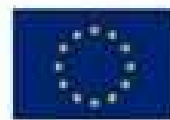




**CENTRAL
EUROPE**
COOPERATING FOR SUCCESS



EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND

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YURA - 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 nad Labem (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.

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 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 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. 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 (Usti, 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 gGmbH**. 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 have 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 other 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.

As „best practice“ in terms of a broad effect and transferability, mainly these three projects ought to be considered:

- Learning partnerships
- On-the-job field days and practical training
- Future laboratories

While with the other best practices, significantly extensive tests of requirements for transferability have to be done.

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.

Pilot Actions are thought to generate and modify concepts that can be used in other regions as well. 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.

In the evaluation method applied, four different subjects of evaluation (evaluandum) were used: project plan, process, project results and perception and application. 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 WS 4 of the YURA project. 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.

Pilot Action 2 – Business Academy (PA 2)

In Pilot Action 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 nad Labem region (Ustecký 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).

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 classes 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.

Pilot Action 3 – Future Laboratory (PA 3)

The Future Laboratory was applied in the following 7 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 nad Labem region (Ustecký 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. Acknowledgement of the results and involvement of relevant political actors is essential to its success.

Pilot Action 4 – Pupils Research Centre (PA 4)

The Pupils Research Centre concept (Pilot Action 4) is similar to the Business Academy concept. However, while the Business Academy concept puts its emphasis on gifted pupils, the Pupils Research Centre concept is directed at pupils belonging 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 classes, 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).

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**

Follow-up projects were planned in all four Pilot Actions and already in the implementation phase in all Pilot Actions with the exception of Pilot Action 4. In particular for Pilot Action 2 (Business Academy) the project partners' interest in continuing the approach was remarkable. On the contrary, the Future Laboratory was the Pilot Action that was apparently seen as least rewarding compared to the effort involved.

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.

To date, only one specific external impact is to be reported: the Business Academy concept was adopted by other four districts in Germany.

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

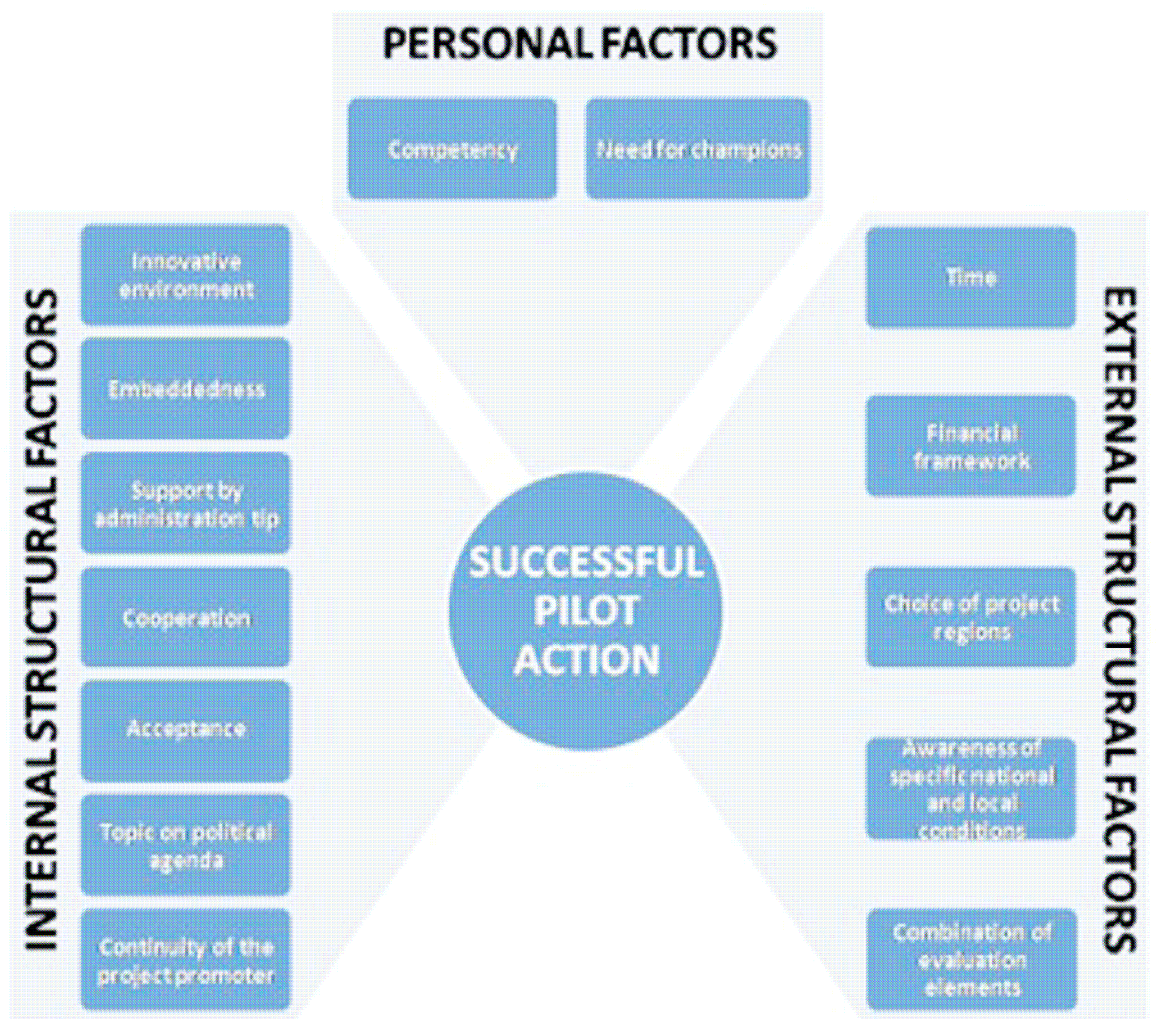
- Time. The demanding requirements for the regions should be balanced by an adequate project duration. Especially regions with lower level of competencies available and less links between the relevant actors need sufficient time to make the projects feasible for their regional development.
- Financial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



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

One way to prove the importance and echo that the YURA project bears and the interest that it has arisen in today's society, it is also to present 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 both in Italian and German language after the year she has spent in Austria 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.

DER PROJEKT YURA (The role of human capital in development process. The YURA project).

As a young graduate from university, 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. What it should be avoided at all times is the so-called *brain waste*: students acquiring a knowledge they can not put at work in their home land and in their territory.

What is really evident getting to know better the YURA project is that wasting talents harms not only youth, that becomes totally uninspired, but it damages the area's economy and the social network.