

Abstract Book

Challenges for the New Cohesion Policy 2014-2020

An Academic and Policy Debate



Riga, 4-6 February 2015



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SMART WORK FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN REGIONS

Alise Vitola, Iveta Baltina and Ilze Judrupa, Riga Technical University, LATVIA

Non-metropolitan territories face significant challenges in a globalised world as the number of jobs in traditional rural sectors is decreasing and regional and urban disparities – increasing. At the same time, information and communication technologies as well as the changes in professional duties allow medium and small-sized towns, as well as the rural community to participate in the knowledge economy distantly. Thus telework, defined as a work form when the duties are being performed using ICT outside the premises of the employer, may serve as an instrument to achieve Cohesion Policy and Europe2020 regional development goals.

A number of 2007-2013 regional development programmes (e.g. in United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Estonia), supported by the EU Cohesion policy, shows that one of the tools for the facilitation of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the non-metropolitan regions is the development of smart work centres (SWC), also called telework centres, enterprise hubs or co-working spaces. SWCs are special premises for distant working employees or companies considerably near the person's living place. The basic facilities offered by the SWCs are a computer with appropriate programs, office equipment and ICT. SWCs offer a stimulating professional environment thus raising the productivity and satisfaction of its clients, as well as facilitating synergies among its users.

Such centres bring benefits to employees, employers and local communities. Employees get the chance to live in a more peaceful, natural environment, decrease their commuting time, achieve a better work-life balance etc. Employers on the other hand can decrease personnel and operating costs and recruit better motivated employees. The local municipalities and communities can achieve an increased perception of the quality of life, advance economic activity and consequently local budget income.

Based on the international experience, we propose policy recommendations in support of niche regional economic development areas in order to guide policy-makers with practical observations and evidence-based approaches on how to better exploit smart ICT-supported working forms. These recommendations could help to design new Cohesion policy instruments in Latvia and other EU countries to attract qualified workforce to less populated regions thus facilitating smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU regions.

Also a typology of smart work centres has been developed based on a survey of 10 SWCs across the Europe. The typology takes into account such criteria as the accessibility, user groups, opportunities to co-operate, in-house business support, infrastructure and available community services and distinguishes such types of SWCs: Economic Development SWC, Enterprise SWC, Socio-economic hub SWC and Distance Working SWC. Moreover, a socioeconomic impact of the SWCs has been evaluated based on a questionnaire distributed in 10 EU countries. Results of the evaluation can be used for evaluation of EU funds programmes and feasibility studies of EU funds projects.

This work has been developed within the INTERREG IVC project Micropol - Smart Work Centres in Non-Metropolitan Areas supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

WHERE DID THE WELL-BEING GO IN ESIF?

Benedict Wauters, ESF Agency Flanders, BELGIUM

The paper will explore what could be the meaning of “well-being” of EU citizens in an ESIF context. Indeed, in 2009, the independent report “An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy” delivered at the request of Commissioner for Regional Policy, by former Italian Minister of Finance Fabrizio Barca, amongst other experts, indicated “A remarkable lack of political and policy debate on results in terms of the well-being of people, at both local and EU level, most of the attention being focused on financial absorption and irregularities.”