



Regio WIN



RegioWIN – Interregional Competition as a means of successfully involving regional stakeholders in Smart Specialisation and bottom-up approach for ITI

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¹ Views expressed in this paper represent exclusively the authors' own.

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Abstract

RegioWIN – Interregional Competition as a means of successfully involving regional stakeholders in Smart Specialisation and bottom-up approach for ITThe Baden-Württemberg case study can contribute experience to various aspects addressed at the conference.

With the concept of a 2-stage interregional competition for strategic development concepts and ERDF funding possibilities Baden-Württemberg has successfully activated many new stakeholders in all regions of its state to participate in Smart Specialisation processes.

Territorial design was not limited to administrative units instead the regions had to define themselves in a collaborative process and based on evidence as functional areas and find a leadpartner to represent them. The only restriction was that a given territory couldn't be addressed by more than one regional strategy.

The regions had to submit SWOT-based strategic concepts in line with EU 2020 goals and the Baden-Württemberg innovation strategy to enhance the innovation capacity of their territory in view of the major societal and economic challenges. The competition framework asked for structured participation of all relevant societal groups. In a first stage the strategy was designed building on local strengths and challenges including a draft of useful projects for strategy implementation. In a second stage the strategies had to be mapped into development strategies and the implementing projects had to be proposed including ownership for financing, operation and implementation road map. Finally regional stakeholders had to decide on priorities for the proposed projects in regard to their strategy. Only a limited number of projects targeting innovation and CO₂-reduction were eligible to ERDF funding.

Three ministries joined efforts for the competition call.

An interdisciplinary jury chose the projects eligible for ERDF funding. In a downstream process following the selection all other keyprojects were offered counselling on funding opportunities.

Experience shows that the call for competition instantaneously activated an intensive dialogue process among the stakeholders involved in innovation and regional development within the various territories. Fences were pulled down and novel allies for regional development identified. The competition gave regions extended access to instruments which are usually limited only to very discreet target groups.

As a result the regional stakeholders came up with a wide array of innovative projects reaching from various types of custom made business development centers targeting f.i. KETs like Organic Electronics or Nanoanalytics, high tech start-ups or technology transfer over collaborative research projects and infrastructure for applied research in the field of biomedical technology to clusters and sustainable regional mobility and energy systems.

Two aspects are of interest for further elaboration and sharing: The mechanisms activated in the participating regions and the preparatory necessities on the side of administration in general and in the light of ERDF programming

The Baden-Württemberg experience with interregional competition suggests that competitions are a successful instrument in regional development to transport Smart Specialisation to any type of territory and to activate new stakeholders in a regional context for various innovation issues. They can also help to establish strategic processes in territories with little or scattered strategic awareness or limited collaborative spirit.

1 Rationale behind RegioWIN

Information about Baden-Württemberg

With its 10.8 million inhabitants, a GDP of Euro 460 billion and an annual state budget of Euro 44 billion², Baden-Württemberg is one of the more-developed regions in Germany and the EU. The correspondingly very small budget³ from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is deliberately and specifically being implemented to strengthen essential location factors.



Image 1: Where to find Baden-Württemberg⁴

Within the past three decades, Baden-Württemberg has made use of targeted innovation policies to develop a diverse landscape of institutions for innovation in the are-

² See State Office of Statistics Baden-Württemberg (ed.): Baden-Württemberg - Facts and Figures, Stuttgart 2016.

³ Only since ERDF funding period 2007-2013 ERDF funding is available across the state. Prior to this, only selected structurally weak areas as defined by the EU funding framework qualified for ERDF funding in Baden-Württemberg. ERDF budget: ERDF 2007-2013: 143.4 million Euro, ERDF 2014-2020: 246 million Euro.

⁴ See <https://www.weltkarte.com/europa/europakarte/karte-regionen-europa.htm> [accessed: 11.08.2016].

as of higher education, non-academic research institutions, intermediaries of technology transfer, clusters and networks.

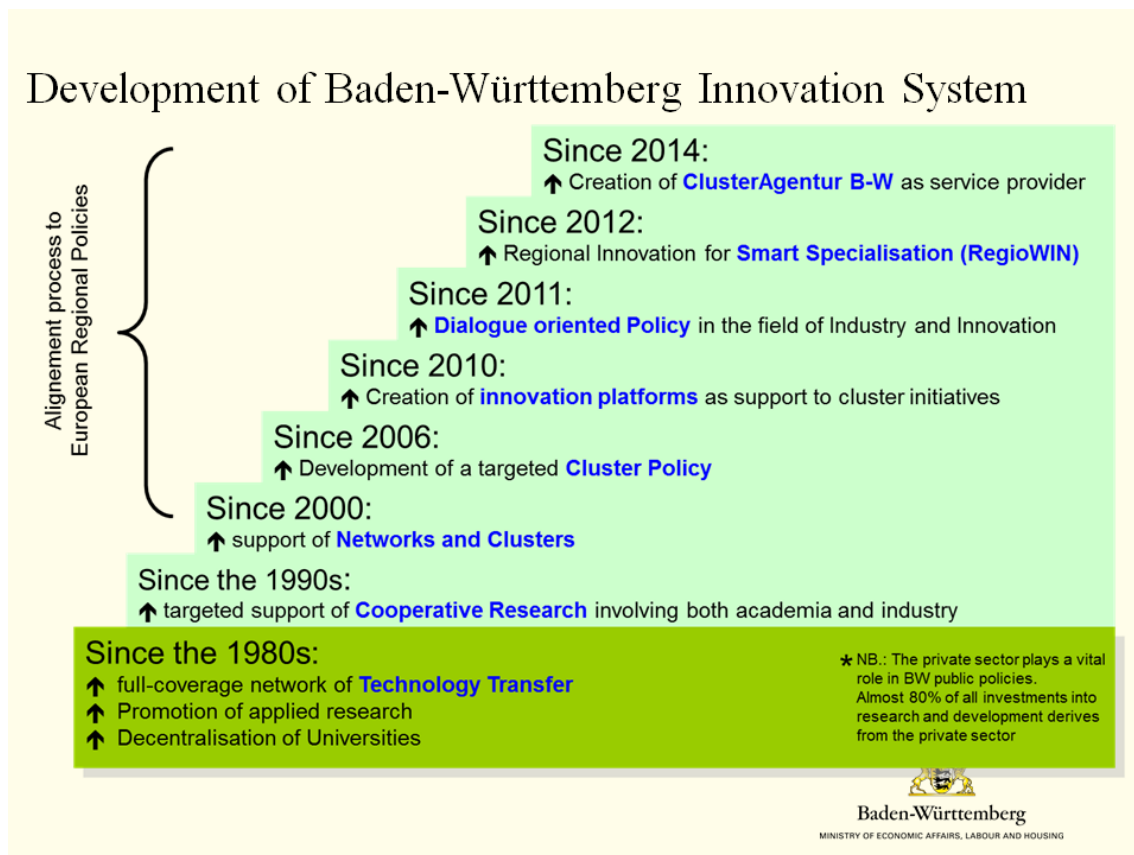


Image 2: Instrumental development within Baden-Württemberg's innovation strategy⁵

For many years counting, Baden-Württemberg has taken the top position among the most innovative regions in the EU according to innovation studies. With 4.8 % of its GDP⁶ going to R&D expenditures, it has already surpassed the target set out in EU 2020 goals. Baden-Württemberg's excellent innovation ranking is the result of R&D expenditures made by companies (80 %). The majority of these occurs across a very limited number of industries and are contributed by a few individual global players. On the other hand, the portion of SMEs taking part in innovation spending has continued to decrease in recent years.⁷

This finding fundamentally uncovers economic as well as potential, as yet unknown, structural risks, from certain perspectives, for location factor development in the region. As such, the question posed for the public sector is: What can be done ahead of time in order to enhance the public influence side of innovative power?

At state level (NUTS I), statistics for Baden-Württemberg present a generally positive picture. However, upon closer investigation into the sub-regional level (NUTS II and

⁵ authors' own graph.

⁶ See State Office of Statistics Baden-Württemberg (ed.): Forschungs- und Entwicklungsmonitor Baden-Württemberg, in: Reihe Statistische Analysen 2/2016, p. 7.

⁷ See Baden-Württembergischer Handelskammertag (ed.): Technologiepolitik in Baden-Württemberg 2015, p. 2.

III)⁸, significant differences in terms of innovative power and innovative dynamics make themselves known, as, f.i., proven in the last innovation study concerning the municipal and regional levels conducted by the State Office of Statistics of Baden-Württemberg.⁹ It is safe to assume that the roots of these differences in innovative power at sub-regional level can be found in the pronounced regional challenges in relation to economic structures, topography, demographics and the interconnections between the actors of innovation.

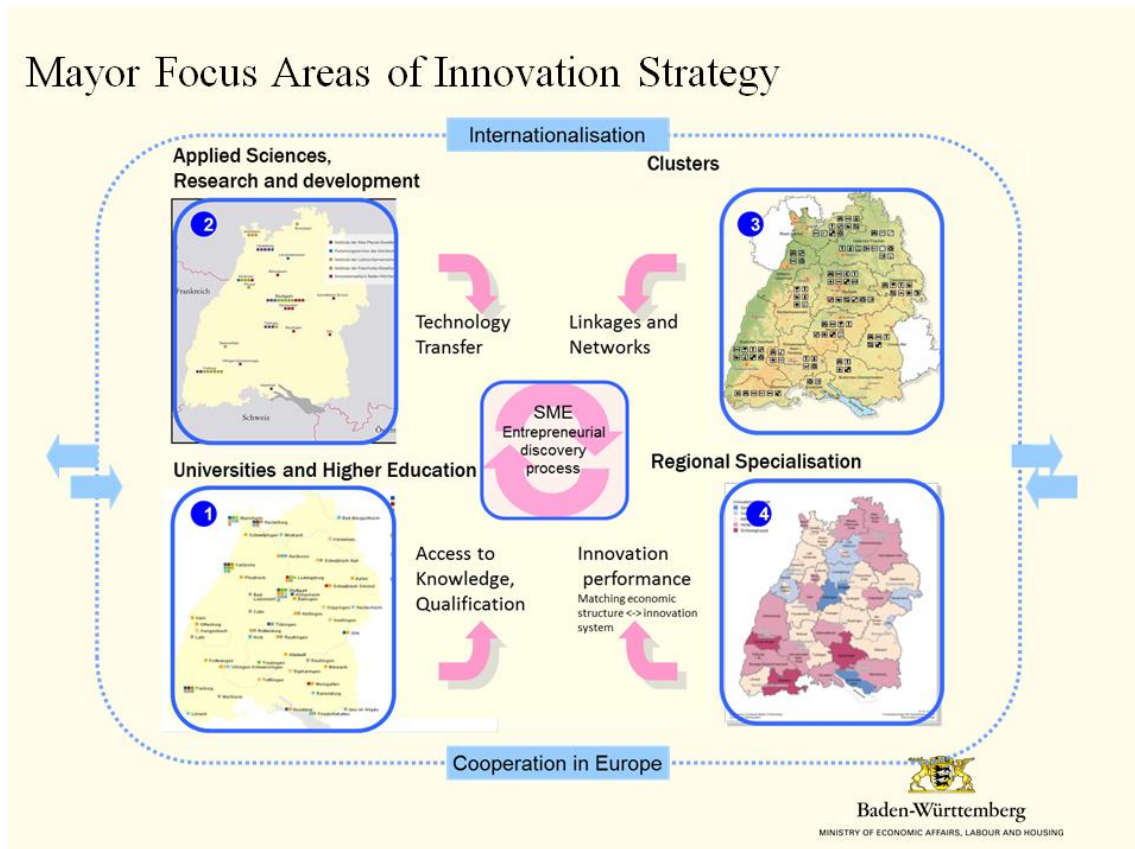


Image 3: Mayor focus areas of the Baden-Württemberg innovation strategy¹⁰

At state level, the strategic approach of innovation policies long-since has undergone a dynamic and iterative development.¹¹ Moreover, the interconnection between the relevant innovation actors can be deemed as excellent following an intensive phase of dialogue-oriented innovation and economic policies. Due to the diverse competencies concerning regional development aspects, potential for improvement exists in terms of interconnectedness at the sub-regional level.

⁸ From the EU perspective, Baden-Württemberg is considered as a region (NUTS I level). Within Baden-Württemberg, a differentiation is made between 12 planning regions (NUTS II), which encompass 44 city and county districts (NUTS III) along with 1,101 towns and municipalities. In the following text these actors are referred to as the sub-regional level.

⁹ See Einwiller, Ruth: Innovationsindex 2014, Kreise und Regionen in Baden-Württemberg, in: Statistisches Monatsheft Baden-Württemberg 2/2015, pp. 5-12.

¹⁰ authors' own graph.

¹¹ See <http://wm.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/innovation/innovationsstrategie%20des%20landes/> [accessed: 04.08.2016].

With this, the question arises as to which contribution the sub-regional level can make to enhancing the innovative power in the respective territories?

Long-term technological, ecological and demographic changes present a new set of challenges for all the regions, counties, towns and municipalities within Baden-Württemberg. In order to overcome these, new ideas and strategic concepts for shaping the future must be developed. Due to the subsidiary division of responsibilities in Germany as well as in Baden-Württemberg and in consideration of the larger framework of state and EU policies, these can only be developed and implemented by actors themselves at the sub-regional level.

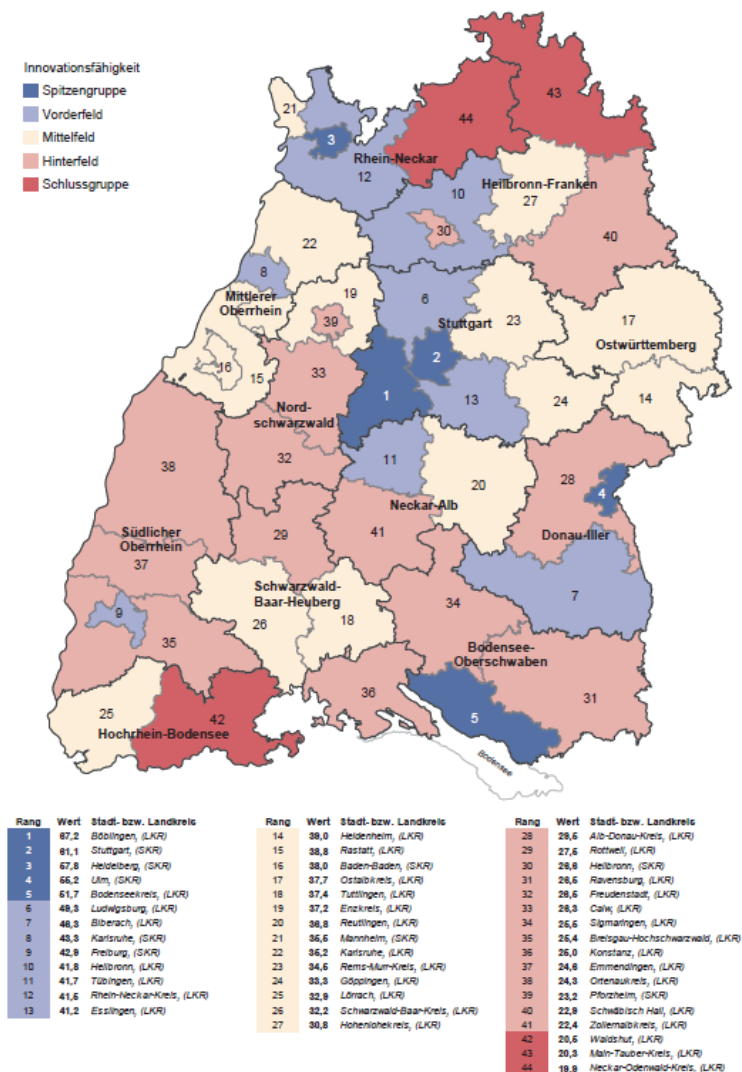


Image 4: Innovation index - Analysis at NUTS III-level in Baden-Württemberg¹²

RegioWIN as a core programmatic instrument within the ERDF programme (EFRE-OP) in Baden-Württemberg

During the 2014-2020 funding period the European Commission through the ERDF, supports i.a. the “Investments for Growth and Jobs” goal. Related to this several as-

¹² See Einwiller, Ruth: Innovationsindex 2014, Kreise und Regionen in Baden-Württemberg, in: Statistisches Monatsheft Baden-Württemberg 2/2015, p. 7.

pects are brought to special attention including the strengthening of sustainable urban and regional development, participation of local stakeholders in project planning and implementation within the framework of integrated territorial strategies.

In the past, funds for regional policies at both state and EU level were only available for addressing structural weaknesses.¹³ In the context of the paradigm shift of cohesion policy from sole concentration on compensating for disadvantages and towards a policy of “enhancing strengths” Baden-Württemberg focussed on enhancing strengths already during the 2007-2013 ERDF funding period. This resulted in targeted pilot actions, though these remained limited to selected regions with structural weaknesses in urban and rural areas. One of particular importance was the model project addressing innovative municipal development schemes in rural areas - EU-lighthouse projects (EULE)¹⁴, which received additional support by accompanying research.

For the 2014-2020 ERDF funding period thus an instrument was needed that would appeal to all of the state's regions and also prove suitable for facilitating and systematically integrating strategic engagement in local development. This instrument would have to consider the aspect of “Supporting Competitiveness” by way of developing the innovative power within the various regions across the state. In other words: the instrument had to be capable of transferring the concept of Smart Specialisation from state level to sub-regional level. The state government deliberately made use of ERDF funds in order to promote the process of Smart Specialisation at sub-regional level across the state.

Three of the ministries involved in implementing ERDF in Baden-Württemberg combined their efforts to this goal as their respective intervention fields contain important building blocks for regional development:

- the Ministry of Finance and Economy (presently the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labour and Housing) as the ministry responsible for regional development
- the Ministry for Rural Affairs and Consumer Protection (responsible for developing rural areas)
- the Ministry of Science, Research and Arts (responsible for universities and other institutions of higher education).

¹³ Apart from the urban development funding scheme (see <http://wm.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/bauen/staedtebaufoerderung/foerderschwerpunkte-und-programme/> [accessed: 10.08.2016]), in Baden-Württemberg a structural funding programme only exists for rural areas (see <http://mlr.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/unsere-themen/laendlicher-raum/laendlichen-raum-staerken/elr/> [accessed: 10.08.2016]).

¹⁴ The EULE model project, as part of Baden-Württemberg's ERDF programme for the 2007-2013 funding period, consisted of a model-like two-stage funding competition through which municipalities or municipal associations in rural areas in a first step developed sustainable and integrated development strategies that were implemented through lighthouse projects. ERDF funds were used to support the strategy development and implementation of the lighthouse projects. For further information see www.eule-bw.eu.

Based on positive past experiences with competitions for activating regional actors in diverse policy areas¹⁵, an interregional competition under the banner of “Regional Competitiveness through Innovation and Sustainability – RegioWIN” was set up. Through this all regions in Baden-Württemberg were offered the chance to receive financing for essential regional projects in the area of innovation and the energy transition.

The RegioWIN competition thus represents a core programmatic element of Baden-Württemberg's ERDF strategy for the 2014-2020 funding period. Within the framework of its dialogue-oriented regional structural and economic policies, the Baden-Württemberg state government likewise ascribes a high degree of significance to RegioWIN over and above ERDF implementation.

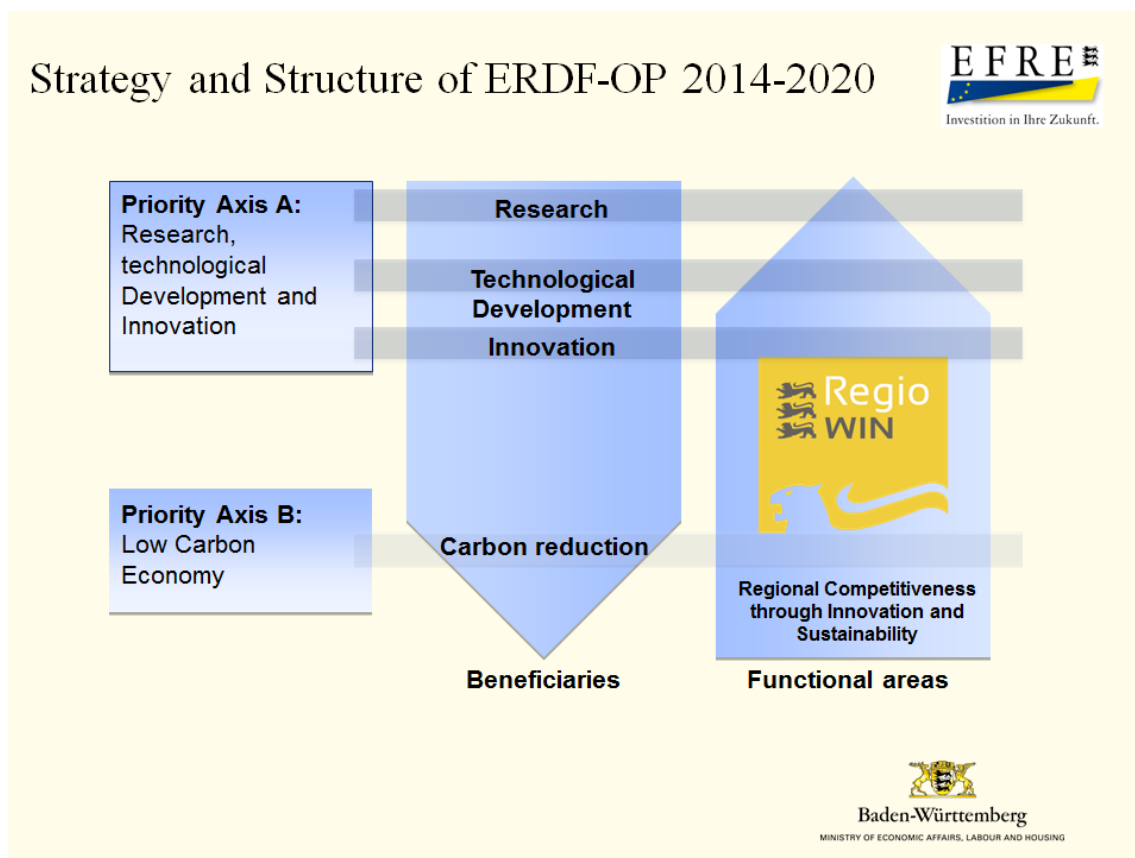


Image 5: Structure of ERDF-OP 2014-2020 for Baden-Württemberg¹⁶

During the structural design of the framework conditions for RegioWIN, important experiences could be drawn from the EULE model project.

¹⁵ Some examples include: The Leading-Edge Cluster Competition (see Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany: announcement of guidelines for financing the “Leading-Edge Cluster Competition” within the framework of the Hightech Strategy 2020 for Germany; Competitions for enhancing state-wide networks in Baden-Württemberg (see <http://www.rwb-efre.baden-wuerttemberg.de/>, under “Ausschreibungen” and “Wettbewerbe”) and EULE (see p. 10, footnote 14).

¹⁶ authors' own graph.

Understanding Smart Specialisation in the context of regional policies in Baden-Württemberg

Within the framework of ESIF regulations¹⁷, the existence of a Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) in the field of innovation policies was first established as a binding precondition for implementing ERDF funds in the form of an ex-ante conditionality for thematic objective 1¹⁸, “Strengthening research, technological development and innovation”. Numerous guidelines and white papers were gradually published in order to spur on the development process and desirable thematic concentration of these RIS3-strategies with respect to EU 2020 goals.

At the same time, in order to implement a higher degree of result orientation, ESIF regulations contained various binding requirements forcing the regions to focus their ESIF operational programmes (ESIF-OPs) on a few large topics only. The interplay of these two objectives on the part of the EU gave rise to misunderstandings and misinterpretations with regards to the Smart Specialisation concept and also raised numerous questions from the regions as to how such a strict concentration of ERDF funding in only a few focus areas accorded with the overarching demand of a Smart Specialisation Strategy.

In line with our understanding, Smart Specialisation is a useful concept for regional development. However, Smart Specialisation cannot entail any absolute and irreversible concentration on particular strengths (f.i., automobiles in the Stuttgart region) for the sake of regional development. Rather it should allow for a region’s array of strengths to be identified at the level of the corresponding functional area and, subsequently, to stabilise and develop this as much as possible by orienting public investments in order to contribute to enhancing economic and job growth. On the other hand, this also means that Smart Specialisation should never lead to mono-cultures and to ignoring or even inhibiting the crucial (due to its risks minimising role) aspect of diversification. On the contrary, a balance between specialisation and diversification must prevail in order to establish a crisis-resistant and resilient economic structure. In the context of such a regional Smart Specialisation process, further specialisation may take place within certain fields relevant for regional development.

For example, new business areas can be tapped in and for a region by way of cross-clustering existing strengths. Another example is horizontal specialisation achieved by networking in the area of regional policy instruments. Every economic region has its own innovation institutions and services that have developed for a variety of reasons (R&D institutes, colleges and universities, institutions for technology transfers, innovation consultants from associations and chambers, R&D centres of global mar-

¹⁷ Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and Council from 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

¹⁸ Art. 9 ESIF regulation together with Annex XI, Part I, No. 1.

ket leaders, cluster initiatives, technology-, business incubation- and innovationcentres, etc.). It is not a given that such institutions and services necessarily interact well in practice. Added value can be generated for a region's innovative power through regional actors who network these institutions and services with a focus on a region's demands.

With this in mind, the RegioWIN competition was meant to generate the impetus required to systematically pursue the improvement of location factors in the state's functional areas (within NUTS I) as a long-term structural and regional policy goal in line with the principle of subsidiarity and the allocation of responsibilities.

2 Design of the RegioWIN instrument

Regional policies oriented towards innovation must be strategically, systematically and analytically established. Within the federal system of Germany both local and sub-regional authorities have their own rights and powers. By law they have shared responsibilities to organise and shape territorial development f.i. by drawing up urban and regional development plans. These are elements that are relevant for Smart Specialisation Strategies. For this reason, regional stakeholders in the RegioWIN competition have been called upon to further develop their regions on the basis of development strategies related to Smart Specialisation.



Image 6: Structure of the RegioWIN competition¹⁹

¹⁹ authors' own graph.

Impetus for lasting improvement processes in the area of regional development

The Regio**WIN** competition and the prospect of receiving the prize money from the ERDF motivated regions, counties, towns and communities together with the relevant actors in economy, research sector, society and administration to address the strengths and weaknesses of their functional areas with regard to innovation, sustainable development and employment, to identify future opportunities, and to develop a common future-oriented strategy with the goal of realising Smart Specialisation in their functional areas.

The competition thus offered the regions involved new opportunities to contribute to a focussed and needs-oriented tangible enhancement of both the hard and soft location factors relevant for innovative power and future-oriented economical sustainability. Along with the economic and ecological conditions and global interdependence, these factors represent significant determinants for the competitiveness of a region.

Regio**WIN** offered all functional areas in Baden-Württemberg the opportunity to benefit from the state's ERDF-OP and to facilitate processes of continuous improvement through "regional governance" within the regional networks. These strategy processes resulted in measures, actions, programmes and lighthouse projects²⁰ containing a high leverage in terms of regional development, which have the potential to contribute substantially to the improvement of regional and, in turn, business competitiveness.

Competition procedure²¹

The Regio**WIN** competition was divided into two phases. In each competition phase, the submitted entries were evaluated and selected by an independent and interdisciplinary jury on the base of a transparent set of criteria.

In the **first competition phase**, regional stakeholders were requested to reach a consensus about the strengths/weakness and opportunities/risks of their self-defined functional area through a comprehensive bottom-up process and on the basis of a targeted socio-economic analysis, which would ultimately lead to the creation of appropriate strategies with a shared goal orientation for a regional innovation and growth profile.

These regional strategy concepts were intended to summarise the regional analyses and concepts and to entail goals, strategies, measures and projects for enhancing future-oriented regional development of the respective functional areas. Among this, the principle of sustainability also had to be considered. Furthermore, the primary measures and implementation projects had to be developed through regional consensus.

²⁰ According to Regio**WIN** terminology, projects that basically fit into the Baden-Württemberg ERDF-OP framework are termed **lighthouse projects**. Equally important for implementing the strategy are all the projects that do not fall into the thematic scope of ERDF-OP. These are termed **key projects**.

²¹ See Ministerium für Finanzen und Wirtschaft (ed.): Wettbewerbsaufruf Regio**WIN**, p. 5ff.

With regard to potential future funding through Baden-Württemberg's ERDF-OP, proposals for lighthouse projects also had to be included, which under the following two goals of Baden-Württemberg's ERDF-OP²² would be able to contribute to the intelligent, sustainable and integrated economic growth in Baden-Württemberg:

- Enhancing research, technological development and innovation - targeted at the growth areas laid out in Baden-Württemberg's innovation strategy: "Sustainable Mobility", "Environmental Technologies, Renewable Energy and Resource Efficiency", "Health and Care", and "Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Green IT and Intelligent Products"
- Promoting efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions in all sectors of the economy - connected to Baden-Württemberg's sustainability strategy, the biomass action plan and the state's integrated energy and climate concept, targeting energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy and strategies to reduce CO₂ emissions, especially in urban areas.

For this, a comprehensive and systematic definition of innovation was taken as a basis.

In the **second competition phase** the competition regions selected by the jury in phase 1 were requested to put the strategy concepts, in all their relevant relations into concrete terms and to further develop them into "regional development concepts" oriented towards implementation. Moreover, the proposed lighthouse projects had to be developed into directly implementable projects which included a founded cost projection, financing budget and time schedule. The competition participants had to prove by the corresponding cooperation agreements how the implementation of the regional development concepts along with all the relevant projects could be ensured.

The competition regions selected by the jury in phase 2 received access to funding from Baden-Württemberg's ERDF-OP 2014-2020 for their awarded lighthouse projects.

RegioWIN communications strategy

The Regio**WIN** competition fulfilled two tasks: first, it served to support special features in terms of regional policies and, second, it also served as a selection process for about one third of the ERDF-OP budget in the 2014-2020 funding period.²³ Important projects from a regional policy perspective tend to be rather complex and have longer planning periods. In order to secure the longest possible timeframe for project implementation, the competition was initiated already in February 2013, prior to the commencement of the 2014-2020 funding period, prior to the publication of the

²² See Image 5: Structure of ERDF-OP 2014-2020 for Baden-Württemberg, p. 11.

²³ See Operational Programme Baden-Württemberg ERDF 2014-2020 under the "Investment for Growth and Jobs" goal (2014DE16RFOP001), p. 79.

ESIF regulations²⁴, and prior to the approval of the ERDF-OP for Baden-Württemberg.²⁵

Numerous uncertainties and inconsistencies arose from this with regard to the superordinate framework conditions. For example, the expectations of the European Commission for administrative implementation of the newly installed instrument Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and the consequences of this concerning the designation process of the managing authorities were still being developed at the time, while an amendment of the state aid law was in full swing. To meet the requirements of participants and administrative responsibility, a communication concept was necessary that offered a maximum level of transparency.

Information about the Regio**WIN** competition was published through various documents on the competition's website www.regiowin.eu. Along with the call for proposals²⁶, a comprehensive guideline was published for each phase of the competition²⁷, in which all new developments relating to the conditions were respectively added. Additionally, informational and consulting events took place across the state. The service provider²⁸ contracted with running the competition offered neutral advisory services pertaining to the process and an opportunity was given to have open questions answered by using a FAQ tool.

As a conclusion of the second competition phase in January 2015, the winning competition regions were conferred the title of a **WIN**region.²⁹ Beyond that they obtained the opportunity to apply for ERDF funding for their awarded lighthouse projects.

²⁴ The ESIF regulations (see p. 12, footnote 17) were signed on 17.12.2013 and published in the Official Journal of the European Union (L 347/320) on 20.12.2013.

²⁵ Preparations for the ERDF-OP Baden-Württemberg were commenced in 2012 and carried on in close dialogue with GD Regio until approval in October 2014.

²⁶ See Ministerium für Finanzen und Wirtschaft (ed.): Wettbewerbsaufruf Regio**WIN**.

²⁷ See Ministerium für Finanzen und Wirtschaft (ed.): Leitfaden erste Wettbewerbsphase - Regionales Strategiekonzept und Leitfaden zweite Wettbewerbsphase - Regionales Entwicklungskonzept.

²⁸ neuland+ GmbH & Co KG - Tourismus-, Standort-, Regionalentwicklung, Esbach 6, 88326 Aulendorf.

²⁹ The title "**WIN**region" is a word mark protected by federal law.

Wettbewerbsablauf

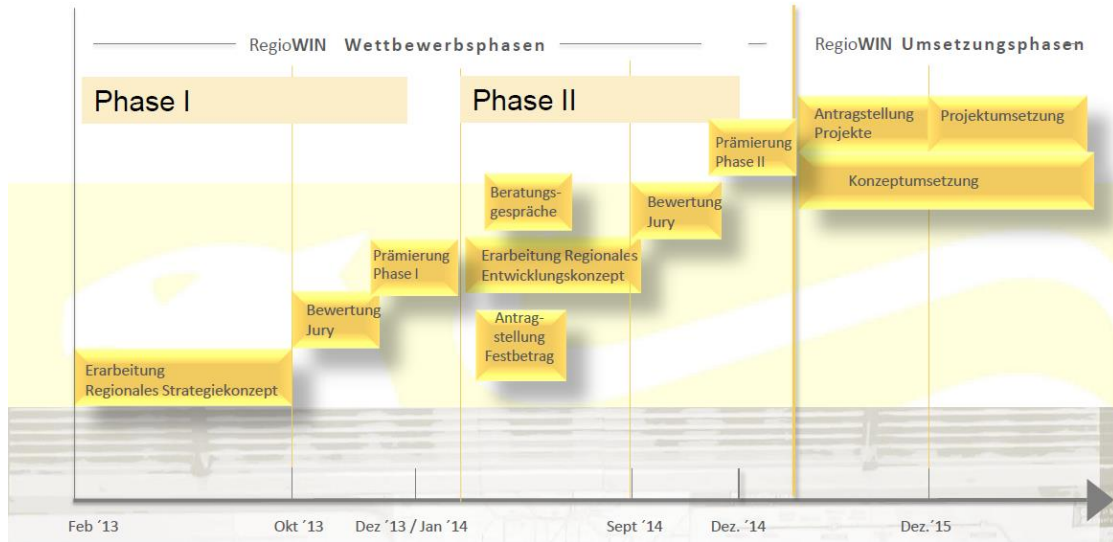


Image 7: RegioWIN time schedule³⁰

The application for funds had to be made within one year of receiving the award. To ensure the optimised use of the instruments available through the ERDF-OP on behalf of the awarded projects, the **WIN**regions received in-depth and individualised consulting through the respective funding ministries resulting in customised funding solutions. This also involved dividing lighthouse projects into various sub-projects.

For the key projects and measures that did not fall under the scope of the competition³¹, the participating regions received detailed feedback about other potential sources of funding and support outside of the competition. Beyond support through the Structural Funds, also the resources of all the relevant departments and units within the state administration of Baden-Württemberg were taken into account.

Target group and competition participants³²

The **target groups of the competition** were all regional players active in shaping and later implementing the conceptual and strategic development of a functional area. This included all relevant stakeholders from municipalities, the private sector, research institutions, society and administration in the regions that were able to present ideas for strengthening research, technological development and innovation as well as in relation to a low CO₂ economy in all sectors. In concrete terms, this included cities, communities, counties, associations, chambers, business development agencies, companies, unions, clusters, regional planning authorities, institutions of higher

³⁰ See neuland+: Präsentation zur Informationsveranstaltung Zweite Wettbewerbsphase: Regionale Entwicklungskonzepte, slide 3.

³¹ See Image 6: Structure of the RegioWIN competition, p. 13.

³² See Ministerium für Finanzen: Wettbewerbsaufruf RegioWIN, p. 11.

education and universities, research institutes and their networks and other relevant social groups.

The **competition participants** were regional partners and multipliers that were responsible for realising the competition entries and that assumed a leading role in regional development processes. They generally came from the ranks of regional stakeholders who bear comprehensive responsibility and authority for the development of a functional area, such as municipal authorities, chambers, associations or unions and their bodies.

Leadpartners: Competition entries made on behalf of the regional stakeholders had to be submitted by a responsible leadpartner who was also tasked with coordinating the regional processes.³³

Competition region³⁴

One special characteristic of the competition was the principle of single-spatiality. As a competition region, any of the functional areas designated by the actors with a focus on Baden-Württemberg could be defined within NUTS I.

As a rule, such functional areas are located in an inter-municipal context, such as a municipal grouping, a county, two counties, a city and its surrounding area or a region according to regional planning. City districts and conversion³⁵ areas could only be considered if integrated within a functional spatial organism. The functional area could be set up to traverse the boundaries of administrative borders or federal states, f.i. it could be designed according to commuter flows or other linkages.

Thereby the principle of single-spatiality however, had to be observed: one area could only be part of one individual concept. For example, a county could not concurrently submit a concept for the county and be part of a strategy concept of the surrounding region.

³³ The leadpartner was chosen by the regional stakeholders themselves. He continues to assume an important role in implementing the overall concept during the implementation phase.

³⁴ See Ministerium für Finanzen und Wirtschaft: Wettbewerbsaufruf Regio**WIN**, p. 10.

³⁵ Conversion area labels a military area, which is given back to civilian use and therefore needs development.

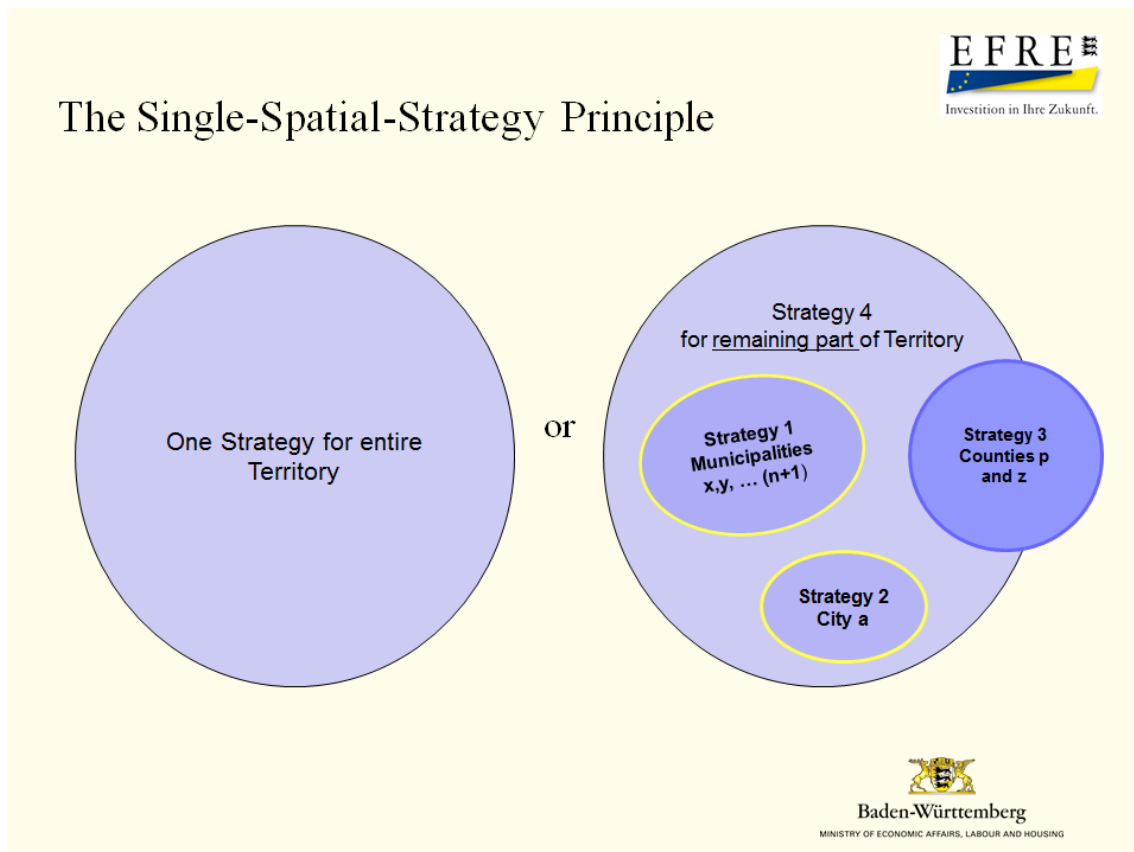


Image 8: Principle of single-spatiality³⁶

Financial framework

In order to support the winning concepts and lighthouse projects, a total budget of 95 million Euro was made available. This comprised a combination of an ERDF budget of 68 million Euro along with additional state funds of 27 million Euro.

To further develop the regional strategy concepts into regional development concepts in phase 2 of the competition, the participating competition regions could apply for a lump sum support of 50,000 Euro each.

For financing the winning lighthouse projects, the prospect of receiving up to 70 %³⁷ in funding was set up, the maximum eligible project costs were fixed at 10 million Euro.

3 Outcome of the competition

Shape of the functional areas

The principle of single-spatiality forced the regional actors to come to a consensus about the shape of their competition regions, despite any fondness for pre-existing and, in part, historical borders. This allowed for the interdependencies within these regions to surface and become known on many levels. It also provided an occasion

³⁶ authors' own graph.

³⁷ 50 % ERDF and 20 % supplementary state funds, provided that they accord to State Aid Rules.

for networking with stakeholders whom one may have known but had not previously maintained active contact with for various reasons or with whom one was even in competition. In other words: the competition provided the space for a critical reflection about traditionally and historically developed administrative borders. Regio**WIN** provided a unique opportunity to define functional areas that deviated from traditional administrative structures, reflecting the real existing regional interconnections and shaping them into a strategic community.

The competition participants used their freedom of self-definition for their competition regions. As a result the regional alliances vary among large units such as metropolitan or planning regions (STG, MRN, SBH, NSW, NEA), pre-existing thematically composed regional districts (KA Technology Region), counties (OAK, BSK) or the combination of several counties (SUO, KOS, BMS).³⁸ This also led to the definition of interdependent regions that deviated from the given regional planning boundaries.

The concluding evaluation of the proceedings carried out by the service provider³⁹ assessed this space for negotiation on the part of the regions very positively, as it enabled the creation of innovative solutions through the subsidiary division of decision-making freedoms.

Though not wholly unexpected for the planners of the competition, the strategic approach of Smart Specialisation was markedly more difficult to implement for larger regions, which generally incorporate vastly different structures and potentials, along with very heterogeneous interests, than for the smaller county contexts.

This is a clear indication that the concept of Smart Specialisation with its emphasis on bottom-up approaches proves easier for smaller units to apply. Particularly in the process of prioritising proposals for the implementation projects, large regions were confronted with strong structural differences (f.i. metropolitan regions vs. rural areas within one competition region) that were more difficult to overcome compared to smaller and more homogeneous regions. For large and structurally diverse regions, the question of which projects hold the potential to promote the region as a whole in connection to best ensuring its competitiveness constantly comes into conflict with a regional balancing of interests, which is a precondition for building a consensus.

Concerns raised at the start of the competition that smaller regions might find themselves faced with a competitive disadvantage compared to larger regions eventually proved to be completely unfounded. On the contrary, the smaller and more homogeneous regions clearly had a strategic advantage in quickly being able to focus their goals and interests. This heightened their ability to act in terms of regional policies. Large regions, on the other hand, had the advantage of being able to draw from a wider array of human and financial resources for regional management processes. Moreover, it became clear that regions which could draw from existing strategic processes and established structures, regardless of their size and structure, had a time

³⁸ See Annex p. 34, Image 12: Regional codes for the competition regions.

³⁹ See p. 16, footnote 28.

advantage and could therefore focus more of their efforts on developing their light-house projects.

Activating stakeholders and giving impetus for strategy processes

The first phase of the competition already succeeded in getting a response from a broad array of regional stakeholders. The 14 competition regions involved in phase 1 encompassed the entire territory of Baden-Württemberg. This was accompanied by an impressively high degree of mobilisation: More than 1,500 people and institutions were involved in the development of the 14 designated regional strategy concepts. This high degree of activation led to an extraordinarily numerous and regular amount of regional press coverage throughout the competition process. RegioWIN established itself as a brand that has also been able to generate a large degree of attention for ERDF funding and regional economic policies in Baden-Württemberg, extending beyond the competition process.



Image 9: Competition regions phase 1⁴⁰

⁴⁰ authors' own graph.

An independent jury selected 11 competition regions in phase 1 and prompted them to further develop their ideas into regional development concepts, along with implementation projects that had already been sketched out, as an entry for phase 2 of the competition.

This second phase brought in additional partners from the private sector, generally connected to a project, along with representatives of other cross-cutting objectives.

The quality of the submitted competition entries in phase 2 was so high that the jury awarded all 11 competition regions involved with the title of **WINregion** and selected 21 of the 61 proposals for lighthouse projects.



Image 10: Winning competition regions phase 1 und 2 along with winning lighthouse projects⁴¹

In conclusion, it can be noted that this competition approach was successful in initiating, further developing or stabilising regional strategy processes in accordance with Smart Specialisation throughout the state of Baden-Württemberg.

⁴¹ authors' own graph.

The central principles of the Regio**WIN** competition - including

- the decentralised ERDF approach in the functional competition regions with their own steering structures,
- the facilitation of a regional consensus generating goals and identifying focus areas (Smart Specialisation) by way of broad participation, and
- the orientation towards innovation and sustainability within the conceptional set-up and in terms of the central projects

were all successfully achieved across the board.⁴²

Even those competition regions not selected in phase 1 repeatedly indicated their intention to further carry out the regional strategy processes that were brought to life through the competition. This experience corresponds with competitive processes in other policy areas in which initiated processes often prove effective in the long term regardless of being selected or not.⁴³

In order to perpetuate the regional policy process beyond the actual competition and during the implementation phase of the awarded projects, the Regio**WIN** network was established following the awarding ceremony of the second competition phase. All competition regions represented by their leadpartners and together with the project sponsors for the awarded lighthouse projects are involved in this network, regardless of having previously won.

Besides the institutional representatives from the municipal level (association of cities and towns, county association), this network serves as an additional mouthpiece for the regional level in relation to regional economic policies and as their representatives within the ERDF monitoring committee.

In this respect, in addition to the above mentioned goals Regio**WIN** also facilitated innovation in regional governance: prior to Regio**WIN**, there was no such mouthpiece for regional policy!

Involvement of regional actors in project selection

Competitions and calls for funding applications typically appeal to homogeneous target groups and offer funding opportunities for specific types of measures. As such, calls for investments in public research infrastructure generally address institutions of higher education or non-academic research institutions, calls for cluster projects turn to cluster initiatives, and calls for municipal development target cities and communities. The Regio**WIN** competition offered an alternative to this selection mechanism that proved suitable for non-homogeneous target groups and featured an open strategic orientation. Through this ERDF-funded approach, regions throughout Baden-Württemberg, in all of their diversity and with all of their strengths and weaknesses,

⁴² See neuland+: Evaluierungsbericht Regio**WIN** – Regionale Wettbewerbsfähigkeit durch Innovation und Nachhaltigkeit, Gesamtschau des Wettbewerbs 01.01.2013 – 23.02.2015.

⁴³ See <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/BioRegio-Initiative> [accessed: 10.08.2016]; Staehler, Tanja/Dohse, Dr. Dirk/Cooke, Philip (eds.): Evaluation der Fördermaßnahmen BioRegio und BioProfile, p. 27f.

were given the opportunity to strategically orient themselves through their own regime along the lines of specific future-minded regional development (=bottom up). Effective in facilitating growth and innovation, this represents a symbiotic connection of needs and regional opportunities recognised across the EU.

The competition regulations set out by Regio**WIN** called on the regions to involve all stakeholders, capable of contributing to regional competitiveness, in the development of strategies. This granted the regional actors access to a large portion of measure types laid out in the ERDF programme, ones which otherwise would have only been available to target groups strictly selected along the lines of specialised policies. The only requirement was that, for a particular type of measure, a suitable sponsor in the region demonstrated a willingness to support the project in terms of content and financing.

The importance of individual projects for the implementation of the common strategy the regional stakeholders had agreed on then had to be evaluated through a regional consensus that led to the drafting of a priority list which ultimately served as a basis for the jury selection. As many of the awarded lighthouse projects were fairly complex, the funding measures available through the ERDF-OP didn't fit 1:1 in all cases.

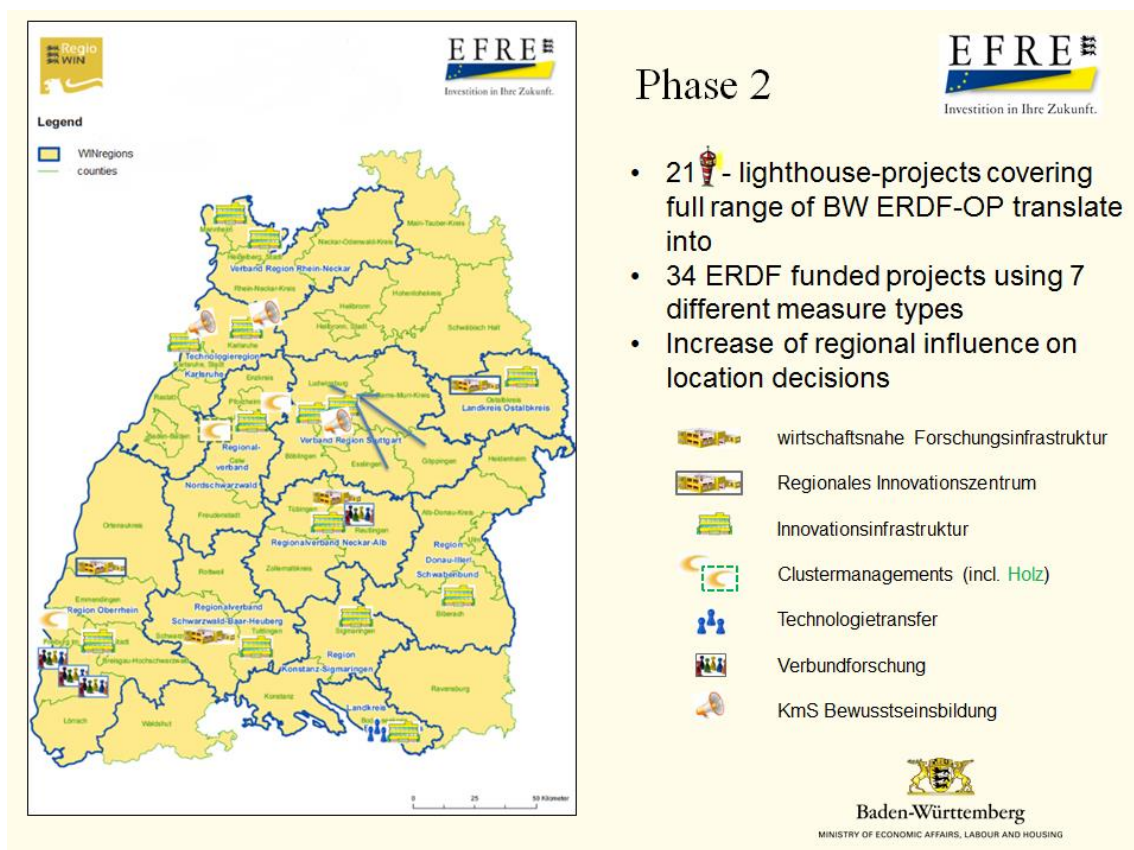


Image 11: Measure types used for implementing the lighthouse projects⁴⁴

As a result of the funding advice that was provided following the final awarding ceremony, the 21 lighthouse projects were divided into 34 (sub-)projects. For this, a total

⁴⁴ author's own graph.

of nine different measure types from the ERDF programme were available, of which seven were subsequently utilized.

In conclusion, by setting priorities for lighthouse projects, the regional stakeholders were able to gain additional influence on location decision-making processes, which would otherwise have been the sole responsibility of specialised decision-making committees or mechanisms. Decisions for expanding institutions of higher education or non-academic research institutions are normally made by the responsible committees, a process that does not allow for the contributions made by these institutions to the regional economic structure to assume any leading role.

In obligating the parties involved to reach a regional consensus, the regional actors would often first have to assess the regional policy potential inherent in their projects, as majority support had to be achieved within the regional discourse, to which project a particularly high degree of regional policy benefit was ascribed.

Through this, the Ministry of Science, Research and Arts, being involved in the competition f.i. recognised unexpected opportunities for including regional potentials into its own location and development strategies for institutions of higher education, an area that is otherwise operated in a top-down manner. This resulted in a typical win-win situation that enabled a high degree of coherence.

Hereby the competition significantly expanded awareness among regional actors of the relevance various project types unfold for regional policies beyond the sponsor target group and likewise supported actors in building new alliances for future-oriented and sustainable regional development.

4 Target conflicts and related difficulties in the light of ERDF programming

As mentioned above, for the 2014-2020 funding period the European Commission i.a. aimed at enhancing sustainable urban and regional development along with increasing participation of local stakeholders in project development within ERDF. In order to achieve this, it established, among other things, the new instrument of ITI.⁴⁵ Further, a minimum value of 5 %⁴⁶ of ERDF funds had to be reserved for measures directly supporting the urban dimension as set out in the ESIF regulations. This was either to be implemented through an ITI, an individual priority axis, or an individual operational programme according to Art. 7 of ERDF regulations.

At the same time, the European Commission increased the overall focus on results of ESIF funding in terms of regional development. So, all regions were firmly called on to thematically focus their ESIF-OPs. Being that Baden-Württemberg is only allocated a very small ERDF programme⁴⁷, DG Regio signified in the course of the approval

⁴⁵ (18) ESIF regulations; Art. 36 ESIF regulations.

⁴⁶ Art. 7 (4) ERDF regulations.

⁴⁷ ERDF 2014-2020: € 246 million Euro.

process that two thematic axes would be entirely appropriate for such a small programme. This eliminated the specialised priority axis instrument for the urban development aspect. According to ERDF regulations, this only left the ITI instrument to generate formally creditable contributions by ERDF-OP for the urban dimension. Hence an appropriate way of implementation for the ITI instrument under the prevailing conditions in Baden-Württemberg had to be found. Therefore the Regio**WIN** competition was developed forming a core programmatic element of Baden-Württemberg's ERDF strategy.⁴⁸

An integrated territorial approach generally encompasses a far greater spectrum of topics and tasks compared to the coverage of a biaxial ERDF-OP. This issue could, however, easily be resolved through the conditions set out for the competition that called for a systematic approach tackling the economic, environmental, demographic, social and climatic challenges at the level of the competition regions. At the same time it was clearly communicated, that ERDF financing was only available to selected lighthouse projects⁴⁹ within the OP focus areas and that therefore the regions would have to convincingly present, how the key projects, equally important for strategy implementation but outside of the ERDF-OP scope were to be effectuated by the respective regions.⁵⁰

The intra-ESIF regulation small print considering the example of the ITI instrument

The following observations do not in any regard pertain to the suitability of the Regio**WIN** competition in supporting regional development. They are meant to shed light on goal conflicts among strategic approaches and administrative burdens within the ESIF regulations by referring to one prominent example and likewise illustrate how the belated concrete establishment of administrative allegations concerning the ESIF regulations contribute to rendering new and interesting regional policy instruments largely useless and potentially impede the achievement of important goals set out by the European Commission, possibly on account of purely formal reasons.

The instrument "ITI" laid out in Chapter III, Art. 36 of the ESIF regulation is clearly recognisable as a further development of the "measures for local development executed by local residence" mentioned in previous Chapter II, Art. 32-35 but catering to a larger scale. As this instrument is meant to address the special challenges urban areas are faced with through an integrated approach according to ERDF regulation Art. 7 (1), it seemed obvious for the implementation of the urban dimension that the development of the corresponding strategies were to be carried out by the regional stakeholders through a bottom-up process. Accordingly, both phases of Regio**WIN** were organised.

In the course of further evolvement of the administrative regulations executing the ESIF regulations, it became ever clearer that, in practice, the resulting demands on

⁴⁸ See Image 5: Structure of ERDF-OP 2014-2020 for Baden-Württemberg, p. 11.

⁴⁹ See p. 14, footnote 20.

⁵⁰ See Image 6: Structure of the Regio**WIN** competition, p. 13.

the administrative implementation of ITI would be difficult to combine with a bottom-up process or with a competition.

Particularly for a competition, which is predestined to result in bottom-up processes, it was in effect nearly impossible to abide by purely administrative guidelines which, beyond that, were only established after the ESIF regulations⁵¹ had been announced. Art. 7 of ERDF regulation prescribes that the managing authorities have to at least include “urban authorities” in project selection when implementing the urban dimension. Within the Regio**WIN** regulations this task of “project selection” played a prominent role, as through their consensus, the regional stakeholders selected the most important projects for their region and subsequently prioritised these. This order was essentially not put into question through the jury selection.

Now, following ESIF regulation every decision-making entity also has to be part of the management and control system (MCS) of an ESIF-OP as an intermediate body. While Art. 36 (3) ESIF regulation, describes the implementation of intermediate bodies in connection with ITI as an option, Art. 7 ERDF regulations state that the inclusion of the “urban authorities” has to be organised in accordance with Art. 123 ESIF regulations (6) or (7), being a very strong hint, that these “urban authorities” necessarily must be included in the MCS as an intermediate body. The detailed administrative consequences of this aspect with respect to implementing measures supporting the urban dimension were first brought into focus by the European Commission in June 2014, while in Regio**WIN** the competition regions were already deep into the development of their entries for phase 2 of the competition.⁵²

As this problem generally concerned the implementation of the urban dimension in Germany the ERDF representatives of the German federal states discussed the matter in exchange with DG Regio, at the time, asking how extensively an intermediate body, whose task is merely to select projects at the sub-regional level, has to be involved in the MCS. An understanding was reached stipulating that for this particular case it would be sufficient to monitor the transparency of the selection process only and that no further check of human resource capacities and qualifications was necessary.

Agreements for Regio**WIN** were accordingly prepared with the leadpartners and the ERDF managing authority in Baden-Württemberg even conducted monitoring visits of the project selection meetings in summer 2014 in a random number of competition regions. With a view to future inspections by European financial control (EFC), this was meant to ensure that project selection in the regions was being conducted in accordance with Art. 125 (3) ESIF regulations on the basis of transparency.

⁵¹ The ESIF regulations (see p. 12, footnote 17) were signed on 17.12.2013 and published in the Official Journal of the European Union (L 347/320) on 20.12.2013. The Guidance for Member States on integrated Sustainable Urban Development (Art. 7 ERDF Regulation) first dated from 20.04.2016, see European Commission: Guidance for Member States on integrated Sustainable Urban Development (Art. 7 ERDF Regulation).

⁵² See Image 7: Regio**WIN** time schedule, p. 17.

Unfortunately, the results of the discussions mentioned above regarding possible differentiation among intermediate bodies with an MCS were not reflected in guidelines for designating the managing authorities and the MCS. When these were publicised at the end of 2015, the possibility of differentiating among the intermediate bodies according to their specific function was no longer envisioned.

In practice, this meant that, even for an intermediate body exclusively responsible for project selection at the local level, such as a leadpartner in Regio**WIN**, proof of a sufficient amount of human resources for that particular task along with proof of an adequate degree of competence and qualifications for carrying out the task⁵³ would have to be presented as a prerequisite for designation of the managing authority and MCS. Moreover, such intermediate bodies would have to keep track of all relevant files and be available for a system inspection through EFC years later.

Such requirements are completely incompatible with a bottom-up process in which regional actors are free to organise themselves for a limited period of time and bundle their know-how of regional development.

If these requirements had been known beforehand, they would have presented serious obstacles for participating in the competition, as few, if any, leadpartners would have been willing to assume this degree of formal risk without deriving any recognisable benefit from it. In all probability, only pre-established stakeholders would have come into question under such circumstances, whereas a significant degree of regional consensus-building would have been lost.

The retroactive implementation of these conditions would have required an unacceptable degree of bureaucratic effort which would have wiped out the positive image that Regio**WIN** had set into motion for ERDF funding across the state.

Upon consideration of the administrative risks, pragmatic agreement with DG Regio has been reached, which concludes that Baden-Württemberg's ITI Regio**WIN** will not be implemented under Art. 7 of ERDF regulations.⁵⁴ Although the entire Regio**WIN** process has also achieved exceptionally positive resonance on the part of DG Regio and has likewise been recognised as an exemplary way of implementing the urban dimension, in consequence of the above described effects the associated ERDF budget statistically cannot be assessed as a contribution to the urban dimension, even if it effectively represents precisely this contribution in Baden-Württemberg's ERDF programme. In light of the statistics, Baden-Württemberg therefore does not contribute to enhancing the urban dimension at all! When the fulfilment of important content-related goals is significantly impeded by the negative interference of formal administration regulations, this concurrently presents a critical inquiry for the EU framework.

⁵³ Obligations of managing body when implementing intermediate bodies see Art. 123 and Annex XIII, 1. (ii) ESIF-VO.

⁵⁴ A sufficient number of national programmes already exist in Germany, which take the needs of local authorities into consideration. Moreover, the 5 % quota is also cumulatively fulfilled throughout all of the German OPs, even without the contribution of Baden-Württemberg.

5 Conclusion

Experiences drawn from the Regio**WIN** competition demonstrate that competitions are a suitable and effective instrument to enhance integrated territorial development in various regards, such as:

- initiating bottom-up processes;
- offering a high leverage using a small budget while appealing to numerous even non-homogeneous stakeholders ;
- carrying strategic ideas for regional development like Smart Specialisation across the expanse of a large region;
- developing and selecting customised concepts and projects for diverse region types in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity;
- bundling resources from various policy areas for regional development.

Key success factors for the success of a prolific competition and the subsequent implementation of the awarded projects include:

- sufficient preparations of the competition framework that keeps in mind all possible ESIF funds-specific implications and good and reliable agreements among the involved policy areas in terms of “one face to the customer”;
- as many degrees of freedom as possible for the regional stakeholders;
- a realistic timeframe that leaves adequate time for regional determination processes;
- consistent communication about the framework conditions and the facilitation of unbiased advice to the competition participants;
- transparent selection criteria and a jury that is free of political influences

as well as the active support and advice to the competition winners concerning specific administrative traps and helpful hints during application and implementation process for the projects in order to avoid frustrations arising from fund-specific administrative risks.

As competitions are only credible if they are executed in a manner that is truly open to diverse results, their application in the area of integrated strategies is expedient and desirable in terms of content and considers the principle of subsidiarity.

At the same time, competitions are demanding for managing authorities due to the fact that openness to results is fundamentally difficult to reconcile with the concept of an operational programme that asks for the detailed and reliably quantified prediction of outputs and results during the planning and approval process.

Project funding can prove to be an effective incentive for initiating bottom-up processes. Beyond this, however, in order to initiate strategic processes and operate them in a sustainable manner, suitable instruments for financially supporting this regional process must be in place regardless of any thematic concentrations of an o-

operational programme⁵⁵. If beyond project funding no incentives can be offered in the interest of the regional processes, the risk arises that in view of prospective funding possibilities regional stakeholders will form a hunting pack targeting individual projects and, though formally swallowing the bitter pill of writing up a regional development strategy, subsequently not continuing to implement the strategy in practice to any significant degree.

Bottom-up processes turn out to stand in diametrical opposition to the formal demands of an ESIF MCS. If the European Commission wishes to enhance such processes by new and innovative instruments and measures, the managing authorities require the necessary latitude to include such processes into their regional systems in a manner that can pass inspections. Detailed formal requirements for implementation of new instruments prescribed by the European Commission, especially if not published at the same time as the regulations, hamper development of regionally adapted methods of implementation and, in the worst case, hinder their broader application. Therefore experienced managing authorities should be deeply involved in the development and description of such formal requirements for all newly developed instruments as destructive interferences between programmatic ideas and administrative small print can only be detected by practitioners with sufficient field experience.

⁵⁵ Thematic objectives 1 and 4 do not encompass suitable intervention categories that would have allowed for the support of integrated processes f.i. in the form of regional management.

Abbreviations

Art.	Article
bn	Billion
DG	Directorate Generals
EFC	European Financial Control
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
etc.	et cetera
EULE	European Lighthouse Projects
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
f.i.	for instance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
i.a.	inter alia
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
i.e.	namely
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
KET	Key Enabling Technology
MCS	Management and Control System
NUTS	Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques
OP	Operational Programme
p.	page
p.a.	per annum
Regio WIN	Regional Competitiveness through Innovation and Sustainability
R&D	research and development
SME	micro, small or medium sized enterprise
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

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Annex



Anlage 2: Dokumentenbenennung

Jeder Wettbewerbsregion wurde ein Regions-Code zugewiesen, der als führende Bezeichnung im Namen jedes elektronischen Dokuments des Wettbewerbsbeitrags zu verwenden ist:

Regions-Code	Wettbewerbsregion
BMS	Baden-Württembergische Mitglieder des Schwabenbunds
BSK	Bodenseekreis
KOS	Konstanz-Sigmaringen
MRN	Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar
NEA	Neckar-Alb
NSW	Nordschwarzwald
OAK	Ostalbkreis
SBH	Schwarzwald-Baar-Heuberg
STG	Stuttgart
SUO	Südlicher Oberrhein
TRK	Technologieregion Karlsruhe

Image 12: Regional codes for the competition regions⁵⁶

⁵⁶ neuland+: Leitfaden zweite Wettbewerbsphase - Regionales Entwicklungskonzept, p. 37.