limited in scope. The principal organisation after the

BMW Assembly is the Western Development Commission. It is primarily a policy research and analysis organisation which aims to promote the position of the region in development initiatives. It places particular emphasis on measures that promote the rural dimensions of the region, especially diversification of the rural economy. Its operational remit is narrower than the BMW Assembly, and falls under the auspices of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It does provide one form of financial support for local initiatives, through the WDC Investment Fund (€28 million). One of their major initiatives has been to attract population to relocate from the Dublin region to the West of Ireland, particularly those with skills or in employment.

A range of other organisations also either directly try to influence government policy with regard to knowledge, learning and capacity-building, or deliver on national policies in this regard within a regional and local context. These include Teagasc (The Agriculture and Food Development Authority), FAS (the National Training and Employment Authority), Enterprise Ireland (promotion of Irish enterprise) and WestBic (EC Business and Innovation Centre). Teagasc has a very specific agriculture and rural development focus, and is under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Driven by EU policies, one of its main areas of concern is promoting diversification of agriculture and farm-related activities. This is pursued in two ways – through research activities and through its direct advisory services to farmers.

6.1.2   *County Level Development Strategies*

In many cases, these are a reflection of national-level policies that are delivered by organisations and agencies representing or funded by central government at the local level. Such organisations include County Development Boards, County Enterprise Boards and Vocational Education Committees. Funding is channelled to these organisations from central government. Organisations that set their own local development agendas would include Local Action Groups (including those delivering LEADER Programmes and Local Development Social Inclusion Programmes). However these also now reflect an increasing set of national priorities given that EU funding is at a reduced level in the Irish context. These organisations would all provide certain kinds of support to learning and capacity-building in the form of direct financial supports, training, advice, mentoring, etc.;

however, the suggestion is that some of the efforts may be fragmented whilst in other cases, overlap exists.

6.2 Network of capacity-building organisations

This section summarises the more precise nature of support relevant to regional and rural learning provided through publicly-funded institutes and agencies/organisations in the West region and the Roscommon study area.

Table 6.2 provides an overview of learning and innovation support structures identified within the West Region and County Roscommon. The focus is predominantly on publicly-supported organisations and agencies, even though there is also a wide and arguably increasing network of private organisations operating on a consultancy basis which are frequently enrolled by these agencies on a short term basis to provide additional, specialised supports in the form of training, mentoring, audits and assessments. Table 2 is divided into 3 different 'levels'; the first outlines educational institutes with knowledge and capacity-building remit; second is regional and local public agencies; and third, other regional and local, private and/or professional agencies. Their location within the region, their knowledge and learning remit, and nature of their funding source is also indicated.

Table 6-2 Overview of learning and support structures identified within the West Region and County Roscommon

Name	Location	Knowledge and learning remit	Funding source	Website
Educational institutes with knowledge and capacity-building remit				
National University of Ireland Galway	Galway City	Third level education and research	Public	www.nuigalway.ie
St. Angela's College	Sligo Town	Third level (outreach campus of NUI Galway)	Public	www.stangelas.nuigalway.ie
Galway Mayo Institute of Technology	Galway City Castlebar	Third level education and research. Emphasis on technical training	Public	www.gmit.ie

Sligo Institute of Technology	Sligo Town	As above	Public	www.itsligo.ie
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	As above	Public	www.lyit.ie
Athlone Institute of Technology	Athlone, Co. Westmeath	As above	Public	www.ait.ie

Regional and local public agencies with governance, knowledge and capacity-building remit

BMW Regional Authority	West region	Advisory/research	Public	www.bmwassembly.ie
Western Development Commission	West Region	Advisory/research		www.wdc.ie
Teagasc – The Food and Agricultural Authority	Galway (RERC) Network of advisory offices across region	Agricultural and rural development research, training and advice.	Public	www.teagasc.ie
FÁS – The National Training and Employment Agency	Network of training centres and employment offices across region.	Training; employment/recruitment service; advisory; support for community-based enterprises	Public	www.fas.ie
County Enterprise Board	Roscommon Town	Advisory/training	Public	www.roscommon.ie
Vocational Education Centre	Roscommon Town	Training	Public	www.roscommonvec.ie

Údarás na Gaeltachta	Gaeltacht areas	Business support, education & training	Public	www.udaras.ie
Enterprise Ireland	Regional network – (incl. Galway, Letterkenny, Sligo, Athlone	Business support,	Public	www.enterprise-ireland.com
Failte Ireland	Regional network – Regional office – Galway (covering West Region – Galway, Mayo, Roscommon)	Tourism-specific support	Public	www.failteireland.ie
Marine Institute	Oranmore, Co. Galway	Marine research	Public	www.marine.ie
Local Action Groups	Roscommon Integrated Development Company	Business support, training, community devt.	Public	www.ridc.ie
Other regional and local private and/or professional agencies with knowledge and capacity-building remit				
Westbic (Business & Innovation Centre	Roscommon Town	Business planning & support	EU & private	www.westbic.ie

The West region has one university (National University of Ireland Galway) and three Institutes of Technology. Athlone Institute of Technology, in Athlone Town, is situated on the Roscommon border and as such the county would form part of its catchment area. Other organisations such as Teagasc and FAS operate on a networking basis throughout the region and the county, providing a range of services.

6.2.1   *Examples of operational interfaces, partnerships and arrangements*

Líonra Network

Co-operation is evident amongst agencies and organisations at all levels in terms of promotion and facilitation of learning and capacity-building initiatives. One example of this kind of collaboration at the regional level is with the BMW Regional Assembly and the Líonra Network. Established in 2001, this is a network of all of the third level education institutes in the BMW region, and the BMW Regional Assembly. The stated aim of the Líonra Network is "to create a collaborate response by the third-level sector to the development needs of the BMW Region" (Heads of Agreement, 2009). The rationale behind the agreement was an acknowledgement of the disparities between the regions of Ireland in regard to technological development and innovation, and human resource development. The underlying principle of the Líonra Network is that of collaboration among the institutions, and between academia, research centres and industry. The focus is predominantly on boosting research and development that will in turn stimulate innovation resulting in economic benefits. The benefits of the network approach are to facilitate sharing of information and resources.

The Network has recently been involved in a partnership with Enterprise Ireland and FAS, with funding assistance of €200,000 from FAS. The project enabled individuals to set up and develop new businesses in the areas of health science, engineering, biotechnology and IT. The programme offered a range of practical supports including start-up support, information workshops for entrepreneurs, financial planning advice and business mentoring. It provided dedicated workspace for participants within the Business Incubation Units of the participating Líonra institutions.

BMW Business Mentoring for Winners

This initiative was funded through the BMW Regional Programme of Innovative Actions following successful application by Líonra. It involved a mentoring programme delivered to small firms via the seven institutions in the network. A total of 35 firms received support. The aims of the initiative were: to analyse

specific skills needs and identify the best forms of assistance; to develop the human resource capacity within enterprises to enhance their innovative and competitive capacities. It was thus motivated by the need to stimulate and improve the knowledge absorption capacity of companies in the region, and to assist in the development and creation of sustainable businesses, and increase collaboration between enterprises and the third-level education sector.

BMW Food Technology Transfer Programme

The aim of the initiative has been to assist small-scale local and regional food producers through the creation of a regional food technology transfer system, linking centres of academic expertise and product development with food producing companies and food producer hubs. This initiative, which is also part of the BMW's Regional Programme of Innovative Actions, involved the BMW Assembly allocating resources directly to St. Angela's Food Technology Centre in Sligo, and the Drumshanbo Food Hub (Developed by Drumshanbo Community Council, County Leitrim and serving food companies in Counties Leitrim and Roscommon) in order to progress the initiative. The target was to increase the capacity of 50 small food producers throughout the BMW Region. Assistance to companies has been provided by these centres on a case-by-case basis. The rationale behind this initiative was the knowledge that within the BMW Region there was a large number of small food producers serving local and regional markets but with additional value added in that they sourced raw materials locally. However, it was clear that these were operating in an extremely competitive market, and that many of them were lacking in the full range of skills and expertise necessary to be successful, from achieving standards of excellence in the product itself (e.g. product development and quality control), to the sale of the product (e.g. marketing, branding, packaging, etc.). The initiative has also been expanded to other food producers in the region, using the network of County Enterprise Boards and LEADER Groups. The initiative has also linked into the Skillnets Learning Network to source additional expertise and support.

Skillnets Learning Network

Skillnets is a publicly-funded programme which provides financial support for enterprises that decide to co-operate as a group in order to establish an industry training programme or undertake an industry initiative that individual members

of the group could not undertake as successfully acting alone. The main aim of the network is to support the development of work place skills. The emphasis is on flexible delivery, tailor-made to suit specific needs and circumstances. This means that enterprises can identify their training needs and devise suitable local training responses. Skillnet supports the networks with resources and expertise. It is a particularly beneficial approach for SMEs that are faced with constraints around critical mass, expertise, time and finance to deliver effective training on their own. One of the members of Skillnet is the Rural Food Company Training Network, which has become part of the resources for the Food Technology Transfer Programme. From a regional perspective, Skillnet is active with around 30 networks in operation in the BMW region. The Líonra Network is also affiliated to Skillnet.

6.2.2 Publicly-supported initiatives at local level

Roscommon Integrated Rural Development Company (RIDC)

The RIDC is a new initiative formed in 2009 by the joining of the Arigna LEADER Company, the Mid-South Roscommon LEADER Company and the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, following directions by the co-ordinating government Department (Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs). County Roscommon thus has a single access point for local development. The company focuses on delivery of two main programmes to the county, Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) and LEADER.

Apart from these two principal programmes, the RIDC is also involved in supporting a number of other schemes which have capacity-building and knowledge-generating dimensions. These include: Community Services Programme (providing funding to groups that supply services to their local communities); HSE High-Scope (development and support of groups in the delivery of High-scope teaching), Social Finance (support to micro business in the early stages of a business); RosWIN -Roscommon Women in Business Network (develop and operate a business network for women in County Roscommon).

RosWIN – Promoting gender-based networks at the local level

The RosWIN network was established in 2006 by the Roscommon Partnership Company Ltd. (now RIDC), in collaboration with Roscommon County Enterprise

Board and WIN Ireland. The network is also supported by FÁS through its contribution to the employment of a network co-ordinator. The purpose of RosWIN is to foster entrepreneurship among women in County Roscommon by providing a forum where they can make contacts, promote their business, develop their knowledge, network together and meet other women in business. The RosWIN Network provides a forum to share experiences, and to provide a range of activities to its members. It also provides a link to business development supports from the County Enterprise Board, the IDC, FÁS, and other agencies. A range of training courses is provided through RosWIN with the aim of enhancing the skills and knowledge of its members. These include training in accredited courses that are also of practical value to building up a business. Many of these are provided by trained staff from Roscommon Enterprise Board. Examples include a Start Your Own Business Course, which covers the entire range of issues that are part of a new business start up.

6.3   Discussion and conclusions

Currently, much of the language surrounding discussions of learning, innovation and knowledge generation tend to reflect very definite discourses of 'production' of goods or services. One of the concerns arising from this review is overwhelming emphasis on policies to achieve a form of economic development rooted in the knowledge economy, and on high-end innovation and technological advancement through research and development which can only ultimately serve a very small section of the population in rural areas. The notion of a rural learning region in which this becomes a primary focus of knowledge-generation raises concerns about those who are excluded from such a model of development and the fate of other forms of knowledge. The central role of third level institutions in such a model also raises concerns of a geographical nature, with the reality that there is an inevitable clustering of high-end research around the vicinity of these institutions. The location of Business Incubation Units within the campuses of the relevant institutions is a small case in point.

On a related note, the exclusion of Roscommon Town as a hub town in the NSS framework could be perceived as a reflection of its low status in the wider scheme of development objectives for the country as whole across a range of

dimensions; an emphasising of its dependency status that makes the process of building capacity all the more difficult.

The review of publicly-funded institutes and agencies relevant for supporting regional and rural knowledge focused in the broadest sense on organisations that provide education, training and other related supports that contribute towards these outcomes in the region and study location. As such, it has sought to establish as comprehensively as possible the potential nature and extent of knowledge development and approaches to capacity-building within the region and the case-study area. In the context of promoting learning and innovation from a regional and rural perspective, the number of publicly-funded institutions might be regarded as relatively extensive; however, reviews conducted by bodies such as the BMW Regional Assembly have already established that levels of knowledge transfer and capacity-building are weak within the region. Along with the existing situation of infrastructural and other resource deficits in the region (already outlined in earlier reports) it could be argued that the predominantly top-down nature of public policy support for knowledge and learning initiatives creates inflexible conditions for those operating at the regional and local level in terms of goal-setting and decisions around funding. This in turn leads to a particular range of outcomes that can mitigate against learning, knowledge transfer and capacity-building, particularly by fragmenting efforts and reducing incentives for networking between institutions and agencies (thus reducing synergies on the ground). Situations relating to fragmentation of resources and efforts have been outlined in interviews with representatives of local organisations such as Roscommon County Enterprise Board and Roscommon County Council. Concerns have also been expressed about reductions in funding allocations to implement programmes and initiatives that would support learning and capacity-building. Whilst overlap in some areas was acknowledged, it also emerged that very good but informal working relationships had been developed at the local level among many of these organisations. This had led to constructive exchanges of information and pooling of resources to maximise the benefits that could be achieved for clients using their services. What was being clearly illustrated was the importance of informal networks of communication to bring value-added to an existing but scarce resource base, at least in financial capital terms. The issue of long-established staff leaving their positions and essentially truncating these informal networks of knowledge and information was

also discussed as an issue. In terms of understanding this situation through the conceptual framework, the evidence suggests the availability of a certain level of resources and facilities (in the form of financial allocations from the relevant government departments, put in place via the associated NDP-driven policy, but with a preoccupation on safeguarding rigid financial mechanisms set from the top. These then tend to be too inflexible on the ground when put into operation in a situation that requires a (justifiable) level of latitude in their interpretation. The wider concern would relate to the impact of very rigid conditions attaching to grant aid and other supports where the object is to encourage and promote innovation. Arguably, the introduction of a level of regional governance in the Irish context would prove beneficial.

The effective absence of a regional layer of governance in Ireland has generated ongoing concern about the effectiveness of policies that are formulated and delivered from the top down. A series of submissions to government from the BMW Regional Assembly which seeks to make explicit the inherent structural weaknesses within the region, points up the difficulties in applying 'one size fits all' policy prescription for regions, and areas within regions, in which markedly different infrastructure and resource conditions prevail. In other words, it contends that a level of regional 'proofing' is required. Another argument advanced by one interviewee, however, is that given Ireland's geographical size, population density (around 5 million persons) and our situation as an island nation, the idea of a regional strategy is an inherently problematic one. From a regional learning perspective, the absence of a regional tier of governance mitigates against the development of networks of co-operation and information exchange, making the task of developing local synergies all the more difficult. It also creates disincentives for other potential actors, typically the third level sector within the region, which must still compete on a national basis with all other institutions for the same sources of funding without being able to make a case for the strategic importance of the regional level. The BMW Regional Assembly arguably presents the most effective body to undertake a regional governance role in terms of co-ordinating with the diverse range of actors and stakeholders who would be part of this complex governance framework.

7 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 'SAARLAND (G)' WIOLETTA FRYS AND BIRTE NIENABER

In this chapter, an overview is given of the learning and innovation supporting strategies by documenting regional learning supporting (public) policies, their strategies and instruments in the CS region 'Saarland'. Then, examples of learning and innovation supporting structures will be presented there. Finally, a synthesis of the operational arrangements and networks will complete this chapter which will describe the different forms of cooperation between public and/or private agencies within the region, but also between (neighbouring) regions and across national borders.

7.1 Learning and innovation support policies and strategies

Within the scope of M4.1 Overview of public strategies for capacity building within the domain of regional development available 'Saarland', a documentation of regional learning supporting (public) policies (strategies and instruments) was drawn up by examining *rural development policies, regional development policies* and *learning and innovation policies*. In order to refer to the original documents, every described policy is followed by a link.

Interviews with 10 experts were carried out and recorded. The contacted key actors belong to the following institutions:

- Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen (1 key actor interviewed)

- Landwirtschaftskammer für das Saarland (2 key actors interviewed)

- Saarländisches Ministerium für Bildung, Familie, Frauen und Kultur (1 key actor interviewed)

- Saarländisches Ministerium für Gesundheit und Verbraucherschutz (1 key actor interviewed)

- Saarländisches Ministerium für Umwelt – Agentur Ländlicher Raum (2 key actors interviewed)

- Saarpfalz-Kreis – Dezernat Umwelt, Bildung und Bauen (1 key actor interviewed)

- SaarLernNetz (1 key actor interviewed)

- Saar-Lor-Lux Umweltzentrum GmbH (1 key actor interviewed)

Rural and regional development policies determine rural regional development in Saarland. The regional development policies carried out in Saarland are programmes and initiatives which are funded by the European Union and/or the German government and/or the federal state.

7.1.1   Rural development policies

<table>
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<u>**German Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz)**</u>

<u>**National strategic plan of the Federal Republic of Germany for the development of rural areas 2007-2013**</u>
The Federal Republic, represented by the Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, drew up a national strategic plan which comprehends the programmes of the federal states based on EU regulation (s. EAFRD) ((Umweltministerium des Saarlandes, 2010a).
<u>**Policy:**</u>
National Strategy Plan of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Development of Rural Regions 2007- 2013: http://www.saarland.de/dokumente/thema_naturnutzung/Nationale_Strategie_29-08-2006.pdf

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Box 7-1 Rural development policy (G): Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

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EPLR Saar (ELER) (EAFRD)

The plan for the development of rural areas in Saarland realises the contents of the EU regulations (EC) No. 1698/2005 ("ELER (EAFRD) regulation") for the funding period of 2007 – 2013. Thus, it is in accord with the strategic guidelines of the EU and the national strategic plan of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Besides considering the sustainability objectives of the Gothenburg Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment, the ELER (EAFRD) regulation provides four priority domains for the development of rural areas:

Axis 1: Improvement of the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry
Axis 2: Improvement of environment and landscape
Axis 3: Improvement of the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of rural economy
Axis 4: LEADER as a multi-disciplinary task

Firstly, the plan for the development of rural areas (EPLR Saar) analyses the situation of rural areas in Saarland and shows their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks in order to formulate appropriate measures, with reference to the objectives and strategies of the EU, which offer sustainable perspectives to the rural areas. Generally, the funding measures are provided to 50% by the EU and to 50% by national funds (federal (Bund) and state governments (Länder), local authorities). By far the most important source of co-financing is the National Basic Regulation which is primarily based on the joint task "Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coast Protection (GAK)".
For Saarland, about 28.3 million euros of EU funds are available for the period of 2007-2013 (previous period of 2000-2006: about 38 million euros). Besides the measures of Axes 1 and 2, which focus mainly on agriculture and forestry and for which more than half of the funds are provided, the measures of Axis 3 (village renewal, business start-ups, rural tourism, diversification of rural economy, et al.) should be reinforced during the funding period of 2007-2013, as well as the LEADER approach which benefits both agriculture and rural development ((Umweltministerium des Saarlandes, 2010a, Grabski-Kieron and Krajewski, 2007 NOTE 16, Hahne, 2008 NOTE 127ff).

Policy:
COUNCIL REGULATION *(EC) No* 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. (EAFRD): http://www.saarland.de/dokumente/thema_naturnutzung/ELER_VO_1698_2005.pdf

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Box 7-2 Rural development policy (G): EAFRD Saar

ILEK

ILEK is the abbreviation for "Intergriertes ländliches Entwicklungskonzept" (Integrated Rural Development Concept). This concept is drawn up by integrating existing plans, concepts and studies on the area of several municipalities. Among other things, the conceptional connection of individual measures is part of this. An important factor is the collaboration of the population and other actors of rural areas in the forming process.

The objective of ILEK, which is supposed to serve as a strategic concept for the future of a rural region, is the improvement of the quality of life in rural regions by securing and developing the spaces for life, work, recreation and nature (Magel and Franke, 2008 NOTE: 29ff).

An integrated and innovative rural development is required so that rural areas can fulfill their diverse functions as a space for life, economy, nature and recreation. This is a development which is characterised by regional economic cycles, networks and cooperations, as well as active citizen participation. Therefore, the funding of the development of rural areas shifted more and more from individual sectoral development strategies to integrated rural development concepts (ILEK) over the last years. It is no longer the village as a delimited settlement unit or areas used for agriculture and forestry, which are the subject of surveys, plans and funding, but the region as a whole. Hence, several rural communities join together and draft an overall concept for their future development. Together, they develop strategies in order to improve their region in competition with other regions (Umweltministerium des Saarlandes, 2010c).

The task of the regional management consists in supporting communities with the practical implementation of the development concept, but also in helping the other project executing organisations with coordination and with questions of financing and funding possibilities. Furthermore, its task is to promote the development and the growing together of the region (verbraucherzentrale Saarland, 2010).

The report "ILEK Bliesgau" represents the formal conclusion of the drawing up of the integrated rural development concept (ILEK). With that, another important milestone on the way to a sustainable development of the Bliesgau has been reached (Saarpfalz-Kreis, 2010). As today the Bliesgau is a LEADER-region it is not a ILEK-region any more. One area is allowed to be either LEADER-region or ILEK-region and it is specific for Saarland. Furthermore there are following ILEK-regions in Saarland now: "Region Saar-Obermosel", "Region Illtal", "Region Hochwald", "Region Saar-Prims-Bogen" and "Region Saargau".

Policy:
ILEK Bliesgau Integrated rural development concept for the Bliesgau region (2007):
http://www.saarpfalz-kreis.de/dokumente/ILEK_Bliesgau.pdf

Box 7-3 Rural development policy (G): ILEK

REK

With the Regional Development Concept (REK), the "Local Action Group (LAG) Biosphere Reserve Bliesgau" took part in the Saarland competition for selecting local action groups for Focus 4 (LEADER) of the "Plan for the development of rural areas in Saarland" (ELER/ EAFRD) and took the first place. All future LEADER projects will be based on this concept (Biosphärenzweckverband Bliesgau, 2009a, Kroës and Elbe, 2008 NOTE: 95ff).

Policy:
Regional Development Concept - Plan for the development of rural areas in Saarland 2007-2013 (2007): http://www.biosphaere-bliesgau.eu/upload/pdf_07/REK_screen.pdf

Box 7-4 Rural development policy (G): REK

The biosphere reserve Bliesgau, which is located in the southeast of Saarland, bordering Rhineland-Palatinate and France, was officially designated by the UNESCO in 2009. The term of "Biosphere reserve" has become a category in the German federal law for nature conservation. The 15 German biosphere reserves designated by UNESCO represent habitats, typical types of landscape and

ecosystems which are this country. Almost all of them are cultural landscapes, which are cultivated at different levels of intensity and located in rural areas (German Commission for UNESCO, 2010a).

UNESCO-Policy of the biosphere reserve Bliesgau

People have been using the slightly hilly landscape of the Bliesgau for thousands of years. It is characterised by precious sparse orchards, different grasslands which are rich in species, extensive beech forests and a pasture landscape which is traversed by the little River Blies. The north of the Bliesgau is an urban commuter area. With a population density which is above the national average, the Bliesgau is rather urban in comparison to other German biosphere reserves. Therefore, the relation between urban and rural areas with all its different facets, influences and changes is one of the main focuses of scientific research.

A special characteristic of this region is the diversity of landscape: different living spaces overlap in a confined area and accommodate many rare habitats, animal and plant species; the highest number compared to other regions of the Saarland. The Bliesgau hosts over 80 percent of the whole population of the Little Owl (*Athene noctua*), which is threatened with extinction. The Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) is to be found particularly often and almost half of the orchid species which exist in Germany can be found on the shell limestone soils. The nature conservation project "Saar-Blies-Gau/Auf der Lohe" preserves the most precious natural treasures of the biosphere reserve.

The traditional small-parcellized cultural landscape is endangered especially by the abandonment of uneconomical areas. Over the last 30 years, 50 percent of all fruit trees disappeared. Therefore, the biosphere reserve, together with agriculture, is looking for news ways. There is a great potential concerning renewable energies, especially biomass from agriculture and forestry which can be used for the generation of energy. There is already an instrument for the active promotion and regional marketing called "Bliesgau-Regal". 18 suppliers market about 80 different products in about 30 super markets, beverage shops and bakeries.

Another challenge is the demographic change and its consequences for suburban and rural areas. The biosphere reserve develops village centres in a model-like way, looks after rural infrastructure, landscape development and local social networks.

The Ecological School Youth Hostel "Spohns House" in Gersheim is an important co-operation partner of the biosphere reserve. Due to the resolute orientation of the educational offers towards the principles of sustainability, was awarded as a project of the UN decade of education for sustainable development (for Spohns Haus see internal and external network of capacity building agencies).

Examples of functions of the biosphere reserve: research board of trustees, Bliesgau-Regal, Ecological School Youth Hostel "Spohns House", "Energy Initiative City of Solar power St. Ingbert"

The key issue of the idea of the biosphere is the regionality. With this ambitious project, the region, as a rural area, wants to face self-confidently the challenges of the future (German Commision for UNESCO, 2010b).

Policy:
Research and monitoring in German biosphere reserves:
http://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/MDB/documents/themen/gebietsschutz/Broschuere_Forschung_BR_Ansicht_18_08.pdf

Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2001): http://www.unesco.de/fileadmin/pdf/verfassung.de.pdf

Box 7-5 Rural development policy (G): UNESCO-Policy of the biosphere reserve Bliesgau

7.1.2   *Regional development policies*

Besides the rural development policies ILEK and REK, which were demonstrated in the appropriate section before but are regional development policies too, the other regional policies in Saarland will be formed below.

Operational Programme 'Saarland'
The Operational Programme Saarland is carried out with the participation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) within the framework of the objective 'Regional competitiveness and employment'

On August 8th, 2007, the European Commission approved a regional development programme for Saarland for the period of 2007-2013, the "Operational Programme EFRE (ERDF) Saarland - Regional competitiveness and employment 2007-2013". This programme comprehends joint support for the Saarland within the framework of the objective "Regional competitiveness and employment". The overall budget of the programme amounts to about 529 million Euros and the joint support by ERDF is about 198 million Euros (these are 0.74% of all EU funds which are used in Germany within the framework of Cohesion Policy) (Europäische Kommission, 2010).

Policy:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/prordn/details_new.cfm?gv_PAY=DE&gv_reg=ALL&gv _PGM=1102&LAN=4&gv_PER=2&gv_defL=9

Box 7-6 Regional development policy (G): European level

Regional development plans (LEP) determine regional planning on federal level. Based on valid regional planning law, the plans or programmes represent a combination of concrete objectives, spatial planning and general guidelines for the further planning and development of the federal states, but also of regions and communities.

Regional development plan (LEP), section "Environment"
The demands on the area are very varied. A modern society needs settlement areas, business areas, areas for leisure time, sports and recreation. But also the free – partly wild – landscape fulfills an important function for society. The regional development plan (LEP) "Environment" coordinated the different utilisation claims, weighed them up and formulated objectives for clearly defined area and site selections (Umweltministerium des Saarlandes, 2010b).

Policy:
Landesentwicklungsplan, Teilabschnitt „Umwelt (Vorsorge für Flächennutzung, Umweltschutz und Infrastruktur)" Teil A: Textliche Festlegungen vom 13. Juli 2004
Section "Environment (Precaution for land utilisation, environmental protection and infrastructure)" Part A: Textual determinations on 13 July 2004):
http://www.saarland.de/dokumente/thema_geoportal/LEP_Teilabschnitt_umwelt(1).pdf

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Box 7-7 Regional development policy (G): state level

LEADER is a programme for the promotion of rural areas which has been supporting model-like and innovative projects in rural areas already since 1991. It relies on the "bottom-up" approach which integrates the citizens of a region. Local action groups draw up made-to-measure development concepts for their region together with actors on the spot. The objective is to support the rural areas of Europe on their way to an independent development. In the funding

period of 2007-2013, LEADER is integrated as axis 4 in the EAFRD programme for the development of rural areas (Hahne, 2008 NOTE 127ff).

LEADER
The three central objectives of LEADER 2007-2013 are:
- Improvement of the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry
- Improvement of environment and landscape
- Improvement of the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of rural economy

Support of the regions by creating identity in times of globalisation:

The abandonment of regional identity in favour of a general internationality not only causes cultural impoverishment by adapting universal validity, but also economic recession due to the discontinuation of using own resources as well as loss of individual independence by abandoning local customs. Due to this reason, it is necessary in times of globalisation to save historically grown regional structures and to establish localisation as a counterbalance.
To support the regions means, among other things, to create economic cycles which are stable, local and sustainably effective. This can be achieved by the establishment and extension of value added chains like: local husbandry of dairy cattle, local processing of milk and local sale of dairy products.

Such projects are promoted, among others, by the LEADER programme of the EU and should serve primarily to satisfy the local basic needs and secondary to support the local rural economic power by overproduction which can be sold elsewhere.

Thereby the difficulties of the globalised world can be diminished within a clearly defined framework. Instead of satisfying one's basic needs in a 'global' way – by buying goods from the supermarket, own resources should be used again. Additional needs, which cannot be satisfied by local products, should be supplied by goods offered from neighbouring regions. Several effects could result from that:
- Preservation and creation of local traditions
- Support of local self-confidence and regional identity
- Support of local economy
- Increase of quality of basic necessity
- Recovery of culinary experiences which seemed to be lost forever

The promotion of rural development and of local commodity markets is by no means motivated in a folkloric way. It is not a matter of luring visitors to the countryside by "hustle and bustle". However, it is about stopping the social effect of decoupling, which is spreading in rural areas due to globalisation, and to oppose the internationalising trend with a localising one.
Eight regions established themselves in Saarland. The three LEADER regions can be found among them:
- Biosphere reserve Bliesgau
- Cultural landscape initiative St. Wendeler Land
- Local action group Warndt

The following educational offerings are provided within the framework of LEADER:

Biosphere reserve Bliesgau – Environmental Education:
Environmental education is an important issue for the biosphere reserve Bliesgau. Children are our future, also and especially in the biosphere reserve Bliesgau. Therefore, the biosphere reserve offers a lot of activities which aim at children and adolescents. The following events are carried out:
- Competitions for schools and nursery schools
- School project "Sparse Orchard"
- Further training for educators

Cultural landscape initiative St. Wendeler Land – Environmental education and qualification:
Two main objectives are pursued in this field with eight projects. For one thing, attractive offers in order to experience the natural environment are put up especially for children and adolescents (e.g. the School Farm Walhausen, eco-pedagogic offers of the School Youth Hostel Berschweiler and nature educational trails in Ostertal). For another thing, specific qualifications with reference

to the local commodity market are built up.

In detail, the following projects are carried out:
- Seminar series „Localisation/Globalisation"
- Eco-pedagogic School Youth Hostel Berschweiler
- Permanent exhibition "Local commodity market" - Wendelinushof
- Rural Energy Mix
- Regional network of educational trails in cultural landscape
- Youth and nature in rural areas
- School Farm Walhausen
- Qualification "Gastronomy/commodity market"
(Verbraucherzentrale Saarland, 2009)

Policies:
National regulations of the Federal Republic of Germany for the development of rural areas
http://www.warndt.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/leader/leader-warndt/NationaleRahmenregelungen-ELER_01.pdf

COUNCIL REGULATION *(EC) No* 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. (EAFRD)
http://www.saarland.de/dokumente/thema_naturnutzung/ELER_VO_1698_2005.pdf

Leader group(s)
Within the framework of EAFRD, three so-called Leader regions (Bliesgau, Warndt, St. Wendeler Land in Saarland are supported, in which development processes are planned, realised and promoted self-dependently by local action groups. In the Leader region St. Wendeler Land, until 2006, 2.48 million euros were available for the realisation of the "Lokalwarenmarkt (local goods market) – St. Wendeler Land".

Statistisches Landesamt (*Statistical State Office*)(Hrsg.) (o.J.): LEADER + im Saarland – eine Herausforderung für den ländlichen Raum. Available on: http://www.saarland.de/8355.htm [Last access: 29/10/09]
Europäische Kommission (*European Commission*)(Hrsg.) (2009): Europa vor Ort im Saarland. Available on: http://presseportal.eu-kommission.de/index.php?id=24 [Last access: 29/10/09]

Box 7-8 Regional development policy (G): LEADER and Leader group(s)

7.1.3   Learning and innovation policies

Programmes for regional development are offered by several German federal ministries and carried out in close cooperation with the Länder (federal states) or they are initiated by the state governments themselves. These programmes focus on the promotion of regional education, support of the regional economy and scientific research.

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research
"Learning Regions – Support of Networks" is a programme of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research with the participation of all federal states and the European Social Fund of the European Union.
Altogether about 118 million euros are available for the programme. 51 million euros of this sum come from the European Social Fund. The support is carried out according to the guidelines.
At present, 70 Learning Regions are supported on the basis of the guidelines 2001. The networks were chosen in 2001 and 2002 (first and second wave) and are sponsored for five years at maximum. The support of other networks, according to guideline 2001, is not possible.
With the help of guideline 2006, the programme Learning Regions – Support of Networks is reinforced. In the period of 01/07/2006 and 01/10/2006 to 31/12/2007, integrated services in regional networks for 'Lifelong Learning" are sponsored. Networks, which were not already supported by the programme "Learning Regions – Support of Networks" within this term, are entitled to make an application.
The present guideline of funding (2007; see below) enables proven educational networks, within the framework of the programme "Learning Regions – Support of Networks", to consolidate again their model-like work in the fields of funding which are described in the programme (LERNENDE REGIONEN 2009a).

The programme "Learning Regions – Providing Support for Networks"

"International comparative studies reveal that Germany has not yet been sufficiently successful in developing and using all talents, in particular those of disadvantaged people. The educational offer does not appeal to all, although continuing learning has become imperative in a knowledge society. Whether young or old; up-to-date knowledge is indispensable for taking new chances – without it, there is the threat of social exclusion and unemployment. Thus, it is necessary to build the foundations as early as possible in order to be able to develop competencies and gain qualifications throughout a whole lifetime. This requires interlocking all educational sectors and comprehending education as a continuing process. Institutional borders have to be overcome so that learning can take place within demand-oriented structures. Making Lifelong Learning feasible is the common target of the Federal Government, the states and the European Union. The point is to create the structural conditions for an open access to the learning worlds of tomorrow" (Lernende Regionen, 2009b).

Making Lifelong Learning feasible through networking and co-operation
"The Federal Ministry of Education and Research Action Programme "Lifelong Learning for All" and the recommendations of the "Forum Bildung", which elaborated strategic proposals for the quality and sustainability of education in Germany, pave the way for a "learning society". Their main ideas are:
- Strengthening the learners' personal responsibility and self-management
- Motivating disadvantaged groups that are currently less involved in education
- Strengthening relations between all educational sectors
- Co-operation of educational providers and users
- Improving the quality, quantity, and structure of offers, in order to promote user-orientation in particular.
Co-operation and networking offer educational providers and organisers a chance to actively create a structural change for Lifelong Learning. Learners and companies' changing expectations, individualisation of educational requirements, and reforms in labour market policy demand new offers and innovations that cannot be initiated by single and small providers on their own" (Lernende Regionen, 2009b).

"With its programme, "Learning Regions – Providing support for networks", the Federal Ministry of Education and Research promotes regional co-operation and networking. The objective is to bring together important players from different educational sectors in order to jointly develop new offers for Lifelong Learning within the scope of a regional strategy. This includes:
- General and vocational schools, institutions of higher education, funding agencies and institutions offering out-of school education and off-the-job or inter-firm training, trade union's and industry training organisations, adult education centres, education funding agencies of the churches, commercial providers and other educational institutions
- Companies, chambers, trade unions, business development organisations
- Education counselling institutions, youth authorities, employment offices and other administrations
- Cultural and socio-cultural institutions
- Teachers and learners" (ibid.).

Impulses from the Learning Regions
"The goal of the "Learning Regions – Providing support for networks" programme is to find optimal solutions for the structural challenges of Lifelong Learning -solutions, which will not only benefit the promoted networks, but which can also be assumed and continued by others. At the same time, results from other programmes should be adopted and implemented within the Learning Regions. The structure-building and sustainable approach of this programme is also generating lively interest on an international level (ibid.)".

"Exchanging results is organised in the form of programme-wide thematic networks. They represent the "rails" via which the results are systematically revised:
- Developing sustainable structures and organisations of regional networks for Lifelong Learning, quality development in networks
- Education marketing: improvement of exchange processes between providers and users, advertising for Lifelong Learning, development of trademarks
- Lifelong guidance: qualification and education counselling, increasing transparency
- New learning worlds: innovative forms of teaching and learning, new learning locations and e-Learning

- New transitions between educational phases, recognition of informal learning, improvement of the permeability between educational sectors
- Involvement of and co-operation with small and medium-sized enterprises.

Within the scope of the thematic networks, programme-wide symposia and conferences are organised, single projects are systematically compared, success factors are derived, models are introduced and reviewed in a general form. The most important media for the programme-wide result transfer are, among others, "inform – The Magazine for Learning Regions" ("inform – Das Magazin für Lernende Regionen") and the internet platform of the project management agency within DLR www.lernende-regionen.info" (ibid.).

Policies
Funding guidelines for „Integrated services of regional networks for Lifelong Learning "for the consolidation II of the programme "Learning Regions – Promotion of Networks", 12.02.2007: http://www.lernende-regionen.info/dlr/download/DRL_Ausschreibungstext_0307_final_Netz.pdf
Guidelines of 2006 and 2001: http://www.lernende-regionen.info/dlr/2_7.php
Presentation of the programme: Learning Regions – Promotion of Networks (2008): http://www.lernende-regionen.info/dlr/download/BMBF-21_Lernende-Regionen_Master_03.pdf

Implementing the strategy for Lifelong Learning (2004): http://www.lernende-regionen.info/dlr/download/Ausstellungskatalog-gesamt.pdf

The programme "Learning Regions – Providing Support for Networks": http://www.lernende-regionen.info/dlr/1_141.php

Educational offerings and target groups
Learning Region Saarland "SaarLernNetz" (Saar Learning Network)
The "SaarLernNetz" is the place to go for „new learning in Saarland" and wants to be a kind of educational market place for new learning with new media in the region. It provides different facilities concerning learning, playing and informing as well as new educational offerings in the region and the way to use them. The information platform offers the following services:

- A service office, as a permanent institution, which
  - makes information and resources for using new media available
  - is qualified in using new methods
  - coordinates the network
- A project workshop, in which new developments of network partners are initiated; new innovative projects are the objective
- Fields of business in which projects and orders in the network can be tested and put into practice. This includes, among other things, an interactive detective story for using knowledge, the media transfer of the Gesundheitsnetz (health network) Saar, practical oriented learning and teaching in the fields of technology, business management and languages. During consolidation phase[20], self study centres are built up in three locations: Saarbrucken, Merzig and St. Ingbert.

The focal point is to test infrastructure and accompanying offers for self study in regional-specific contexts.
The Learning Regions works together with the Greater City of Saarbrucken, the district principal town of Merzig and the medium-sized town of St. Ingbert within the range of municipal cooperation in order to implement Lifelong Learning as a multi-disciplinary task in different municipal structures.
The cooperation with St. Ingbert (adult education centre) focuses on development and establishment of an integrated overall concept for a municipal education planning of Lifelong Learning in a medium-sized town.
Schools, institutions of higher education, public and private further training centres, municipal

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[20] Self study centres for the Saarland region – SaarLernNetz (consolidation of the programme): The objective is to establish autodidactic learning in three model-like study centres in the region in order to test the conditions for an area-wide supply of self study offers and associated study consultants (LERNENDE REGIONEN (2009c) Netzwerke der Programmvertiefung "Integrierte Dienstleistungen regionaler Netzwerke für Lebenslanges Lernen".).

institutions, chambers, companies and labour unions belong to the network partners. The project management is represented by the German Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI GmbH) in Saarbrucken (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2008 NOTE: 87, 105).

Box 7-9 Regional development policy (G): Federal Ministry of Education and Research

German Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology
The Federal Ministry for Economy and Technology offers the so-called "Central Innovation Programme for Small and Medium-Sized Companies (ZIM)"

Educational offerings and target groups:
Central Innovation Programme for Small and Medium-Sized Companies (ZIM)
The "Central Innovation Programme for Small and Medium-Sized Companies (ZIM) " is the new basis programme of the German Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology for market-oriented technology promotion.
The ZIM started on July 1st, 2008 and offers to small and medium-sized companies a reliable perspective for the support their innovation efforts till the end of 2010. This is done by an attractive promotion of cooperation and network projects and, since 2009, additionally by the promotion of individual projects.
Hence, the ZIM is basis programme of the Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology for market-oriented technology promotion of the innovative economy of medium-sized companies in Germany. According to the motto "Stimulus for growth", the innovative power of small and medium-sized companies should be supported sustainably and it should be contributed to their growth and competitiveness. With ZIM, the technology promotion of the Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology wants to

> - encourage small and medium-sized companies to make a greater effort with research, development and innovation,
> - reduce the technical and economic risks of research and development projects,
> - convert research and development results quickly into market-effective innovation,
> - extend the cooperation between small and medium-sized companies and research institutions,
> - increase the commitment of small and medium-sized companies for research and development cooperations and innovative networks,
> - improve the management of innovation, cooperation and networks in small and medium-sized companies.

The ZIM is a nationwide promotion programme which is open to all technologies and sectors and which targets small and medium-sized companies and cooperating research institutions close to economy (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie, 2009).

Box 7-10 Regional development policy (G): Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology

Saarland Ministry of Economy and Science: Department C/3 – Promotion of innovation
Besides the promotion of investments and qualification, the Ministry for Economy and Science supports research and development in medium-sized companies within the framework of its innovation strategy. Those companies can make a profit and can grow that respond best to the ever-changing demands. The one, who is the first on the market with something newly developed, can achieve good prices for some time. Besides these processes of research and development, new structures, processes, leadership behaviour and incentive systems are decisive for companies, because they decide how well a company is prepared for the ever-intensifying competitive conditions.
A high degree of innovation is the result of systematic planning, realisation and control of ideas in organisations. This innovation management has to be understood as a part of the corporate strategy and can refer to products, services, production processes, organisational structures or management processes. Whereas product innovations usually pursue the goal of improve the satisfying of their customers' needs, process innovation are geared to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of processes (Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft des Saarlandes, 2009a).
Educational offerings and target groups:
Technologieprogramm Saar – TPS (Technology programme Saar TPS)
With the "Technologieprogramm Saar – TPS"(Technology programme Saar TPS), companies in Saarland are offered a wide range of funding possibilities for projects with an innovative character. The new programme concentrates already existing funding possibilities from different

technology programmes. In doing so, the funding programme, with improved conditions, has been considerably expanded.

Thereby, research and development projects can be supported at almost every stage. Technical studies of feasibility in the run-up to a planned development are as eligible as the development of new products and processes in all fields of technology, as well as pilot schemes and demonstration projects and their testing and application.

The highest funding possible in the TPS programme is 200 000 Euros (Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft des Saarlandes, 2009b).

Policy:
Guidelines for the technology promotion of individual companies in Saarland (Technology programme Saar – TPS) January 7th, 2008):
http://www.saarland.de/dokumente/thema_innovation/TPS-Richtlinien.pdf (14.07.2009)

EFI – Programm
Promotion of development, research and innovation in Saarland – EFI programme:
Development, research and innovation improve competitiveness to a high degree. Within the framework of this funding programme, innovative and promising measures and projects of companies and research institutions in Saarland should be supported. These funding measures are supposed to contribute to the intensification of the structural change in Saarland (Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft des Saarlandes, 2009c).

Policy:
Guidelines for the promotion of development, research and innovation in Saarland (EFI-Programm) - December 2nd, 2008:
http://www.saarland.de/dokumente/thema_innovation/EFI-Richtlinien.pdf (14.07.2009)

Box 7-11 Regional development policy (G): Saarland Ministry of Economy and Science

German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety: Department D/4 – Sustainable Development, Environmental Education

Educational offerings and target groups:
Education for sustainable development:
The term "Education for sustainable development" means education which enables people to foresee global problems, to face them and to solve them. Furthermore, it describes an education which promotes values and principles which form the basis for a sustainable development. At last, it stands for an education which underlines the complexity and the mutual dependency of three dimensions: environment, society and economy.

Education for sustainable development should be part of the following fields of education:
- Elementary and pre-school education
- School
- Institutions of higher education
- Vocational training and further education
- Extracurricular education and further training
- Informal learning

Policy:
Learn how to shape the world and your life. UN decade of education for sustainable development 2005-2014 The action plan in Saarland (2009):
http://www.bne-portal.de/coremedia/generator/unesco/de/Downloads/Dekade__Publikationen__national/Saarland_20Aktionsplan_202007.pdf

Box 7-12 Regional development policy (G): German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

Centre for Productivity and Technology (ZPT): "FuE-Intensiv"
"The Zentrale für Produktivität und Technologie Saar e. V. offers a wide range of services to support enterprises from the Saarland in promoting their competitiveness and innovation as well as tapping new sales market. The ZPT is supported and financed in particular by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour and the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the Saarland. Under the ZPT's roof, you will find an enterprise Europe network, the Innovation Relay Centre for Research and Technology as well as a Patent Information Centre. The comprehensive services the ZPT provides for the Saarland Industry in terms of advice, training, transfer of technology and promotion of innovation, are mainly aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises to help them improve their competitiveness and develop new products and processes" (Zentrale für Produktivität und Technologie Saar e.V., 2009a).

Educational offerings and target groups
The new service point of the ZPT "FuE-Intensiv" deals with a major problem. Its task is to intensify the consulting especially of small and medium-sized companies at every stage of the innovation process and therefore, to improve the innovative strength of the enterprises. With the help of innovation checks and informing consultations, companies can compare their status to industry average. Ensuing intensive consultations help to develop ideas for projects, to improve the degree of innovation of the company and therefore to improve the competitiveness and sustainability. Thereby, funding and financing possibilities, as well as the support for application, represent an important pillar of "FuE-Intensiv" (Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft des Saarlandes, 2009a).

Box 7-13 Regional development policy (G): Centre for Productivity and Technology ZPT

7.2 Learning and innovation support structure (facilities)

Based on our research and on the interviews with experts, this compilation of public institutions was elaborated in order to present their networks and cooperations more explicitly later on in chapter 7.3.

Projects within the framework of regional learning represent a large proportion of the measures concerning learning and innovation support. These measures offer projects which are financially supported by the German government and the European Union within the framework of the programme "Learning Regions". With the help of this programme, many projects were realised by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. However, today they are run independently, without federal or EU funds. Depending on the type of educational institution, different methods are used for the support of regional learning. These include counselling and further education within the field of environmental and quality management or language courses.

With this programme, *new ways of learning* and the *Weiterbildungsdatenbank Saar* (database for further education) could be developed. According to an expert, especially counselling in education gained in importance and this, in particular, for rural regions. The reason for this development is "the chaotic situation of educational opportunities, which is hardly comprehensible for the

individual" (KEY ACTOR No. 8). Furthermore, there is the project "Lernort Ich" in Greater Saarbrucken which runs a kind of educational management besides the database for further education. All in all, this is how transparency in all educational opportunities is to be established.

In addition, there are *self-study centres* as a new form of learning which try to attract new learners who – for whatever reasons - have not used the course offerings of other institutions so far. Other projects are the so-called *parents' schools*, which are supposed to support parents in education and learning, or the programme "*Mum is learning German*", which offers low-level language courses for people who have refused to learn other languages so far or who simply did not have the time to do it.

In summarising it can be stated that the public knowledge institutes cover different fields of educational opportunities concerning general and vocational further training. They address both adults and pupils. In doing so, the advertising of education and educational marketing have to be promoted because certain target groups cannot be reached by educational offerings. Especially underprivileged social groups have to be attracted, both in urban and rural areas. Support measures are funded by the German government, the European Union and the federal state.

According to the Saarland Ministry of Education, the leading voice in education on federal state level, support is requested both from congested areas as well as from rural regions. These requests come from educational institutions and individuals and deal substantially with counselling or funding opportunities. The majority of enquiries from outside Saarland come from language schools (most of them from the Mediterranean region: from Spain, Portugal and Italy) which want to offer courses or events in Saarland or from individuals who are interested in educational leave, the leave of absence for educational purposes. The requests from outside Saarland represent one third of all requests and are equally treated. However, funding is only available for agencies who offer their services in Saarland. As the KEY ACTOR No. 2 notified the majority of enquiries from outside Saarland in his institution come from Africa now. They concern the establishing of dual educational system in African countries.

After the OECD's educational survey PISA and the subsequent political discussion, the need for the creation and/or increase of abilities and competences has been recognised. For this reason, providers of further education are not bound to instructions where to put their main focus on. A broad offer supplied by qualified staff is the only thing which is required and regulated by law.

Table 7-1 presents a list of public or publicly funded educational institutions which play an important role for the support of rural regional learning and capacity building in Saarland. All of the knowledge institutions can be found within Saarland, predominantly located in or around the capital Saarbrucken, but also in rural regions (focusing on the biosphere region Bliesgau). However, the institutions located in congested areas also offer educational opportunities for rural regions.

Table 7-1 Public knowledge institutes in the Saarland

Name	Location	Relevant research fields	Website
FORUM EUROPA Verein zur Förderung europäischer Kultur und Bildung e.V. (Association for the Promotion of European Culture and Education)	Saarbrücken	Offers seminars, workshops and expert discussions on European topics	http://www.forum-europa-saar.de/
Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen (European Academy of Otzenhausen)	Otzenhausen	Several fields of activities. 'European Education', Institute of Rhetoric and Methodology, ''Courage of Sustainability''	http://www.eao-otzenhausen.de/
Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Saarland (State Office for Political Education Saarland)	Saarbrücken	Provides activities at schools, projects for pupils, competitions, events for teachers, further education for parents and especially for female teachers.	http://lpmfs.lpm.uni-sb.de/LPB/
Arbeitskammer des Saarlandes (Chamber of Employment)	Saarbrücken, Kirkel	Maintains the Centre of Education in Kirkel, where seminars in the fields of labour and social law are offered	http://www.arbeitskammer.de/
Kreisvolkshochschule Saarpfalz-Kreis (Adult education centre of the district of Saar-Palatinate)	Bexbach, Blieskastel, Gersheim, Kirkel, Mandelbachtal	Provides education offerings and further training, (single events, courses and seminar offerings concerning political, social, professional, cultural and personal life), development programme "French lessons in nursery school" of the Ministry of Education and the Arts	http://www.kvhs-saarpfalz.de/
Biosphärenreservat Bliesgau (Biosphere Reserve Bliesgau)	Bliesgau region	Offers environmental education in terms of competitions for schools and nursery schools, further training for educators and the school project "Mixed orchard".	http://www.biosphaere-bliesgau.eu/
SaarLernNetz (SLN) – Zusammenschluss von verschiedenen Bildungsanbietern zur	Saarbrücken, St. Ingbert, Merzig	Online educational portal which offers, among others, search functions for further training courses, jobs and literature, three self-study centres	http://www.saarlernnetz.de/

Förderung des Lebenlangen Lernens (SaarLernNet - Education network of the Saar region)			
Ministerium für Umwelt des Saarlandes – Netzwerk Umweltbildung (Ministry of Environment of the Saarland – Network 'Environmental Education)'	Saarbrücken	Support of education for sustainable development	http://www.saarland.de/12400.htm
Ökologisches Schullandheim (Ecological Schullandheim, state-run kind of youth hostel in the country used for school trips)	Gersheim	Offers accommodation for school classes, youth groups and families from all over Europe, internships for pupils, information events, workshops and seminars on topics like consumption, saving resources, climate protection and energy Moreover, further training for teachers, educators and youth directors is provided.	http://www.spohnshaus.de/spohnsHaus/
Zweckverband Naturschutzgroßvorhaben "Saar-Blies-Gau/Auf der Lohe" Association of conversation project)	Wittersheim	Supervision of a centre of cultural landscape, the so-called 'Lochfeld	http://www.bfn.de/0203_saarbliesgau.html

7.3   Synthesis: operational arrangements and networks

An important basic idea of public knowledge institutes is the idea of networking. The cooperation with local actors, with public administration and knowledge institutions is principally set up by law. The more organisations interested in education come together, the better it is for the whole situation. Due to this general networking, ever new ideas and new strategies for the solution of problems are emerging. For example, the main cooperation partners of the Ministry of Education are organisations of further education. Knowledge institutions mainly work together with the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) and the Institute for Development Planning and Structural Research (IES) in Hanover. The cooperation with universities is relatively low. On the administrational level, the cooperation between ministries is very productive. Finally, there is the cooperation on the local level: these interactions cover general and vocational further training. The most important institutions for further education, which are funded, are *adult education centres* and the *Catholic Adult Education*, because they offer educational opportunities in remote rural regions. They supply the local population with so-called *small-scale education*. The basic idea is that further training is provided on the spot so that interested people do not have to travel to more centrally located institutions. Therefore, these projects are of great interest in many different respects. *Adult education centres* and the *Catholic Adult Education* are the main providers because they can be found in small towns and villages. These two measures were initiated in 2004 and they are still stable and solid. Both are funded by the Saarland Ministry of Education.

Within the framework of M4.2 Internal and external network of capacity building agencies mapped 'Saarland', we present the support structures (facilities) for educational offerings and innovation processes of our CS region 'Saarland'. At first, we introduce the institutions and their offerings with reference to the respective target groups. Thereby, we also consider those institutions which cooperate with the educational institutions that appear on our list (see Table 7.1). Thus, we give an overview of the present offer concerning education and further development which can be divided into two main branches: a general one and another which is vocationally orientated. Both are directed at all age groups.

Therefore, young people are also taken into consideration besides further training for adults.

FORUM EUROPA Verein zur Förderung europäischer Kultur und Bildung e.V., Saarbrücken – FORUM EUROPA *Association for the Promotion of European Culture and Education*, Saarbrucken

The association offers seminars, workshops and expert discussions like, for example, the seminar series "Werte, values, valeurs… What is it that connects us with each other in Europe?", a workshop with adolescents (11th grade and older) on the occasion of the Europe Day of 2008, as well as concerts in Saarland and neighbouring regions (also abroad) and art exhibitions (Forum Europa, 2009). Their target groups are not specified, but they seem to focus on adolescents and adults of all social groups, perhaps with a stronger tendency towards adolescents (e.g. collaboration with the University of Music, Saarbrucken).

Moreover, the FORUM EUROPA is a Member of the association "Partners for Europe" to which belong ASKO EUROPA-STIFTUNG, Saarbrücken, the Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen gGmbH, Otzenhausen/Saarbrücken (*European Academy*), the Foundation FORUM EUROPA, Luxemburg, the Foundation Europrofession, Saarbrücken and the Foundation "Forum für Verantwortung" (*Forum for Responsibility*), Seeheim-Jugenheim.

Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen – *European Academy of Otzenhausen*

The European Academy of Otzenhausen offers several fields of activities. Within 'European Education', seminars, meetings and conferences (with a focus on key questions of European integration and European politics, France and the French-German cooperation, international politics and development policy, Greater Region SaarLorLux (Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg) are organised. The general target group of these activities are people of all social groups with a minimum age of 16 years.

Furthermore, the Institute of Rhetoric and Methodology organises seminars and workshops in order to provide education of adolescents and adults, job training and professional development, expert conferences with scholars, expert colleagues and practitioners.

In addition, the European Academy hosts single art exhibitions beside a permanent one. Visitors can explore a trail of Celtic cultures and explore a cultivation of trees from different European regions.

The institution also maintains a field of activity called 'Courage of Sustainability', which includes the educational initiative "From Knowing to Acting" and the publication of a book series called "12 Books on the Future of the Planet" (Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen, 2009a, Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen, 2009b).

The European Academy of Otzenhausen collaborates with a vast number of regional, national and international partners (see M4.2).

Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Saarland – *State Office for Political Education Saarland*

The State Office for Political Education provides activities at schools, for example, politicians visiting schools, projects for pupils, competitions or events for teachers, like an information meeting about the use of films in lessons. Target group is first of all pupils and teachers from all kinds of schools. But the state office also offers further education for parents and especially for female teachers. Furthermore, authority cooperates with schools in Saarland and with the "SaarLernNetz" (*Saar Learning Network*), a kind of educational market place for new learning with new media in the region.

Arbeitskammer des Saarlandes – *Chamber of Employment, Saarland*

The Saarland Chamber of Employment maintains the Centre of Education in Kirkel, where seminars in the fields of labour and social law are offered, covering all kinds of questions: from health and safety protection at the workplace to eco-political questions, but it also imparts knowledge on the Internet, on competence in using media and on rhetoric and character building.

The offer is aimed at two major target groups: members of works council and staff council representatives, representatives of severely handicapped employees, health and safety managers and officers according to the state's Equal Opportunities Act, as well as all employees who want to continue their education according to the 'Weiterbildungs – und Bildungsfreistellungsgesetz' (*law about the leave of absence from work for training purposes*) of Saarland.

The Chamber of Employment also cooperates with the SaarLernNetz (Arbeitskammer des Saarlandes, 2009a, Arbeitskammer des Saarlandes, 2009b).

GeBIT Ausbildung und Schulung GmbH, Saarbrücken/Merzig – *GeBIT Company for formation and training, Saarbrucken/Merzig*

The company offers training courses, seminars of the IHK Industrie- und Handelskammer (*Chamber of Industry and Commerce*), courses of the Agentur für Arbeit (German Federal Employment Agency), like, for example, languages courses for integration and alphabetisation courses for foreigners and migrants and participates in projects of development partnerships ('Mentor' and 'Perspektive plus X'). The enterprise works together with TNM Software GmbH, Neunkirchen (Saar), IHK Saarland, Saabrücken, Arbeitskreis Wirtschaft (*Working Group on Economy*) e.V., Saarbrücken, SaarLernNetz and the Bundesverband Personalvermittlung (*Federal Association for Staff Placement*) e.V., Bonn.

Kreisvolkshochschule Saarpfalz-Kreis (Schulen in Bexbach, Blieskastel, Gersheim, Kirkel und Mandelbachtal) – *Adult education centre of the district of Saar-Palatinate (Schools in Bexbach, Blieskastel, Gersheim, Kirkel and Mandelbachtal)*

The adult education centre provides education offerings and further training, which can be single events, as well as course and seminar offerings concerning political, social, professional, cultural and personal life. Furthermore, French lessons are given in nursery and primary schools in addition to the development programme "French lessons in nursery school" of the Ministry of Education and the Arts. Moreover, there are centres of examination in the three eastern districts of Saarland for the 'DELF' (*Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française – French language examination*), which is organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Arts and the Institut Français (*official French Government Centre of Language and Culture*). Children, adolescents and adults from all social stratums of the area of the Saarpfalz district can be determined as the centre's target group (Saarpfalz-Kreis, 2009).

Biosphärenreservat Bliesgau – *Biosphere Reserve Bliesgau*

Besides its ecological function, the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Bliesgau offers environmental education in terms of competitions for schools and nursery schools, further training for educators and the school project "Mixed orchard". With projects like these, local schools and nursery schools, educators working in

schools and nursery schools are targeted primarily (Biosphärenzweckverband Bliesgau, 2009b). The Biosphere Reserve cooperates with the German UNESCO Commission, Bonn, the Ecological Schullandheim (*state-run kind of youth hostel in the country used for school trips*) Gersheim, the Saarland Ministry of Environment, Saarbrücken, Freunde der Biosphäre Bliesgau (*Association of Friends of the Biosphere Bliesgau*) e.V., Blieskastel. Due to activities of Biosphere Reserve Bliesgau informal regional learning will be boosted, especially within associations and societies, which is a very important additional benefit of the reserve.

SaarLernNetz (SLN) Zusammenschluss von verschiedenen *Bildungsanbietern* zur Förderung des Lebenlangen Lernens – *SaarLernNet (SLN) Education network of the Saar region*

Online educational portal which offers, among others, search functions for further training courses, jobs and literature. There are self-study centres in Saarbrucken, St. Ingbert and Merzig. The network wants to attract suppliers as well as consumers in the fields of educational information, educational production and educational organisation and works together with a lot of cooperating partners (see M.2).

Ministerium für Umwelt des Saarlandes – Netzwerk Umweltbildung – *Ministry of Environment of the Saarland – Network 'Environmental Education'*

The cooperation includes the work group "Solar" in the energetic-technical sector, the BUND (<u>Association for Environment and Nature Protection; German branch of Friends of the Earth)</u> with its "KunterBUNDMobil" ('*kunterbunt' means motley*) for the ecological exploration of the environment, the LAGS (*professional association for health promotion and prevention*) which supports healthy school feeding, the State's Youth Welfare Office which provides further education in the pre-school sector, the State Office for Pedagogics and Media, which fixes the idea of sustainable development in schools within the framework of the programme "Transfer 21", the Landesjugendring Saar (*a youth association of the state)* as an umbrella organisation and contact for many extracurricular youth organisations, the Ministry of Education, Family, Women and Culture which is responsible for the content and composition of instruction, among others, the ecological Schullandheim (*state-run kind of youth hostel in the country used for school trips*) 'Spohnshaus' Gersheim, which offers a wide range of week-end

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programmes which are oriented towards sustainability for school classes and it is an international meeting place, the 'SaarForst' (*a state company running commercial forests*) State Office which committed itself to Forest pedagogy, the NABU (*German non-governmental nature conservation organisation*) Saarland with its holiday programmes for children and natural history excursions (Umweltministerium des Saarlandes, 2010d).

The cooperation aims to attract pre-schools, schools and the extracurricular sector (see M4.2).

Ökologisches Schullandheim Gersheim – *Ecological Schullandheim (state-run kind of youth hostel in the country used for school trips) Gersheim*

The Ecological Schulandheim Gersheim offers accommodation for school classes, youth groups and families from all over Europe, especially from Germany, France and Poland, internships for pupils, information events, workshops and seminars on topics like consumption, saving resources, climate protection and energy. Moreover, further training for teachers, educators and youth directors is provided. Target groups are school classes, youth groups and families adults, who are interested, as well as teachers, educators and youth directors. The institution collaborates a.o. with the German commission for UNESCO – The **UN** Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in Germany, Bonn and various others organisations and initiatives.

Zweckverband Naturschutzgroßvorhaben "Saar-Blies-Gau/Auf der Lohe" – *Association of conversation project "Saar-Blies-Gau/Auf der Lohe"*

The association supervises a centre of cultural landscape in Wittersheim, the so-called 'Lochfeld', in cooperation with the district of Saarpfalz and works together with the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Protection and Reactor Safety, Berlin, the state of Saarland, the Saarpfalz district, the City of Gersheim, the City of Mandelbachtal, Naturlandstiftung (*a foundation*) Saar, the City of Saarbrücken. Due to the protection of the environment in the project area the association boosts informal regional learning as an additional advantage.

NABU Saarland – *NABU (German non-governmental nature conservation organisation)*

NABU Saarland organises excursions, lectures, conferences, festivities, exhibitions, work assignments, seminars, journeys, general consultation about

nature and environment, maintains a so-called "Green Phone" (general consultation concerning nature and environmental issues), arranges holiday programmes for children and adolescents and join-in actions, like for the local protection of species. The organisation collaborates with various governmental and non-governmental organisations (see M4.2).

The equal treatment of men and women is a target setting for the support of strategies of regional learning. Due to the fact that the gender aspect affects every possible field, it is a main focus in further education law. One of the expert mentioned that wages are still different for men and women. In this aspect, Saarland does not differ very much from the rest of Germany. Thereby other aspect appeared: „The equal treatment of men and women is no problem in Saarland but rather the differentiation between foreigners and locals" (KEY ACTOR No. 3). This means that even home country nationals are strangers if they weren't born in Saarland. This refers specifically equal opportunity employees.

Concerning the attraction of young people, schools and more and more kindergartens and day-care centres are responsible for education. But following the idea of networking, it is necessary to enlarge the offerings of other institutions for young people. "A type of cooperation is necessary which trespasses limitations within education. Furthermore, schools can only be successful if they cooperate with as many partners as possible and, of course, with the field of further education: due to lifelong learning, we will never stop studying" (KEY ACTOR No. 8).

8 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 'WESTERKWARTIER (NL)' WIEBKE WELLBROCK AND DIRK ROEP

In the following chapter, the research findings of the case study area the Westerkwartier are summarised. In section 8.1 learning and innovation supporting policies and strategies that provide a frame for rural regional learning and innovation processes to take place in the Westerkwartier will be considered. In sention 8.2 examples of available learning and innovation support structures will be presented. In 8.3 the chapter is concluded with a synthesis in which different operational interfaces are highlighted by describing different arrangements and partnerships. Evidence will be shown for (starting) support and initiation of rural regional learning and innovation processes within development initiatives/ networks in the Westerkwartier.

8.1 Learning and innovation support policies and strategies

In M4.1, we considered policies which were formulated to support rural regional development initiatives in the Westerkwartier. These policies frame the administrative and operational space for rural regional development by putting forward development objectives and suggesting strategies to meet these objectives by initiating and supporting rural regional development activities. In line with our aim to study rural regional learning, we focussed on policies and strategies that facilitate rural regional learning and innovation processes.

Actors and policies that influence the design and implementation of policy objectives related to regional learning in the Westerkwartier can be categorized into five different governmental levels: the European Union, the state (national government), the region, the province and lastly municipalities and water boards.
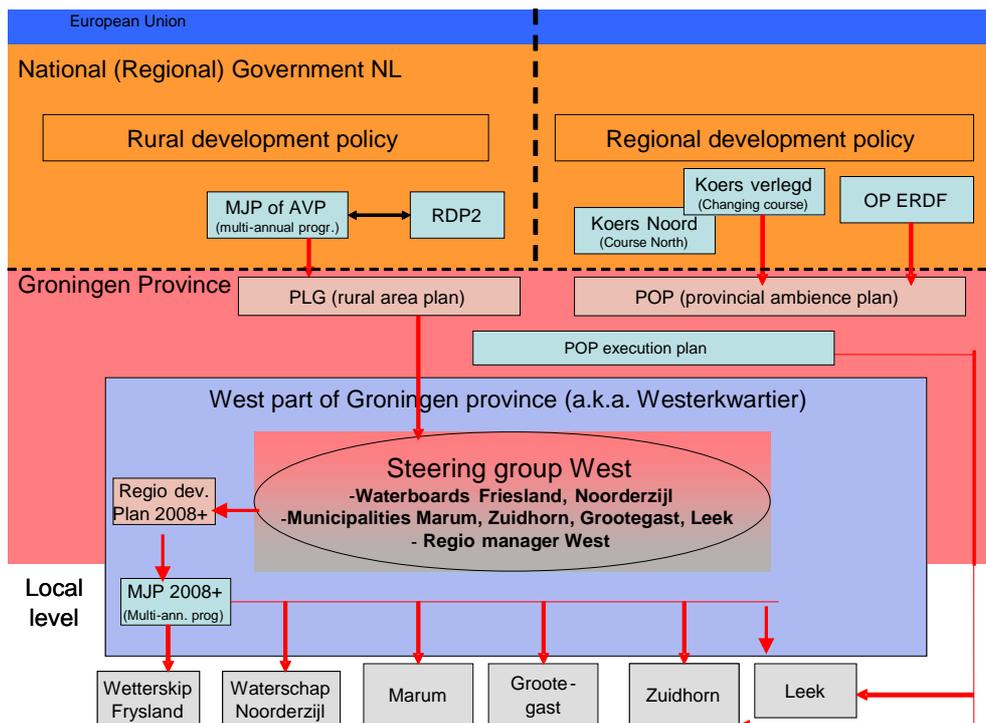
Figure 8-1 Relevant representatives and policies in public administration (NL)

As shown in Figure 8.1, at each governmental level, a development agenda with development objectives is formulated. At European and national level, agendas are still formulated very broadly and only state general objectives which should be aimed at by stakeholders at lower governmental level. Furthermore, general development steps are suggested which should lead to the fulfilment of the desired objectives in the different members states. These agendas are passed down the administrative hierarchy and at every level they are reformulated in a more precise way in order to fit the specific development needs at the different public administration levels.

Rural regional development in the Westerkwartier is framed by two kinds of development policies: rural and regional development policies. Regional development programmes are formulated for and by the region North Netherlands which comprises the three Northern provinces Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen. Of these, the policy agenda "**Koers verlegd**" (Changing course) explains how North Netherland should be transformed into a knowledge based economy. Its focus is on high tech industry clusters. In addition, European policy objectives, also with regard to stimulating initiatives related to learning and innovation are incorporated in the **OP EFRO (ERDF)**. The executive programme

"**Koers Noord**" (Course North) follows up on the OP ERDF and presents a programme to strengthen the spatial economic structure in North Netherland.

OP EFRO (Operational programme European Regional Development Fund)
This policy document was formulated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and aims at realising development objectives posed by DG Regio. It focuses on broad project ideas and includes an overview of supported project suggestions along the following objectives:
1. Support for Innovation, entrepreneurship and knowledge economy
2. Creation of attractive living regions
3. Attractiveness of cities (not relevant for the Westerkwartier)
4. Technological assistance
The EFRO programme further focuses on ensuring equal opportunities for men and women as one of their horizontal priorities.

Koers verlegd: Aanpak tot transitie naar een kenniseconomie in Noord Nederland'
(Changing course: Approach for a transition into a knowledge economy N.NL)
In this regional policy agenda, objectives are introduced of how to turn North Netherland into a knowledge economy. At macro-level, the policy shall focus on international competitive power through producing knowledge and innovation. Means are thus used to stimulate technological development, knowledge transfer into business life and the development of new foreign markets.
At meso-level, the agenda will focus on stimulating knowledge in key economic areas, namely energy, water technology, multisensory systems, agribusiness, chemistry, commercial care, life science, ICT sector, shipbuilding and tourism. At the same time, emphasis will be placed on stimulating opportunities for SMEs in key economic areas.
In addition, available human capital shall be improved through stimulating and improving the level of education. This shall be done by improving the use of HRM, stimulating business oriented education, improving the adjustment capacity of education towards the employment market, improving the education structure in North Netherland and supporting entrepreneurship.
1. Improved use of HRM
2. Stimulation of business orientated education
3. Improving the adjustment capacity of education towards the employment market
4. Improvement of education structure in NN
5. Support of entrepreneurship

Koers Noord: op weg naar pieken 2007-2010 (Course North: towards peaks)
Koers Noord is the region specific execution programme of the policy agenda 'Koers verlegd' and is mainly directed at SMEs and starters. The programme focuses on the following objectives:
1. Extension of key areas and national spearheads
2. Transition in regional spearhead sectors
3. Strengthening SMEs with regard to innovation, export and education level of employees.
4. Solving of the diffuse character through strengthening economic concentrations.

Box 8-1 Regional development policies (NL)

In Groningen Province, policy objectives formulated at higher governmental level, including those related to learning and innovation are summarised and reformulated in the **POP Groningen (Provincial development plan Groningen)**.

Box 8-2 Provincial Development Plan Groningen (NL)

In addition to the EFRD programmes, the European Social Fund is also used to build human capital and equip the Netherlands for a transition into a knowledge based economy in the era of globalisation. The **OP ESF** is regarded as a substitute to existing national policies and programmes and contains three development objectives: 1) Increase of labour opportunities (Special help for unemployed people who have trouble in finding a job), 2) Support for inclusion of disadvantaged people (Specific measures for people that have not been reached by regular reintegration measures; facilitate the inclusion of disadvantaged people in the employment market; offer special education and schools and ensure a close collaboration between schools and the employment market) and 3) Increase adaptability and invest in human capital (education for employees).

In contrast to regional development policies, there is only one nationally applicable rural development agenda, namely the **agenda** "**Vital countryside**". This agenda integrates the RDP 2 and hence objectives of the European CAP 2 (amongst others the LEADER approach, axis 4) and national rural development objectives. Development objectives specified in the agenda "Vital countryside" were translated into strategies which are summarised in the operational **Multi-annual programme (MJP).**

Box 8-3 Rural development policies (NL)

POP Groningen and Agenda Vital Countryside form the basis of the **Development Programme West Groningen**, a policy document formulated and implemented by the Steering Group West (see Figure 8.1). This steering group is comprised of members from the municipalities Leek, Marum, Grootegast and Zuidhorn, Groningen Province, water boards and the regional manager of the agenda "Vital countryside".

Box 8-4 Development Programme West Groningen (NL)

Development plans outlined in the Development Programme West are operationalised in the multi-annual programme Groningen West 2008+. The development programmes are partially financed through European funds, national funds, and provincial funds and partially through funds made available

from the different municipalities. It is interesting to note, however, that most development objectives are related to rural development policy plans. Regional development plans are only in part applicable in the Westerkwartier and are centred on economic core areas in Leek and Zuidhorn.

8.2   Learning and innovation support structure (facilities)

In M4.2, we considered the availability of support structures (facilities) for rural regional learning and innovation processes in the Westerkwartier. It was shown that there are numerous potential support facilities for rural regional learning and innovation in the Westerkwartier, in form of education facilities, research facilities, consultancy services and advice bureaus. In fact, the number appeared to be so large that we decided to make a selection and only present a snapshot of the available support structure. We will therefore only present publically funded knowledge institutes involved (or potentially relevant) for regional learning processes in the Westerkwartier.

In Table 8.1, we present a list of different publically funded knowledge institutes which are or could be relevant for supporting rural regional learning and innovation in the Westerkwartier. These institutes are either involved in education, research or advice. Furthermore, the knowledge institutes presented in table 8.1 are either in spatial vicinity to the Westerkwartier or involved with regional development initiatives in the Westerkwartier.

Table 8-1 Public knowledge institutes in and around the Westerkwartier

Name	Location	Relevant research fields	Website
AOC Terra (Agricultural education centre)	Groningen city	Offers in "green" vocal training for the provinces Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen	http://www.aocterra.nl/organisatie/?id=pages/Home/Over-AOC-Terra/Internationalisering
Hanzehoogeschool (University of Applied Sciences)	Groningen city	Installation of multidisciplinary research knowledge centres, amongst others the centre for "Regional Development Northern Area"	http://www.hanze.nl/home/
Noordelijke Hoogeschool (University of Applied Sciences)	Leeuwarden	Consists of 4 institutes: 1. Health and Welfare, 2. Technology, 3. Education and Communication, 4. Business and management studies; Knowledge centre sustainable energy	http://www.nhl.nl/nhl/14/home.html
Rijkuniversiteit Groningen (RUG)	Groningen city, North Netherlands	Faculty of spatial science with emphasis on urban and regional development; Faculty of Economics and Business	http://www.rug.nl/corporate/index
Stenden University of Applied Sciences	North Netherlands (Assen, Emmen, Groningen, Leeuwarden, Meppel); South Africa, Qatar, Bali, Thailand	BA and MA programmes in Management studies (Business, Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation, SME and Retail, Communication, etc.)	http://www.stenden.com/en/Pages/default.aspx
Van Hall-Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (part of WUR)	Leeuwarden, Velp, Wageningen	Rural and Environmental Management (Including specialisation Regional Developments and Innovations); Business and Management (including focus on Agribusiness)	http://www.vanhall-larenstein.com/
Wageningen University (part of WUR)	Wageningen	Economics and Society Food and Food production Animals and Plants Environment and Climate	http://www.wageningenuniversity.nl/UK/

In the Netherlands, there are two types of knowledge sectors, 'green' knowledge and other knowledge. 'Green' knowledge institutes are specialized in subjects related to agriculture, environment and nature conservation. Accordingly, the 'green' knowledge sector is separated from the rest of the knowledge sector and is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. Other knowledge institutes are controlled by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

At the time of our research, four of the potentially relevant knowledge institutes presented in Table 8.1 were involved in rural regional learning and innovation processes in the Westerkwartier. Out of these three knowledge institutes, three belonged to the 'green' knowledge sector, namely AOC Terra, Van Hall-Larenstein and Wageningen University. AOC Terra is responsible for vocational training in the agricultural sector and Van Hall-Larenstein and Wageningen University has been engaged in research concerning agriculture (including research into potential re-grounding activities for farmers), nature and landscape management and the environment). Only Stenden University represented the 'other' knowledge sector and has been occupied with research on tourism and marketing.

In addition to the listed publically funded knowledge institutes, there are numerous private (and public) agencies in and around the Westerkwartier which could also be relevant for rural regional learning and innovation processes. Since it seems impossible to list them all, only those agencies were noted that are involved in projects together with publically funded knowledge institutes. Nevertheless, both publically funded knowledge institutes as well as private agencies are able to offer education, research and advice for development initiatives in the Westerkwartier.

8.3   Synthesis: Examples of operational interfaces, partnerships and arrangements

Having identified relevant policy objectives and strategies to initiate and support rural regional development activities related to learning and innovation as well as available supportive knowledge infrastructure, we will now focus on the

governance of regional learning in the Westerkwartier. Here we focus on the what sort of learning and innovation activities are supported (objective) and the way in which these objectives are supported (strategies). This will be done by identifying different operational interfaces between representatives of public administration, representatives of knowledge facilities and regional initiators. To describe the different operational interfaces present, we will focus on the partnerships and arrangements found, describing the different actors involved, the purpose of their partnerships and arrangements and outlined the agreements they formed.
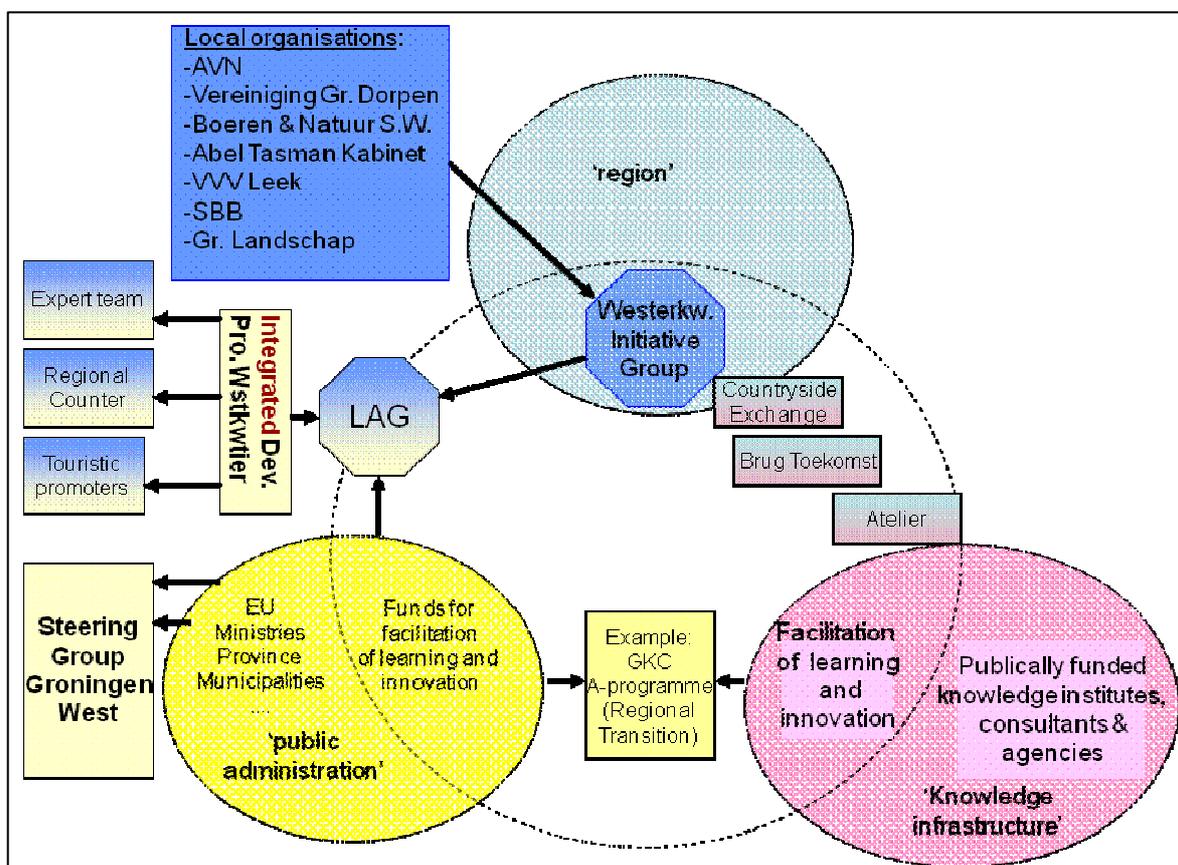

Figure 8-2 Examples of operational interfaces in the Westerkwartier (NL)

To start, we considered local organisations involved in regional development in order to assess the kind of development interests currently present in the Westerkwartier. It was shown that the majority of development initiatives in the Westerkwartier are connected to agriculture, nature and landscape management.

There are, however, also other initiatives concerned with tourism, culture and socio-economic vitality. As Figure 8.2 shows, these organisations are represented in the **Westerkwartier Initiative Group (WSI)** which acts as a platform for innovations. As an umbrella for the different local organisations, the WSI seems to be an important hub for representatives of public administration to make arrangement with regional initiators and to create partnerships.

Secondly, we turned to identify operational interfaces established between representatives of public administration and regional initiators. In order to establish arrangements and partnerships between representatives of public administration and regional initiators, we focussed on rural regional development policies because they appeared to be more relevant for development in the Westerkwartier. For example, the LEADER policy was shown to act as a formal agreement to facilitate arrangements and partnerships between these pillars. Through LEADER, a **Local Action Group (LAG)** was established in the Westerkwartier. In the Netherlands, a LAG is a quite formal institution where 50% of its members belong to the public administration sector and 50% of its members are regional stakeholders. In the Westerkwartier, regional stakeholders represented in the LAG stem from the Westerkwartier Initiative Group (WSI). Members of the public administration sector represented in the LAG belong to Groningen Province and the different municipalities of the Westerkwartier. The LAG in the Westerkwartier is therefore an example of a public-private partnership between representatives of public administration and regional initiators.

In the Westerkwartier, the LAG is given responsibility to formulate objectives and strategies which initiate and support development activities aimed at the socio-economic development of the region. These objectives and strategies are laid out in the **LEADER action plan** which is part of the **integrated development programme West Groningen**. The LEADER action plan can therefore be regarded as a compilation of bottom-up development initiatives which are included in the otherwise top-down development programme West Groningen.

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<u>LEADER action plan for the social-economic development</u>
The LEADER action plans follows three development lines which are elaborated in several action points. These development lines are:
1. Agriculture and landscape (improving the competitive power of agriculture and the quality of nature and landscape)
2. Vital rural economy (Improving the vitality, strengthening and diversifying rural economy)
3. Identity, culture and tourism (Strengthening the own identity and cultural revitalisation, supporting regional tourism)
4. Stimulate cooperation and networking

The LEADER action points are then incorporated into an integral development plan Groningen West.

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Box 8-5 LEADER action plan Westerkwartier (NL)

Furthermore, the LEADER action plan is another <u>operational interface</u> between representatives of the public administration sector and regional initiators. The LEADER action plan thus acts as a <u>formal agreement</u> to operationalise <u>arrangements</u> that are aimed at supporting and initiating learning and innovation processes within regional development activities. Examples of such arrangements include a **communal house** which provides rooms for meetings and brainstorming activities. Furthermore the communal house acts as a **regional counter** that aims to create a meeting point for public and private initiators and citizens who are involved with rural development in the Westerkwartier. Also, **touristic promoters** have been hired with LEADER money to stimulate touristic activities in the Westerkwartier. Apart from rural regional development policies, also regional development policies may facilitate arrangements and partnerships between regional actors and representatives of public administration (e.g. business related arrangements and partnerships). However, these needs to be studied further.

Apart from direct engagements of regional initiators, public administration also offers indirect support for rural regional learning and innovation activities. Indirect support for rural regional learning and innovation activities is provided through <u>arrangements</u> and <u>partnerships</u> between policies and representatives of the public administration sector and knowledge institutes. For example, through LEADER funds, rural regional initiatives can be given finances to collaborate with (public or private) knowledge institutes (such as education, research and advice). Furthermore, within the 'green' knowledge sector, knowledge institutes

(research, education, advice) can be supported in their engagement with rural initiators through funds made available from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. There are funds available for different aspects of rural development including, for example, multifunctional agriculture, nature and landscape conservation and regional transition. A great share of funds available from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality is given to Wageningen University. Another example of how these funds are managed is the **Green Knowledge Cooperation (GKC)** which is responsible of ensuring a close link between societal concerns and scientific endeavours. Funds provided by the Green Knowledge Cooperation (GKC) are thus a further example of an <u>arrangement</u> for indirect support of rural regional learning and innovation processes.

> **Green Knowledge Cooperation (GKC)**
> The Green Knowledge Cooperation acts as a link between science and society. It's function is to administer funds which aim to stimulate education and research directed towards societal issues in rural areas. The GKC is connected to the LNV and administers the funds of the LNV for education and research concerning agriculture, nature and food quality. The GKC offers different financial programmes to support knowledge exchange and cooperation between knowledge institutes and society. In funding programme A, for example, regional initiators can apply for funds in various themes related to rural development. These include multifunctional agriculture, nature and landscape management or regional transition. Through the regional transition theme, Brug toekomst and Atelier was (will be) financed. Interestingly, to apply for funds in programme line A, the application needs to be submitted by regional initiators and not by universities. Apart form programme A, GKC provides other funding options for universities to engage in societal 'green' knowledge matters.

Box 8-6 Green Knowledge Cooperation (NL)

Apart from LEADER and GKC, there are other arrangements between knowledge facilities and public administration to support and initiate rural regional learning and innovation activities in rural development initiatives. Other examples of indirect support for rural regional learning and innovation activities include, for instance, university funding, private investors and other public administration funds within and outside the 'green' knowledge sector.

In the Westerkwartier, so far at least three initiatives that are aimed to support and initiate rural regional learning and innovation in development activities have been facilitated through indirect support means. Support was obtained for the past initiatives 'Brug toekomst' and 'Countryside Exchange' and has been granted for the starting initiative 'Atelier'. All initiatives have aimed at gathering

knowledge about the Westerkwartier and supporting regional learning and innovation processes that help regional development initiatives to be successful and/ or to be established.

Following the operational interfaces created between representatives of the public administration sector and regional initiators, also for operational interfaces between regional initiators and knowledge facilities the WSI plays an important role. For example, together with knowledge institutes, the WSI is actively seeking funding possibilities to support and initiative rural regional learning and innovation activities and applied for funds at the GKC to prolong the initiative Brug toekomst and to initiate the initiative Atelier. Both initiatives have been funded through the previously mentioned regional transition theme.

Brug toekomst
Brug toekomst was an arrangement between regional initiatives and green knowledge institutes. Knowledge institutions elaborated research questions coming from the region, conducted student research and facilitated group discussions amongst local organisations, eventually leading to the establishment of the WSI. This project aimed at cooperation between different green knowledge institutes in the Netherlands and was guided and partly financed by Wageningen University. Research themes in this project included: How can a farmer remain a farmer?, How can the quality of the landscape be further developed and how can the liveability of the region be strengthened?

Countryside Exchange
Countryside exchange (CE) is a programme to facilitate knowledge exchange and networking between local citizen groups across different rural areas in Europe and the US (ETC Adviesgroep, 2009). In the Netherlands, this programme is partially supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) (ETC Adviesgroep, 2009). Through participation in the countryside exchange programme, the WSI was able to set up a research agenda and arrange the participation of public and private actors in regional learning in the Westerkwartier.

Atelier
Atelier is a project that is aimed to continue the arrangements established during the Brug toekomst project and aims to put the results obtained during Brug toekomst into practical development plans. This arrangement is, however, still in negotiation and depends also on funding made available by public policy. The 'work atelier' idea was invented by a lecturer at Van Hall-Larenstein, Willem Forthuis in 2004. Although a 'work atelier' can have a physical meeting place, it should not be understood as a physical work space but as a knowledge arrangement between people who facilitate regional rural learning, knowledge and working cooperation directed towards renewal of the living environment and the development of new, needed competencies within all participants. The 'work atelier' thus acts as a work and knowledge network that should bring people together, who are involved with regional questions in a particular area. These people may include students, researchers, lecturers, public administers, experts, citizens and other stakeholders.

Box 8-7 Rural regional learning and innovation processes supporting initiatives (W, NL)

In conclusion, the outlined <u>operational interfaces</u> are not a complete overview of all <u>partnerships</u> and <u>arrangements</u> present in the Westerkwartier and merely a snapshot of current governance practises. Nevertheless, they provide us with evidence that support for rural regional learning and innovation within rural development activities exist/ is developing in the Westerkwartier:

- Several different <u>partnerships</u> and <u>arrangements</u> between actors of the different pillars were identified, suggesting different support possibilities for rural regional learning and innovation in the Westerkwartier.

- Most of the identified operational interfaces were consisted of public-private partnerships.

In M 4.3, we will deepen our investigations into the quality and efficacy of the outlined partnerships and arrangements for rural regional learning and innovation activities in the Westerkwartier. To do so, we will investigate their efficacy in supporting rural regional learning and innovation in development initiatives/ networks in the Westerkwartier.

Already, we identified some relevant development initiatives and networks in the Westerkwartier that will be used for future studies. These development initiatives/ networks include a **lobby for Groninger Villages** (VGD), the agricultural project **MEI** and the environmental and agricultural associations **De Eendracht** and **Boer & Natuur**. We also identified an entrepreneurial women network **Wichterwest** which will be subject to our future investigations. Also, there seems to be some indications for other (rural) business networks in the Westerkwartier which will be investigated more in depth.

9   SYNTHESIS

In this final chapter a comparison and synthesis is made for the findings so far in the different case study areas and some implications for further research.

First some preliminary comments on the research done so far and some significant findings across the case study areas. The current report reflects the state of the art of research in progress. In the contributions for the respective six case study areas, the contours of the governance of rural regional learning and innovation are manifest. The picture is, however, not yet complete and needs further focussing in the follow up research. The further focussing on what to look for specifically can be seen as part of empirical research as from empirical findings it becomes more evident what is of relevance to shape an adequate picture and on what specific parts need to be highlighted.

Up to now, much effort has been made to map the relevant public policies coming down from the different public administration levels from the EU to the local level of municipalities, how these policies frame rural regional development and are eventually applied in the respective case study areas with the intention to enable certain development activities and, willingly or not, disable others. An overview of relevant EU-policies (such as ERDF, ESF and EARDF measures and additional funds for convergence regions), and how these are incorporated in national rural and regional policies is already quite complicated. It is even more difficult to sort out and access what policy measures do support rural regional learning and innovation, either directly by supporting individual or joint activities or indirectly by supporting learning and innovation facilities, such as education, research and consultancy. It is not easy to reconstruct and comprehend all the different policy branches and operational measures at different levels and their interrelations, and how this policy maze affects rural regional learning and innovation. An overview of the main policies is already quite challenging. In the previous chapters, such an overview is sketched for the six case study areas which have been presented, and as said, it reveals the first sketchy parts of how rural regional learning and innovation is framed and supported by policies and how the mediation of policy measures towards regions is actually arranged. In figure 3-1, figure 5-1 and 5-2 and figure 8-2 an overview is actually synthesized in a comprehensible map for respectively Alytus, OHTL and Westerkwartier.

These maps can be further elaborated in the course of the research, for the other three case study areas as well. These maps reveal a common structure with regard to learning and innovation support policies, but the results of the case studies also reflect national or regional differences.

The different findings can however be partially related to differences in focus of the research and what has been revealed so far, but there is also the question of different interpretations of a 'learning region' and capacity building and its application in policies. So, in some cases the focus is more on learning and innovation in rural based SME (e.g. Roscommon), while the focus of others is more on civic engagement in rural regional development as enhanced by Leader. Another difference relates to how specific capacities are built: e.g. capacities built as a result of education and training reflected in improved skills and competences of individuals such as entrepreneurs or citizens (considered as an investment in human capital to improve economic cohesion) or as part of (social) learning as a result of activities jointly undertaken such as community or regional development (raising social capital to improve social cohesion). One does not exclude the other, in fact they can interconnected and re-enforce each other, but the focus in this research will be more on social learning as a matter of mutual learning by joint practicing.

The emphasis on investments in human capital to improve economic and social cohesion appears to be most manifest in the German case studies by the adoption of the learning region concept in the 'Lernende regionen' in federal (Bund) and state (Länder) policies in Saxony and Saarland. The focus here is on developing 'new ways of learning' to improve and extend the educational offer of both regular public educational institutes and newly created intermediary agencies in close collaboration with business sectors or civil (e.g. environmental) organisations to enhance 'life-long learning' and raise skills and competences of workers and make (disadvantaged) regions more competitive in a globalised knowledge economy. In the Saarland case study various collaborative networks are documented. Considering the governance of rural regional learning and our focus on social learning (mutual learning by joint practices), the question then is how the capacities built by these 'new ways of life-long learning' are related to specific regional issues, which can be guaranteed by the networks, but even more crucial if the capacities built are tuned with the capacities needed and

employable in (joint) development activities. This assumes the facilitation of joint learning and innovation in development activities by knowledge institutes and intermediary agencies and some kind of arrangement for the structural engagement of knowledge institutes and other intermediaries, such as e.g. in the Atelier in Westerkwartier. Arrangements that provide for a regional embedding of learning will be object of further investigations.

At a general level the policy discourse is quite similar and familiar, e.g. with regard to the importance of social and economic cohesion, participatory approaches as in Leader and the wide spread knowledge-economy vocabulary.

Not a surprise considering the fact that EU policy reflects a balancing of national interests. Of greater interest is however how all these different policies are mediated to the regional and local level as a set of enabling and disabling policy measures, sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting. The case studies clearly demonstrate the tendency to integrate different policies into an overarching territorial bounded policy framework and development programme. This conjoins with the ***emergence of new territorial entities***, that interestingly do not coincide with the existing levels of public administration, but entail a collaboration of municipalities across provincial level (such as in the *Westerkwartier* and *Comarca de Verin*) and sometimes even across Autonomous Regions (Spain) or Länder (Germany). These newly emerging territorial collaborations and territorial profiling (e.g. branding) can be rooted in a common and distinct socio-cultural and political-economical history (e.g. a *terroir* in France, or a *streek* in The Netherlands, or a district) in combination with geographical boundaries or ecological systems (e.g. Biosphere reserves in Germany or other National parks), although physical boundaries are often pragmatically and arbitrary. Apparently, these emerge as part of finding the right level of connection between policies and the engagement of citizens, as citizens can probably better identify (as in the sense of belonging to) themselves with these areas.

Collaboration at higher public administration levels is also manifest, e.g. between provinces (e.g. North Netherlands), or between counties in a substantial part of a country (such as BMW in Ireland) and even across national border (e.g. Interreg). This regionalisation is enhanced by EU-policies, it is often an explicit

pre-condition, and also sustained by the institutionalisation of the Committee of Regions, to get regions more involved in policy making and implementation. In these emerging regions the interrelation between rural areas and urban centres are also reconsidered. These higher levels of administrative collaboration, however, question the engagement of denizens, as there is less 'sense of belonging'.

The integration of policies and (re)emergence of territories goes along with the imperative of organising the active participating of its residents in policy making (less well developed) but foremost in policy implementation to enhance the realisation of envisioned regional development strategies. Here we come across the paradox that active participation and creation of space for bottom-up initiatives is arranged if not orchestrated to meet the (formal) precondition of EU-policies that aim to enlarge the self-organisation and self-exploration of its citizens. Formats for partnerships (such as the formal representation of stakeholders in Leader Action Groups) and blue prints for arrangements might even lead to the denial and unintended exclusion of bottom-up initiatives in a region.

The question is then what is the appropriate level governing rural regional learning and innovation? Who should benefit? How can that best be arranged to make if effective for the aimed for beneficiaries of public policies? This will be subject of further investigations.

In all cases studies we do witness a down scaling in the mediation and implementation of rural regional policies with the establishment of partnerships and the arrangements made. This is most manifest in the establishment of LAG's. In part, this can be explained from the condition that at least 50% of the LAG members should represent non-governmental actors (often representatives from both regional business sectors and civic organisations). In part, however, this can also be explained in finding the most approporiate territorial scale to be able to mobilise denizens, and the identification with a territory, its particular issues and the prospects and the public and private benefits of future developments might function as leverage. In both German case study areas LAG's are established in the UN-Biosphere reserves, creating vital coalitions or partnerships and tailored arrangements to support joint development activities

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(networks). It would then be of interest to study, in line with the second stage of research, in depth if the arranged operational support of learning by doing in these development activities is indeed evaluated as (more) effective by its intended beneficiaries and if they can be further improved. As concluded in the respective contribution, in Ireland the BMW is seen as a proper interface, but one that still needs further down scaling to be able to make effective connections to the denizens of the region and create more space for bottom up initiatives. From a governance perspective, is also important to consider the extent to which those actors 'on the ground' are convinced of the benefits of such an interface. Particularly organisations and individuals might regard it as an unproductive administrative layer merely raising the transactions costs. In this respect, a deeper exploration of the nature of such institutional arrangements and the implications for (and potential role in) the development of effective development collaborations is pertinent.

So next to newly emerging territories to accommodate the delivery of policies and to support learning and innovation in joint development activities, we witness the emergence of various arrangements that by their establishment intend to support joint learning by doing in these newly emerging territories. Furthermore, in all case study areas, learning and innovation is supported by public and private knowledge facilities, although in Alytus County the involvement of private agencies is still sporadic. In some case study areas (OHTL, Saarland and Roscommon), the facilitating function is additionally carried out by ministries and hence from the public administration pillar. This is of interest for the final aim of this research, to identify good practices in the governance of rural regional learning and innovation.

For all case study areas an overview of partnerships and arrangements established to somehow support rural regional learning and innovation has been made and some examples are given of joint development activities that are actually supported and are manifest in regional networks. In fact, these reflect the interfaces (partnerships and arrangements) operational between support policies, learning by doing in joint regional development activities and facilitating of learning and innovation by public knowledge institutes and non-governmental agencies. A synthesis can be made by locating the interfaces (partnerships and arrangements) in the conceptual framework, thus constructing a map of the

governance of rural regional learning and innovation for each case study area. An example is made for the Westerkwartier (see figure 8.2).

In the research ahead the operational features of these regional partnerships and arrangements in case study areas will be further investigated. First by revealing the differential joint development activities (networks) in case study areas with a specification of the types of support they get or need and how joint learning and innovation is actually facilitated. This will result in a typology of networks supported in case study areas. In some cases (e.g. Saarland and Dresden/Saxony) this will entail a further downsizing of the case study area to the level of arrangements at newly emerging territories. Then a selection of different regional networks is made to study more in-depth what support and facilities are given or needed. And finally the effectiveness of the operational arrangements will be evaluated by its presumed beneficiaries.

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