



**CENTRAL
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COOPERATING FOR SUCCESS.



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EU Mainstreaming final report

The project Yura was born to develop transnational youth strategies to counteract the consequences of demographic change and brain-drain. The participating regions South-West-Styria (Austria), Ustí Region (Czech Republic), Saxony-Anhalt (Germany), Lower Silesia (Poland), North Great Plain (Hungary), Province of Novara (Italy) were and currently are all suffering from above-average migration of especially young and qualified people.

Lead Partner of the project is the Ministry for Regional Development and Transport of the Saxony-Anhalt.

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Introduction

The core specific objective of the YURA project was the development of transnational transferable strategies to counteract the negative effects of the ongoing demographic change in Europe. As the demographic change leads to diminishing numbers of people in the productive age, future competition for the well-educated will be even harder than it is today.

The problems of demographic change caused by migration are even higher in disadvantaged and rural regions as well as in regions that are facing a transformation process. Already today, but in any case in the midterm, those regions are facing a shortage of the qualified labor force. The consequences for social and territorial cohesion are immense, due not only to the weakening of the regional economic strength and competitiveness of existing companies.

Regions with a decreasing population will have problems in providing and financing public goods and services, including access to education, health care, maintenance of public buildings, transport and ICT infrastructure, which are important to avoid social polarization and poverty (COM Working Paper Regions 2020). The same regions are also characterized by domination of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME) and handicraft. These SME have more problems to recruit employees compared to larger companies, which have a higher publicity and better financial and material resources for recruitment.

The project YURA contains three general objectives:

1. Support of a sustainable development in rural regions with problems of demographic and social change.
2. Strengthening and improvement of a structural approach for the joint development and implementation of cross policy actions.
3. Improvement of capabilities in the regional development to react effectively on changing framework conditions of demographic change.

The YURA project contributes to the “Central Europe” objectives of priority 4 “Enhancing competitiveness and attractiveness of cities and regions”. Therefore, the project’s specific objectives are described as follows:

1. Reduction of the negative impact of demographic and social change in rural regions by the development and implementation of transnational strategies to improve attractiveness and competitiveness of rural regions in comparison to urban centers.
2. Improvement in the quality of life by adaptation and improvement of social infrastructure. The development of joint and generally transferable methods should create framework conditions, which promote the active participation of young people as well as the corporate citizenship and civil participation. The higher identification with the region is supposed to counteract migration tendencies. The active participation of young people in the decision making process is in line with the recommendations of the EC.
3. Improvement of human capital and social integration. The joint development and implementation of generally transferable models and the long-term cooperation between schools, enterprises and regional development institutions ensures the availability of young employees.
4. Initiation of a transnational knowledge transfer between the project partners and the “European Network of Regions in Demographic Change”. Also the establishment of a structured dialogue at EU level is to improve demographic analysis to shape regional policies. The development of a joint new benchmarking system with specific indicators that better reflects the challenges of demographic change, should support the policy making process. Furthermore, the system will be recommended and made available as an applicable tool for other decision makers in the European mainstreaming process.
5. The reduction of negative impacts on demographic and social change in regions with migration problems in Central Europe.

The activities within the project were divided in 5 work packages (WP).

WP 1 and WP 2 = dealt with organization and management issues and dissemination activities

WP 3 = Swot analysis and Benchmarking

WP 4 = Pilot actions

WP 5 = Strategy development

WP 3's special analysis of the existing social and economic framework (conditions, situation, regional needs and best practice in the particular regions) performed mainly in the first 2 years of the project was essential to issue codified data then used to develop a new indicator system for the benchmarking study of the above mentioned regions. The indicator system was able to compare differently structured regions in the European union and it was built on existing statistical data in the region. The results of the SWOT analysis and Benchmarking performed during WP3 were used for the joint implementation of Pilot Actions in WP4 and the strategy development in WP5.

The SWOT analysis

The SWOT Analysis, coordinated by the Project Partner **isw Institut gGmbH**, is based on the single SWOT analyses of the participating regions. Those analyses had been worked out by each region and then gathered into the overall analysis. The process of **over-aging** of the population can be observed in nearly every region taking part in the project. Connected with this is a decrease in population as a whole. The development of **migration** is different within each individual region. Large and partially midsize cities show gains from migration, while especially peripheral territories show some significant losses from migration. In general, the economic performance is more or less clearly below the respective country and regional averages. In other words: the regions show structural weaknesses. The majority of the participating regions are forecasting a **decrease in population** ranging from minor to significant. The development of the population carries consequences for the

development of the labour market. Most regions face a shortage of skilled workers, at least in some occupational groups (e.g. technical and healthcare occupations). The **educational system** shows the same basic structure in all participating regions (elementary school, secondary school, grammar school/continuing education). Nonetheless, there are regional distinctions in regards to the structure of the educational system. Within the project this pertains to the particularly important transition from the school system to apprenticeship, as well as the transition from grammar school to university. The distinct characteristics are to be taken into consideration with a possible adoption of “best practices”. In most regions there are well-developed and versatile forms of interaction within the framework of **professional orientation and professional preparation**. In many cases, a well-developed network of participating actors can be found.

Best practices were discussed by the Working Group in view of their potential transfer and adoption. Then each partner had an easy access to these experiences published as case study or best practice description.

The main goal of the SWOT analysis was to pinpoint overall **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities/Options and Risks** in determined environment as per the 6 regions. In its analysis, isw Institut gGmbH went over these to come to the following conclusions: only few regions named as **strength** favorable demographic or rather age structures (Ústí, Lower Silesia, Novara).

Collaborations between schools and economy were intensified in most regions. The support given by corporations is shown in many ways, such as the sponsoring of schools. All regions undertook great efforts in the fields of adult education and continuing education. Lifelong learning programs are being increasingly implemented with increasing activities for the qualification of older workers (e.g. North Great Plain), as well as specifically tailored qualification programmes (e.g. Lower Silesia) and motivational measures for the unemployed (such as North Great Plain). At the same time, a number of added efforts were made to increasingly align education and research.

Regarding the identification of **weaknesses**, the quality of the collaboration between school and economy is highly affected by the interlocking dedication

by all parties involved (teachers, students, corporations, management and their willingness to collaborate). This also concerns the determination of demands for workforce. Quality and flexibility of the school development were criticized by some regions. The study also points out, that a higher acceptance of vocational schools is required. In regards to the general conditions the following weaknesses were isolated amongst others:

- Emigration of qualified workers (in nearly all regions)
- Weaknesses in the FuE-division (R&D)
- High share of long-term unemployed
- Partially low mobility of the workforce
- Partial or only little identification with the big industries/corporations
- Worsening of the general social surrounding (crime, vandalism, etc.)

In regards of **opportunities and options**, the (continued) development of hard and soft site-related factors is viewed by all regions as a chance in regards to the demographic change. This because is supposed to encourage people to stay or even return. This is related, for example, to a good social infrastructure, particularly in the field of childcare. The operation of private institutions should be made easier. Chances are also being preserved through the improvement in mobility. Offering appealing conditions, residents from neighbouring regions can be attracted as well. Generally, a stronger political support in education and vocational training is viewed as a chance to improve the existing situation. This also includes increasing expenditures in the field of education. To secure the demand for skilled workers it is necessary to integrate qualified foreign workers in the respective regions. At the same time, the boosted mobility of the actively aged population has to be understood as a opportunity to improve. Furthermore, a proactive employment policy should be developed and implemented.

In regards of **threats and risks**, more or less all regions are affected by demographic change. Normally, the effects are being intensified through emigration. This might cause a further differentiation in society (individualization, a larger gap between poverty and wealth, dealings with minorities). Social tensions and conflicts will continue to grow with such an

increased spreading of social inequalities. A heightened competition with other regions can lead to an increased pressure due to migration in both directions. Especially emigration of highly qualified workers is to be feared. With increasingly tightened public budgets, problems regarding financing the technical and social infrastructure can easily arise. A continuing low interest in technical occupations would further enlarge the lack of skilled workers. In addition, most economic sectors are increasingly threatened by closures due to ageing factors (which are not compensated). The noticeable lack of skilled workers in some sectors can, in the intermediate-term, affect the competitiveness of corporations due to lack of qualification.

Transnational Benchmarking Study

WP 3 also took into account a benchmarking study carried out by the Project Partner **isw Institut GmbH**. After the SWOT analysis, it was vital to the YURA project to analyse the participating region in a comparative manner. That is why a transnational benchmarking study was commissioned to assess common grounds of study.

The results of the transnational benchmarking of soft location factors (with focus on parts of the social infrastructure) were to be analysed and worked out in a study that could be useful to political and administrative decision makers to counteract the negative impact of demographic and social change.

Approximately from the beginning until the mid-90s, this type of study was applied to public sector. The reader must keep in mind that the implementation of this method to public sector is not pre-existing. This because the public systems lack a competitive situation otherwise present in free economy. One characteristic of the public sector is that the final goals of public service providers are not immediately given. Public administrations (mostly represented in the YURA project), act as non-profit organizations. Therefore the goals of this benchmarking had to be defined and separately

operationalized. This in order to introduce competitive elements in an area where it doesn't exist any competition between the actors.

Benchmarking in the public sector primarily offers performance comparison based on results. In other words: the best it could be done was identifying best performances or solutions (best practices) and from those work out lessons useful to the other organizations.

The first difficulty was to define uniform goals as they often cannot easily be defined, especially since the target marks partially withdraw themselves from quantification. The project YURA was facing this difficulty as well, especially since the problems of the participating regions differed very much. And this has already been highlighted by e.g. the SWOT-analysis.

In order to be fully able to solve this problem in a satisfactory way, the study would had required a detailed empirical contemplation, which would have, within the limited project budget of YURA, gone beyond the scope of the financial framework available. So the only possible way was to compromise, using the goals that were already in the project application named as "overall goals":

- stop emmigration of specialists/skilled workers
- reduce negative effects of the demographic and social change
- increase efficiency of social infrastructure and soft location factors
- improve human capital and social integration
- intensify the cooperation between schools, companies, local/regional administrations

If one accepts this vagueness, it becomes apparent, that within the project YURA, the goal of the benchmarking study could not have been to highlight one region (or more) over the others due to a specific feature. Feature which all others regions should have consequently learnt from. Therefore the goals were best set on the determination of „best practice“. It was then fair to say that its deriving application could secure success in other regions as well.

At the beginning of the work it was already foreseeable that particularly quantitative indicators would only be comparable to a limited extent. For example, the educational- and vocational training systems are organized

differently in the individual partner regions. Likewise, the definitions of occupations requiring formal training differ in individual countries. Therefore different structures of data collection were gathered on the field. Among the sparsely available quantitative data records (in regards to the numbers and comparability needed for the benchmarking indicators), special attention was paid to the development and co-ordination of a qualitative questionnaire.

The most serious problem turned out to be the practical non-comparability of existing systems for vocational training in the partner regions. While school education is still fairly comparable, including the different forms of occupational orientation, this was not the case with vocational training. The dual system of vocational training, meaning the parallel practical training in enterprises and the theoretical training in vocational schools, is only practiced in some regions (also in Germany there is no consistency– e.g. the health professions, which are mostly trained in vocational schools). A benchmarking for these – essential – fields of the project would come close to a principle investigation in terms of a system comparison, which would significantly exceed the framework of the project. A second methodological problem resulted from the incompleteness of available data sources. It was already pointed out, that independent empirical investigations were not foreseen within the framework of the project YURA (unless they were carried out by external experts – however, this possibility was not utilized). Therefore we had to use publicly released statistical sources and other material, such as internal statistics and overviews with the project partners, studies, analyses and reports with respective statistical components. Here as well, only a limited comparability was given. Therefore the evaluation focused on the questionnaires, which were compiled by the regions and were mainly centred on the assessment of non-quantitative, but qualitative estimations.

The heterogeneity of education and training systems in participating partner regions is reflected by the indicator system. Uniform or easily comparable indicators were only identified in a few instances. Yet, the basic principle to acquire information (due to the very limited financial budget and better opportunities for later updating) was to use surveys as part of the project but

also refer to publicly accessible statistics. This framework condition was mostly kept through the study.

Starting point of an overall assessment is the discovered situation. In order to carry on the benchmarking study, a questionnaire was developed. Generally the questions were formulated so that they could be answered based on provided multiple choice answers (this to minimize time effort), but nevertheless explanatory notes, amendments and add-ons, could be included as „remarks“. This part was used extensively by project partners. The questionnaire was supposed to map out the framework conditions as well as to offer starting points for the selection of "best practices". Since praxis has demonstrated that many good project approaches were more or less impossible to be transferred to other regions, due to different framework conditions, it appeared appropriate to allocate a relatively large amount of space to study framework conditions.

A transfer is in principle possible, but the framework conditions have to be coherent and a specific financial strength has to be guaranteed. Projects as the one concerning brick-makers are tied to very specific requirements, which cannot be generalized in this case.

The basic question, whether an onbroad effect applied or rather a specialized action should be viewed as best practice, can not clearly be answered based on the benchmarking study performed. Nonetheless, it has to be noted, that in the project approach, transferability requires a significant broad effect.

Pilot Actions

The results of the analysis and the benchmarking from WP3 was then used to develop Pilot Actions in WP4.

In WP4 pilot actions were implemented to test solutions to actively facilitate demographic change. The results of the pilot actions were to be transferred into the joint action plan (WP5) to be used for regional, transnational and European Mainstreaming.

The pilot actions also included the development and implementation of common methods for an active participation of the youth in the process of adjusting social infrastructures in the regions (encouragement of voluntary social commitment).

Therefore, an evaluation method that evaluates / checks / measures / captures whether the found solutions are innovative was needed. And, if they are regarded to be so, what makes them innovative.

The internal Evaluation of the pilot actions is an important part of the project, because it proves success or failure, transferability and sustainability of the international initiatives in the course of the project YURA.

The Evaluation is divided into two parts. The first part is an ex-ante questionnaire, which consists of general questions to determine general aims of the project partners (e.g. number of participating young people, number of events, number of follow-up projects, etc.). The second part, an ex-post evaluation, is based on the ex-ante evaluation but is expanded with qualitative questions concerning the special topic of the particular pilot action.

Furthermore, results were analysed according to an internal and an external impact dimension.

In a temporary cooperation of six regions (characterised by a similar structural setting) from the six EU member states of Germany, Austria, Italy, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, four different approaches to counteract negative effects of the demographic change were tested and further developed. Each of the four approaches was featured in a separate Pilot Action in WP4 of the YURA project. Throughout the project there have been planned four major groups of Pilot Actions, each with a different focus of content. Every project partner, exceptions are the Lead partner and PP4 – Regional development agency South-West-Styria (WP coordinator), was involved in at least two Pilot Actions.

The Pilot Actions are generally described as follows:

Learning Partnership (PA 1)

The basic idea of the Learning Partnership concept was to link schools and local companies formally through partnership agreements in order to show pupils career perspectives within their home region.

The Learning Partnership approach was tested in the following three regions: Saxony-Anhalt, Germany (represented by Project Partner 3), Federal state of Styria (Steiermark), Austria (represented by Project Partner 5), Lower Silesia, Poland (coordinated by Project Partner 9).

Participating enterprises were able to present their business and the variety of professional fields they are dealing with, while the schools were able to link practical issues raised by the enterprises to their school curricula. The cooperation was intended to help bringing school teaching closer to the needs of local business. Elements within the Learning Partnership concept included: factory tours, specific lessons held by corporate employees, internships etc.

Based on the case study report worked out by all YURA Project Partners and also additional evaluations, it was shown that one major problem is that most pupils are not aware of the leading companies and SME in the region they live in. Based on regional research and the fact of growing skills shortage in scientific and technical fields (the demand especially in the fields of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, materials science, metallurgical and chemical engineering) new routes require the professional orientation quality for young people.

Further objectives are:

- new forms of presentation of careers in regional working fields (e.g. science and technical fields)
- improvement of the image of careers in scientific and technical fields
- increase of the number of young employees in scientific and technical fields
- containment of migration of youngsters

Target groups:

- Pupils between 13-15 years
- The pupils' parents
- Schools/Universities and other educational institutions
- Regional companies

Pilot Action 2 – Business Academy (PA 2)

The Business Academy approach is also directed at attracting well educated young talents to the local economy and letting them settle in the region. Here, the focus was on the support of gifted pupils.

The Business Academy approach was applied in the following five regions: Saxony-Anhalt, Germany (represented by Project Partner 2), Federal state of Styria (Steiermark), Austria (represented by Project Partner 5), Ústí Region (Ústecký kraj), Czech Republic (represented by Project Partner 6), Province of Novara, Italy (represented by Project Partner 7), Lower Silesia, Poland (represented by Project Partner 10).

All YURA regions taking part in Pilot Action 2- Business Academy are struggling with similar problems and issues. By adapting and testing experiences and tools (instruments, applications) of the Foundation of International Education in different regional contexts it was possible to create a transferable model for all European regions.

The Business Academy activities were based on two sources. The "Diamond Workshop" model developed by the Wrocław, Poland, home of the Foundation of International Education (Fundacja Edukacji Międzynarodowej, FEM, Project Partner 10) and the support of gifted pupils through the economic academy of the German Herzog August Foundation (Herzog-August-Stiftung, based in Weißenfels, Burgenlandkreis county).

The "Diamond Workshop" model has been applied there since 2007, providing extra-curricular work in natural sciences (chemistry, biology) and mathematics. Through promoting its strengths and assets it tries to develop

and emotional attachment between gifted pupils and their region and, in particular, with the regional centre.

In contrast to the FEM's approach, the objective of the Herzog August Foundation's activities is to impart economic knowledge to pupils. It should be noted that in contrast with the other Pilot Actions with their more general objectives, the Business Academy Pilot Action is clearly focused on attracting gifted pupils to move to or stay in the regional centre. Since the Business Academy approach is a novelty to the majority of project regions, its adoption and implementation can be seen as a regional innovation. It is worth noting that traditionally the emphasis of the educational systems has been far more on the support of deprived pupils than of gifted ones. However, it appears that the Business Academy concept is not easily transferable to other rural/peripheral regions, because often these regions lack some of the preconditions, in particular the existence of an innovative enterprise environment and of higher educational institutions. Infrastructural restrictions, such as limited supply of broadband internet access or of decent communication links to the European metropolitan areas add a whole other set of problems.

Further objectives:

- to raise awareness among higher grades pupils concerning labour market possibilities connected with regional demanded fields (through meetings with careers officers and representatives of regional businesses)
- to raise pupils' motivation for education at specialized faculties (through pilot testing of 3 innovative supporting programmes designed for specially gifted pupils)

Final beneficiaries:

- gifted students of secondary schools who will take part in testing new methodology
- teachers implementing PA Business Academy

- parents implementing PA Business Academy
- Students from other YURA regions taking part in PA Business Academy

Indirect beneficiaries:

- Students of secondary schools in all YURA partner regions that will use supporting models for specially gifted pupils, newly-prepared within the PA.

Pilot Action 3 – Future Laboratory (PA 3)

The Future Laboratory was applied in the following 6 regions: Saxony-Anhalt, Germany (represented by the Lead Partner and Project Partner 3), Federal state of Styria (Steiermark), Austria (represented by Project Partner 4), Ústí Region (Ústecký kraj), Czech Republic (represented by Project Partner 6), Province of Novara, Italy (represented by Project Partner 7), Northern Great Plain region (Észak-Alföldi Régió), Hungary (represented by Project Partner 8), Lower Silesia, Poland (represented by Project Partner 10). FL has been established as a problem solving tool involving a broad spectrum of the population. The concept is described as a way of constructive collaboration when tackling urgent social problems (Jungk/Müllert 1990, p. 9).

It enables participants to bring their own ideas and wishes into planning processes. Thus people involved become part of the creation of their own or a more general future. A Future Laboratory is a bottom-up tool strengthening democratisation processes by involving people to interact in problem solving processes.

Successful cases show that using the Future Laboratory concept it is possible to enhance the identification of young people with their region and to foster local political participation.

Joint objectives:

- Determination and verification of methods and instruments for the identification of scenarios and strategies, which are needed to make living conditions in rural and migration-stricken regions more attractive
- establishing a platform that will improve the quality of work and family life and reduce migration in the region – through initiation and verification of the said methods.
- Supporting activities of partners and regions, which are engaged in tackling the problem of migration of young people.

Target groups:

- Young people between 13 to 25 who might leave the region;
- Organizations that are working with young people on a long-term basis (NNO, small and medium-sized businesses, schools, etc.)
- towns where organizations engaged in PA are located;
- Regions of partners engaged in PA.

Pilot Action 4 – Pupils Research Centre (PA 4)

The Pupils Research Centre concept (Pilot Action 4) is similar to the Learning partnership concept, building cooperation between enterprises and schools. The Pupils Research Centre concept is directed at pupils from seventh to tenth grade. It attempts to make the young people aware of the existence of certain professional fields in their region and to bring them together with local enterprises. By showing the assets of the local economy and highlighting its human resources, pupils will be supported in their individual career planning.

The implementation of the concept is based on the specific conditions offered by the local economy and is carried out in the form of projects. The main emphasis is put on the provision of extra-curricular work, in particular of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (also known as STEM fields) and on “practice days” with local enterprises.

The following four regions have carried out projects testing the Pupils Research Centre concept: Saxony-Anhalt, Germany (represented by Project Partner 2), Federal state of Styria (Steiermark), Austria (represented by Project Partner 5), Northern Great Plain region (Észak-Alföldi Régió), Hungary (represented by Project Partner 8), Lower Silesia, Poland (represented by Project Partner 9).

Target groups:

- Pupils between the age of 13 to 16 and 15 to 18
- Pupils' parents
- Teachers
- Participating companies

Synthesis of project evaluations

Based on the analysis of the observed internal and external impacts of the Pilot Actions, a synthesis of the project evaluations carried out highlights the following critical success factors.

Internal Impact

The most important internal impacts of the Pilot Actions are the following:

•strengthening of the local activity level

The Pilot Actions have improved communication and cooperation and led to the establishment of new collaboration and cooperation patterns in the participating regions.

•raised awareness for the problems resulting from the demographic change

The raised awareness of actors in the political, educational and business spheres was described as a goal for some of the Pilot Actions.

• development of specific concepts

Due to the success of all Pilot Actions, follow-up projects were planned in all four Pilot Actions and already in the implementation phase in all.

External Impact

The external impact of the Pilot Actions is in particular relevant for the YURA project. The main criteria to assess the extent to which the Pilot Actions were known beyond their respective region is their perception in relevant regional development related circles and the general discussion that PA have generated.

A successful model project was also good if it inspired other regions with similar problems. Aware of a possible solution, the new inspired region could ask and talk about the implementation of the positive Pilot Action in its own territory.

Ideally, a successful project idea would be implemented in a number of other regions.

The analysis of Pilot Actions from the perspective of the **evaluation aspects** 'plan', 'process', 'project results' and 'perception and applications' and the distinction between internal and external effects provided the necessary insight to carve out factors important or even critical to the success of potential future projects.

Three categories of success factors can be distinguished:

- Personal factors
- Internal structural factors
- External structural factors.

The above mentioned success factors are interdependent. The more success factors are met, the higher is the possibility to achieve good project results.

Personal success factors refer to those skills of a project promoter which have significant influence on the project success. Competence and experience in the relevant topic (e.g. economy, education, and facilitation) are essential for a successful project implementation. These should be found either among the project promoter or instructed by external experts.

Individuals, showing their **competence** and well embedded in the regional network of relevant actors and willing to deploy their networks for the sake of the project are important to the project success as well as for the dissemination of the project approach.

Internal structural factors such as:

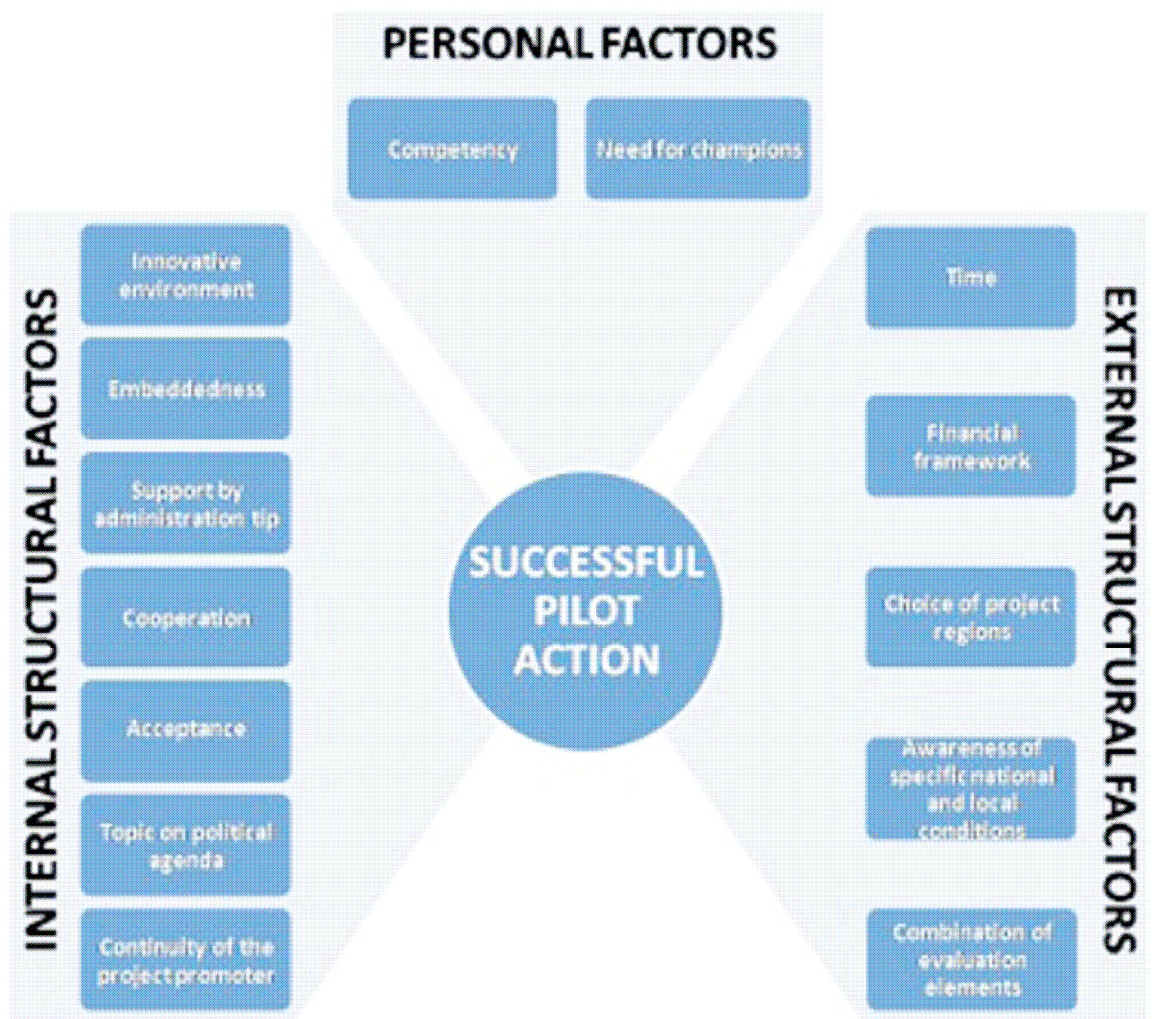
- Topic on political agenda. If a specific topic is on the local political agenda, this is crucial to the motivation of regional actors dealing with that topic.
- Continuity of the Project Partner. The organisational continuity of the project promoter has significant influence on the project realisation. A change in project responsibility often results in delays and loss of information and mutual trust).
- Acceptance. The reputation of the project promoter within the region, but also beyond, is important for the motivation and involvement of essential actors in the project.
- Cooperation. Well-established cooperation structures provide significant advantages in finding the best matching partners for a particular project. Furthermore, less time is spent searching for potential partners and getting in touch with them, more time it's needed to carry out the project.
- Support from top administrative staff. Top administrative staff such as mayors, governors or district chief executives, are a valuable resource for any project.
- Innovative environment. Developing innovative strategic approaches is a core objective of the projects belonging to the YURA project. There are two main principles for the promotion of innovation: the first is to promote "charisma" in institutional arrangements through the creation of situations that are distant from the daily routines. Second, referred to the network approach, is that innovations are results of collective learning processes.

External structural factors such as:

- Time. The demanding requirements for the regions should be balanced by an adequate project duration. Especially regions with lower level of competencies available and less links between the relevant actors need sufficient time to make the projects feasible for their regional development.

- Financial framework. In order to carry out activities additional to the daily routine work, sufficient funding is needed. This needs to be used for additional staff or investments. A start-up financing can stimulate the creation of sustainable structures, able to maintain themselves even after the initial funding comes to the end.
- Choice of project regions. One of the main outcomes of the YURA project evaluation is, that in the regions that had previously included the issues addressed by the YURA project into their development strategies, the PA had the positive effect of making the institutions face these issues even after the end of the Pilot Actions.
- Awareness of specific national and local conditions. Another important aspect for the implementation of the Pilot Actions is the awareness of specific national and regional characteristics that might have an impact on the project. The role and image of political actors (whether justified or not) varies widely between the regions of the European Union.

Structured overview of the success factors and their structure:



Final considerations on Pilot Actions

Transferability and sustainability of the pilot actions are very important topics for the Project YURA. Hereafter the reader will find some remarks on how positive this experience was to really change the ongoing trend and how the four Pilot actions have proved to be very useful in the very next future. This experience tells us that all actors must take action in changing the existing conditions. People, institutions, schools and most of all, companies. They can have a key role in modifying the ongoing demographic change. This, only if they take action in linking closely their work to schools and the academic world. The business world, from big to small companies, can benefit greatly from talking to schools and preparing students for the challenge they face. Pilot actions have highlighted that SME can benefit even more from this close relationship with academic institutions making pupils aware of their existence and their area of business.

Learning Partnership

The YURA pilot action "Learning Partnership" is basically transferable to all YURA partner regions and to other regions as well. During the implementation process of a "Learning Partnership" attention should be paid to the visualized "Step Sequences on how to implement a Learning Partnership". Furthermore, it is advantageous to have good and close contacts to regional actors, stakeholders and schools to know about a partner organization in the respective region. The knowledge of the regional economic structure is of particular importance as is the situation of the local labor market, since the instrument "Learning Partnership" is especially successful if problems in these fields could be recognized immediately.

Through the active cooperation of regional actors, negative influences in terms of demographic and social change, especially in structural weak rural areas, could be mitigated and regional collaboration can be

strengthened. Under these circumstances, the YURA pilot action “Learning Partnership” has achieved a key requirement of the overall YURA project and shows a transferable approach on how to deal with problems of demographic change and the shortage of young skilled workers.

Business Academy

In Poland, the business Academy model was developed as a possibility to support highly gifted young people. In the course of the project YURA it was tried to implement this model in all participating countries. Concerning this, it is absolutely important to pay attention to the current state of the support for gifted learners in the respective countries and to make adaptations. Not only is the individual specialist area to examine, but also the respective procedure. In this case it is important to note that an early support through multiple channels is very important as well as the involvement of parents.

Future Laboratory

Acquisition and evaluation of the problems and factors that determine the attractiveness of the region in the eyes of young people, and – most importantly – the closed links of organizations capable of solving the given problems, make it possible to strengthen the relationship between young people and their town/region. Thus, they epitomize some of the indispensable steps that will provide a solution for the problem of excessive migration from rural areas and structurally-stricken regions. Through the implementation of the Future Laboratory pilot activity in Ústí Region and at other partners engaged, the feasibility of the activity was confirmed in even other regions and countries of the European Union. Core requirements for the implementation of FL in another region are:

- Identification and involvement of local authorities and their willingness to seize problems and propose solutions to the issues.

- Identification and involvement of organizations working with children and young people (NNO, school, and suchlike).
- Assurance of financial resources for the implementation of FL.
- Selection of a group of young people that fit the purpose, i.e. discussing problems relating to life in a given town and actively coming up with solutions.

Pupils research centre

Generally, all regions appreciate the fact that this pilot action gives young people the opportunity to learn more about the possibilities of their own professional carrier, about local economy and, very important, teachers and parents were involved in the PA. In some regions the decision makers in the existing administration were encouraged to engage more intensively in questions of an “in time” organized vocational orientation as well as in the prevention of a disproportionate migration of young people, especially against the background of the demographic development. More or less, the advantages weight out the disadvantages. However, it is obvious, that the PA provides important incentives for the development of the activities, e.g. the transferability to other regions/countries is definitely desired and given. The results of the interviews carried out with students demonstrate that young people have a lack of knowledge concerning future employment possibilities in their region. The results furthermore indicate that the transfer of such knowledge in schools is done with different intensity. Despite all existing problems, relations with family and friends nevertheless play an important role for the 20 interviewed pupils in the district Burgenlandkreis. While 40 % of the pupils can imagine staying in the region 15 % would prefer to leave the region. The information provided by teachers on job opportunities in the region is assessed as not sufficient enough. Pupils are eager to learn more about their region, the

economy, the companies and vocational opportunities and are furthermore interested in doing an extracurricular pre-vocational training or practical work in a company. The desire to do a vocational training or to study is nearly balanced.

YURA Youth Seminar - Magdeburg, November 2011

To fulfil the requirements of the YURA project, it was also important to listen to young people's voice and their point of view on the problems regarding demographic change. The 5 days youth seminar that was held in Magdeburg in 2011 gave them means to let the institutions know about their opinions and also to develop ideas to change the status quo in their regions.

After getting to Magdeburg these young men and women had their chance to socialize with each other and to present their home region to the other participants. This was also a great occasion to discuss about their regions' problems and peculiarities.

All 20 participants coming from the 6 partner countries were then welcomed to choose one of the 4 different workshops and attend it: radio, video, print and web. In the following 4 days they were asked to create a message that was to be publicized with whatever media they had chosen for the specific purpose. A combined appeal was, in the end, presented to the Parliament of Saxony-Anhalt.

In the spirit of the YURA program, the participants were welcomed to compare their experiences and speak up their minds about their future. Various solutions to the regional problems were also brought to general discussion. At the end of the seminar, they worked out a declaration in which they asked the Parliament of Saxony-Anhalt to act against migration of young people from their home towns due to lack of job opportunities.

Here are their demands:

- 1) More opportunities for work experience in local companies while we are still at school. We want to know what vacancies local employers need to fill, so that we can begin training or studying with a specific goal in mind.
- 2) Increased cooperation between schools and businesses (open days, entrepreneurial mentoring, partnership etc.). Our schools must teach important life skills; space should be made in the curriculum for entrepreneurship, self-reliance and accountability towards society.
- 3) Free and regular local public transport. Young people in the rural areas of our regions suffer a structural handicap. They must be helped to participate fully in cultural and social life.
- 4) More information about possibilities of “learning mobility”. If we are to survive in an age of globalization, we need to learn lessons from other parts of Europe. We can then pass on the specialist knowledge we have acquired to others in our region. Unfortunately, there is little awareness about the various programmes on offer.
- 5) No unpaid internship should last for more than four weeks. Since training and academic study are said to lack practical relevance, there is demand for wide-ranging professional experience in the form of internships. We are happy to take up these placements but would like to receive reasonable remuneration in return.
- 6) Politicians should give increases support and place more reliance on women in managerial positions. Regions whose young women in particular are leaving must create special incentives for this target group.
- 7) There should be more encounters between politicians, business and young people. If they want to keep us here, politicians and entrepreneurs must understand what makes us tick. And we in return must become conversant with the nuts and bolts of society and the economy from an early age, so that we can plan our our lives accordingly.
- 8) Free, fast internet access. A modern region not only supplies its major conurbations with rapid internet access, but makes it available to all. We equate internet to a “right to information”, which is why it should be free of charge.

9) A high priority should be given to the promotion of a well-rounded social life.

A healthy working-life balance is an important factor when it comes to quality of life. Any region wishing to remain attractive should, as matter of fact, facilitate participation in clubs, cultural institutions, sport, and youth organizations, and provide funding for these.

10) Education must be challenging and free of charge - from birth to one's qualification. Whenever one is talking about nursery, school, training, study or music, school and youth-exchange programmes, free, high-quality education is a hard, not a soft factor for young families deciding where to settle down.

11) More interregional programmes for young people. There should be an increasingly interregional character to the subject-matter of workshops, youth encounters, and school exchanges and the funding available to them (in keeping with a "Europe of Regions"). This contributes to the creation of a regional identity which enjoys healthy competition with a local, national, and - ideally - also a European identity.

12) Children and young people should be regarded as an investment for the future. We don't want to see ourselves constantly depicted as a problem which simply costs money to solve. We would like to enjoy the same positive media interest and image among politicians as a large investor would receive; otherwise, we might continue to feel that we are unwelcome here.

Martina Agosti's graduation thesis

The importance and echo that the YURA project bears and the interest that it has arisen in today's society, it is also present in the thesis written by Miss Martina Agosti who graduated in year 2011 from the Università Cattolica Sacro Cuore in Milan, Italy. Hers it's a dual university degree both in European Integration and Regional Development. Her thesis is written in Italian and German language after the year she has spent in Germany at the Martin-Luther University of Halle. During the above mentioned year she also had the

opportunity to work at the Trade and Industry Bureau of Halle-Dessau where she was involved in the definition of the strategic objectives of the YURA project.

The original title of her thesis is:

IL RUOLO DEL CAPITALE UMANO NEI PROCESSI DI SVILUPPO. IL PROGETTO YURA/ DIE ROLLE DES HUMANKAPITALS IN DER ENTWICKLUNGSPROZESSEN. DAS PROJEKT YURA (The role of human capital in development process. The YURA project).

Miss Agosti has taken the YURA project very seriously. Analysing the potentials that in 2011 the YURA project had, Miss Agosti was confident that the goals set by YURA would have revealed themselves as winning ones if implemented in right away. She also underlined the tireless effort of all partners to find more solutions to counteract the consequences of demographic change and brain-drain. Of all of them there are two features of the YURA program that she defined as promising. The **first** is getting a stronger relationship and collaboration between schools and the entrepreneurial world. The final objective of the YURA project should be, for her, to create among the students more awareness of the importance of working experiences and, at the same time give to the business industry the chance to find out the real talents that could eventually specialize after finishing school.

The **second** interesting aspect of this project, for her, is also trying to invest as much as possible on the territory so that students coming out of school can be able to find a job or at least use what they have learned abroad in a positive way.

Conclusions

The strategy to counteract demographic change should have the general objective of supporting innovative solutions concerning demographic and social transformations and the effects thereof by developing an international youth policy addressed to the European, national and regional entities. The strategic

objective of the YURA project regions should obtain a positive net youth migration rate (people up to the age of 35) by decreasing the number of long-term in/out-migrations, by encouraging the return from the short/medium-term migrations as well as by attracting people up to the age of 35 to the regions.

Actions which need to be pursued or initiated appertain to many specific policies: education, the labour market, social policy, leisure time culture, the quality of democracy. In order for the strategy to be effective, it cannot be reduced merely to educational actions targeted at a specific age group but rather converge on the wider context of activating young people to pursue grass-roots (bottom-up) activities, their entering the labour market along with the entire spectrum of institutional issues (*inter alia*, tailoring education offers to suit the needs of the local and regional labour market, the reconciliation of family life and professional engagement, activity of young people within the public domain). Creating better job prospects for the young and encouraging youth to remain in their birthplaces will facilitate the acquisition of well-trained professionals by local workplaces and employers. Focusing on the youth which constitutes the main target group for both regional development and the development of innovative entrepreneurship, will have positive impact upon the entire region.

The strategic goal of regions having problems with the migration of young population is to design the education and scientific policy supporting development of modern, innovative branches of economy and to allow young people to acquire new skills and abilities in carrying out their work duties properly.

In order to effectively reduce the outflow of young population from the migration hazard region, there is a strong need to take into consideration the unemployment counteractions in the age groups up to 35 years old. The general activities should be focused on boosting social and economic development of the region within the context of increasing job opportunities for young people. Thus, private business initiative should be supported; the needs of local economy and labour market should be identified well and matched with

the education offer.

Equally important goal is to reduce social, cultural and economic educational inequalities as in a longer perspective they may result in economic deterioration. Educational spending is the best long-term investment which brings in a certain profit. In general social dimension, education that contributes to equal opportunities, improves global competition, employment growth rate and maintenance of social welfare. The common access to all the educational levels is one of the main actions undertaken in order to raise the quality of human capital and thereby to prevent out-migration of young people from the region. That's why the equal access to education should be made an important public issue and necessary steps should be taken in that respect.

In order to do something effective to counteract migration processed, Pilot Actions have proved to be an effective tool.

While the pilot action Learning Partnerships and Pupils Research Centre mainly serve as a basis for the establishment of cooperations between schools and regional companies as well as for getting to know the companies and their fields of work, the Business Academy is dedicated to promote highly gifted and especially interested young people.

This aspect can partly be found again in the Pupils Research Centre as the additional curricula had to be done outside of school, voluntarily and by involving own "research".

Basically, it can be said that these three pilot actions contain a strong work-effective and economic aspect.

The pilot action future laboratory focused on a more social aspect in the life of young people. The aim here was to work out a concept in several phases of how young people imagine their perfect region. An important point here was the participation of young people in regional development processes or the acquaintance with regional politics. Since young people are able to take part in the creation of their environment and participate in discussions with policy makers, their sense of wellbeing should increase and thus also the attachment to the region.

It can be mentioned in advance that it is true for all pilot actions that intersections, which undertake organisational tasks, are very important factors in order to secure the long-term development of partnerships.

In conclusion, it can be said that with the right implementation, all pilot actions will have a direct or indirect very positive effect on the number of qualified specialists in rural areas.

We also must bear in mind that the aim of EU youth policy (which stresses its serving role to young people with providing them with equal opportunities and enabling them to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society), can be reached through:

Investing in Youth (putting in place greater resources to develop policy areas that affect young people in daily life and improve their well being) and **Empowering Youth** (promoting the potential of young people for the renewal of society and to contribute to EU values and goals);

Countermeasures are, therefore, to be regarded as priorities, and the recommendations presented hereafter are to be implemented at both regional and European level:

- Improve the education system placing greater emphasis on practical skills
- Increase funding for modernization of schools.
Modern education should not focus only on specific knowledge but also provide general knowledge. Nowadays it is important that graduates have certain key qualifications (languages, social skills, economic and computer knowledge) in order to enter the labour force.
- Promote interaction between schools and enterprises. Highly recommended are long term solutions based on mutual profit (i.e. cooperation and partnership) that will eventually form a permanent network.
- Open training centres.

- Open youth centres.
- Promote interplay of hard and soft locational factors like:
 - wage levels
 - social infrastructure
 - scholarships

Early retain of the up-and-coming skilled workers to the region and adaption of "soft" locational factors to the needs as social factors to stay are particularly suitable to improve the social integration, to increase the quality of life and to slow down the process of segregation.

- Continuing education (also known as further education)

Lifelong learning must increasingly internalized. This includes increasing activities for the qualification of older workers, as well as specifically tailored qualification programmes and motivational measures for the unemployed. At the same time, there must be added efforts to increasingly align education and research with the real demands of the economy.

Different type of education are to be addressed:

Retraining of adults

Studing at college

Education via internet (e-learning)

Continuing education for professionals

Lifelong learning – selfmotivated and voluntarily pursued