



Niedersachsen

Amt für regionale Landesentwicklung
Lüneburg

The RUMORE Project:

Rural-Urban Partnerships Motivating Regional Economies

Action Plan for the Transition Region Lüneburg

To be implemented and monitored from January 2020 – December 2021

RUMORE 
Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

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1. Introduction

1.1. The RUMORE Project and general information

The overall objective of RUMORE is to improve policies in the field of regional innovation strategies by facilitating rural-urban cooperation and partnerships. Huge potentials for growth and job creation remain unused, because urban – often more innovative – cores and surrounding rural parts are not well linked in terms of innovation chains, hence exhibiting a gap for joint innovation policy and effects for regional development.

Funding opportunities and regional innovation strategies are often too focused on cities, thus ignoring the stakeholders (e.g. R+D institutions, innovative enterprises) in the rural and peripheral areas who then cannot unfold their full spectrum and chances. RUMORE tackles this shortcoming and enhances the delivery of innovation in regional innovation chains via improved ruralurban partnerships. The partnership consists of eight partners from five countries with a mix of regional authorities, one advisory Lead Partner and a business development agency.

RUMORE compiled the few approaches of how to design and setup policy instruments for integrated urbanrural development in innovation policies. Partners shared good practices in an interregional learning and peer review process through learning events designed as living labs. Good practices were subsequently transferred and adapted to the specific contexts. The progress of improvement of each policy instrument was continuously discussed and recurring working groups and discussions on overarching level produced results and benefit.

The action plan of the RUMORE Interreg-Europe project is a means to implement the results of phase 1 into phase 2. It was developed as a result of the exchange in the project partnership and the intensive work with regional stakeholders. It provides details on how the lessons learned will be exploited. It specifies the nature of the actions to be implemented, their timeframe, and the involved players, the costs and funding sources.

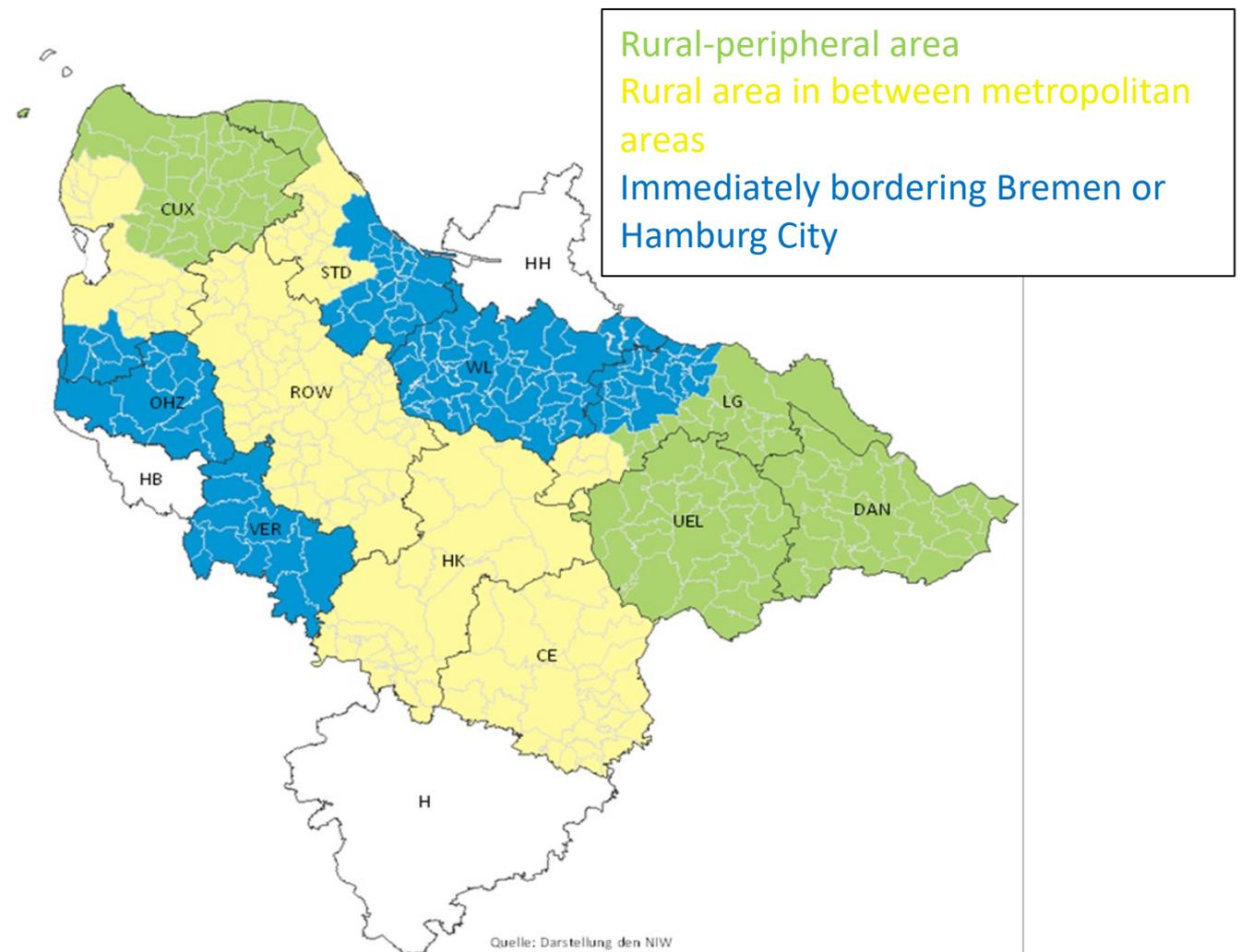
The Office for Regional Development Lüneburg has prepared, and will implement the action plan in close cooperation with regional stakeholders.

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1.2. Regional Context

The action plan applies for the former government district Lüneburg, which forms today the administrative district of the Office for Regional Development Lüneburg and is classified as a NUTS 2 region. The region consists of 11 counties and covers over 15.500 km².

The Region displays a considerable level of economic interdependence with the bordering cities Bremen, Hamburg and Hannover and can, consequently, be described as an in-between area. Several universities, research institutions and large companies are located in Bremen, Hamburg and Hanover. This opens up opportunities for regional development and economic growths, but also results in challenges such as enormous commuter flows. To a smaller extent, also the city of Lüneburg with its university applies attractive forces to its surrounding.



In spite of its proximity to the three major cities, most of the region is rural. There are villages, small and medium sized towns and a diverse natural scenery. Mud flats, heathland and natural river courses are protected as nature reserves. The economy of Lüneburg Region is characterized by small and medium-sized enterprises as well as well-developed energy, food and tourism sectors. Some local enterprises from the manufacturing sector have reached leading positions in their branches due

to the development of innovative products and services. Overall, there is a great variety of industries and only in a few sub-regions, there is a strong accumulation of enterprises of one sector.

In parts of the region, lightweight material and chemistry industry play an important role, and since 2018, stakeholders are working in a region wide network on exploiting the potential of hydrogen power for the region. Moreover, research on renewable resources and agriculture becomes increasingly important, especially in the counties of Uelzen, Heidekreis and Stade (Altes Land). For instance, in the county Uelzen, the Chamber of Agriculture develops, in cooperation with the Ostfalia College in Suderburg, sensor-supported irrigation systems for field crops.

Nevertheless, the amount and density of innovation stakeholders in the region is low in comparison with other western German regions. There is only one university and less than a dozen college locations and research institutions. The same applies for the number of historically evolved collaborations between universities, colleges and research institutions on the one hand and other stakeholders, such as enterprises and municipalities, on the other hand. Long distances, administrative borders to the bordering cities, and as a result a lack of points of contact, have hampered the emergence of collaborations.

To sum it up, the predominantly rural character of Lüneburg Region and the high diversity of its economic base call for targeted support of innovation activities. Regional challenges and funding needs are not identical with those of the cities and industrial cores around. There is a need for low threshold approaches, which address the demands of local companies and municipalities as well as for local support mechanisms. These should help applicants with less experience in project development to initiate new projects. Moreover, comprehensive and flexible support is needed for existing and new stakeholder networks and cooperation projects, which aim at exploiting the Region’s innovation potential. It is crucial that local enterprises, universities, and public authorities are involved in the development of the regional policies and funding guidelines.

1.3. Policy Context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	“Investment for Growth and Jobs programme”
Name of the policy instrument	Lower Saxony Multi-fund Operational Programme 2014-2020

The action plan aims to impact the Lower Saxony Multi-fund Operational Programme 2014-2020, an investment for Growth and Job Programme. The Multi-fund Programme aims at achieving the objectives of the "Europe 2020" strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Through the combination of ERDF and ESF in one programme and through the joint strategic approach aiming at improving the developments in the region, synergies and efficiency are reached more effectively. This integrated approach helps addressing the needs and potentials of Lower Saxony to generate growth and employment.

In line with the German National Strategic Reference Framework and the Europe 2020 Strategy, four priority-axis are defined for the ERDF:

- 1) Support for innovation;

- 2) Support for SME competitiveness;
- 3) Support for the reduction of CO2 emissions;
- 4) Sustainable and environment friendly development of areas and landscapes

As well as four further priority axes for the ESF, including one priority axis for Social Innovation (priority axis 7).

Within the RUMORE project, the focus was placed on the guidelines in priority axis 1 and 7 (supporting innovation activities and social innovation). However, also other priority axes and aspects regarding the overall implementation of the programme were taken into consideration.

There are in total ten funding measures in priority axis 1 and 7. All of them support different kinds of innovation activities. The guidelines address different stakeholders, such as universities, colleges and research institutions or small and medium sized enterprises. In addition, the type of supported measures varies between the guidelines and some guidelines subsume different support measures. There are funding guidelines and funding measures, such as the guideline “innovation networks” or the funding measure “innovation through colleges – cooperation and networking”, where funding is provided only for collaboration projects of specified types. In other guidelines, additional points are awarded in the scoring procedure, when a collaboration over county borders take place. However, none of the existing funding guidelines has a special focus on rural-urban partnerships. Moreover, the multi-fund operational programme does not apply for Hamburg and Bremen, two of the three major cities bordering Lüneburg Region. Projects across the borders of different federal states are only in individual cases possible and are not officially promoted.

For collaboration projects with Hamburg, the biggest of the three bordering cities, there is another policy instrument: The Hamburg-Lower Saxon Support fund. Via this fund different kinds of cross-regional-border projects promoting the integrated development of the Metropolitan Region Hamburg can be funded.

The Lower Saxony Multi-fund Operational Programme applies for the complete federal state Lower Saxony, so in total for an area of 47.614 km² with almost 8 million inhabitants. Lower Saxony is divided into four districts (NUTS 2 Region). Lüneburg is one out of those four regions (districts) covered by the Multi-fund Operational Programme. However, Lüneburg region has a special status within the programme, because it is the only region in Lower Saxony classified as a transition region. The other three regions have a higher GDP per Capita and are therefore classified as more developed regions. Against the backdrop, Lüneburg region has a reserved budget within the Multi-fund Operational Programme and in some funding guidelines subsidies are higher. Nevertheless, there are no different funding guidelines, funding measures or adjusted requirements for the transition region. The same funding guidelines apply for whole Lower Saxony.

In Lower Saxony, there are different ministries and institutions involved in the implementation of the current and the development of the next operational programme. With regard to the conclusions and the actions defined later, it is necessary to touch upon the governance structures of the programme. At first, there is one central management authority in the Ministry of Federal and European Affairs and Regional Development. Second, there are different state ministries, which are, as the relevant line ministries, responsible for the contentual implementation of the respective

funding guidelines. The co-finance of projects out of federal-state resources is organized via the budget of the relevant line ministries, too. Programme changes without the approval of the management authority and the responsible line ministry are impossible. Third, the NBank, the Lower Saxon state development bank, is the central awarding authority for the whole Operational Programme. Moreover, there are four Offices for Regional Development, one for each NUTS 2 region. The Offices for Regional Development are, as intermediate bodies, involved in monitoring and coordination processes for their regions. They advise and support stakeholders, together with the NBank, in developing and initiating projects and grant applications. In addition, they are responsible for an important part of the scoring procedure, the so-called “regionalfachliche Bewertung” (region-specific assessment). Depending on the guidelines, there are additional institutions involved in scoring and implementation procedures.

All of those bodies are involved in implementation and monitoring processes of the multi-fund operational programme. Furthermore, those institutions form, together with representatives from economic and social partners and some additional stakeholders the Monitoring Committee. There is only one Monitoring Committee for whole Lower Saxony and changes within the multi-fund operational programme are coordinated and decided at the Federal State Level.

Changes of the programme during an ongoing funding period are only possible to a very limited extent and require multilevel coordination processes. Since the current funding period is already well-advanced, and since the preparation of the next funding period has already started in 2018, the next funding period was taken into consideration as well.

1.4. Key Challenges regarding the Policy Instrument and the RUMORE project

There are different key challenges arising from the previously described context, which were tackled in the framework of the RUMORE project. To sum up, the RUMORE activities in Lüneburg aim to better connect enterprises from the rural parts of the Region to universities and research institutions. Furthermore, they seek to involve the universities, colleges and their students in regional development projects in order to explore the Region’s potential for sustainable development.

First, the low number of innovation stakeholders and resulting from it, the rather low number of historically and naturally evolved collaborations with innovation stakeholders, limits the number of innovation projects in the region. Consequently, there is a need to strengthen existing innovation networks and to develop and implement new instruments and projects enhancing the regional innovation capacity. This applies in particular, because the implementation report for 2017, completed in 2018, has clearly shown that the absorption rates of spending and the number of submitted applications in priority axis 1 and 7 of the programme were significantly lower than in the other three regions in Lower Saxony. There even is a risk that funds could not be absorbed.

Naturally, there are different reasons for such a low budgetary commitment, however, the low amount of stakeholders experienced in developing innovation projects and in applying for funds in a competitive system is, most likely, one central reason. Due to certain actions already implemented, absorption rates have significantly improved since the end of 2018. Moreover, in several funding guidelines, such as the Funding Guideline Social Innovation or Funding Guideline Innovation through

Colleges – Cooperation and Networking, the last calls took already place in the beginning of 2019. Consequently, the possibilities for additional changes are limited.

Still, the basic problem remains and consequently the Office for Regional Development and regional stakeholders seek for instruments and approaches to facilitate the development of projects in the region. This means, looking for tools, event ideas and new approaches to connect innovation stakeholders, such as colleges and research facilities from the region and beyond, and regional stakeholders, such as small enterprises and municipalities. In that respect triple-helix-cooperation formats and instruments to facilitate the emergence of quadruple helix collaborations are of particular interest. The aim is to improve the support of regional stakeholders in developing and implementing innovation projects and to offer venues for collaboration.

According to several stakeholders, the lack of flexibility and the small adjustment to specific regional circumstances places another key challenge. Consequently, solutions were sought, within the existing governance structures, to incorporate regional and local specifics to a larger extent into the implementation of the current operational programme. With the aim to increase the number of (funded) projects that include stakeholders from more rural areas and enhance hereby the regions innovation capacity.

One of those regional specifics is that three major cities are bordering the region without being part of it. Projects across the borders of different federal states are possible in individual cases, but they are not advertised and there are no extra measures to support and facilitate cross regional projects. However, rural-urban aspects and the collaboration across the borders of the region are of particular importance for Lüneburg region.

Moreover, the relatively low number of innovation stakeholders and the low amount of stakeholders experienced in innovation projects results in a great demand for consultation services and in a need to support collaborations, which are rather low threshold and which have a high practical benefit for stakeholder such as municipalities and small enterprises.

2. Conclusions resulting from the RUMORE project

2.1. Structure and Goals of the Action Plan

Based on the previously described challenges and identified gaps, three actions have been developed. Those actions are the primary result of the project work. The goal of the actions is to better support stakeholders from rural areas in exploiting their innovation potential, via increasing the number of collaborations with innovation stakeholders, such as universities, and the number and intensity of innovation projects. The actions were inspired by the cooperation in the local stakeholder group and the exchange with the international partners during the RUMORE international learning events. They display the identified improvement possibilities. All the three actions are divided into different sub-actions, building up on each other.

The three actions are:

- Action 1: Stronger incorporation of regional and local specifics into the implementation of the operational programme

- Action 2: Involvement of regional universities and colleges into the development of regional development projects

- Action 3: Leading Project for sustainable economic development of the biosphere region in the Metropolitan Region Hamburg

Actions 1 and 2 correspond directly to the ways of improvement of the policy instrument envisaged in the project application. Action 3 addresses a different policy instrument, because there are currently no adequate funding opportunities in the Multi-fund Operational Programme for such measures. This action is inspired by lessons-learnt from the project and by regional discussion processes, which are going on in the region for several years. Some Sub-actions of action 1 and 2 have already started to be implemented during phase 1 of the project, because of the low amount of time remaining in the current funding period. Action 3 still needs to further definition. Unfortunately, there was a processing delay in 2019 because of elections on local level and because it became obvious during project development workshops that further preliminary meetings are necessary.

2.2. Additional Results

Some results and ideas that arose from the project work could not be included into the action plan. For instance, stakeholders discussed in different meetings possibilities to set up a new sustainability network for the food industry, which was supposed to be funded out of the Multi-fund Guideline Innovation Networks, but unfortunately, there was no project owner found. Still, different project activities, especially a stakeholder group meeting focused on green economy and reports on projects from Amsterdam, have stimulated debates about green economy and potentials for circular economy within the region. Different stakeholders have enlarged their box of ideas for future projects.

Moreover, due to the low amount of remaining time in the current funding period, additional potential actions and possibilities for improvement of the policy instrument, identified in discussions with regional stakeholders, could not be implemented in the current funding period. Some aspects of those possibilities for improvement are named in action 1.

Another key result of the project work is that it must be ensured that existing projects and networks are continued to be funded in the next funding period.

3. Actions identified in Lüneburg to respond the gaps detected

ACTION 1 – Programme implementation workshops - Stronger incorporation of regional and local specifics into the implementation of the operational programme

- 1. The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

As explained in the chapter policy context, there are no individual funding guidelines or governance structures for the Transition Region Lüneburg within the Operational Programme. It is not the intention of this action to implemented new structures or a new programme, but

discussions with stakeholders and monitoring processes revealed that improvement is necessary, because the regional context in Lüneburg differs from the one in the other regions in Lower Saxony. Consequently, there is a need to take regional and local specifics more comprehensive into consideration in programme implementation. More comprehensive support mechanisms, to support the development of new cooperation projects, are necessary.

According to presentations about the structure of the Operational Programmes of the RUMORE partners and their experiences with the implementation of those programmes, regional and local specifics are taken much more into consideration in other regions. Especially, the presentations about the programme “Kansen voor West’ Operational Programme ERDF (EFRO) Western Netherlands” have shown different ways how to incorporate the local and regional level into the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the policy instrument. It was a key message that a local tailor-made approach in programme implementation is crucial and that there is room needed for different approaches in each city& region.

The structures and ways of decision making of the “Kansen voor West’ Operational Programme ERDF” were of particular interest, because also this programme covers different regions. Nevertheless, fundamental changes of the governance processes are not possible within the running funding period and the general government structures in the Netherlands are different from the ones in Germany. Still, inspired by the Kansen voor West Programm, it was decided in Lüneburg Region to incorporate stakeholders from the local level to a larger extent into the implementation of the policy instrument and to take their concerns more strongly into consideration.

2. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

2.1. Policy Implementation Workshops with regional and local stakeholders

The main action is the introduction of policy implementation workshops, those workshops will take place yearly till the end of the current funding period. Their aim is to improve the implementation of the operational programme via stronger incorporation of stakeholders on local level.

For those workshops, the Office for Regional Development invites different stakeholders from the local and regional level, which are potential applicants or are, as multipliers, in close contact with potential applicants. Moreover, the management authority, the NBank and, if required, the responsible line ministry, will participate. With the introduction of those workshops, the Office for Regional Development establishes a new link between stakeholders on regional and local level and the policy owners on state level.

Structure of the workshops:

The workshops will start with the presentation of the current status of implementation of each funding measure, to show how much money is still available for which individual measure. Also absorption rates will be shown.

After this presentation, the focus will be on those funding guidelines and funding measures, where the number of submitted applications and consequently the absorption rates are low. Local stakeholders will analyse and discuss the Programme guidelines with a low response, and generate ideas on how to improve budgetary commitment and to generate more applications.

Moreover, local and regional stakeholders will be invited to express their ideas for improvement of the policy instrument.

The first workshops took already place in autumn 2018. Due to the large amount of funding guidelines with low absorption rates it was decided to divide the workshop into three smaller workshops. The results of the workshops have shown, that it is necessary to held them regularly in order to improve the implementation of the programme.

2.2. Selected Results of the first Workshop Round

2.2.1. To be implemented in the current funding period

The workshops resulted in a number of fruitful ideas, which are now put into practice. However, because the ongoing funding period ends in 2020, 2019 is the last year in which it is possible to hand in applications in the majority of the funding guidelines in Lower Saxony. Consequently, results from the workshops were, if possible, implemented immediately.

Moreover, already during the workshops themselves and in previous talks with local stakeholders, many individual questions from stakeholders were solved. Along with increased advertisement, this has already increased the number of applications in several funding guidelines.

Increased advisory services

A primary response from the workshop was that more advisory services are necessary to support applicants, which are not yet experienced in developing innovation projects and the accompanying applications. This applies for many small enterprises in rural areas, but also municipalities indicated the need for more advice on how to develop project applications. In the following,

In addition, it was agreed upon to organize and implement several “application workshops” where SMEs receive support in preparing their funding applications. The key target group of those workshops, which will take place decentralized, are SMEs which have innovation potential, but no experience in developing project applications. The NBank will be responsible for the realisation of those workshops.

The first workshop has already taken place in the county Harburg.

Information events for the funding guideline social innovation

Another response was that it is not clear for many stakeholders, which kind of projects can be funded within the funding guideline social innovation in priority axis 7. It was decided to held an extra information event for this funding guideline and to present a larger number of good examples from other regions in Lower Saxony. The event took place in January 2019 and the number of participants was high. Subsequently, the number of applications for the last call (end of april 2019) has more than doubled.

Introduction of open calls in the funding guideline “Innovation through Colleges”

Via the funding guideline Innovation through colleges different formats of cooperation and network projects between colleges and universities and other stakeholders such as regional SMEs are funded. The implementation of this funding guideline is organized via state-wide thematic calls. The thematic calls are oriented towards the specialisation fields of the Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy Lower Saxony (RIS 3). However, the number of applications in those thematic calls was significantly lower than in the other regions. Especially, the amount of cooperation partners from rural areas was low.

To change this situation it was agreed on with the Lower Saxon Ministry of Science and Culture to execute two thematic open calls, exclusively for Lüneburg Region, in order to give more flexibility to Colleges and Universities in the region and to allow them to take up topics from stakeholders from rural areas. The open calls took place in autumn 2018 and in spring 2019. Those two open calls, in combination with increased advisory activities from the Office for Regional Development and the Ministry, have increased the amount of applications significantly. Moreover, especially the Ostfalia College in Suderburg has handed in different applications tackling specific topics of rural areas.

2.2.2. Recommendations for the next funding period

Not all issues raised at the first workshops could be implemented in the ongoing funding period. As the Programme's funding period ends in 2020, some results of the workshops will be considered in preparing the next funding period. In general, stakeholders spoke out for more flexibility and for more low-threshold funding opportunities. The need for more room for region and local specific approaches was expressed in different ways.

Improved funding for innovation networks

One result, which cannot be implemented in the current funding period, is the need for improved funding guidelines for innovation networks. Especially, higher funding rates and the possibility to support "grassroots networks", which support network activities in early stages and are more low-threshold, could help the region to unfold its innovation potential.

Improved support structures for project development

There is a general need for more comprehensive support structures on regional level, which stimulate the establishment of innovation networks and cooperative projects. To some extent the Office for Regional Development and other regional institutions are already fulfilling this task, but more manpower is clearly needed to achieve a measurable success and to make sure there will be more cooperation projects in the future.

Improved funding opportunities projects across regional borders

An additional result is that there is a need for improved funding opportunities across regional borders and also across the borders of the federal state.

3. **Players involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

Players involved in the organization and implementation of the yearly policy workshops:

- Office for Regional Development Lüneburg (Main organizer)
- NBank (State Funding Bank of Lower Saxony)
- Management Authority
- If required: responsible line ministries
- Regional and local stakeholders and multipliers

4. **Timeframe**

The first Round of Workshops took place in the end of 2018. From now on, workshops will take place once a year till the end of the current funding period. The measures agreed on will be implemented afterwards.

5. **Costs** (if relevant)

Ca. 1500 Euro for the implementation of each workshop round. Resources are needed for the implementation of the workshop event.

6. **Funding sources** (if relevant):

The Office for Regional Development has a certain budget for events and dissemination activities. Significant parts of this budget will be used for the described activities.

ACTION 2 - "Landlust": Student idea competition to involve students into regional development projects

1. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

Only few municipalities, enterprises and organizations from rural areas are cooperating with universities and colleges, which are mostly located in cities. Not many enterprises, municipalities or organizations from rural areas in our region have worked directly together with students. In addition, there is, in comparison with other regions, a rather low number of applications and project ideas for different funding guidelines from the policy instrument.

From the beginning of the RUMORE project work it was a goal to increase the cooperation with universities and colleges in the region, and to develop low-threshold and uncomplicated ways to connect stakeholders from rural areas with universities and research institutions.

The presentation of the work of the Green Knowledge Portal Twente, especially during the study visit in Twente, has given us different examples how to incorporate education and research institutions into regional development processes. Especially, the incorporation of students and the focus on rural development and agriculture has inspired this action.

Several practice-oriented study courses exist at the Leuphana University Lüneburg and at colleges and universities in the cities around the region. However, matchmaking between students and stakeholders from the rural areas has only taken place in a very few individual cases.

Stakeholders in the region could profit more comprehensive from the expertise and the amount of ideas existing in the colleges and universities. This would improve the implementation of the policy instrument.

2. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

This action is divided into three different sub-actions. The first one has already taken place in summer 2018, the second one is based on the first one, and the third one is planned to start in 2020.

2.1. Student Idea Competition for the development of rural areas

In spring 2018, the Office for Regional Development and the Leuphana University Lüneburg launched a first of its kind student idea competition for sustainable development of rural areas. It was the introduction of a new instrument to stimulate cooperation/contacts between the University located in the City Lüneburg and different stakeholders in rural areas.

From April to July 2018 over 200 master students worked intensively on the development of 57 project concepts. The groups of students elaborated innovative ideas for the improvement of the working and living conditions in the Eastern part of Lüneburg region and developed proposals for increasing the added value in pre-selected local communities or counties. A jury of eight regional stakeholders decided on the most innovative and feasible project ideas.

The starting point for the students was the Regional Development Strategy for the Transition Region Lüneburg. This regional strategy was developed in the beginning of the current EU funding period and defines fields of action for projects funded from the multi-funds. It is an important evaluation criteria for project applications in the multi-funds. Consequently, the idea competition was also a new mechanism how to generate projects and applications for the policy instrument.

The bunch of submitted project ideas was broad – from concepts for co-working spaces and mobile learning offers through alternative models for food supply to new leisure and tourism activities such as geocaching events. The idea competition was the first time in which the Office for Regional Development Lüneburg and the majority of the jury members worked directly together with students.

2.2. Follow-Up activities of the Student Idea competition

In order to develop concrete project out of the ideas developed by the students different follow up activities are taking place since autumn 2019.

Selected follow up activities aiming at the development of concrete innovative projects, which are ideally funded out of the policy instrument. The idea competition is hereby one element of the Strategy of the Office for Regional Development to increase the amount of applications for multi-fund funding guidelines.

Those activities have already resulted in a new cooperation project between the town Geestland and the Leuphana University Lüneburg, in a project application for the funding guideline social innovation submitted by the County Heidekreis (based on an idea developed by students), additional projects resulting from the ideas are currently developed. For instance, there are different LEADER action groups, which have taken up project ideas. Different dissemination Events took place.

Conference “Landlust – Impulses for rural areas in Lüneburg Region”

In November 2018 all mayors, business developers, county commissioners, LEADER regional manager and other stakeholders from the whole region were invited to a presentation of the best student concepts. The main aim of the event was to discuss about the implementation of the student ideas.

Follow-up workshops with stakeholders

After the conference, stakeholders from the region had the possibilities to work in individualized workshops, organized by university students, on developing real life projects out of students ideas.

2.3. Additional Rounds of Idea Competition

Currently, the Office for Regional Development works out the concept for next student-idea competition. It is planned to start in the end of 2019 or the beginning of 2020. The approach will be different because, it is planned to orient the tasks of the students more closely to the demands of municipalities and regional stakeholders.

3. Players involved (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

The Office for Regional Development has organized the first idea competition. The Office acts as an intermediary between the university with its students and stakeholders in the region. The Office for Regional development determines the needs and interests of stakeholders in the region, matches them with EU funding opportunities and develops on this basis, in close cooperation with the partner universities or partner college, the specific tasks for the students.

The Leuphana University Lüneburg was the cooperation partner of the first student idea competition and its follow up activities. It is not sure yet, which university will become the cooperation partner for the next student idea competition. It depends on the topic, which has not yet been chosen, and on the possibilities of the universities and colleges. The implementation of an idea competition must fit into one the study courses and into research projects offered at the university.

The main beneficiaries of the described activities are different stakeholders from rural areas within the region on whose challenges and needs the students are working. In the first student idea competition regional stakeholders were only indirect incorporated into the development of the idea competition. Regional stakeholders formed the jury and there were follow up activities organized in order to disseminate of the developed ideas. A stronger and individual incorporation took already place in the follow-up workshops, which took place in 2019. In those workshops students adjusted the previously developed ideas to the circumstances of one municipality.

It is planned for the next activities to involve the stakeholders already when developing the tasks for the students and in the working phases of the students.

4. Timeframe

The first round of the idea competition took place in summer 2018 and different kinds of follow-up activities are taking place since the end of 2018.

The next round of an idea competition is planned for 2020.

5. Costs (if relevant)

The implementation of the workshop “Landlust” has costed 5000 Euros. The majority of costs arose for different dissemination activities and different kinds of meetings and events.

In addition, the organisation and support of such new instruments requires personnel resources.

6. Funding sources (if relevant):

For the first round budgetary resources (5.000 Euro) from the Lower Saxon Ministry Federal and European affairs and Regional Development were made available. Moreover, to a limited extent

the Office for Regional development has used own resources for events and dissemination activities.

So far, there is no secured funding for additional rounds, but chances are good that there are again funding possibilities via the ministry. It is also planned to use own resources.

Moreover, the Office for Regional Development plans to extend its official schedule of responsibilities and to incorporate the area of responsibilities “cooperation with universities and colleges” into its official schedule of responsibilities.

ACTION 3 - Lighthouse project for sustainable economic development of Biosphere Regions - Leading Project for Sustainable Economic Development of the Biosphere Regions in the Metropolitan Region Hamburg

1. The background (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

A diverse natural scenery characterizes Lüneburg Region and the Metropolitan Region Hamburg. Five out of sixteen German UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are fully or partly located within the Metropolitan Region Hamburg, two in Lüneburg Region. UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are, according to its definition, model regions to establish how man can live in and with nature and use its resources in a sustainable manner. Consequently, it is a permanent question for many stakeholders in Lüneburg Region, how to combine economic development with nature conservation. This applies in particular for the area within and around the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve ‘Elbe River Landscape`.

During the past months, different discussions with regional stakeholders and a closer look on good practices from the RUMORE partner regions have shown, that the spatial proximity to Hamburg and other regional centers, such as Lüneburg City or Schwerin in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, offers opportunities for economic development for this biosphere reserve and its surroundings, which are not fully exploited, yet. Especially, the project Green Cycle Routes to regional producers and the approaches to focus on regional producers have inspired discussions.

2. Action (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

Stakeholders from the Metropolitan Region Hamburg, including the Office for Regional Development Lüneburg and stakeholders who participated in RUMORE activities, have now decided to develop and implement a package of measures for the Biosphere Region. The aim is to improve the competitiveness of the regional economy and to increase the attractiveness of the region as living and economic area. Sustainability and conservation aspects will be taken under special consideration while developing and implementing those measures.

It is planned to develop a lead project with different sub projects, which are currently developed.

This action and its different sub-actions still need further time to be developed. Due to elections on local level and ongoing discussions about project ownership on county level, there was a delay in development in 2019. However, further project development workshops are planned for 2020 and we are optimistic that a project application will be handed in in 2020.

3. Players involved (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

Metropolitan Region Hamburg

Counties - it is not sure yet which county will be the project leader

Chambers of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce and Handicraft

The administration of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Members of the advisory board of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

4. Timeframe

It is planned to develop a full project application in 2020. The start of the project is envisaged for the end of 2020. Due to elections on county level there is planning delay.

5. Costs (if relevant)

The project is still in the development process, costs can therefore only be estimated. In total we expect costs up to 400.000 Euro.

6. Funding sources (if relevant):

Promotion funds of the Metropolitan Region Hamburg

Co-Finance of regional stakeholders such as the respective counties

4. Monitoring of the Action Plan

The Office for Regional Development Lüneburg will be responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of the refereed actions in the context of the action plan to watch the progress and define the impact. The Office for regional development will make sure to check how the actions presented are implemented and what are the results coming from these actions, while the mutual learning process is ongoing.

The Office of Regional Development will perform the following actions to monitor the implementation of the action plan:

1. Quarterly Check of all actions
2. Based on the quarterly checks, the staff will run 1-2 pages evaluation reports, regarding the actions performed, challenges, and results.
3. Every year the Office will develop a yearly report
4. By the end of phase two a final monitoring report will be delivered on the same issues, plus an analysis of future recommendations.

Date: 20.12.2019

Signature: L. Schmidt

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____