



## Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

ROBUST receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727988.\*



October 2018

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# Snapshot: Expressions of Urban – Peri-Urban – Rural Relationships Regional Employment Pact of the Metropolitan Area of Styria Metropolitan Area of Styria, Austria

## 1. Brief Description

Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) are contracted partnerships to better link employment policy with other policies in order to improve the employment situation at the regional and local level. The TEPs were piloted in regional development policy of the EU in the late 1990s and had, due to its integrative approach and place-based strategy, a particular effect on (rural) territories. The support was provided within the framework of the Structural Funds Programme through the European Social Funds (ESF). Since 2001 TEPs have been mainstreamed and established in all nine Austrian provinces. Additionally, some partnerships were set up at a sub-provincial level, the so-called “regional level” (e.g. in the provinces of Styria and Upper Austria). The “Regional Employment Pact of the Metropolitan Area of Styria” (REPMAS) was established in 2000 and was set up as a regional platform to gather all interested stakeholders in the fields of labour market, economic policy and regional development. It had the function of an advisory board of experts.

The closer collaboration between representatives of these policy fields in the regional context (Public Employment Service Austria, Chamber of Labour, Federation of Austrian Industries, Trade Unions, Austrian Economic Chamber and political interest groups) faced the challenging objectives to strive for a better adaptation of policies to local circumstances, needs and opportunities in the field of employment. The REPMAS also sought greater effectiveness and efficiency of resources, an improved support for specific target groups and securing existing and creating new jobs. The collaboration was coordinated by the Regional Management of the Metropolitan Area of Styria (RMSZR) and projects were implemented in the funding periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013.

## 2. Questions and/or Challenges

Analysing rural-urban linkages and options for synergies are the primary objective of the ROBUST project. The case of the REPMAS illustrates a promising implementation of a policy measure in a multi-level spatial structure through combining top-down (Federal Ministry and

province) and bottom-up approaches (REPs). Thus, it is interesting to explore how this place-based strategy was implemented and which circumstances contributed to its success.

Looking at the structure of the advisory board of the REPMAS all main stakeholders and decision-makers of the employment and economic sector were involved. The process of establishing and implementing the REPMAS was accompanied and coordinated by professionals at national, provincial and regional levels (e.g. national TEP-coordinating office provided by ZSI consulting; support on provincial level provided by BAB consulting). Due to structural changes in European Structural and Investment Funds the TEPs operational programmes were not anymore continued in the period 2014-2020.

Nevertheless, the value added to this regional territorial partnership is of significant interest for the ROBUST project. In particular, issues about the cooperation, experience and stakeholder involvement are of interest. Moreover, commitment of the various partners in the advisory board and aspects of institutional learning could be explored. Are these experiences used in local and regional projects and what lessons on spatial effects can be drawn for the ROBUST project? A place-based initiative in the employment sector like the REPMAS enables the coordination of site-specific offers and demands and tailored training for (skilled) workers.

### 3. Main Insights

#### 3.1. Indications of the application of the new concept of 'New Localities'

In the year 2000, several Regional Employment Pacts (REP) were established in the province of Styria (e.g. in relation to the case study region, for the political district of Voitsberg together with the Regional Management of South-West-Styria and by the Regional Management of Graz & Graz surroundings). After a substantial administrative reform in the province of Styria, involving mainly changes at the municipality structure and some rearrangements of political districts, the basis for regional development addressed a slightly larger scale of spaces. The new structures included “large regions” (established in 2010) which in general meant larger ones than before but still at a comparably fine territorial detail. Within these new regions the new “Regional Employment Pact of the Metropolitan Area of Styria” (REPMAS) was formulated and signed by the relevant stakeholders. This decision extended the territorial scope of the “central area” of Styria to some extent, but still many interrelations of citizens and enterprises are well beyond this scale. However, within this new administrative body of the Metropolitan Area of Styria, many place-related and multi-sectoral development processes were initiated. The Metropolitan Area of Styria consists of the city of Graz and the districts of Graz-Umgebung and Voitsberg. Thus, urban, suburban and rural structures lead to a great variety of resources and competences in the region. The tasks and working areas of the Regional Management of the Metropolitan Area of Styria (RMSZR) are therefore diverse and complex and will be intensified in the future: strengthening the community cooperation, bringing issues forward like smart and flexible mobility, social integration, health care, lifelong learning, youth management, participation processes and pushing the region forward as business location. The RMSZR promotes the exchange of information within the

region and supports regional actors with professional project and network management. Though the Regional Employment Pact had a very strong place-based approach, the linkages to higher-level stakeholders and decision-makers were indicative of the external driving forces experienced in the regions and the rising awareness on spatial inter-linkages.

Moreover, the Regional Employment Pact was an instrument that promoted an approach of closing the gap between rural and urban areas in the labour market. The TEPs contributed especially to an improved support for certain target groups in the labour market, like women, youth, elderly and disabled people and to create new jobs and securing existing ones. This is crucial to avoid further loss of the amount of local labour through out-migration, to counteract the impending lack of professionals and more general to maintain a sustainable living space in rural areas.

### 3.2. Insights related to the broad area of 'Smart Development'

As already mentioned above, the TEPs are contracted regional partnerships to better link employment policy with other policies and to improve the employment situation at the regional and local level. The partnerships in the Austrian provinces were set up among the relevant institutions to agree upon and implement joint programmes for promoting employment and social inclusion. The TEP partners jointly adopt these programmes and implement them based on a coordinated pact budget. The Styrian TEP was signed by the pact-partners for the provincial and regional level as an effective instrument of employment policy. The primary objective is a concerted linkage of labour market and employment policy with all other policy areas in Styria. Linking goals and strategies at the provincial level with region-specific goals and experiences from regional implementation creates potential for more innovation and strengthens efficiency through more responsive planning and implementation procedures.

By matching the needs and necessary developments in the regional partnership, it is also possible to respond in a more timely and flexible way to economic and social challenges, use endogenous potentials and focus on certain disadvantaged groups in the labour market – young people, women, the elderly and persons far from the labour market. Thus, the implementation of the Regional Employment Pact testifies the high problem-solving orientation of this approach. Important tasks of the pact were therefore to identify employment difficulties, perceptions and objectives of the region and to involve all relevant actors. The operational aims focused to better integrate job-creating actions and to use available funds for a regional employment strategy which was shared by all stakeholders in the REPMAS.

The REPMAS proved to be a regional platform of interested actors with the aim of optimal networking between labour market and employment policy with regional development. During the period 2010-2013 the following priorities were targeted (RMZSR 2013):

- Promotion of the concept of "Life-Long Learning",
- promotion of the career choice for natural science technical disciplines,

- promoting girls to select technical education and jobs,
- promoting the integration of people experiencing a great distance to the labour market and measures to enhance integration of migrants,
- promotion of the female skilled worker potential for the (border) region,
- promotion of regional development activities in the field of "Green Jobs",
- linking regional development activities in the field of renewable energy with the regional labour market and employment policy.

The following projects have been realised:

- Network Café – focusing on gender mainstreaming action
- Network Café – focusing on youth and employment
- Job fair in Seiersberg, a small suburban village close to the city of Graz
- Competence centre for women
- Energy centre is becoming popular
- Cooperation between schools and businesses
- Network Enterprises Workforce Slovenia Styria (good NEWSS) (akzente n.y.)
- Project on job orientation and education counselling, supported by art work for schools (Project Boxenstopp; Draxl et al. 2014)

The success of Austrian TEPs is often attributed to their long-term stable and effective, highly networked structures, funded within the framework of the Austrian ESF Programme (Förschner 2010, 10). As the programmes of work are decided upon by the individual provincial TEP committees, they are flexible in determining the objectives as well as the ways to respond to a changing environment. This allows them to choose the types of measures that operate within the partnership agreement, as well as the corresponding co-funding arrangements. Furthermore, the implementation of the TEPs within the ESF Programme in Austria has massively increased the awareness on the target groups of those most in need but also the knowledge on their characteristics and specific demands. In the Metropolitan Area of Styria, the networking of all social partners in the REPMAS offered the opportunity to consider challenges relevant to the labour market in a comprehensive way. The Styrian TEPs particularly focused on information and counselling of enterprises and roundtables organisation which aimed *“to openly discuss regional challenges and possible solutions”* (Förschner 2010, 10). Numerous project ideas and projects have been developed in the Regional Employment Pact during the past project periods.

However, commitment for this kind of strategic integrated approach to labour market challenges with a particular focus on territorial implications waned in recent years and no financial support through a “pact-like” system could be secured within the current programme period (2014-2020). This unfavourable trend was already discerned by analysts of Austria’s response of labour market policy to the crisis in 2008. At that time (2010) it was

argued that *“surprisingly enough, changes within the agreements have been limited until now and the TEPs have not been asked by the responsible Minister to take a wider coordinating role”* (Förschner 2010, 10). The less prominent role and discontinuation of the approach since 2014 underpins the reduced commitment for addressing equality issues, territorial dimension and convergence aspects in the current labour market strategy.

The development of the regional TEP over more than two successive operational periods of Structural Funds implementation particularly enhanced the awareness and understanding of the crucial role of collaboration of regional actors in the area of labour market development. In particular, target groups for employment initiatives were identified and the need towards including these groups in innovative initiatives has become a major concern for stakeholders and decision-makers. This involves also the increased cooperation of municipalities and public stakeholders to start initiatives at smaller communities and address place-specific needs of skill development and adaptation towards enterprises specific needs. Consequently, networking between business enterprises, schools and municipalities to secure apprenticeships and to train skilled workers has been established at sub-regional level as well. This development can be seen as a base for current employment policy and place-based adaptations of education offer and targeted transfer activities.

### 3.3. Other insights that could be relevant for further work

Multi-dimensional problems on the labour market, like unemployment of certain groups, gender segregation, shifts between industries, economic sectors and regions as a result of developments in the business and technology sector can be better met with the instrument of partnerships. TEPs have to be developed under consideration of economic, employment policy and social conditions of each region, but also of its institutional and political tradition. For qualitative enrichment, the involvement of NGOs should be considered.

In light of the situation of the labour market and the economy in Styria under the Styrian Employment Pact priorities were deliberately set to combine forces from different policy areas and cooperative use. Thematic focus areas were education and further training for skilled workers, consideration of disadvantaged target groups and education as well as career choice. Thus, a follow-up project, the Regional Coordination of Educational and Career Guidance (original in German: *“Berufsorientierung und Bildungsberatung”*, BBO), started in 2015 in Styria and is carrying out a wide set of counselling work following the nationwide views on the education system and educational guidance. The task of the regional BBO coordination is to guide a strategic discussion process at the regional level, to accompany a regional standardising process and to implement approved goals and coordinated pathways of education support. The work priorities of the BBO coordination should ensure a regionally coordinated BBO offer in the sense of lifelong learning as well as structure bundling under the umbrella of the regional structures of Styria. This approach would substantially support the intentions of the Regional Employment Pact, even if that system is not any more in place.

For a sustainable and dynamic development of the region educational and professional decisions are of great importance. It is therefore all the more important to have a common understanding and a coordinated approach for education guidance. The vision is that all people living in Styria can access BBO offers in all phases of life in a low-threshold and transparent manner. Regional management authorities and the BBO coordinators dispose of a particularly good overview of the BBO landscape but also have a very broad regional knowledge that can be used for example by institutions concerned with educational guidance and counselling, regional stakeholders or other regional organisations and referred to.

At the provincial level, an operational and a strategic BBO committee have been installed which continue somehow a territorial view on educational development and job integration. Moreover, the structures are further split into seven regions and act through the following differentiation.

- Regional BBO bodies have been installed.
- The national target image was adapted to the individual regions.
- Regional BBO offers are collected and updated regularly.
- Regional workshops and network meetings are regularly organised and conducted.

It seems that the focus has shifted towards intensive information and counselling support, with less concern for marginalised groups or spatial gaps in employment options. However, a much more intensified analysis of these aspects would be required to substantiate the supposed changes and to conclude on spatial effects for the rural-urban area of the case study.

#### 4. Data Sources and Indicators

Table 1 Data / Indicators for Regional Employment Pact of the Metropolitan Area of Styria

Data / Indicator	Source
<b>Data provided by Employment Service Styria (AMS Steiermark):</b>	
Monthly labour market information, at regional and local level	<a href="http://www.ams.at/stmk/ueber-ams/medien/arbeitsmarktdaten/steirische-arbeitsmarkt/information-arbeitsmarkt">http://www.ams.at/stmk/ueber-ams/medien/arbeitsmarktdaten/steirische-arbeitsmarkt/information-arbeitsmarkt</a>
Labour Market Report Annual overview and analysis of the Styrian labour market. The main focus of this report is the interpretation and presentation of the most important labour market indicators.	<a href="http://www.ams.at/stmk/ueber-ams/medien/arbeitsmarktdaten/steirische-arbeitsmarkt/arbeitsmarktreport">http://www.ams.at/stmk/ueber-ams/medien/arbeitsmarktdaten/steirische-arbeitsmarkt/arbeitsmarktreport</a>

Labour market information - annual average data Contains the average annual data of registered unemployed (stocks and movements), apprenticeship seekers and vacancies, analogous to the monthly "Information Labour Market".	<a href="http://www.ams.at/stmk/ueber-ams/medien/arbeitsmarktdaten/steirische-arbeitsmarkt/jahresdurchschnittsdaten">http://www.ams.at/stmk/ueber-ams/medien/arbeitsmarktdaten/steirische-arbeitsmarkt/jahresdurchschnittsdaten</a>
Labour market data and analyses of the Styrian labour market Profiles of the province and the Styrian political districts	<a href="http://www.arbeitsmarktprofile.at/2016/6/">http://www.arbeitsmarktprofile.at/2016/6/</a>
<b>Data provided by Styrian Chamber of Economics:</b>	
Statistics on apprenticeship in the province of Styria and its districts	<a href="https://www.wko.at/service/stmk/bildung-lehre/statistik-2017-lehrlingsstelle-wko-steiermark.html">https://www.wko.at/service/stmk/bildung-lehre/statistik-2017-lehrlingsstelle-wko-steiermark.html</a>
WIBIS – Economic policy reporting and information system	<a href="https://wibis-steiermark.at/regionsprofile/">https://wibis-steiermark.at/regionsprofile/</a>
<b>Qualitative data on implemented projects in the REPMAS</b>	
Cooperation of education system and regional enterprises to secure the regional demand for skilled labour in the field of science and technology.	RMSZR 2013; 2011)
Practice Day of technology and information on professional needs; in 2013.	RMSZR 2013; 2012; 2011
“Take your Chance” Job fair in Seiersberg.	RMSZR 2013
Networkcafes	RMSZR 2013; 2012; 2011
ETZ-Project “YURA”	RMSZR 2012; 2011
Energy centre is becoming popular	RMSZR 2011
ETZ-Project “Good News”	RMSZR 2011

## 5. Critical Appraisal of Data Use

The wide range of diverse information available needs some further structuring and analysis with regard to spatial effects and inter-relationships for which interest has risen. But overall understanding of implications still lacks a more detailed and fresh analysis that takes new spatial development concepts into account.

## 6. References

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Draxl, E., Fischer, A. and Friesz, S. (2014) Boxenstopp. Zwischen Schule und Arbeit. Theorie und Praxis für den IOBB-Unterricht an Schulen. Graz.

Förschner, M. (2010) Partnerships in the Recovery: Rebuilding Employment at the Local Level. OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance Handbooks. Paris. [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjyuoq24tDcAhXDFZoKHcBqBRMQFjAAegQIABAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.oecd.org%2Fcfef%2Fleed%2F45204556.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1QYNDAavZ0\\_hz2ox3nb5EL](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjyuoq24tDcAhXDFZoKHcBqBRMQFjAAegQIABAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.oecd.org%2Fcfef%2Fleed%2F45204556.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1QYNDAavZ0_hz2ox3nb5EL)

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Scoppetta, Anette (2004): European Initiatives for Social Integration into the Labour Market: Partnerships as important instruments for strengthening regional development and labour market policies.

### **Link**

Regionaler Beschäftigungspakt Steirischer Zentralraum. Abgeschlossene Projekte

<https://www.zentralraum-stmk.at/projekte/abgeschlossene-projekte/beschaefigungspakt-steirischer-zentralraum/>

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