

The Europeanisation of Cities within Regions

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S1921274

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, program European Studies, University of Twente

2020

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Preface

By writing 'The Europeanisation of Cities within Regions' the Double Degree Program of the Master European Studies at the University of Twente and the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster comes to an end. After my Bachelor in European Studies at the NHL University of Applied Sciences I have been able to challenge myself with the Master in European Studies and been able to continue discovering the European Union via a variety of courses, papers and researches. During the time working on this thesis I have dived into the world of European Structural Funds and read a significant amount of academic literature regarding this topic. Via this way I want to thank several people, without whom it would not have been possible. First of all, I want to thank Dr. Jaansoo for her guidance and advice during this thesis. Secondly, I want to thank Dr. Freise for being my supervisor from the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Lastly, I am grateful for the support I have received from my girlfriend and my family during my thesis time.

Kevin Dijkstra

Abstract

With Europeanisation and Regionalisation as ongoing processes that characterise the development of the European Union, Structural Funds are getting more important for cities within regions. Via the requirements placed on the admission of European Social Fund (ESF) projects, cities are stimulated to collaborate with each other in order to make the ESF more effective towards local needs. The aim of this study is to analyse the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for cities in the regions of Münster (Germany) and Twente (the Netherlands). Data for the analysis in this thesis originates from academic literature, and a variety of policy documents of the European Union, Germany and the Netherlands. Additionally, interviews were held with policy officers working at districts and municipalities located in the Münster and Twente regions. The results show that the regionalisation of the ESF has led to changes in using the ESF in Germany and the Netherlands. At the same time the regionalisation of the ESF has increased collaboration between cities in the region of Münster and Twente. This increased collaboration in its turn has presented opportunities such as, for example, the division of administrative tasks and costs of ESF projects and the possibility for smaller cities to join more ESF projects. The collaboration also imposed threats that the cities in the regions have to take into account. For example, a possible conflict of interest between cities within a region was always present. Nevertheless, the regionalisation of the ESF has led to more formal collaboration between local actors and has been overall beneficial for the regions of Münster and Twente for the 2014-2020 programming period.

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1 Introduction

For decades, the European Union (EU) has focused on social inclusion, improving the mobility of workers and employment opportunities in the common market. The main pillar that has helped the EU realise the improvement of these social targets is the European Social Fund (ESF). In the recent programming periods the ESF has become more regionalised, meaning that the focus of the ESF funds switched from the central government towards regional governments. Following the European Parliament (2014), this switch towards a more regionalised ESF is the best way to ensure that the spending of the ESF is as effective and efficient as possible and meets the needs of the concerned regions and communities. However, this switch towards a more regionalised ESF has also various consequences for regional and local governments. An example of such a consequence is the increase in responsibilities that municipalities now have regarding the ESF. More about the increase in responsibilities as a result of regionalisation is discussed in section 2.1.1. By giving municipalities expanded responsibilities regarding the management of ESF allocations, municipalities have been able to successfully set up strategic plans that boosted the employment and social inclusion in their municipality (Eurocities, 2018). The regionalisation of the ESF has caused municipalities to shift from working alone towards working together with other municipalities within a region. This thesis explores the effects of the regionalisation of the ESF to the collaboration between municipalities within a region. For this thesis, the ESF activities of municipalities in the region of Münster in Germany and the region of Twente in the Netherlands are analysed. This analysis of ESF activities presents the effects of the regionalisation of the ESF on the collaboration of municipalities within their respective regions. The discussion over the choice of the regions is presented under subchapter 3.2.

Over the programming periods, the ESF has gone through several reforms in order to be more efficient and effective and to adapt to societal challenges that occurred throughout programming periods. These reforms have had many consequences for the regional and local governments that make use of the ESF. For example, during the first programming periods the ESF used to provide regional and local governments with financial means for activating the unemployed. However, for the current programming period the regional governments need to apply for funding in order to be able to receive the financial means of the ESF (Regulation No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013). Also, as a result of the 1988 ESF reforms aiming to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the ESF, local governments are nowadays stimulated to collaborate with other local actors within their region (European Commission, 2014).

The shift of the power regarding the ESF from the central government towards the regional and local governments can be explained through both the development of the ESF over the years and

the theory of Regionalisation. Regionalisation is one of the processes that characterises the development of the EU. It illustrates the decentralisation of European countries and the accompanying rescaling of activities within these countries (López & Tatham, 2017). Regionalisation encourages the rescaling of activities, which on its turn fosters a greater adaption to the European context. Since the regionalisation of the ESF has been initiated by the European Commission and influences the domestic policies, the regionalisation of the ESF can be seen as a form of Europeanisation. The theory of Europeanisation deals with the mechanisms by which the ESF was integrated into domestic policymaking. One of the consequences of Europeanisation and Regionalisation can be a change in the type of collaboration between municipalities within a region. This thesis examines the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for the collaboration between municipalities within the region of Münster in Germany and the region of Twente in the Netherlands. Via desk research and interviews with policy officers from municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente, the consequences that the regionalisation of the ESF creates and the accompanying potential threats and opportunities within and between municipalities in these regions are investigated. So, the main research question that guides the thesis is:

What are the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF on the collaboration of municipalities within the regions of Münster (Germany) and Twente (the Netherlands)?

In order to answer this main research question, three subquestions were developed. The first subquestion looks at the differences in the way municipalities have made use of the ESF during different programming periods. For this subquestion the programming periods of 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 are compared to the 2014-2020 programming period. The choice of the Programming Periods is discussed in section 3.1. The first subquestion is as follows:

What are the differences in the way that the municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente make use of the European Social Fund for the 2014-2020 programming period compared to the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming periods?

The second subquestion studies the opportunities and threats of the regionalisation of the ESF. To address this subquestion, the desk research is used as a research method. Through the desk research the regionalisation of the ESF is analysed together with the Europeanisation of the ESF in order to see the impact of the regionalisation of the ESF. The second subquestion is:

What are the threats and opportunities that arise for municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?

The third subquestion studies the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF and whether the regionalisation has been beneficial or disadvantageous for the collaboration of municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente. To address this subquestion, city officials are interviewed in order to determine whether the regionalisation of the ESF has been beneficial or disadvantageous. The third subquestion is:

In what extent has the regionalisation of the ESF been beneficial or disadvantageous for the municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente in regard to the collaboration within the region?

The thesis proceeds as follows. After this brief introduction, chapter two sets the theoretical framework in which the process of the ESF becoming more region-oriented is elaborated. The theoretical framework also discusses the different types of regional collaboration that can occur as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF. Following the theoretical framework, chapter three presents the methodology used to conduct this research. Chapter four discusses the outcomes from analysis of the retrieved data. Finally, the thesis ends with an overall conclusion in chapter five.

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter defines concepts that relate to the topic of the research in order to embed the thesis into already existing research. Therefore, this section starts off with discussing the development of the ESF over the years. On the basis of the development of the ESF, the theories of Europeanisation and regionalisation will be explained. The theory of Europeanisation explains how the ESF has been implemented in the previous years and the effects that the ESF has had on the activation policies of the different cities in regions in the EU. The theory of regionalisation explains the region-oriented approach of the ESF and the potential opportunities and threats that can occur for regions and municipalities that make use of the ESF. As a result of the Europeanisation and regionalisation of the ESF, it is for the 2014-2020 programming period compulsory for municipalities to collaborate with other local actors within their respective regions. Therefore, this chapter concludes with discussing the theory of regional collaboration between different municipalities and regions.

2.1 The European Social Fund

The ESF is the oldest European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and the main financial tool of the EU for supporting work places, helping people get better jobs and ensuring that all EU citizens have equal job opportunities. The ESF was created under the Treaty of Rome in 1958 and became the first operational Structural Fund of the EU. The ESF was originally created in order to increase the employment of the citizens of the European Economic Community (EEC) and therefore raise the living standards within the EEC (Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, 1958). Nowadays the aims of the ESF are to promote high levels of employment, make the labour market more accessible for workers, support the occupational mobility of workers and facilitate their adaption to changes regarding the industries. Adding to that, the ESF strives to stimulate young people to obtain a high level of education and help them with the switch from education to employment. Last but not least, the ESF aims to improve the social inclusion, fight poverty among the European Member States, and promote equal opportunities (European Parliament, A, 2018). With thousands of local, regional and national projects related to employment funded by the ESF, the ESF invests in young people, people from disadvantaged groups, people over 55, employees and all those seeking a job (European Commission, 2013).

2.1.1 Main reforms of the ESF

In order to develop the ESF, both major and minor reforms have been introduced since its creation in 1958. The main reforms of the ESF were conducted in 1971, 1977 and in 1988.

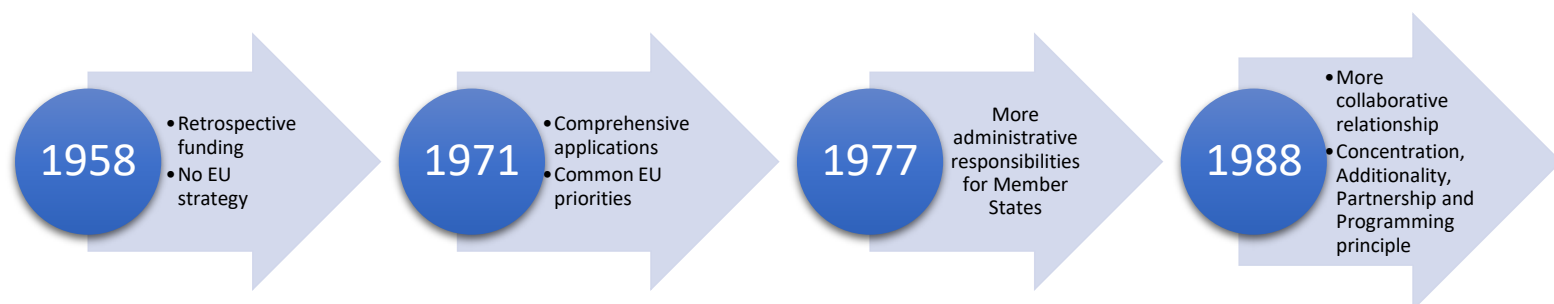


Figure 1 Main Reforms of the ESF

During its first programming period (1958-1971), the ESF retrospectively reimbursed the Member States 50% of their job-related training and resettlement costs. The reimbursement was meant for workers affected by the economic restructuring. Also, from its creation until the end of the first programming period, the ESF was only used by Member States to deal with problems related to unemployment at the national level. The retrospective use of the ESF in regard to domestic policies prevented the EEC to have any influence on the national labour market policies at that time (Anderson, 1995). Both the lack of a European strategy and the automatically accepted applications for reimbursement led to the ESF resources being spread among a wide range of projects. Reimbursing this wide range of projects dealing with national problems caused the ESF to be inefficient in the years after its creation (European Communities, 2007). However, in order to provide more effective policy solutions dealing with structural factors and the unemployment in the EEC, solutions at the European level were required (Ellina, 2003).

Main reform 1971: Comprehensive applications for assistance beforehand

In order to strengthen the ESF as a tool to respond more to the EEC than to national objectives, the ESF was reformed by a Council decision in 1971. Until this Council decision, Member States could implement projects and be re-funded for them afterwards. After the 1971 reforms, Member States were required to apply for ESF funding prior to the implementation of their national projects. As a result of this reform, the Commission was able to set common priorities and assign the ESF resources to effectively deal with these priorities. With the introduction of common priorities, the eligibility criteria for the ESF changed from the national level to the EEC level. This change caused the ESF to be used in a more targeted manner (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2018). The introduction of common priorities across the EEC contributed to a more structured approach of ESF funding, since specific priorities were targeted. The creation of new guidelines and common priorities for the redistribution of ESF resources led to the optimisation of ESF money, which made ESF interventions as efficient as possible (Brine, 2004). (For more information, see: Official Journal of the European Communities, 1971).

Main reform 1977: More administrative responsibilities towards Member States

The second reform of the ESF took place in 1977 and gave more responsibility to the Member States by transferring parts of the ESF administrative tasks to the national level. By giving the Member States more administrative tasks regarding the ESF application and implementation, it became easier for the Member States to incorporate the ESF into national labour policies (Brine, 2002). This was also done in order to make the ESF more relevant and easier to understand for the Member States. In addition, guidelines from the Commission were strengthened. These guidelines defined the framework and priorities of the ESF within which the Member States could operate. This caused the ESF to be a more pro-active instrument of EEC policies. As one of the priorities, the 1977 reform stated that 60% of the ESF resources were aimed at eliminating structural unemployment and under-employment (Brine, 2002). Following the major reform of the ESF in 1977, a smaller reform was introduced in 1983. The main change of this reform was that the ESF started to focus more on long-term structural changes and directing ESF funding towards regions most in need of funding. (For more information, see: Official Journal of the European Communities, 1983).

Main reform 1988: Introduction of multi-annual frameworks and four new ESF principles

Since the ESF was growing in size and importance, a new reform of the ESF was introduced in 1988. This reform changed the focus from projects that were pursued in a national context towards a multi-annual effort agreed between the Member States and the Commission (European Communities, 2007). With the coordinated planning between the Member States and the Commission regarding the spending of the ESF, the ESF moved closer to the needs of the regions within the Member States (Brine, 2002). Furthermore, the ESF reform of 1988 focused on four new principles: concentration, additionality, partnership and programming. The concentration principle referred to the need to channel the ESF according to functional and geographic priorities in order to be more efficient (Ellina, 2003). By regionalising the ESF under this concentration principle, a new level of communication between supranational institutions and local and regional authorities was produced. With the Commission encouraging local and regional authorities to apply for ESF funding, national authorities could be bypassed. At the same time, the Commission required national authorities to cooperate with local and regional authorities in drafting the application (Ellina, 2003). The partnership principle recognised the evolving relationships between the Commission, national, regional and local authorities and strengthened the link between the actors to make the ESF more effective. The partnership between the different actors has been strengthened via the programming principle, concerning documents setting out priorities and implementation measures (Ellina, 2003). The final principle of the

1988 reform was the additionality principle, which prevented Member States from replacing National funds with EU funds. With the creation of multi-annual efforts and focusing on the four new principles, the 1988 reform of the ESF resulted in a more cooperative and collaborative relationship between the Commission and the Member States (European Communities, 2007). The coordinated planning led to more attention to the regional needs and the concentration and partnership principles stressed the need to collaborate more with actors at every level.

2.1.2 Changes in the ESF between the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 programming period

For the last two programming periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020), the ESF has not been subject to major reforms. Nevertheless, changes in regard to the influence of local actors concerning the use of the ESF can be recognised. The previous programming period (2007-2013) had to deal with the global recession, which raised problems in regard to the co-financing of the ESF by the Member States. During this period the ESF supported the priorities set by the Commission and the Member States. At the same time, the ESF also dealt with specific challenges identified for Member States by Country Specific Recommendations (European Committee of the Regions, 2018). In regard to the regionalisation, the ESF was a key investor in supporting, developing and maintaining local-partnership based services concerning the social inclusion priority for the programming period (European Commission, A, 2014). However, recommendations of the 2007-2013 programming period show that priorities had a strong local dimension and that coordination between the EU, national, regional and local level should be enhanced for the 2014-2020 period (For more information, see: European Commission, A, 2014). Together with simplifying planning documents and increasing the capacity of the local and regional authorities, the ESF became more regionalised for the current programming period (2014-2020).

At the beginning of the current programming period (2014-2020) the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds was created. This code of conduct aimed to maximise the impact of the funds (European Commission, B, 2014). In addition, the ESF also made use of the place-based approach, which requires that social challenges are addressed based on the needs expressed at the local level (European Committee of the Regions, 2018). One of the tools that helps with the place-based approach is the community-led local development (CLLD) (European Commission, A, 2016). An increasing number of municipalities have gained more responsibilities regarding the management of ESF allocations in their area. However, the ESF is still not directly accessible by municipalities. The access of local actors still depends on the approach of the Member State regarding the allocation of the ESF, since every Member State has a different government structure and can therefore organise the ESF in a different manner. The relationship between local governments and the national government also influences the access of

cities to ESF resources (Eurocities, 2018). The local programming approach¹ to the ESF has been proven successful, since ESF resources are more efficient and effectively deployed towards the needs of the municipalities (Eurocities, 2018). Nevertheless, municipalities are becoming more important and relevant in order to make the ESF more effective to the local needs (Eurocities, 2018). For the current programming period, more municipalities took part in the development phase of the ESF Operational Programmes than in the previous programming period (European Parliament, 2014). However, in order to make the ESF fit better towards the local needs, Member States need to involve municipalities more regarding the development of the ESF Operational Programmes. Thus, Member States need to involve municipalities more in order to fully apply the partnership principle (Eurocities, 2018). Even though the ESF became more regionalised for the current programming period (2014-2020), local ESF applicants still see the administrative burden as one of the biggest obstacles when applying to the ESF (European Parliament, B, 2018). This is particularly challenging for smaller municipalities, since they do not have the organisational structure to deal with the administrative tasks and costs that come with the ESF application and implementation. Together with the overall complexity of regulations that accompany the ESF application and implementation process, the ESF remains challenging for local actors (Eurocities, 2018). Although there came a greater focus on regions in the ESF, obstacles in the form of complexity and administrative burden remained for the local actors in the 2014-2020 programming period (European Parliament, B, 2018).

2.2 Europeanisation

As discussed previously, the ESF has developed and changed over the past decades. In order to see what the impact of the ESF has been on domestic social policies, the theory of Europeanisation can be used. According to Knill and Lehmkuhl (2002), Europeanisation looks at the extent to which the implementation of a European policy causes changes to domestic institutions like the decision-making structures of different policy areas or regulatory styles. Therefore, in regard to this research Europeanisation is defined as:

“a process involving, a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public choices” (Cini, 2007, p. 407).

¹ The Local Programming approach is a bottom-up approach, where the problem definition for Operational Programmes is done at the local level in order for the ESF projects to fit better to the local needs and have a bigger impact on the ESF beneficiaries (Eurocities, 2018).

2.2.1 Europeanisation Mechanisms used by the ESF

The theory of Europeanisation proposes different mechanisms in order to explain the impact of European policies on domestic policies and politics. The ESF has been making use of three mechanisms as a form of Europeanisation: the strategic usage, aid conditionality, and policy learning. The strategic usage of the ESF by domestic actors deals with changes happening in domestic policies as a result of specific policies that are made by the EU in the form of directives and regulations (Töller, 2004). In this case, the ESF helped domestic actors to transform ESF resources into political practice. An example of strategic usage is that it can help bypass political stalemates at the national level since it attracts EU funding and introduces activation policies at the local level both at the same time (van Gerven, Vanhercke & Gürocak, 2014). The strategic usage also refers to the ability of actors at the European, national and regional level to create enough space to manoeuvre to implement social inclusion policies (Verschraegen, Vanhercke & Verpoorten, 2011).

The second mechanism of Europeanisation is aid conditionality, which means that the ESF influences domestic policies through the various requirements placed on the actors making use of the ESF (Dobbin, Simmons & Garrett, 2007; Verschraegen et al., 2011). Placing requirements to the aid gives the Commission legitimate powers to block and prevent unjustified ESF funding from happening. One of these requirements is the additionality principle, which implies that national and sub-national governments are required to spend the EU funds in addition to any planned expenditures. Another requirement that is set as a condition for receiving ESF funding is the partnership principle. The partnership principle requires national governments to cooperate with supranational, regional and local actors regarding the preparation and implementation of the various ESF programmes. This principle is for ensuring that the ESF is implemented through an integrated and multilevel approach that should bring together a variety of different actors at national, regional and local level (Van Gerven, Vanhercke & Gürocak, 2014).

The final Europeanisation mechanism is policy learning. In regard to policy learning via the ESF, actors can readjust their strategies in order to pursue the same objectives in the context of the ESF (Verschraegen et al., 2011). For example, the municipality of Twente readjusted their reintegration policy in order to make it subsidised under the ESF (Annex 6.2). At the same time, the regionalisation of the ESF can lead to more ESF exposure at the regional level. Seeing the effects of ESF funding for a municipality within a region can stimulate other municipalities to use the ESF as well. An example of ESF exposure is municipalities receiving financial aid from the ESF. Once a municipality receives ESF funding, other municipalities are stimulated to use the ESF themselves (Annex 6.2). Besides the readjustment of strategies and financial incentives at other municipalities, policy learning also occurs as a result of collaboration with other municipalities. Collaboration with other municipalities gives the

possibility to examine ESF practices at other municipalities and reflect on own ESF ideas (Verschraegen et al., 2011). A combination of policy learning from self-assessment, policy learning from regional exposure and policy learning from different approaches from other municipalities is known as mutual learning (Zeitlin & Pochet, 2005).

Taking these Europeanisation mechanisms - strategic usage, aid conditionality, policy learning - into account, it becomes clear that there is more than one approach to explain the impact of the ESF on the domestic level. In practice, these three Europeanisation mechanisms are intermingled. However, based on Verschraegen et al (2011) "it is possible to empirically distinguish one mechanism from another" (p.57).

2.3 Regionalisation

Regionalisation is one of the processes that characterises the development of the EU. It also illustrates the decentralisation of the European Member States and the accompanying rescaling of ESIF activities (López & Tatham, 2017). One of the means that stimulates the process of regionalisation in Member States is the ESF. Regionalisation of the ESF means that the ESF activities are getting rescaled to a more regional level and that regions themselves are becoming more important regarding EU social policy (López & Tatham, 2017). The reforms of the ESF in 1971, 1977 and 1988 led to an increasing focus on local actors. Since 1988, local actors were taken into account under the concentration and partnership principles of the ESF (Ellina, 2003).

2.3.1 Regionalisation and Europeanisation

Regionalisation within the EU is intertwined with Europeanisation. The Europeanisation processes within the EU have significantly influenced and stimulated the regionalisation (Lajh, 2004). The regionalisation of the ESF can be seen as a form of Europeanisation, since requirements put on the use of the ESF impact European policy at the local and regional level. An example of this is the partnership principle as one of the requirements for the use of the ESF. By requiring Member States to involve local actors into the application and implementation processes of the ESF, changes in the policy making structure and decentralisation are stimulated. On the other hand, the regionalisation of the ESF can cause municipalities to Europeanise to a greater extent, since the regionalisation leads to more ESF exposure at the local and regional level. The Europeanisation and regionalisation of the ESF both lead to changes at the local government level (Borz, Brandenburg & Mendez, 2018). An example of the effect of regionalisation is Germany. Besides the Federal state level, Germany is regionalised into different Bundesländer. These Bundesländer all have some form of sovereignty and when it comes to the ESF, not only the Federal state negotiates with the EU regarding financial means. For the recent programming periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) also different Bundesländer negotiated with the EU

regarding the ESF. This regionalised focus fits better to the local needs in the Bundesländer (Grasnick, 2014).

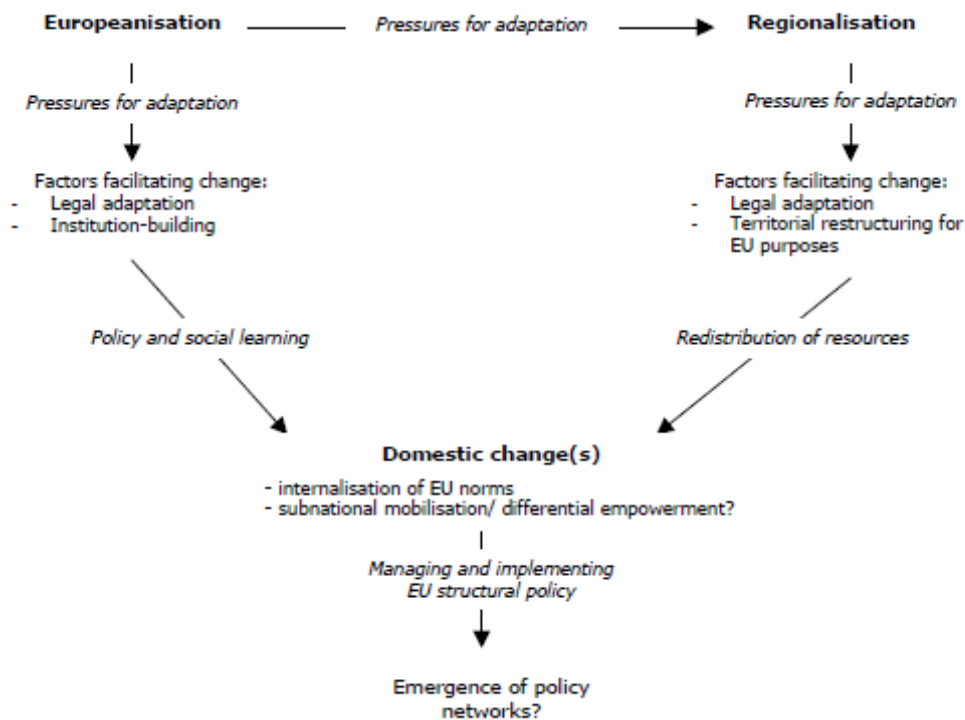


Figure 2 Influence of Europeanisation and Regionalisation
Source: (Lajh, 2004, p.11)

Figure 2 shows that the Europeanisation of the ESF causes legal adaptation, institution-building and policy learning. The regionalisation of the ESF as a form of Europeanisation creates territorial restructuring for EU purposes and redistributes the ESF resources (Lajh, 2004). Both the policy learning mechanism and the redistribution of ESF resources towards the local and regional level bring more ESF exposure towards both of these levels. The financial and regulatory exposure to the ESF can contribute to more Europeanisation of the regions and their cities within. This is the result of the policy learning and aid conditionality mechanisms of Europeanisation. Following López and Tatham (2017), as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF, the local governments are encouraged to Europeanise to a greater extent and increasingly engage in value, strategic and organisational adaption to the European environment. Creating the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the ESIF for the current programming period (2014-2020) shows the European interest in involving local actors in order to make the Structural Funds more effective and efficient (European Commission, B, 2014).

2.3.2 Opportunities and threats of the regionalisation of the ESF

The regionalisation of the ESF gives the municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente more power and responsibilities in regard to the use of the ESF. This regionalisation of the ESF and the accompanying responsibilities can create potential opportunities and threats for

municipalities. However, the access to the ESF and the opportunities and threats for municipalities still depend on the Member State approach and the relationship between local and national authorities (Eurocities, 2018). Therefore, different government structures can have different opportunities and threats as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF. Since Germany and the Netherlands have different government structures, the regionalisation of the ESF can cause different opportunities and threats for the Münster region and the Twente region. For example, the Bundesland of Nordrhein-Westfalen has its own ESF Operational Programme for the 2014-2020 programming period, whereas the region of Twente fell under the national Operational Programme in the Netherlands. One of the opportunities of the regionalisation of the ESF is the increasing focus on the local and regional needs (European Commission, B, 2016). As a result of the increase in focus, the ESF fits better to the local and regional needs, which in its turn makes the ESF more effective and efficient at the local level. In Poland, a more regionalised focus has led to more regional development with the help of the EU Structural Funds (Opiłowska, 2019). Another opportunity comes in the form of more collaboration between cities within a region. More collaboration can lead to a better division of administrative tasks and costs regarding the application and implementation of ESF projects. This can make it easier for municipalities to join more ESF projects. The regional collaboration is discussed in section 2.4. At the same time, the ESF focus on regionalisation makes the municipalities and regions themselves obtain more responsibilities and competences (Eurocities, 2018). For example, for the 2014-2020 programming period, multiple labour market regions were created in the Netherlands. Every labour market region has one centre municipality that is responsible for the ESF in their labour market region. For the region of Twente, the municipality of Enschede is responsible for the application and implementation of the ESF in the whole region.

One of the threats that municipalities recognise as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF is the administrative burden that comes with the increase of responsibilities (European Commission, C, 2016). The European Commission (2016) recognises the amount of work together with the lack of support structures within a region, as the biggest threats for municipalities from the regionalisation. Especially smaller regions and local actors within these regions see the use of the ESF as challenging, since they do not have the capacity to deal with the ESF and its large administrative work (Zimmerman, 2016). In order to deal with these threats, municipalities can choose to strengthen their institutional capacity or cooperate with other municipalities to deal with the administrative burden of the ESF. Municipalities and regions that cooperate with other local actors are better able to deal with the growing responsibilities and are more likely to have the ESF fit to their needs (Eurocities, 2018). However, it is possible that municipalities within regions might have totally different interests, which might make cooperation within a region more difficult. On the other hand, sharing knowledge and

information between different municipalities can be beneficial (Zimmermann, 2016). Learning from knowledge, information and practices from other municipalities can make the ESF application and implementation easier for a municipality. The financial incentive from the ESF can lead to an increase in the institutional capacity of interested and eligible regions. Once public authorities have received funding from the ESF and understand how the ESF application and implementation work, it legitimises and normalises the use of the ESF for the future. When the use of the ESF is legitimised, public authorities are not dependent on individual motivation anymore and regions can create the optimal structure to apply to the ESF in the future (Zimmermann, 2016).

2.4 Regional Collaboration

The European Commission recognises the importance of collaboration at the local and regional level. Therefore, it created the European code of conduct on partnership under the ESIF. Together with article five from Regulation 1303/2013, partnership between the different levels of government is compulsory throughout all programming stages of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period (European Commission, C, 2016). With the increased responsibilities as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF and the compulsory partnership for the current programming period, municipalities are obliged to collaborate with other municipalities. This obligation was posed upon the Member States by the Commission in order to maximise the impact of the ESIF (European Commission, B, 2014). Collaboration with other municipalities within a region gives municipalities the opportunity to learn other approaches to the implementation and application of the ESF. Collaboration also creates the opportunity to divide the administrative work and costs that come with ESF projects.

The theory of regional collaboration discusses the different types of intra-regional collaboration: loose linkages, mutual adjustment, temporary taskforces, regular coordination, coalitions and collective networks. Intra-regional collaboration focuses on the collaboration within a region (Sun & Cao, 2015). An example of intra-regional collaboration is collaboration between municipalities within the region of Twente, i.e. collaboration between Enschede and Hengelo. Within the confined region, cities and municipalities work together in order to be more effective. Strong interaction between cities within a certain region increases region-specific knowledge and can strengthen the region as a whole (Sun & Cao, 2015). Intra-regional collaboration has the advantage that the different cities are within a significant geographical proximity so that a collaborative and interactive relationship between these different municipalities can be established and easily maintained (Fritsch & Schwirten, 1999).

According to Mandell (1999) collaborative efforts can range from loose linkages and coalitions between municipalities to more structural arrangements. Within intra-regional collaboration there are

different types of collaboration. Firstly, there are the linkages and interactive contacts between two or more municipalities. An example is the interactive network Eurocities, where cities can exchange information with one another (Eurocities, 2012). This form of collaboration is considered to be the most informal type of collaboration and can exist of information sharing regarding a specific topic (Hall, 1999). Secondly, there is the mutual adjustment of policies and procedures. This form of collaboration is more formal than the loose linkages and aims to accomplish an objective. Thirdly, the temporary task force between organisations in order to fulfil a common goal (Mandell, 1999). The main characteristic of mutual adjustment and temporary task forces is that local actors agree to collaborate for a limited amount of time. The fourth type of collaboration is regular coordination, which is through a formal agreement such as a partnership in order to achieve a goal (Hall, 1999). The fifth type of collaboration is the creation of a strategic coalitions, where goals are often narrow in scope and the actions occur within the participating organisation. For example, the economic alliance between the city of Enschede and the city of Palo Alto. Both cities share knowledge and focus on helping start-ups in both regions (Visit Enschede, n.d.). Lastly, the collective network structure, where there is a broad mission that takes on tasks that reach beyond the independent actors (Mandell, 1999). For example, the Northern Netherlands Alliance, in which the three provinces – Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe - work together to acquire funding from the EU for the Northern Netherlands (Huis van de Nederlandse Provincies, 2016).

Even though the collaboration between local actors was already present in the previous programming period (2007-2013), the Commission decided that the collaboration has to be increased and intensified for the current programming period (European Commission, A, 2014). Therefore, the Commission introduced the code of conduct on partnership, which made the collaboration between local actors compulsory. According to Eurocities (2018), in some cases the collaboration between municipalities has had a beneficial effect. For example, in the case of the Achterhoek (Netherlands), where cities collaborate because it allows them to deal more effectively with problems that would otherwise be too large for individual cities (Genugten, Kruijf, Zwaan & Thiel, 2017). In the following chapters is discussed what the consequences of the increasing regional focus of the ESF for the collaboration between municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente have been.

3 Methodology

The main question of this thesis is: ‘what are the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for the collaboration of municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente?’. This question is an example of an empirical question that focuses on the causal relation between the regionalisation of the ESF and the consequences this regionalisation has on the collaboration for municipalities in Münster and Twente. The three subquestions that have been developed in order to support the main question focus on different aspects related to the main question. This section discusses the methods used to address the main research question and sub-questions.

3.1 Analysis of the Subquestions

The first subquestion focuses on the differences in the way that municipalities in Twente and Münster nowadays use the ESF in comparison to the use of the ESF in previous programming periods. The subquestion is formulated as follows: ‘what are the differences in the way that the municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente currently make use of the European Social Fund compared to previous ESF periods?’. In order to answer this subquestion, both desk and field research are conducted. For the desk research, evaluations by the European Commission and the Member States regarding the use of the ESF in previous programming period from the chosen municipalities are analysed together with an analysis of the development of the ESF over the different programming periods. The type of field research that is used for this subquestion is known as semi-structured interviews. These interviews allow to specifically look at the differences between programming periods in the regions of Münster and Twente. These types of interviews are comprised of interview questions that have been formulated beforehand, and questions that can be asked in response to answers given by the interviewee. This allows the interviews to get deeper into the topic and if necessary it might introduce new ideas during the interview (Babbie & Rubin, 2007). The interviews were conducted with policy officers of the municipalities of Enschede, Hengelo, Almelo and Hellendoorn in the Netherlands and the district of Steinfurt and the regional Münsterland agency in Germany. For the desk research, evaluation reports on previous programming periods of the ESF in Germany and the Netherlands are used to analyse the impact of the ESF in Münster and Twente. For this subquestion, the programming periods of 2000-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 are analysed, since these are the three most recent programming periods and because they all cover seven year periods. Programming periods before 2000 usually covered six year periods.

For the second subquestion, the emphasis is on the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for the municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente and the opportunities and threats

as a result of these consequences. The second subquestion is: ‘what are the threats and opportunities that arise for municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?’. In order to answer this subquestion, qualitative research tools in the form of semi-structured interviews and document analysis are used. For the document analysis, evaluation reports from the Commission on previous programming periods of the ESF are analysed in order to see the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF. In combination with the semi-structured interviews, potential threats and opportunities as a result of the regionalisation are identified. The opportunities and threats of the regionalisation of the ESF can be analysed by looking at the consequences of more ESF exposure at the local and regional level.

The third subquestion investigates whether the opportunities and threats from the regionalisation of the ESF have been beneficial or disadvantageous for the collaboration of municipalities in Münster and Twente. The third subquestion is: ‘has the regionalisation of the ESF been beneficial or disadvantageous for the municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente in regard to the collaboration within the region?’. With the help of semi-structured interviews with policy officers at the municipal level familiar with the ESF in the region of Münster and Twente, an answer can be given to this subquestion. The interviews help to identify which type of collaboration is present between municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente. The amount of regional ESF projects can show whether the collaboration has increased over the programming periods of 2000-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. Through addressing these pre-discussed subquestions, the main research question can be answered.

3.2 Units of Analysis and Variables

The main units of analysis in this thesis are the municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente. For these municipalities, the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for the collaboration is analysed. Additionally, the differences in the use of the ESF between the programming period of 2000-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 are discussed. To define the municipalities suitable for this research, the following requirements were set. Firstly, the municipalities need to fall under a NUTS level 2 region, since only municipalities within NUTS level 2 regions are eligible for funding of the ESF². Secondly, the regions that are used for the research have to have previously used the ESF in the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 periods. This requirement is necessary to enable comparison of the ESF in different programming periods, i.e. the differences in the use of the ESF can be analysed. This can show

² The NUTS classification divides the economic territory of the Member States. Regions that fall under the NUTS level 2 are considered to be basic regions for the application of regional policies. Regions that are part of the NUTS level 2 have between 800,000 and 3 million inhabitants and are eligible to receive funding from the ESF (Eurostat, 2014).

the impact and consequences of the regionalisation to the collaboration of the municipalities in Münster and Twente. These two requirements - NUTS level 2 and previous use of ESF - are necessary in order to answer the main question and three subquestions of this thesis as they make sure that differences and consequences with regard to the regionalisation of the ESF can be analysed. The cities, municipalities and districts in the regions of Münster and Twente below fulfil both requirements (European Commission, B, n.d.; Provincie Overijssel, 2005).

<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Münster</i>	<i>Overijssel</i>
1. NUTS level 2	The whole region of Münster	The Province of Overijssel
2. Use of ESF for the programming period 2007-2013	<p>The four districts in Münster:</p> <p>The district of Borken</p> <p>The district of Coesfeld</p> <p>The district of Steinfurt</p> <p>The district of Warendorf</p> <p>The city of Münster</p>	<p>The 14 municipalities in the region of Twente:</p> <p>Enschede, Hengelo, Almelo, Borne, Dinkelland, Haaksbergen, Hellendoorn, Hof van Twente, Losser, Oldenzaal, Rijssen-Holten, Tubbergen, Twenterand, Wierden</p>

There were several reasons for choosing these two countries – the Netherlands and Germany- for the investigation in this thesis. Firstly, they have been chosen because of the interest in the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for collaboration in the regions of the University of Twente and the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, since this thesis is conducted under programs from both universities. Secondly, knowledge of the languages within these countries played a role in the selection. This is beneficial in regard to the analysis of policy documents, since English, German and Dutch documents could be analysed. Lastly, cities from Germany and the Netherlands have been chosen due to the differences in the national and regional government structures. Since both countries

have different government structure, the regionalisation of the ESF may have different consequences for the collaboration of municipalities in these countries.

3.3 Interviews

In order to address the main question and the subquestions, interviews are held with officials from municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente and policy officers from organisations that deal with the ESF in their respective region. These municipal officials and policy officers need to be familiar with the last two ESF programming periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) in order to make the analysis of the differences more reliable. The main goal of this thesis is to investigate what are the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for the collaboration within Münster and Twente. Therefore, the interview questions are focused on the differences in the way that regions make use of the ESF and the consequences that came as a result of this change. The interview is divided into four blocks. Firstly, some introductory questions are asked in order to see how long the interviewee has been working at the city and with the ESF. After that, the interview questions focus on the use of the ESF by the municipality in order to answer the first and second subquestion of the thesis. These questions establish whether there is a difference for municipalities in working with the ESF between the different programming periods. An example of such a question is; 'What were some major challenges of the ESF that you had to deal with in the previous programming period?'. Such a question should give an insight into the different policies and strategies of the regions regarding their use of the ESF and the activation policies dealing with poverty and unemployment. The second subquestion deals with the consequences of the changes. The interview questions that therefore will be asked are: 'How have things changed and how did this change your city's practices regarding the ESF?' and 'what are the opportunities and problems that arose as a result of the change of the ESF?'. These interview questions should generate the advantages and the disadvantages of the change in the way that the regions use the ESF. Furthermore, questions such as; 'Has the change of the ESF helped you innovate with the use of the Fund or has it obstructed the city's policies?' will be asked in order to see whether the changes of the ESF has helped or blocked the cities in their activation policies. In addition to this set of interview questions the semi-structured interview allows more questions to be asked along the way. The full list of interview questions together with a table with what interview question addresses what subquestion can be found in Appendix 6.1.

For this research, at least two interviews per region will be conducted in order to see the consequences of the regionalisation for the collaboration for different municipalities within Münster and Twente. The interviews were held via skype or telephone. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,

it was not possible to hold the interviews face-to-face. The outcomes of the interviews will be intelligent transcripts and can be found in Appendix 6.2 to 6.9.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

According to Dooley (2000), the validity of a research “refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the specific inferences made from the measures and belongs not just to a measure but depends on the fit between the measure and its label” (p.9). The internal validity questions whether observed changes can be attributed to the analysed cause. It is in regard to the truthfulness of the claim that one variable is the cause of another. In regard to the content validity, it is important that we measure what we want to measure. The external validity of the research looks whether the results of the research can be generalised so it is applicable to other research (Dooley, 2000). In regard to this thesis, the results can only be applied to regions within Germany and the Netherlands, since other regions in these countries have the same government structure.

“The validity in qualitative research means appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data. Whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of methodology is appropriate for answering the research question, the design is valid for the methodology, the sampling and data analysis is appropriate, and finally the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context” (Leung, 2015, p.325).

Reliability of a research is defined as “the degree to which observed scores are free from errors of measurement” (Dooley, 2000, p.9). According to Leung, the reliability in qualitative research has to do with the consistency of the research. Within this thesis the main concept is the European Social Fund, which is the fund aimed at supporting the activation policy of regions in the EU. Regarding the regionalisation, it is the rescaling of the ESF towards the local and regional level so that cities within regions become more important regarding the application and implementation of the ESF.

4 Analysis

4.1 Differences in the use of the ESF between different programming periods

The Netherlands

When looking at the differences in the way that municipalities within the province of Overijssel make use of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period compared to the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming period, the main differences can be found in **the actual use of the ESF and the collaboration within the province and among the regions**. For the 2014-2020 programming period, the province of Overijssel consists of two labour market regions, which are the labour market region Zwolle and the labour market region Twente. Within each labour market region, one municipality is assigned as the centre municipality of that region. This centre municipality can apply for ESF funding for its region. The centre municipality of the labour market region of Twente is the municipality of Enschede. As centre municipality, Enschede is responsible for the ESF budget for the region of Twente. Working with **labour market regions and centre municipalities** for the 2014-2020 programming period is a main difference compared to the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming periods. Creating labour market regions and setting up centre municipalities that are responsible for the ESF applications fit the ongoing process of regionalisation of the ESF (Panteia, 2013). Rescaling the ESF activities towards the regional and local level causes municipalities to Europeanise to a greater extent, since they are more exposed to European funding and therefore can take over European norms and values and obtain more ESF expertise at the same time. The regionalisation of the ESF is a form of Europeanisation in order to make municipalities adapt to the European environment. In the case of the Region of Twente, the creation of the labour market region and the assignment of a centre municipality means that the municipalities within the region of Twente had to collaborate regarding the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period. An example of the growing importance of collaboration in Twente for the 2014-2020 programming period is that the centre municipality Enschede held meetings with all municipalities in the region prior to the start of the programming period in order to map the regional needs and create a good collaboration structure (VNG, 2015). The municipality of Enschede lobbied at the other municipalities to create regional collaboration regarding the upcoming regional ESF projects (Annex 6.2).

As a result of the regionalisation of the ESF and the accompanying creation of labour market regions and centre municipalities, more collaboration was present in the region of Twente for the 2014-2020 programming period. In comparison to the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming period, **a collaboration and consultation structure was created in the region of Twente for the 2014-2020 programming period** (Annex 6.4). During the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming periods, the ESF was only used incidentally by some municipalities in Twente (Annex 6.3). For example, the municipality

of Enschede brought forward a single integration project for the 2007-2013 programming period (Annex 6.2). This means that the regionalisation of the ESF has led to an adaptation at the municipal level and created new structures within the region of Twente. In order to prepare for the regionalisation of the ESF in the 2014-2020 programming period, there was one regional project that already worked with centre municipalities for the 2007-2013 programming period (Province of Overijssel, 2012). For the region of Twente, this was the 1000 youth plan³ and this project was the forerunner to the regional collaboration in the region of Twente (Annex 6.5). The newly created regional collaboration between municipalities in the region of Twente for the 2014-2020 programming period has had a positive effect on the use of the ESF for the region. Since 2014, the region of Twente has implemented seven ESF projects in collaboration with the other municipalities (Eurocities, 2018). For the first part of the 2014-2020 programming period, the region of Twente received the full €3 million of the assigned budget for the region. This indicates that the collaboration regarding the ESF projects for the first part of the 2014-2020 programming period has been effective for the Twente region.

Germany

Regarding the differences in the use of the ESF for districts in the region of Münster, the main difference was **the way the ESF was organised in Germany** between the programming periods of 2000-2006 and 2007-2013. As a result of an increasing regionalised focus of the ESF, the 16 Bundesländer created their own Operational Programmes for the 2007-2013 programming period. This was different compared to the 2000-2006 programming period, for which the Federal State created Operational Programmes regarding EU objectives (European Commission. A, 2014). By creating regional Operational Programmes, the ESF fits better to the specific needs of the Bundesländer. However, with the decentralisation of labour market policies in Germany and the regionalisation of the ESF, there has to be more coordination between the regional and local level. For the 2007-2013 programming period, the regional labour market policy was implemented via regional agencies throughout larger areas such as the region of Münster (Annex 6.6). For the 2014-2020 programming period, the main difference with the previous programming periods was that these **regional agencies within each Bundesland gained more ESF responsibilities**, such as increased responsibilities regarding the support of districts. The increase in responsibilities was in order to improve the coordination between the regional and local level and make the ESF more effective towards the local level. For the region of Münster, the regional agency responsible for the coordination of the ESF between the local and regional level is the

³ The 1000 youth plan aims to guide vulnerable youth who are at a distance from the labour market towards the regional labour market. This project went via the province of Overijssel and led to collaboration between the municipalities in the region of Twente regarding this project (Regio Twente, 2014).

Münsterland regional agency (Regionalagentur Münsterland). The Münsterland regional agency informs regional and local actors about the ESF and the corresponding Bundesland policies, together with taking care of public relations within the region (Annex 6.7). This makes the implementation of ESF projects into the local districts easier, since there is an organisation that supports the local districts with their application and implementation. The creation of regional agencies fits the ongoing trends of Europeanisation and Regionalisation, since the different regional agencies in Nordrhein-Westfalen create a larger network of regions and actors that are connected to the ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Nordrhein-Westfalen (Alemann, Gödde, Hummel & Münch, 2010). With the regulations and financial incentives from the ESF leading to the rescaling of activities towards the regional level and thus the creation of regional networks, the ESF becomes more effective for the regions in Nordrhein-Westfalen.

The growing responsibilities of regional agencies lead to more support for the local districts in the region of Münster, which makes the implementation of the ESF for local districts easier. Adding up to the ongoing emergence of regional agencies is the **growing collaboration between local districts themselves in the region of Münster**. In comparison to the programming periods of 2000-2006 and 2007-2013, there is more collaboration between the local districts in the Münster region for the 2014-2020 programming period (Annex 6.6.). This collaboration has led to more projects in the region of Münster. Within the region of Münster, there are five regional projects that were implemented with the help of the ESF (Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2017). The increased collaboration between the districts and the regional agencies in Münster is consistent with the creation of the code of conduct on partnership by the Commission in order to stimulate involvement of local and regional actors in ESF projects. Nevertheless, the involvement of the individual districts in the region of Münster remains minimal, whereas regional agencies obtained more tasks and responsibilities regarding the application and implementation of the ESF (Annex 6.7).

4.2 Threats and opportunities of the regionalisation of the ESF

The Netherlands

As aforementioned, the regionalisation of the ESF has led to some differences in the way that regions and municipalities make use of the ESF for the programming period of 2014-2020. The regionalised focus of the ESF and the accompanying creation of labour market regions and centre municipalities in the Netherlands brings threats and opportunities to the municipalities in the region of Twente. One of the opportunities that occurs as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF is the possibility to **share specific ESF knowledge** at the municipal level. Sharing ESF knowledge and collaborating regarding ESF projects leads to **more exposure to the ESF** at the local level and eventually an **increase in ESF expertise** at the different municipalities in the region of Twente. More local ESF expertise can make it

easier to apply and implement ESF projects (Panteia, 2013). For the region of Twente, the municipality of Hengelo is the most experienced in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF (Annex 6.3). Hengelo has been working with the ESF since 1980 and obtained a lot of ESF knowledge. For the 2014-2020 programming period, there has been more information sharing in the region of Twente (Annex 6.4). The created collaboration and consult structure has led to regular meetings with subsidy advisors from every municipality in Twente and made the sharing of information regarding the ESF easier. Another opportunity as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF is **the inclusion of smaller municipalities in ESF projects**. The newly created collaboration structures as a result of regionalisation have made it easier for smaller municipalities to join ESF projects. Working together with the other municipalities in the region of Twente has made it possible for the municipality of Hellendoorn to join more projects (Annex 6.5). Smaller municipalities are able to join more regional ESF projects, since the **administrative tasks and costs that accompany these projects can be divided** among the collaborating municipalities (Panteia, 2013). The regionalisation of the ESF and the resulting creation of labour market regions and centre municipalities in the Netherlands lead to an increase in ESF exposure and thus more ESF expertise at the local level, since smaller municipalities collaborate regarding ESF projects. The creation of a collaboration structure via centre municipalities and the division of administrative tasks and costs make the ESF application and implementation of projects more streamlined.

Besides the opportunities that come from the regionalisation of the ESF for the region of Twente, there are also multiple threats that arose for the 2014-2020 programming period. The first threat that arose was **the image of the ESF at the local level**. Prior to the 2014-2020 programming period, especially smaller municipalities were doubtful about the ESF due to bad experiences in the past. For example, the municipality of Almelo had problems regarding the ESF finances and requirements in the past (Annex 6.4). Due to the negative image of the ESF, not every municipality was enthusiastic regarding the upcoming ESF programming period (Panteia, 2010). Some municipalities in the region of Twente spent a long time recovering from the ESF problems in previous programming periods and were therefore not eager to work with the ESF again. Adding up that the labour market region structure with the centre municipalities was new, the collaboration in the region of Twente was not fully functioning from the beginning. Nevertheless, during the first years of the 2014-2020 programming period the collaboration structure started working and the financial incentives from the ESF were received. In its turn this led to more enthusiasm regarding the ESF within the region of Twente. Another threat of the regionalisation were the **high administrative tasks that came with an ESF application and implementation**. Even though the municipalities in Twente were able to collaborate and divide the administrative tasks and costs, the burden was still very high for this programming period (Eurocities, 2018). In comparison to the previous programming period of 2007-

2013 some municipalities mentioned that it has become easier to fulfil the project requirements for the 2014-2020 programming period. The larger municipalities stated that it was easier to deal with the ESF requirements, but that they are still very demanding (Annex 6.2; Annex 6.3). The smaller municipalities in the region of Twente mentioned that there is no difference in regard to the ESF requirements between the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 programming period (Annex 6.4; Annex 6.5). A third threat that comes with the regionalisation of the ESF is the **conflict of interest** meaning that a centre municipality has other interests than the smaller municipalities in the region (Panteia, 2013). Within the collaboration structure of the region of Twente, the municipalities contribute in different ways to the collaboration. The larger municipalities often contribute more than the smaller municipalities. This gives the larger municipalities more influence when it comes to the implementation of projects in the region. It can therefore occur that projects that are deemed relevant by the larger municipalities are not relevant for other municipalities in the region. However, according to the municipalities there has not been a conflict of interest within the region of Twente for the 2014-2020 programming period. With the changing ESF, a conflict of interest remains a future threat for the collaboration in the region of Twente.

Germany

The regionalisation of the ESF has had an impact on the Nordrhein-Westfalen Bundesland, the region of Münster and the local districts within the region of Münster. As a result of the regionalisation, the way the ESF is used has changed over the last three programming periods. Together with the growing importance of regional agencies and slightly more collaboration between the different local districts, several opportunities and threats arise for the local districts in the region of Münster. One of the opportunities as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF in the Münster region is **more attention towards local challenges and problems at the district level**. With Operational Programmes at the Bundesland level, there is more of a regionalised focus compared to having one federal Operational Programme. This creates the opportunity for Nordrhein-Westfalen to address regional and local challenges in its own Operational Programme. In its turn, this can make the ESF projects fit better to the regional and local needs and make the ESF more effective in the region of Münster (European Commission, B, 2016). With more ESF focus on the regions and the regional agencies, ESF projects can fit better to the individual situations of the regions and districts within the regions. Adding up to the local attention, is **the availability of more shared knowledge as a result of the regionalisation**. The growing responsibilities of regional agencies have made the collaboration between the districts in the Münster region themselves and the Münsterland regional agency stricter and more intense. This has led to more combined knowledge regarding the implementation and application of ESF projects (Annex 6.7). Together with more support from the Münsterland regional agency, local districts have the

possibility to deal more effectively with the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period (European Commission, B, 2016). Together with sharing knowledge, collaborating with other districts in the region of Münster and receiving additional support from the Münsterland agency, give districts **the opportunity to divide administrative tasks and costs among each other** (Annex 6.6). This makes it easier to join more ESF projects and successfully implement them at the district level.

However, the regionalisation of the ESF also brings threats towards the districts in the region of Münster. The regionalisation of the ESF causes the focus of the ESF to switch from the Federal state level in Germany towards the regions that are part of the Bundesländer. Nevertheless, each Bundesland consists of different regions that hold their own views and positions and have their own problems and challenges (Cologne Government Regional Office, 2018). With the organisation and preparation of the ESF at the Bundesland level as well, it occurs that the ESF does not fit well to regional and district level problems in the region of Münster (Annex 6.6). ESF priorities set at the Bundesland level do not always match with what is needed at the local district level. This causes the ESF to not be fully effective for the local districts in the Münster region. These **regional disparities** within the Nordrhein-Westfalen Bundesland are thus a threat of the regionalisation of the ESF. Another threat is the **coordination between the Bundesland level and the local level**. The local districts and regions mainly follow the direction set out by the Bundesland of Nordrhein-Westfalen (Annex 6.7). Closer collaboration between the local, regional and Bundesland level can increase the effectiveness of ESF projects within districts that implement them. Applying the partnership principle and bringing local and regional actors closer to join the preparation and implementation of the ESF can make the ESF more relevant for local districts. In this way, local and regional problems can be dealt with in a better way via ESF projects that are more relevant.

4.3 Benefits and disadvantages of the regionalisation of the ESF for regional collaboration

The Netherlands

As earlier stated, the regionalisation of the ESF and the creation of labour market regions and centre municipalities in the Netherlands has had an influence on the regional collaboration between municipalities in the region of Twente. It can be argued that the regionalisation of the ESF brings both benefits and disadvantages to the collaboration between the municipalities. One of the benefits of the ESF regionalisation is the intensity of the collaboration between the municipalities in Twente. In comparison to the programming periods of 2000-2006 and 2007-2013, there is much more collaboration between the 14 municipalities in the region. This has led to a **more regional approach to ESF projects and eventually more projects in the region of Twente**. This regional collaboration mainly consists of multiple meetings between subsidy coordinators from all 14 municipalities. For the 2007-

2013 programming period there was only one regional project for the municipalities in Twente, comparing to a total of 11 regional ESF projects for the 2014-2020 programming period (Eurocities, 2018). For the total period of 2014-2020, the region of Twente got assigned €7.7 million from the ESF, of which €3 million is already received for the 2014-2017 part of the programming period (Annex 6.2). The received €3 million is the full amount of the assigned budget for the region of Twente for 2014-2017. This indicates that the ESF has been effective for the region of Twente and that the regional ESF projects have met all the requirements necessary. Another benefit that comes from the creation of labour market regions and centre municipalities is **the possibility for smaller municipalities to join ESF projects**. As mentioned before, the regionalisation can lead to more ESF expertise at the local level. Joining more ESF projects is beneficial for smaller municipalities, since they gain more experience regarding the ESF application and implementation. This fits together with the goal of the Commission to increase the ESF knowledge of local governments in order to reduce the administrative burden and costs that come with ESF projects (European Commission B, 2018).

However, there also lies a disadvantage in the administrative costs and burdens. Even though the municipalities in the region of Twente collaborate and have the possibility to divide the administrative tasks and costs, it appears that **ESF project requirements are still high for the municipalities in the region of Twente**. From the interviews (Annex 6.4) and (Annex 6.5) is clear that there is no difference in the ESF requirements between the 2007-2013 programming period and the 2014-2020 programming period. This indicates that the regionalisation of the ESF and the increased collaboration between the municipalities has not made it easier for smaller municipalities to fulfil the ESF project requirements. On the other hand, interviewees (Annex 6.2) and (Annex 6.3) bring out that it has become a little bit easier for the 2014-2020 programming period to fulfil the ESF project requirements. Nevertheless, **the administrative burden and the costs accompanying ESF application and implementation remain high** for the 2014-2020 programming period. Notwithstanding the disadvantage regarding the administrative burdens and costs, the regionalisation of the ESF has overall been beneficial for the collaboration between the municipalities in the region of Twente. In general, the collaboration has increased and intensified and offered the possibility for the region of Twente to implement more ESF projects for the programming period of 2014-2020. It is possible that it becomes easier for municipalities to deal with the administrative burdens and costs regarding the upcoming programming periods, since there will be more experience regarding the regional collaboration in the region of Twente. The 2014-2020 programming period is the first period in which the municipalities collaborate with each other and the collaboration can further develop in the upcoming years. The type of collaboration within the region of Twente is a strategic coalition, since there is a specific goal to develop the region. The collaboration between the municipalities is not set for a limited time, but will

continue after the 2014-2020 programming period ends. This indicates that it is a more formal type of collaboration between the municipalities in the region of Twente.

Germany

The regionalisation of the ESF in Germany brings consequences forward for the collaboration in regions in the Nordrhein-Westfalen Bundesland and the local districts in the region of Münster. For the local districts in the region of Münster the consequences have overall been beneficial. However, there are also some disadvantages as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF and the accompanying consequences. Firstly, the growing responsibilities of regional agencies such as the Münsterland agency in the region of Münster have stimulated collaboration between districts and helped districts with the application and implementation of ESF projects for the 2014-2020 programming period (Annex 6.7). As a result of the regionalisation and the growing support from regional agencies, the districts have been **more able to divide administrative tasks and costs regarding the application and implementation of EFS projects** (Annex 6.6). This makes it easier for local districts to join more projects in order to deal with the problems they encounter (Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2015). As a result there have been five regional ESF projects between the local districts in the region of Münster for the 2014-2017 part of the programming period. **The collaboration between the districts and the regional agency of Münsterland feels forced upon the regional agency** in order to increase the support for the local districts (Annex 6.7). Even though the collaboration depends on the type of ESF project, overall the collaboration between districts has become more strict and functions better (Annex 6.6). Since there is a growing awareness of the importance of regions at the local districts, the collaboration and ESF projects are more beneficial for the whole Münster region (Annex 6.7).

Nevertheless, the regionalisation of the ESF also leads to some disadvantages for the local districts in the region of Münster. Even though there is an increasing focus on regions instead of Bundesländer, there seems to **not be much coordination between the direction of the Bundesland and the needs of the local districts**. According to the interviewee (Annex 6.6), the local districts are not involved in the preparation and direction of the ESF before the start of a new programming period. The districts mainly follow the direction of the Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen regarding ESF projects and are not involved in the decision regarding the direction of the ESF. Notwithstanding the regionalisation of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period, districts in Münster do not feel that the ESF fits better to their needs compared to the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming periods (Annex 6.6). Additionally, the regionalisation leads to more competition with the other regions in the Nordrhein-Westfalen Bundesland (Cologne Government Regional Office, 2018). Since Bundesländer consist of multiple regions with their own challenges and priorities, every region has to ensure that the

direction of the Bundesland fits their needs. This is contrary to the creation of larger policy networks that collaborate as a result of Europeanisation and Regionalisation.

5 Conclusion

In this Master thesis, the consequences of the regionalisation of the European Social Fund for the collaboration of municipalities within the regions of Münster in Germany and Twente in the Netherlands were discussed. The theory of regionalisation as a mechanism of Europeanisation has been analysed through the use of the ESF in the regions of Münster and Twente. Europeanisation is frequently referred to as an explanation for the impact of European policies at the domestic level, whereas regionalisation illustrates decentralisation and the accompanying rescaling of activities. Via the use of the ESF regionalisation in the EU is stimulated, leading to a different role for municipalities in European regions. In its turn, this new role for municipalities regarding the ESF causes a change in the relationship and collaboration between municipalities in a specific region. This chapter combines all insights of the subquestions in order to formulate an extensive conclusion on the research question “what are the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF on the collaboration of municipalities within the regions of Münster (Germany) and Twente (the Netherlands)?”. The conclusion ends with the limitations of this research and a set of recommendations for further research regarding the regionalisation and collaboration beyond the 2014-2020 programming period.

With the ESF becoming more region-oriented over the last three programming periods (2000-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2020), differences in the use of the ESF were found for municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente. The subquestion “what are the differences in the way that the municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente make use of the European Social Fund for the 2014-2020 programming period compared to the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming periods?” addresses these differences. To begin with, there has been a change in the way the ESF was organised in both Germany and the Netherlands. Germany went from multi-regional Operational Programmes for specific ESF objectives for the 2000-2006 programming period towards regional Operational Programmes for the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming periods. With Operational Programmes for each Bundesland, regional disparities were taken into account and an increasing focus came on the specific regional needs within each Bundesland. For the 2014-2020 period, regional agencies across the Bundesland of Nordrhein-Westfalen obtained more ESF responsibilities regarding the application and implementation for the 2014-2020 programming period, which resulted in more support and coordination for the municipalities in the different regions. This eventually led to more collaboration between the municipalities in the region of Münster. In the Netherlands, labour market regions and centre municipalities were created for the 2014-2020 programming period. These centre municipalities became responsible for the application and implementation of the ESF within their region. With the city of Enschede as centre municipality, the

collaboration within the region of Twente increased and led to the implementation of more ESF projects for the 2014-2020 programming period.

The changes in the way the ESF was organised are part of the regionalisation process. In both countries the ESF switched from a national or multi-regional approach to more focus on smaller regions. This regionalisation of the ESF has brought forward opportunities and threats for municipalities within the regions of Münster and Twente. For the subquestion “what are the threats and opportunities that arise for municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?” several opportunities and threats were identified. The first opportunity is the possibility for more attention to local needs and challenges. Centre municipalities and regional agencies have closer ties to municipalities than provinces or Bundesländer. By giving these centre municipalities and regional agencies more responsibilities regarding the application and implementation of the ESF, there can be more attention to local needs and challenges. A second opportunity of the regionalisation is the gain of more ESF expertise. Collaborating with other municipalities and regional agencies regarding the ESF can lead to an increase in the exchange of ESF knowledge. Together with more exposure to the ESF as a result of the regionalisation, municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente have more ESF knowledge for the 2014-2020 programming period. Furthermore, dividing administrative tasks and costs that come with ESF projects is an opportunity that comes from the collaboration as a result of the ESF regionalisation. Working together with other municipalities in the region of Münster and Twente gives the possibility to divide the tasks and costs among the participating municipalities and gives smaller cities the opportunity to join ESF projects they could not have joined if they were working individually. Nevertheless, as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF some threats also arose for the cities in Münster and Twente. The main threat for municipalities in Münster comes in the form of the coordination with the Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen. Even though there is more focus on the regions in the Bundesland, there is still a lack of coordination and communication between the municipalities and the Bundesland. Nordrhein-Westfalen mainly looks at the interests of the different regions and surpasses the individual municipalities. As a result of the top-down approach in Germany, the municipalities in Münster follow the ESF direction of the Bundesland, which is not always relevant for the municipalities. Within the region of Twente, the main threat is the conflict of interest between the municipalities in the labour market region. Larger municipalities such as Enschede sometimes have different interests than smaller municipalities within the region. Since Enschede is the centre municipality it can bring forward ESF projects that are of less relevance for smaller municipalities.

In regard to the subquestion “in what extent has the regionalisation of the ESF been beneficial or disadvantageous for the municipalities in the regions of Münster and Twente in regard to the collaboration within the region?” these opportunities and threats were scrutinised. Overall, the regionalisation of the ESF has been beneficial for the collaboration of municipalities in both the Münster region and the Twente region. In comparison to previous programming periods (2000-2006 and 2007-2013), there is more collaboration between municipalities in Münster and Twente for the current programming period (2014-2020). This has led to the realisation of more regional ESF projects in both regions. Even though requirements of the ESF stimulate municipalities to collaborate with each other for this programming period, most municipalities do not perceive the created collaboration as forced upon them from above. For the region of Twente, the newly created collaboration is a formal type of collaboration through which the municipalities try to achieve the same goal and sometimes have tasks to go beyond the individual actors. For municipalities in the region of Münster, there is also a formal type of collaboration. Nevertheless, this is mainly limited to coordination with the other municipalities in the region regarding specific projects. The regionalisation of the ESF has given municipalities in Münster and Twente the opportunity to divide tasks and costs and thus make the ESF application and implementation easier. However, it has also brought risks forward such as internal coordination struggles and conflicts of interest within regions regarding ESF projects.

This thesis has shown that consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period are the changes in the way the ESF is used by the regions of Münster and Twente, and the collaboration between municipalities within these regions. These two consequences brought forward opportunities and threats for these municipalities. As a result of the increase in collaboration, administrative tasks and costs can be divided among participating municipalities. This gives more municipalities the opportunity to join ESF projects and thus deal with local challenges such as unemployment. Nevertheless, conflicts of interest can originate as a result of different local needs between municipalities within one region. Therefore, good coordination between participating actors regarding ESF collaboration needs to be present within a region. Nonetheless, the empirical results reported herein should be considered in the light of some limitations. Firstly, the access to data via interviews has limited this thesis. It has proven to be difficult to get in touch with district employees in the region of Münster in regard to the subjects of regionalisation of the ESF and the collaboration within the region. As a result, the findings are based on fewer interviews than anticipated and more on the analysis of policy documents regarding the regionalisation and collaboration in the region of Münster. Secondly, the results of this thesis for the Member States of Germany and the Netherlands may not be exactly similar to any other Member State. Member States with different government

structures can have different outcomes regarding the regionalisation of the ESF and the collaboration within a region, limiting the generalisation of this study.

With the process of regionalisation ongoing in the European Union, additional research can be carried out regarding the consequences of the regionalisation of the ESF for the collaboration between municipalities in regions. With a new programming period (2021-2027) ahead it is interesting to see how the created and improved collaboration between municipalities in Münster and Twente will develop regarding the application and implementation of the ESF into their regions. At the same time, research regarding the effects of the regionalisation for Member States other than Germany and the Netherlands can bring forward new results due to differing government structures. Both types of additional research can help understand the effects of the process of regionalisation for the collaboration of municipalities.

6 Appendix

6.1 Interview Questions

Introduction

- What is your function?
- How long have you been working for your city?
- How long have you been working with the ESF?
- What does your work with the ESF include?

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming Period

- What was your city's policy in regard to the use of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?
- What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period? (Examples)
- What was your city's policy dealing with poverty and unemployment during the programming period of 2007-2013?
- How did you apply for ESF funding for this policy during the 2007-2013 programming period?
- Did you collaborate with other cities in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?
- What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- How do you apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?
- How many projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period? (Examples)
- Has your city changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period? What were the changes?
- Why did the use of the ESF change?

Threats and opportunities

- Have you perceived any changes as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?
 - IF YES,
 - o How has the use of the ESF changed for your city (and the region as a whole)?
 - o How did this change your city's practices regarding the ESF?
 - o What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?
 - o What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?
- Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your city?
 - o Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?
 - o Is there more collaboration with other cities within your region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?
- Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?
- Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your city's social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?
- On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?

- On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?
- Are the ESF projects answering better to your city's needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?
- Do you collaborate with other cities in regard of the use of the ESF?
- Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other cities in your region as a result of the ESF?
- Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?
- How does this forced collaboration between cities in your region work?
- What opportunities and threats bring the forced collaboration?
- With how many regions do you collaborate and regarding how many ESF projects?
- Has the relationship with other cities changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?

	Subquestions	Subquestion 1	Subquestion 2	Subquestion 3
Interview questions				
<i>What was your city's policy in regard to the use of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?</i>		X		
<i>What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?</i>		X		
<i>What was your city's policy dealing with poverty and unemployment during the programming period of 2007-2013?</i>		X		
<i>How did you apply for ESF funding for this policy during the 2007-2013 programming period?</i>		X		
<i>Did you collaborate with other cities in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?</i>		X		
<i>What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?</i>		X		
<i>How does your city make use of the ESF regarding the current programming period from 2014-2020?</i>		X		
<i>How do you apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?</i>		X		
<i>How many projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period? (Examples)</i>		X		

<i>Has your city changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period? What were the changes?</i>		X	X	X
<i>Why did the use of the ESF change?</i>		X		
<i>Have you perceived any changes as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?</i>		X		
<i>How has the use of the ESF changed for your city (and the region as a whole)?</i>		X	X	
<i>How did this change your city's practices regarding the ESF?</i>		X	X	
<i>What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?</i>			X	
<i>What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?</i>			X	
<i>Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your city?</i>		X	X	
<i>Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?</i>		X	X	
<i>Is there more collaboration with other cities within your region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?</i>		X	X	X
<i>Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?</i>			X	
<i>Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?</i>		X	X	
<i>Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your city's social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?</i>				X
<i>On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?</i>		X		X

<i>On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?</i>		X		X
<i>Are the ESF projects answering better to your city's needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?</i>				X
<i>Do you collaborate with other cities in regard of the use of the ESF? And has this changed for this programming period after the regionalisation of the ESF?</i>		X	X	X
<i>Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other cities in your region as a result of the ESF?</i>				X
<i>Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?</i>		X	X	X
<i>How does this collaboration work?</i>			X	X
<i>What opportunities and threats bring the forced collaboration?</i>			X	X
<i>With how many regions do you collaborate and regarding how many ESF projects?</i>				X
<i>Has the relationship with other cities changed within your region as a result of the collaborations?</i>				X

6.2 Interview ESF – Rob Lentfert (Municipality of Enschede, Netherlands)

Introduction

- **What is your function?**

I am project manager for the ESF labour market region Twente as well as subsidy and contract advisor.

- **How long have you been working for the municipality of Enschede?**

I have been working at the municipality of Enschede since 1992 (28 years).

- **How long have you been working with the ESF?**

For the last eight years I have been working with the ESF active inclusion.

- **What does your work with the ESF include?**

With the ESF active inclusion we focus on everyone joining the labour market, meaning that there are no borders and that there is no discrimination and that there are equal opportunities for everyone. We are of course focused on the Netherlands and more specifically on the region of Twente. As municipality of Enschede, we are a so-called centre municipality, which makes us responsible for the budget that we receive.

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming period

- **What was the policy of the municipality of Enschede in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Before 2014 every municipality individually applied for ESF projects. As municipality we did not really do anything with the ESF until the new 2014-2020 programming period. It was the municipality of Hengelo that applied for ESF and we collaborated a little bit with Hengelo regarding the ESF. The municipality of Hengelo has more experience when it came to the use of the ESF and we as municipality of Enschede had previous bad experiences with the ESF, because we received financial resources that we had to return.

- **How did the municipality of Enschede use the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Since Hengelo had more and better experiences with the ESF, we worked together for the 2007-2013 programming period. Together we applied for projects that were relevant for our two municipalities.

- **What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?**

An example of a project was the 1000 youth plan. This plan was brought up by the province of Overijssel and aimed to help young people that had a hard time finding a job to find suiting education or jobs. This project has continued for the years after the 2007-2013 programming

period ended. At some moment we also had a subsidy for integration and integration projects that we carried out with Hengelo.

- **Did you collaborate with other municipalities in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Yes, but only with the municipality of Hengelo. We did not collaborate as Twente region as a whole.

- **What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

The major challenge for the municipality of Enschede was that we had bad experiences with the ESF in the past. Since Hengelo had more experience, we worked together with them regarding some ESF projects. In previous programming periods we received money, but we could either not justify well enough what we had used the money for or the requirements were too strict.

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- **How does the municipality of Enschede apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?**

For this programming period, we started on the first of November 2014 with the ESF. Before that, we already lobbied at the other municipalities in the region of Twente to let them know that a regional subsidy was on its way. We made agreements, went to the responsible people at the municipalities such as team leaders and slowly made them interested in these projects. We actually visited all 14 municipalities to let them know that regional subsidies were becoming available and if they were interested in joining. They did not lobby themselves. We as a municipality even forced them a little bit to join, since it was for the regional benefit. In the beginning they were very sceptical, because more municipalities had bad experiences with the ESF in the past, so we had to really convince them to join.

- **What projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period?**

For the first part of the 2014-2020 programming period, we subsidised integration consultants, who guide people towards work. For the 2014-2017 period we received €3 million, which is the total 100% that was available for the ESF in Twente. As a result of the regional collaboration, more projects were present in the region of Twente. This was also, because the €3 million was used to compensate the region and the municipalities for the administrative burden that comes with the ESF projects. With the remaining amount of the €3 million, we started the project 'matching at work', for which we hired 15 labour market coaches that are divided over the whole Twente region. These labour market coaches help jobless people and people on benefits

to get back to work. The main target audience for this project were people older than 50, younger than 28 or on benefits for at least six months.

- **Has your Organisation changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Yes.

- **If yes, what where the main changes?**

The main change is that there are more regional ESF projects now. We work together with all 14 municipalities in Twente to apply to and carry out these projects. This is beneficial for the municipalities and the region as a whole. In comparison to the previous programming period from 2007-2013 there has been more collaboration regarding the ESF.

- **Why did the use of the ESF change?**

Projects that require a regional approach were becoming available. Enschede as a centre municipality for Twente lobbied at the other municipalities to get them to join these projects. This has led to a more elaborate collaboration within the region of Twente.

Threats and opportunities

- **Have you perceived any changes for the municipality of Enschede as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?**

Yes, there is more collaboration within the region of Twente. The municipality of Enschede has become the centre municipality of the region of Twente, which means that we are now responsible for the ESF budget. We have taken up the leadership role within the region and have tried to get the other municipalities to join in the ESF projects, since its beneficial for the whole region.

If yes,

- **How has the use of the ESF changed for the municipality of Enschede (and the region as a whole)?**

As said before, there is more collaboration within the region. Nowadays we visit the municipalities at least twice a year. We notice that this creates more trust between the municipalities and that it is becoming more accessible. In the beginning, the contact with the municipalities was really difficult, but that has changed over the years.

- **How did this change your organisation its practices regarding the ESF?**

As municipality of Enschede, we really had to lobby at other municipality to have them all collaborate. Now we have a really good collaboration, but we had to really act on that as a centre municipality.

- **What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?**
The main opportunity or advantage is that we now work together as region and can work on regional projects that are beneficial for everyone.
- **What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?**
In the beginning it was quite hard to get the other municipalities to join. The smaller municipalities saw us a large municipality telling them what to do and how to do it. But over the years, the trust between the municipalities grew and now we have a really good relation with the municipalities.
- **Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your organisation?**
 - **Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?**
Yes, for the 2014-2020 programming period we started around three-quarters of a year before the actual programming period began. For this programming period we had to get the other municipalities on board. I can imagine that is not necessary for coming programming periods, because we now have a good collaboration going in Twente. Overall, we have become more involved in the ESF in general since we are centre municipality of the labour market region of Twente.
 - **Is there more collaboration with other municipalities within you region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?**
Yes, for this programming period we collaborate with the municipalities of Twente.
- **Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?**
As centre municipality we are responsible for the budget and the 14 municipalities of Twente. For the programming period 2014-2020 we have received €7.7 million, which makes us the seventh biggest region in the Netherlands.
- **Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?**
See above.

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- **Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your organisation its social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?**
For the region of Twente the collaboration has been beneficial and also Enschede benefitted from the increase collaboration in Twente. On the other side, it also gives more responsibilities and takes more time and administrative tasks.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

3.5. It was rather difficult during this programming period to fulfil the requirements, but it was easier than the programming periods before.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

2. It has become easier, but it is not super easy.

- **Are the ESF projects answering better to your regional needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

Yes, we have the goal that everyone should get to possibility to go work and the ESF fits well to this goal. The labour market regions and the ESF add an impulse to this goal. We also looked at what we already did and connected that to the ESF, like the integration consultants.

- **Do you collaborate with other municipalities in regard of the use of the ESF?**

Yes, with all the municipalities in the region of Twente.

- **Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other municipalities in your region as a result of the ESF?**

I do not perceive the collaboration as forced, but we decided ourselves that we wanted to work together as a region and worked hard to realise that.

- **Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?**

There is overall more collaboration within the region. In the previous programming period there barely was any collaboration.

- **How does this forced collaboration between municipalities in your region work?**

We have multiple meetings a year with the relevant people at the municipalities to discuss everything that is related to the ESF and social inclusion in the region of Twente.

- **What opportunities and threats brings the forced collaboration?**

In the beginning it was quite hard to get the other municipalities to join. The smaller municipalities saw us a large municipality telling them what to do and how to do it. But over the years, the trust between the municipalities grew and now we have a really good relation with the municipalities. But now there are no problems anymore. A lot of municipalities were sceptical, but after receiving financial resources from the ESF and having success, the enthusiasm grew within the region. For the period after 2020, I foresee no problems. However, it is also dependable on the budgets we receive and the targets groups we have to deal with.

- **Has the relationship with other municipalities changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?**

There is more trust between the different municipalities. This is also because the success of the ESF gives an extra boost to the collaboration. However, I cannot tell what will happen for the next programming period. It is likely that the target audience will increase, to add the working people as well. This can lead to a change, but time will tell.

6.3 Interview ESF – Marie-Jose Hooge Venterink (Municipality of Hengelo, Netherlands)

Introduction

- **What is your function?**

I am a subsidies and external relations advisor at the municipality of Hengelo.

- **How long have you been working for the municipality of Hengelo?**

For almost 30 years.

- **How long have you been working with the ESF?**

Also for almost 30 years.

- **What does your work with the ESF include?**

After years of submitting ESF applications for the municipality of Hengelo, supervising ESF projects and submitting interim and final reports, I am now as a subsidy advisor involved in the regional ESF project 'Social Inclusion' of the municipality of Enschede. As a subsidy advisor I am part of a sounding board and I read along and consult with the regional municipalities and actively make calculations.

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming period

- **What was the policy of the municipality of Hengelo in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

During this programming period, the budgets of the municipality of Hengelo proved to be sufficient for the reintegration activities of its beneficiaries. At the time, there was no need from the policy department of the municipality of Hengelo to deploy a complex ESF subsidy process. That was how it was experienced at the time. The implementation of the ESF was therefore also not on the agenda.

- **How did the municipality of Hengelo use the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

The municipality of Hengelo has been using the ESF since the 1980s. Hengelo made full use of the wider options that were available at that time. This was also necessary, because the unemployment figures were high in Hengelo. The situation for the 2007-2013 was very different.

- **What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?**

I applied for a regional ESF youth project in 2012. A part of that project continued in the 2014-2020 programming period, but was cancelled over time due to the lack of structural funding.

- **Did you collaborate with other municipalities in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

No, except for that one regional ESF youth project application.

- **What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

This was not relevant at the time.

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- **How does the municipality of Hengelo apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?**

With regard to the ESF social inclusion, the municipality of Hengelo is part of the regional application of the labour market region Twente. There are three subprojects within the labour market region, the first project is the deployment of work coaches for the guidance towards reintegration into the labour market. The second subproject is the deployment of consultants for learning and developing to make people fit for work. The third subprojects deals with the deployment of start-up advisors to guide starting entrepreneurs. Regarding the ESF subsidy of sustainable employability of regions and sectors, the municipality of Hengelo has submitted an application for the three social work-companies in Twente. This project is currently being carried out.

- **What projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period?**

The project regarding the ESF sustainable employment of regions and sectors was created as a result of the available ESF funding.

- **Has your Organisation changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Yes.

- o **If yes, what were the main changes?**

The need for additional financing in the form of the ESF was greater due to declining budgets. The collaboration with the other regional municipalities in Twente was supported by all municipalities. In addition, the ESF implementation rules were somewhat simplified.

- o **Why did the use of the ESF change?**

See the answer above.

Threats and opportunities

- **Have you perceived any changes for the municipality of Hengelo as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?**

Yes, there is now more collaboration between the municipalities in the region compared to the previous programming period.

If yes,

- **How has the use of the ESF changed for the municipality of Hengelo (and the region as a whole)?**

For this programming period, the applications of the ESF social inclusion and ESF sustainable employability regions and sectors are regarding regional projects for the labour market region of Twente.

- **How did this change your organisation its practices regarding the ESF?**

As mentioned above, there is more collaboration with the other municipalities in the labour market region.

- **What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?**

There is more collaboration between with all the municipalities, which is beneficial for the municipalities and the labour market region as a whole.

- **What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?**

No problems have been encountered to this date.

- **Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your organisation?**

- **Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?**

Overall there is more collaboration with the other municipalities. Every year there are multiple meetings with the subsidy advisors of the other municipalities to discuss the available subsidies for the regional labour market.

- **Is there more collaboration with other municipalities within you region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?**

Yes, see answer above.

- **Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?**

Hengelo does not have more responsibilities towards the EU and the national government. As a municipality, Hengelo tries to be as responsible as possible for the labour market region Twente.

- **Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?**

Apart from the collaboration and meetings with the other municipalities, there is not much different.

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- **Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your organisation its social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?**

No, it has not affected our municipality.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**
4. But the ESF application was not really on the agenda for Hengelo in this period.
- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?**
3. Compared to the previous period, the requirements have become easier to fulfil.
- **Are the ESF projects answering better to your regional needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?**
No, but that has never been a problem.
- **Do you collaborate with other municipalities in regard of the use of the ESF?**
Yes, with the 14 municipalities in the labour market region Twente.
- **Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other municipalities in your region as a result of the ESF?**
The collaboration with the other municipalities does not feel forced. The collaboration offers us the possibility to use the set ESF subsidy for the common regional market.
- **Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?**
Yes, in the previous programming period there was barely any collaboration between the municipalities. For this programming period all municipalities take advantage of the collaboration and the subsidy is available for the regional labour market.
- **How does this forced collaboration between municipalities in your region work?**
For this programming period all municipalities take advantage of the collaboration and the subsidy is available for the regional labour market.
- **What opportunities and threats brings the forced collaboration?**
To date, there have been no threats and the municipalities are happy with the project management of the municipality of Enschede and the extra resources that benefit the regional labour market and economy.
- **Has the relationship with other municipalities changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?**
The willingness to collaborate with other municipalities has grown as a result of the positive effects of the joint ESF implementation.

6.4 Interview ESF – Maarten Visscher (Municipality of Almelo, Netherlands)

Introduction

- **What is your function?**

Advisor subsidies at the municipality of Almelo

- **How long have you been working for the municipality of Almelo?**

I have been working at the municipality of Almelo for 15 years.

- **How long have you been working with the ESF?**

I was appointed at the municipality to clear up the mess left as a result of the problems that occurred with the ESF at the end of the 90s. I was involved in the ESF since my appointment, but nowadays it is for the municipality of Almelo not very active anymore.

- **What does your work with the ESF include?**

In the beginning I dealt with the problems that occurred due to the problems with the finances and requirements of the ESF, that caused Almelo to have some major losses. Afterwards, most of the tasks regarding the ESF have been put away to the 'Werkplein Twente' and the Twente region as a whole.

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming period

- **What was the policy of the municipality of Almelo in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

The municipality of Almelo did not do very much regarding the application and implementation of the ESF for this programming period. There were only two ESF projects that the municipality of Almelo was actively involved in.

- **How did the municipality of Almelo use the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

As mentioned before, we were only actively involved in two ESF projects. One of these projects was relevant for the whole region of Twente, this was the regional project. The other projects was a smaller projects just for the municipality of Almelo.

- **What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?**

One of the ESF projects was a regional project that we were involved in. This project dealt with the re-integration of people in the region of Twente that are jobless or on benefits to get them back to work. The other project was the sustainable employability project and we as Almelo applied for that project ourselves. This was for a relatively small amount and eventually due to several perils within the organisation, that project could not be realised anymore.

- **Did you collaborate with other municipalities in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

We had agreements in the region of Twente. Furthermore, we were not very active in regard to the ESF. We only applied for one project and we did so individually.

- **What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Especially for the period after 2000, there has been a lot of administrative work. In the beginning we were still dealing with the problems we had from the previous programming period. This also made the municipality of Almelo very wary when it came to the ESF and therefore we did not do much with the ESF.

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- **How does the municipality of Almelo apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?**

For this programming period, 'Werkplein Twente' is the central ESF point and the place to go to, also regarding employment initiatives. An individual municipality such as Almelo does not necessarily interfere with that. The integration of people towards job is all put at the 'Werkplein Twente'. If municipalities indicate that there is a need for an ESF project, this organisation then acts upon that. The municipalities of Enschede and Hengelo closely cooperate on that point, have combined knowledge and make the ESF accessible for the whole region. Every now and then we have a meeting with all subsidy coordinators of all municipalities in Twente where we discuss the application of the ESF. Enschede as a centre municipality coordinates the regional ESF applications.

- **What projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period?**

For the 2014-2020 programming period there is the regional project to integrate and mediate job seekers into the regional labour market together with fitting training and education.

- **Has your Organisation changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period?**

No, not really.

- o **If yes, what were the main changes?**

For the municipality of Almelo not much changed. We did not do much with the ESF and for this programming period a lot regarding the ESF is delegated towards regional organisations.

- o **Why did the use of the ESF change?**

Not applicable.

Threats and opportunities

- **Have you perceived any changes for the municipality of Almelo as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?**

Only that there is more of a so-called consult structure. The municipality of Almelo is not very active in this consult structure, but it is on the agenda and everyone involved in the ESF in Twente knows where to find each other.

If yes,

- **How has the use of the ESF changed for the municipality of Almelo (and the region as a whole)?**

It has not changed for the municipality of Almelo. We did not do much with the ESF and for this programming period a lot regarding the ESF is delegated towards regional organisations.

- **How did this change your organisation its practices regarding the ESF?**

See the above answers.

- **What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?**

One of the opportunities is that the knowledge of the different municipalities in Twente is combined. Especially the municipalities of Enschede and Hengelo have a lot of knowledge and experience regarding the ESF, this is now shared with the rest of the Twente region.

- **What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?**

The municipality of Almelo remains wary when it comes to the ESF as a result of past experiences in previous programming periods. Nowadays there are still many administrative tasks that you need to fulfil for an ESF project.

- **Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your organisation?**

- **Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?**

No, we did not. More ESF related tasks are delegated to regional organisation that represent the region of Twente in collaboration with Enschede and Hengelo.

- **Is there more collaboration with other municipalities within you region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?**

There are more meetings with the subsidy coordinators of other municipalities and everyone knows where to find one another. That is also because there are more regional projects for the 2014-2020 programming period.

- **Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?**

No, as mentioned before, more tasks are delegated and the municipality of Almelo is not actively involved.

- **Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?**

No, not for the municipality of Almelo.

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- **Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your organisation its social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?**

There are currently regional labour markets, of which Twente is one. This had led to more combined knowledge within the region and between the municipalities. There are also more consultations between the subsidy coordinators. Furthermore, not much did change for the municipality of Almelo since we did not do much with the ESF and it is now regionalised in organisations.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

4. Due to the large amounts Almelo had to pay back for the use of the ESF in previous programming periods, the municipality was wary for the 2007-2013 programming period.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

Also a 4. As a municipality you take a rather big risk when you use the ESF. ESF projects require you to create a large administrative organisation that allows you to deal with these projects. For a relatively small amount of subsidy, you have to take a large risk.

- **Are the ESF projects answering better to your regional needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

Not necessarily better. We have a regional labour market and the Regio Twente is really up to date regarding what is most needed for the region. Werkplein Twente has a few local branches that make it easier to know what is going on in the region.

- **Do you collaborate with other municipalities in regard of the use of the ESF?**

As mentioned before, we consult each other and apply for regional projects in Twente with the help of regional organisations.

- **Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other municipalities in your region as a result of the ESF?**

No, it does not feel forced. If you want you can get in contact with other municipalities regarding the ESF.

- **Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?**

There are more consultations and everyone knows what is going on in the region. It is also easier to get in touch with other subsidy coordinators.

- **How does this forced collaboration between municipalities in your region work?**

As mentioned above.

- **What opportunities and threats brings the forced collaboration?**

Municipalities can benefit from the combined knowledge and experiences from other municipalities that might have more experience in regard to the ESF. This can be beneficial for the whole region of Twente.

- **Has the relationship with other municipalities changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?**

As mentioned earlier, there is more of a consultation structure within the region of Twente.

6.5 Interview ESF – Paul Goudberg (Municipality of Hellendoorn, Netherlands)

Introduction

- **What is your function?**

Consultant for External Relations, Lobby and Subsidies at the municipality of Hellendoorn.

- **How long have you been working for the municipality of Hellendoorn?**

For around 20 years.

- **How long have you been working with the ESF?**

10 years.

- **What does your work with the ESF include?**

I am involved in the application of the ESF for the municipality of Hellendoorn and I am also present at the regional consultants with the other municipalities in Twente regarding the ESF and other subsidies.

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming period

- **What was the policy of the municipality of Hellendoorn in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

The municipality of Hellendoorn operated in a group with the other municipalities in Twente. For the 2007-2013 programming period the municipalities of Enschede and Hengelo were the leading municipalities in regard to the application of the ESF.

- **How did the municipality of Hellendoorn use the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

The municipality of Hellendoorn used the ESF for some social projects in the municipality.

- **What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?**

We worked on some ESF projects, but I cannot name a specific project.

- **Did you collaborate with other municipalities in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Yes, we collaborated with the other municipalities in Twente.

- **What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

The administrative burden that accompanied the ESF application and implementation was very high for the municipality of Hellendoorn and of a high level.

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- **How does the municipality of Hellendoorn apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?**

For this programming period there is a leading role for the larger municipalities such as Enschede and Hengelo. If there is an interesting project, the municipality of Hellendoorn can decide to join the interested municipalities on that project.

- **What projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period?**

We have some ESF projects. One of the projects is regarding the labour market region of Twente in cooperation with the other municipalities.

- **Has your Organisation changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period?**

For the municipality of Hellendoorn, the use of the ESF largely remained the same. Colleagues kept the ESF preferably a bit further away, because of the large administrative burden. There was an exception for the smaller projects, which have less administrative tasks.

○ **If yes, what were the main changes?**

The subsidy coordinators of the municipalities of Enschede, Hengelo and Almelo came more often together within the Regio Twente organisation, which led to more municipalities joining in. Nowadays there are multiple meetings with all the subsidy coordinators of all 14 municipalities in Twente.

○ **Why did the use of the ESF change?**

The value of the ESF was recognised by some municipalities, together with the collaboration between the municipalities in Twente.

Threats and opportunities

- **Have you perceived any changes for the municipality of Hellendoorn as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?**

Yes, the collaboration between the municipalities in Twente has become more intensive.

If yes,

○ **How has the use of the ESF changed for the municipality of Hellendoorn (and the region as a whole)?**

The municipality of Hellendoorn can decide if they join an ESF-project. If a project is of less relevance for Hellendoorn, they can decide to not join the other municipalities that are interested.

○ **How did this change your organisation its practices regarding the ESF?**

There is more collaboration with the other municipalities regarding the use of the ESF. The collaboration gives smaller municipalities the opportunity to join projects that were initially not possible due to the large administrative burdens.

○ **What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?**

There are more possibilities to join projects, provided that the administrative burden for Hellendoorn is not too large. Hellendoorn likes to join, but prefers to leave the administration to the larger municipalities.

- **What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?**

The municipality of Hellendoorn sometimes has different interests and problems they have to deal with compared to other larger municipalities. This can lead to conflicts of interest between the municipalities.

- **Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your organisation?**

Yes, the increased intensive collaboration has led the organisation of Hellendoorn to become more focused when it comes to the use of the ESF.

- **Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?**

No, not necessarily. Due to past troubles with the ESF regarding the requirements and the payment, the municipality of Hellendoorn still has some distrust in the ESF. It therefore prefers to remain rather timid when it comes to the preparation stage.

- **Is there more collaboration with other municipalities within your region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?**

Yes, and it has become more intensive.

- **Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?**

No, Hellendoorn mainly follows the leading municipalities in Twente and basically just has to check the box. The larger municipalities such as Enschede have been more leading when it comes to the ESF.

- **Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?**

Not for the municipality of Hellendoorn.

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- **Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your organisation its social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?**

Hellendoorn can choose what ESF projects they want to join and execute. For a smaller municipality such as Hellendoorn, it is not possible to join all ESF projects. The municipality has to make choices as to what projects they want to carry out.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

3. It was not necessarily easy. However, it was not as bad as the previous programming period.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?**
3. There is not much change. But I am less familiar with the requirements for this period.
- **Are the ESF projects answering better to your regional needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?**
We as a municipality can choose what projects to join. This is not directly different comparing the previous period.
- **Do you collaborate with other municipalities in regard of the use of the ESF?**
Yes, with the other municipalities in Twente.
- **Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other municipalities in your region as a result of the ESF?**
No, I do not perceive the collaboration as forced. If a project takes too much time or costs too much money, the municipality is not obliged to join. Due to the coronavirus, this can occur more often in the foreseeable future, since the organisation and the financial resources are under pressure.
- **Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?**
Yes, the collaboration is more intensive with the other municipalities and also works better.
- **How does this forced collaboration between cities in your region work?**
We have regional meetings with the different subsidy coordinators to discuss the use of the ESF among other things.
- **What opportunities and threats brings the forced collaboration?**
Not every municipality has the same interests and problems they have to deal with. This can lead to a conflict of interest between municipalities.
- **Has the relationship with other municipalities changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?**
Yes, the collaboration with the other municipalities seems to be working better since the previous programming period. Successfully finishing projects also makes it easier to collaborate.

6.6 Interview ESF – Annerose Pott (Steinfurt District, Germany)

Introduction

- **What is your function?**

I am currently the director of the Europe Direct Information Centre in the . I am also contact person for external advise and training programs that are financed from the ESF. From 1990 to 2004 I was the head of the regional secretariat of the for the implementation of the regionalised labour market policy of Nordrhein-Westfalen. This regionalised labour market policy was also financed from the ESF.

- **How long have you been working for the Steinfurt district?**

I have been working at the Steinfurt district since 1988.

- **How long have you been working with the ESF?**

Since 1990.

- **What does your work with the ESF include?**

I mainly consult about the use of ESF funding within the Steinfurt district.

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming period

- **What was the policy of the Steinfurt district in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Until 2004, the regional labour market policy in Nordrhein-Westfalen was implemented at the district level. After that, so for the 2007-2013 period, the labour market policy was implemented through regional agencies across larger regions such as the Münsterland. Within the Münsterland area, programs such as the consultation programming were mainly implemented for the promotion of the economy in the individual districts.

- **How did the Steinfurt district use the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Steinfurt used the ESF for funding different programmes in order to develop the economy within the district.

- **What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Within the Steinfurt district the programme regarding potential advise was implemented and funded by the ESF. There were also projects under the EQUAL initiative in order to tackle discrimination and disadvantage in the labour market region of Nordrhein-Westfalen.

- **Did you collaborate with other districts in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

The ESF application went via the district government. Besides, Regionalagentur Münsterland is responsible for strengthening the labour market in the Münsterland region by supporting the

employees, employers and job seekers. Regional agencies such as the Regionalagentur Münsterland inform districts and regions about the projects and direction of the ESF policy of the Bundesland.

- **What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

The overall ESF application is based on the Operational Programme of Germany and Operational Programme of the Bundesland. For Nordrhein-Westfalen, this was done by the Ministry of Labour of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Steinfurt had not much to do with this. It is more of a Bundesland direction that we follow. However, this can lead to a mismatch in priorities between the Bundesland and the individual districts.

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- **How does the Steinfurt district apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?**

There are only a few regional labour projects left that run via the ESF. There is the so-called Society for Innovative Employment Promotion (GIB) that supports the government of Nordrhein-Westfalen in the battle against unemployment and poverty. The organisation functions as an organisation operating between the Bundesland of Nordrhein-Westfalen and the region of Münster. Regional decisionmakers are supported by this organisation in the application for projects, including ESF projects.

- **What projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period?**

There are three projects for development: the potential advise, the educational check and the educational bonus. With the potential advise, employees and companies are supported to be flexible and keep developing. The educational check and bonus are aimed at people that follow new education for the integration into the labour market.

- **Has your Organisation changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period?**

No, there has not been a change in the way Steinfurt uses the ESF.

- **If yes, what where the main changes?**
- **Why did the use of the ESF change?**

This question is more for the Regionalagentur Münsterland, since the ESF is more regional.

Threats and opportunities

- **Have you perceived any changes for the Steinfurt district as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?**

Yes.

If yes,

- **How has the use of the ESF changed for the Steinfurt district (and the region as a whole)?**

There is more support from regional agencies regarding the implementation of ESF projects in Steinfurt.

- **How did this change your organisation its practices regarding the ESF?**

We were able to do more with the ESF projects, because we were guided and supported by organisations such as the Regionalagentur Münsterland.

- **What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?**

We had more combined knowledge that helped us for the implementation of ESF projects.

- **What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?**

There were not really much problems for us regarding this.

- **Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your organisation?**

- **Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?**

No, Steinfurt did not become more involved in the preparation.

- **Is there more collaboration with other districts within you region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?**

Yes, there is more collaboration with the other districts in the Münsterland region.

- **Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?**

We have less responsibilities regarding the ESF, since the ESF goes more via the Bundesland of Nordrhein-Westfalen and the regional organisations within the Bundesland. There are more actors before it goes to the district level.

- **Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?**

Yes, decisions regarding the ESF happen almost exclusively at the state level (Bundesland). The region is hardly included in the decision of individual projects.

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- **Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your organisation its social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?**

Yes. We follow the direction of the Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen regarding social policies and get support from regional agencies such as the Regionalagentur Münsterland regarding

the ESF and social policies. They keep us informed about the direction of the ESF of the Bundesland and help with the implementation of ESF projects.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

4. The ESF has been useful, but the requirements were not very easy.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

3. As far as regulations allow, the implementation of the ESF can lead to problems. However, misuse must always be excluded.

- **Are the ESF projects answering better to your regional needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

It is for this programming period not better. It is comparable to the previous programming period.

- **Do you collaborate with other districts in regard of the use of the ESF?**

Yes. With the districts in the region of Münster

- **Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other districts in your region as a result of the ESF?**

No, the collaboration does not feel forced. It is voluntary and with pleasure.

- **Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?**

There is more collaboration between the districts within the Münsterland region. However, the collaboration also depends on the type of ESF project. For every different ESF projects, different districts are involved, making the collaboration distinct for every project.

- **How does this forced collaboration between districts in your region work?**

Collaborating with the other districts in the Münsterland region is very useful, since the districts are able to divide tasks and costs. Therefore it is very useful and brings added value for everyone that is involved in the collaboration.

- **What opportunities and threats brings the forced collaboration?**

ESF projects have a lot of administrative work that comes with them. Working together with other districts regarding ESF projects ensures that the administration can be divided between the collaborating districts. This makes it easier to join projects and successfully implement them in the districts.

- **Has the relationship with other districts changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?**

The collaboration always depends on the people you work with. However, for us there is overall a clear improvement in the collaboration for this programming period.

6.7 Interview ESF – Julie Roesler (Regional Agency Münsterland, Germany)

Introduction

- **What is your function?**

I am the head of the regional agency Münsterland.

- **How long have you been working for the Regionalagentur Münsterland?**

I have been working here for 11 years.

- **How long have you been working with the ESF?**

In total I have been working with the ESF for 20 years. This includes previous jobs.

- **What does your work with the ESF include?**

The implementation of labour policy programs from the ministry of Labour in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Additionally, providing information, networking and supporting funding calls in the region of Münster.

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming period

- **What was the policy of the Regionalagentur Münsterland in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

In regard to the implementation of the ESF. We tried to make the best use of the ESF for people and businesses in the region of Münsterland. Applications for the ESF are made to the district government of Münster.

- **How did the Regionalagentur Münsterland use the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

See above. We used the ESF to support the regional actors in Münsterland. We implemented the programs of the ministry of Labour for the relevant target groups in the region. When needed, developed a good structure with comprehensive high-quality offers for the entire region of Münsterland. Furthermore, the ESF is used for the personnel and material costs of the regional agency via the technical assistance theme of the ESF.

- **What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Regarding the ESF, we offered several activities to support the actors in Münsterland. We gave advice, helped organisations with their public relations, held specialist events and strategy meetings and held round table meetings.

- **Did you collaborate with other districts in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Yes. Our job is to implement the ESF programs in the region. Since the Münsterland region consists of four districts and one city, we generally work with the five local authorities in

separate committees. All project decisions require a common vote by everyone, even if a project is only to be implemented in parts of the region such as an individual district.

- **What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

One of the challenges was that everyone had to vote regarding all project decisions. This meant that sometimes a district had to vote for a project that was not relevant for them. This was sometimes tricky. Besides that, districts mainly have to follow the direction of the Bundesland, which means that projects were not always relevant for them.

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- **How does the Regionalagentur Münsterland apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?**

The Regionalagentur does not apply for ESF funding itself. Our organisation supports all players in the region on important topics such as further training, securing skilled workers and digitalisation. We support all players in the region via the earlier mentioned advise, specialist events, strategy meetings and round table meetings.

- **What projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period?**

We do not have our own projects, but we support the implementation of ESF projects in the region of Münsterland on behalf of the Ministry of Labour from the Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen.

- **Has your Organisation changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Yes.

- **If yes, what were the main changes?**

In the current programming period, there is more thematic focus on topics such as securing skilled workers and digitalisation than before. In 2014-2020 there is also a greater focus on companies and their employees regarding the skilled workers and digitalisation. The impact of the topics and their impact on employment and further training were also more dealt with in this programming period.

- **Why did the use of the ESF change?**

The use of the ESF changed, because the challenges regarding the society and the labour market are also constantly changing.

Threats and opportunities

- **Have you perceived any changes for the Regionalagentur Münsterland as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?**

Yes.

If yes,

- **How has the use of the ESF changed for the Regionalagentur Münsterland (and the region as a whole)?**

There is a more regionalised focus as a result of the ESF. Therefore, we cooperate with the four districts in the Münsterland region and this cooperation has become stricter and better. The use of the ESF changes together with the societal challenges that are present in the EU and Münsterland.

- **How did this change your organisation its practices regarding the ESF?**

More cooperation with the regional actors to improve the whole region of Münsterland.

- **What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?**

Cooperation between the districts makes it easier to implement the ESF projects that are being brought forward to the districts. As Regionalagentur, we can support them with the implementation.

- **What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?**

The direction of the ESF is still more connected to the policy and strategy of the Bundesland. Since every Bundesland has multiple regions, there can be a difference in challenges and interest between the regions within a Bundesland.

- **Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your organisation?**

- **Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?**

No, not more involved in the preparation. We are very involved within the region and support the actors in Münsterland regarding ESF projects.

- **Is there more collaboration with other districts within you region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?**

Yes, with the four districts and the one city within Münsterland.

- **Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?**

Yes, we have more responsibilities towards the regional districts in Münsterland. We support these districts with the implementation of the ESF. Our tasks are constantly changing and we have to support, monitor and analyse the districts and the region as a whole.

- **Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?**

As mentioned before, we have more responsibilities.

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- **Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your organisation its social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?**
Yes, we have dealt particularly intensively with the needs and challenges of our region and have agreed on common priorities and strategies such as an action plan to secure skilled workers.
- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**
3. Not very hard, but not very easy either.
- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?**
3. It has not changed much.
- **Are the ESF projects answering better to your regional needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?**
Neutral. About the same for the previous programming period.
- **Do you collaborate with other districts in regard of the use of the ESF?**
Yes, with the districts in the Münsterland region.
- **Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other districts in your region as a result of the ESF?**
Yes. There are more tasks for the Regionalagentur regarding the cooperation within the region of Münsterland.
- **Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?**
Yes, there is more understanding of the region in the cooperation for this programming period.
- **How does this forced collaboration between districts in your region work?**
Collaboration mainly takes place within the region of Münsterland and its four districts and one city. We have regular meetings with all actors in different committees.
- **What opportunities and threats brings the forced collaboration?**
More cooperation is beneficial for the region of Münsterland. Especially since there is more understanding of the region and the role of the ESF regarding that.
- **Has the relationship with other districts changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?**
Yes, the cooperation is more strict and is working better than the previous programming period.

6.8 Combined Interview Results Netherlands

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming period

- **What was your municipality its policy in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Enschede: Not really involved with the ESF, collaborated a little bit with the municipality of Hengelo.

Hengelo: The budget was sufficient, but there was not a large ESF subsidy complex installed. The implementation of the ESF was not really on the agenda.

Almelo: The municipality of Almelo did not do much with the ESF, there were only two projects that they were involved in.

Hellendoorn: Operated in a group regarding the ESF, Enschede and Hengelo were leading municipalities during the 2007-2013 programming period.

- **How did your municipality use the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Enschede: Worked a little bit with Hengelo, since they had more experience with the ESF.

Hengelo: Not much. However, during previous programming periods Hengelo made full use of the ESF.

Almelo: Did only use the ESF for two projects, of which one was regional and one was local.

Hellendoorn: The municipality of Hellendoorn used the ESF for some social projects in the municipality.

- **What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Enschede: One project was the 1000 youth plan to help young people find a job. Also carried out integration projects with Hengelo during this programming period.

Hengelo: Applied for a regional youth project set up by the province of Overijssel.

Almelo: Was actively involved in a regional project regarding (re)integration of people in Twente.

Hellendoorn: Unable to name a specific project.

- **Did you collaborate with other municipalities in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Enschede: Yes, but only with the municipality of Hengelo. Not as region of Twente as a whole.

Hengelo: No, except for the regional youth project.

Almelo: Not really collaboration, but there were agreements with the municipalities.

Hellendoorn: Yes, with municipalities in Twente.

- **What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Enschede: Bad experiences in the past, because of strict requirements.

Hengelo: Because of the little use, there were no major challenges for Hengelo.

Almelo: The use of the ESF is accompanied by a lot of administrative work. There was also distrust because of previous experiences.

Hellendoorn: The administrative burden that comes with the ESF was very high and of a high level.

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- **How does your municipality apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?**

Enschede: Lobbied at the other municipalities to notify them about upcoming regional ESF projects.

Hengelo: Hengelo is part of the regional application of the labour market region Twente. Enschede is the centre municipality that is responsible for the application and finances.

Almelo: There is a central ESF point to go to. Enschede and Hengelo also cooperate, combine knowledge and make ESF accessible for the rest of the region.

Hellendoorn: There is a leading role for the larger municipalities, if interested Hellendoorn can join.

- **What projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period?**

Enschede: Subsidised integration consultants that guide people to work. Financial resources also used for compensating municipalities for administrative work.

Hengelo: A project regarding the sustainable employability of regions and sectors in Twente.

Almelo: There is a regional project to integrate and mediate job seekers into the region labour market.

Hellendoorn: There are a few projects. One of the projects is regarding the labour market region of Twente.

- **Has your Organisation changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period?**
 - o **If yes, what were the main changes?**
 - o **Why did the use of the ESF change?**

Enschede: Yes, there are more regional ESF projects now on which we collaborate more with the other municipalities in Twente. This is the result of more regional projects becoming available for Twente.

Hengelo: Yes, the need for additional ESF financing was greater. The collaboration with other municipalities was supported by all municipalities. The ESF implementation rules were also simplified.

Almelo: For Almelo not much changed. They were not very active with the ESF and the ESF is now more delegated to regional organisations.

Hellendoorn: The ESF use largely remained the same. Although, because of the recognition of the ESF value there are more regional projects and meetings with the municipalities in Twente for the 2014-2020 programming period.

Threats and opportunities

- **Have you perceived any changes for your municipality as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?**
 - **If yes, how has the use of the ESF changed for your municipality (and the region)?**
 - **How did this change your organisation its practices regarding the ESF?**
 - **What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?**
 - **What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?**

Enschede: There are regular visits to the other municipalities and there is more trust between the different municipalities. Enschede had to lobby in order to get every municipality to join the collaboration. This was quite hard in the beginning, but now leads to a better collaboration.

Hengelo: There is more collaboration compared to the previous programming period. For this programming period, the ESF regards regional projects which leads to more collaboration. No problems have been encountered to this date.

Almelo: There is more of a consult structure in Twente. This has not changed much, since Almelo is not very active in this structure. Nevertheless, this structure offers the possibility to get easier in touch with the relevant people and there is more combined knowledge. However, there are still many administrative tasks regarding ESF projects.

Hellendoorn: Yes, the collaboration with municipalities in Twente is more intensive. The regional approach makes it possible for smaller municipalities to join projects that were initially not possible due to large administrative tasks. However, sometimes there is a difference in interest and problems between municipalities.

- **Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your organisation?**
 - **Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?**

- **Is there more collaboration with other municipalities within your region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?**

Enschede: For this programming period, Enschede got more involved and started the preparations for the ESF for 2014-2020 early. This led to more collaboration between the 14 municipalities.

Hengelo: Overall there is more collaboration with the other municipalities. Hengelo always joins the meetings to discuss the available subsidies for Twente.

Almelo: Almelo did not become more involved in the preparation of the ESF. Although there are more meetings with the subsidy coordinators from other municipalities in Twente.

Hellendoorn: Yes, the increased collaboration has led to Hellendoorn becoming more focused regarding the use of the ESF. Hellendoorn did not become more involved in the ESF preparation.

- **Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?**

Enschede: As centre municipality, Enschede is responsible for the budget and the ESF for the 14 municipalities in Twente.

Hengelo: Not towards the EU and national. Hengelo tries to be as responsible as possible for Twente.

Almelo: No, Almelo is not actively involved while tasks are delegated to others.

Hellendoorn: No, Hellendoorn mainly follows the leading municipalities.

- **Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?**

Enschede: As centre municipality, Enschede is for this programming period responsible for the budget and the ESF for the 14 municipalities in Twente.

Hengelo: Apart from the collaboration and meetings with other municipalities, not much is different.

Almelo: Not for the municipality of Almelo.

Hellendoorn: Not for the municipality of Hellendoorn

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- **Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your organisation its social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?**

Enschede: It has been beneficial for Enschede and the whole region of Twente. Both Enschede and the whole region benefitted from the increased collaboration in Twente.

Hengelo: No, it has not affected the municipality of Hengelo specifically.

Almelo: There is more combined knowledge within the region and municipalities, together with more consultations. Furthermore, not much changed for Almelo.

Hellendoorn: Has to choose what ESF projects to join, since it is not possible to join all ESF projects.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Enschede: 3.5. It was rather difficult during this programming period, but easier than earlier periods.

Hengelo: 4. But the ESF application was not really on the agenda for Hengelo.

Almelo: 4. Due to the large amounts Almelo had to pay back, the municipality was wary this period.

Hellendoorn: 3. Not necessarily easy, but also not as hard as previous programming periods.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

Enschede: 2. It has become easier, but still not super easy.

Hengelo: 3. Compared to the previous period the requirements have become easier to fulfil.

Almelo: 4. As a municipality you take a rather big risk for a relatively small amount when using the ESF.

Hellendoorn: 3. Not much has changed in this regard compared to the 2007-2013 programming period.

- **Are the ESF projects answering better to your regional needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

Enschede: Yes, ESF projects fit to the goals of Twente. Also the other way around, things that were already done were also connected to the ESF.

Hengelo: No, but that has never been a problem for Hengelo.

Almelo: Not necessarily better. Regio Twente is really up to date regarding what is most needed for the whole region.

Hellendoorn: Not directly different comparing to the previous programming period. Hellendoorn can choose what projects to join.

- **Do you collaborate with other municipalities in regard of the use of the ESF?**

Enschede: Yes, the 14 municipalities in Twente collaborate together.

Hengelo: Yes, with the 14 municipalities in the labour market region Twente.

Almelo: There is consult and regional applications with the municipalities in Twente.

Hellendoorn: Yes, with the other municipalities in Twente.

- **Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other municipalities in your region as a result of the ESF?**

Enschede: No, not forced. Own decision to collaborate together and to realise a good collaboration.

Hengelo: It does not feel forced. It offers the possibility to the ESF for the common regional market.

Almelo: No, if you want you can get in contact with other municipalities regarding the ESF.

Hellendoorn: No, it is not forced. If a project takes too much time or costs too much money, the municipality is not obliged to join.

- **Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?**

Enschede: There is more collaboration in general. In the 2007-2013 programming period there was barely any regional collaboration.

Hengelo: Yes, in the previous programming period there was not much collaboration. For this programming period the municipalities collaborate and benefit from the available regional subsidy.

Almelo: For this programming period there is more of a consult structure within the region of Twente.

Hellendoorn: Yes, the collaboration is more intensive with the other municipalities and also works better.

- **How does this forced collaboration between municipalities in your region work?**

Enschede: There are multiple meetings a year with all the relevant people to discuss things related to the ESF.

Hengelo: For this programming period all municipalities take advantage of the collaboration and the subsidy is available for the regional labour market.

Almelo: More consultations and meetings with other subsidy coordinators.

Hellendoorn: There are regional meetings with the different subsidy coordinators to discuss the use of the ESF.

- **What opportunities and threats brings the forced collaboration?**

Enschede: In the beginning it was hard to get everyone to join, but over the years the trust grew. For now don't foresee any problems.

Hengelo: There have been no threats to date and the municipalities are happy with the project management of the municipality of Enschede.

Almelo: Municipalities can benefit from combined knowledge and previous ESF experiences of others.

Hellendoorn: Not every municipality has the same interests and problems they have to deal with.

- **Has the relationship with other municipalities changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?**

Enschede: There is more trust between the municipalities in Twente.

Hengelo: The willingness to collaborate with other municipalities has grown as a result of positive effects of the joint ESF implementation.

Almelo: There is more of a consultation structure within the region of Twente.

Hellendoorn: The collaboration with the other municipalities seems to be working better since the previous programming period.

6.9 Combined Interview Results Germany

Use of the ESF during the 2007-2013 Programming period

- **What was your district its policy in regard to the application and implementation of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Steinfurt: Labour market policy was implemented through regional agencies.

Münsterland: The Regionalagentur Münsterland tried to make the best use of the ESF for people and businesses in the Münsterland region.

- **How did your district use the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Steinfurt: Used the ESF for funding programmes to develop the economy within the district.

Münsterland: Used the ESF to support regional actors. Implemented programs for relevant target groups in the Münsterland region.

- **What types of activities did you perform with the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Steinfurt: A programme regarding potential advise/consultancy for start-ups and projects under the EQUAL initiative in order to tackle discrimination and disadvantage in the labour market.

Münsterland: The Regionalagentur offered advise, helped with public relations and held specialist event and strategy meetings regarding the ESF.

- **Did you collaborate with other districts in the region for the application of the ESF in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Steinfurt: Not with other districts. The application went via the district government of the Münster region and the Regionalagentur Münsterland supported.

Münsterland: Yes. The Regionalagentur worked on the implementation of ESF programmes in Münsterland. As the region consists of four districts and one city, the Regionalagentur collaborated with them.

- **What were the major challenges for applying for the ESF that you had to deal with in the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Steinfurt: The application for projects were done at the district government of the Münster region, Steinfurt had not much to do with this. The projects mainly follow the direction of Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Münsterland: The main challenge was that every district had to vote regarding all decisions, even the ones they were not involved in.

Use of the ESF during the 2014-2020 Programming period

- **How does your district apply for the ESF regarding the current programming period of 2014-2020?**

Steinfurt: Regional agencies inform about the upcoming ESF projects and the ESF direction of the Nordrhein-Westfalen Bundesland. Regional decisionmakers are supported by these organisations.

Münsterland: The Münsterland organisation does not apply for ESF funding itself. However, it supports regional actors that do.

- **What projects do you have under the ESF for this programming period?**

Steinfurt: Three projects; potential advise/consultancy, educational check, and educational bonus.

Münsterland: We support with the implementation of ESF projects in the region of Münsterland.

- **Has your Organisation changed its way of using the ESF during the current programming period of 2014-2020 in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period?**
 - o **If yes, what were the main changes?**
 - o **Why did the use of the ESF change?**

Steinfurt: No, it has remained the same for Steinfurt. ESF remains more regional than district level.

Münsterland: Yes. The use of the ESF changed, since the regional challenges regarding the labour market and society constantly change.

Threats and opportunities

- **Have you perceived any changes for your district as a result of the regionalisation of the ESF?**
 - o **If yes, how has the use of the ESF changed for your district (and the region)**
 - o **How did this change your organisation its practices regarding the ESF?**
 - o **What are the opportunities that arose as a result of this change?**
 - o **What are the problems that you encountered as a result of this change?**

Steinfurt: Yes. More support from regional agencies such as Regionalagentur Münsterland in the form of guidance and information regarding ESF projects and the implementation of the projects. This gave the possibility to do more with the ESF projects.

Münsterland: Yes. The focus is more regionalised and therefore the cooperation with the four districts and the city in the Münsterland region got stricter and better. Nevertheless, the

Bundesland mainly decides the ESF direction for this programming period. This can make ESF projects less relevant for specific regions.

- **Has the compulsory partnership principle of the ESF caused any changes for your organisation?**
 - **Did you become more involved in the preparation of the ESF?**
 - **Is there more collaboration with other districts within your region regarding the ESF as a result of the implementation of this principle?**

Steinfurt: No. Steinfurt did not become more involved in the preparation. However, there is more collaboration with other districts in the Münsterland region.

Münsterland: Not more involved in preparation. Yes, with the local actors in the Münsterland region.

- **Do you have more ESF responsibilities towards the EU, National and Regional governments regarding the use of the ESF?**

Steinfurt: No. Steinfurt has less responsibilities, since the ESF mainly goes via the Bundesland and the regional agencies.

Münsterland: Yes, towards the regional districts since Regionalagentur Münsterland supports them.

- **Is there a difference between the previous and the current programming period regarding the ESF responsibilities?**

Steinfurt: ESF decisions happen almost exclusively at the Bundesland level. The region is hardly included in the decision of individual projects.

Münsterland: More responsibilities.

Beneficial or disadvantageous

- **Has the regionalised focus of the ESF affected your organisation its social policies? (Beneficial/obstruct) How?**

Steinfurt: Yes. Steinfurt follows the direction of Nordrhein-Westfalen regarding social policies and get support from regional agencies regarding the ESF and social policies.

Münsterland: Yes. Dealt intensively with needs and challenges of the Münster region.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2007-2013 programming period?**

Steinfurt: 4. ESF has been useful, but requirements were not easy.

Münsterland: 3. Not very hard, but not very easy either.

- **On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to fulfil the project requirements of the ESF for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

Steinfurt: 3. The implementation of ESF can still lead to problems.

Münsterland: 3. It has not changed much.

- **Are the ESF projects answering better to your regional needs for the 2014-2020 programming period?**

Steinfurt: Not better. Comparable to the previous programming period.

Münsterland: Neutral. About the same for the previous programming period.

- **Do you collaborate with other districts in regard of the use of the ESF?**

Steinfurt: Yes. Within the Münsterland region.

Münsterland: Yes. With the local districts in the Münsterland region.

- **Do you perceive a forced collaboration with other districts in your region as a result of the ESF?**

Steinfurt: It does not feel forced. It is voluntary and with pleasure.

Münsterland: Yes. The Regionalagentur has more tasks regarding the cooperation within the region.

- **Is the collaboration different from the last programming period? How?**

Steinfurt: There is more collaboration overall. However, it does depend on the type of ESF project. For different projects the collaboration can be with different districts.

Münsterland: There is more understanding of the region in the cooperation for this period.

- **How does this forced collaboration between districts in your region work?**

Steinfurt: It is very useful, since districts are able to divide tasks and costs regarding ESF projects.

Münsterland: It mainly takes place within the Münsterland region and there are regular meetings.

- **What opportunities and threats brings the forced collaboration?**

Steinfurt: Tasks and costs can be divided, which makes it easier to join projects and successfully implement them in the district.

Münsterland: Since there is more understanding of the region, the cooperation has become more beneficial for the region as a whole.

- **Has the relationship with other districts changed within your region as a result of the forced collaborations?**

Steinfurt: Collaboration depends on the people you work with. However, there is an overall improvement in the collaboration for this programming period.

Münsterland: Yes. The cooperation is more strict and works better than in the previous period.

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