



Project Sketch

URBACT II- Project Proposal

RUnUP - Role of Universities for economic Development in Urban Poles

Point of departure

Regional centres or strongholds, i.e. cities and medium-sized urban centres (50.000 to 200.000 inhabitants) beside European metropolises, capital city regions or urban agglomerations are highly significant for economic performance and innovation competence in Europe. They are the backbone of regional economic systems, fulfilling certain roles as regional market centres or centres for public service provision¹. At the difference to capital cities, external factors like head offices of international companies and their research departments, national centres of excellence and national administration generally play a minor role in medium-sized urban centres. Here, the development and utilization of endogenous potentials is crucial.

Universities fulfil a special function for the development of such endogenous potentials:

- initiation of and support for (technology-oriented) start-ups,
- implementation of new information and communication technologies,
- provision of the scientific background for industry-oriented networks and competences and
- functioning as motor, responsible body and partner for technology transfer and the spread of local knowledge.

Universities are often designated the decisive part and actor of support for regional economic development. The so called "Triple Helix Thesis" derives from the assumption that knowledge-based economic development is significantly supported by the

¹ A detailed classification of cities has been published in the report on the "State of the European Cities", edited by the European Commission, DG Regional Policy, 2007.

cooperation between universities, companies and the administrative partners².

Often, cities can't make sufficient use of existing knowledge and competence potentials of their universities to support economic development and encourage entrepreneurship. This is where the URBACT-Proposal "RunUP - Role of Universities for economic Development in Urban Poles" applies.

The URBACT I-project „STRIKE – Strategies for Urban Regions in the Knowledge Economy“ exemplarily discusses the distinctive role of cities and urban spaces in modern knowledge society. It emphasizes the importance of non-metropolitan urban regions for the use of knowledge potentials and seeks to optimize their organising capacity for stimulating innovation and development. „RUnUP“ ties up to the goals and results of this project.

Compatibility with URBACT II

The project „RUnUP“ aims at the Priority Axe 1: Cities, Engines of Growth and Jobs, as well as on the action field 1.1: Promoting Entrepreneurship. Within this field, the operational programme (OP) URBACT II thematically focuses on "Partnerships with universities as Triple Helix Catalysts (Local governments, university, industry)".

The intended Thematic Network Working Group³ will consist of partners (cities, universities and regional authorities) from the group of urban poles (50.000 to 200.000 inhabitants) outside metropolitan, capital and big cities' agglomerations. Preconditions for partnership are that cities fulfil an important function as anchor and service provider and dispose of an independent university.

In addition to the network, all city partners constitute local support groups (ULSG – URBACT Local Support Group), in which further universities university actors, selected companies and their representatives (alliances, chambers etc.) as well as national and regional authorities are represented. They work out the local action plans.

Project goals and expected results

Local governments, universities and industry cooperate in many different aspects. However, this cooperation often doesn't effectively respond to the specific local situation. In many cities, the three actors in the triple helix structure lack sufficient information on how to best activate local potentials. The overall aim of the project is to contribute to creating this knowledge by developing a

² Henry Etzkowitz: „Transforming Universities as Triple Helix Catalysts: Towards European Innovation Areas“, in: "Discussion Paper for the Senior Officials` Meeting on Urban Policy", Lappeenranta, Finland, October 2006.

³ The choice of the network structure (working group or thematic network) depends on the initial partners and decisions taken during the initial meeting.

pool of different measures tested by the URBACT local support groups and verified for generalization by the network. We choose methods of direct testing to produce immediate positive effects for the member cities themselves at the same time. Goals and expected local results are in detail:

- Creation of powerful “Triple Helix” structures and partnerships to support local/ regional development and innovation competence
- Support of start-ups, strategic consultation and advancement and expansion of companies with the help of the concentrated competence of local partners
- Compulsory involvement of universities in the realization of local and regional strategies for development
- Increased consideration of practical skills demanded by local industry in university curricula.
- Utilization of university infrastructure and technical options to spread knowledge in the cities
- Improving accessibility to information and communication technologies (ICT) for cities
- Deriving impulses from the local action plans for the development of disadvantaged districts and neighbourhoods

For the entire project, the overall aim as mentioned above covers the following aspect:

- Deduction of general recommendations from the local results.
 - Information about measures to activate endogenous potentials in regional centres
 - Information about common obstacles to intensified cooperation between universities, city administrations and companies
 - Best practice examples to enhance such cooperation, in the interest of increasing economic performance and innovation competence of regional centres.
- Facilitation of cooperation and the establishment of long-term alliances between project partners from different cities.
- Contribution to the URBACT capitalization process.

Activities

RUnUP activities will involve a range of selected measures at different levels. After joint formulation, measures will be further conceptualized and tested individually in each city. Subsequently, they are again discussed, evaluated and reformulated at network level. Network meetings at regular intervals thereby allow for continuous optimization of the respective local strategies.

Activities by participating Cities

Partners from different cities will apply different measures, formulated in the local action plans and

responding to the respective local structures and demands. To follow up to a joint procedure and allow for comparability, these measures are embedded in four separate phases. After each phase a joint conference with all network partners evaluates and compares the results achieved in the URBACT local support groups (ULSG). On the one hand, the assessment serves to draw conclusions and give recommendations for the next phase, on the other hand it is meant to derive general policy advice.

The different phases each cover a different time span, relevant to the effort needed to realise the respective measures.

The **first phase** begins together with the preparations for the final application and principally serves the search for and integration of qualified partners into local support groups. As far as they don't participate in the network itself, these are in the first place: members from local administration, research institutes and centres with different thematic orientation, regional authorities that play a key role, managing authorities with funding responsibility and companies willing to assist in terms of business cooperation, public private partnership or sponsoring.

As a precondition for the successful adoption of measures, a profound analysis of the local situation will precede in the **second phase**. Questions to be clarified are: 1) The intensity of already existing integration between university, city and markets. 2) Potentials from further university integration for local sustainable development. 3) An actor analysis under the following aspects: A) Existing contacts between stake holders and their interrelations, B) Strategic potentials for enhanced cooperation and missing contacts, C) Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with already existing contacts and partners.

On the basis of the analytic results, dialogue between the relevant stakeholders will be encouraged in a **third phase**. Elements of such a dialogue will be mutual consultation and the exchange or spread of knowledge. This comprehends for example 1) close cooperation between advice centres for entrepreneurs and start-ups at universities and city administration, 2) a university initiative to reach a broader public and spread knowledge (by means of interviews in local newspapers, radio programs, public lectures, open houses...), and 3) closer dialogue between academia and commerce (by the participation of university institutes in local commercial associations, joint symposia etc.). Furthermore, measures to facilitate direct contact between administration, business, investors and academia are needed. This can be the involvement of the ULSG with city administration or the constitution of a separate working group with volunteers from administration, academic institutions, companies and the public. Their task would be to consult administration, young entrepreneurs, companies and investors by providing for an exchange of ideas, interests and problems.

During the **fourth and final phase**, partnerships with universities and local businesses will take a further step of institutionalization. Model concepts for synergies and joint ventures to strengthen triple helix structures and thus better activate endogenous potentials will be developed and realized as far as possible. Cooperative projects at this level can involve training courses for young entrepreneurs offered jointly by companies and university institutions, dual apprenticeship systems

(combined university study and apprenticeship in a company) and (re-)training for employees and unemployed. As to derive impulses for the development of disadvantaged districts and neighbourhoods, all measures should put special emphasis on these social environments. Another example measure could be the joint realisation by all partners of a start-up service centre in such a neighbourhood, providing rooms and infrastructure at a reduced price for young and innovative companies.

Network Activities

The role of the network mainly is to consult partners, bundle and interpret findings from local research and action and to deduce policy recommendations. Thereby, it contributes to the URBACT capitalization goals. Other activities on network level are management tasks, public relations and cooperation.

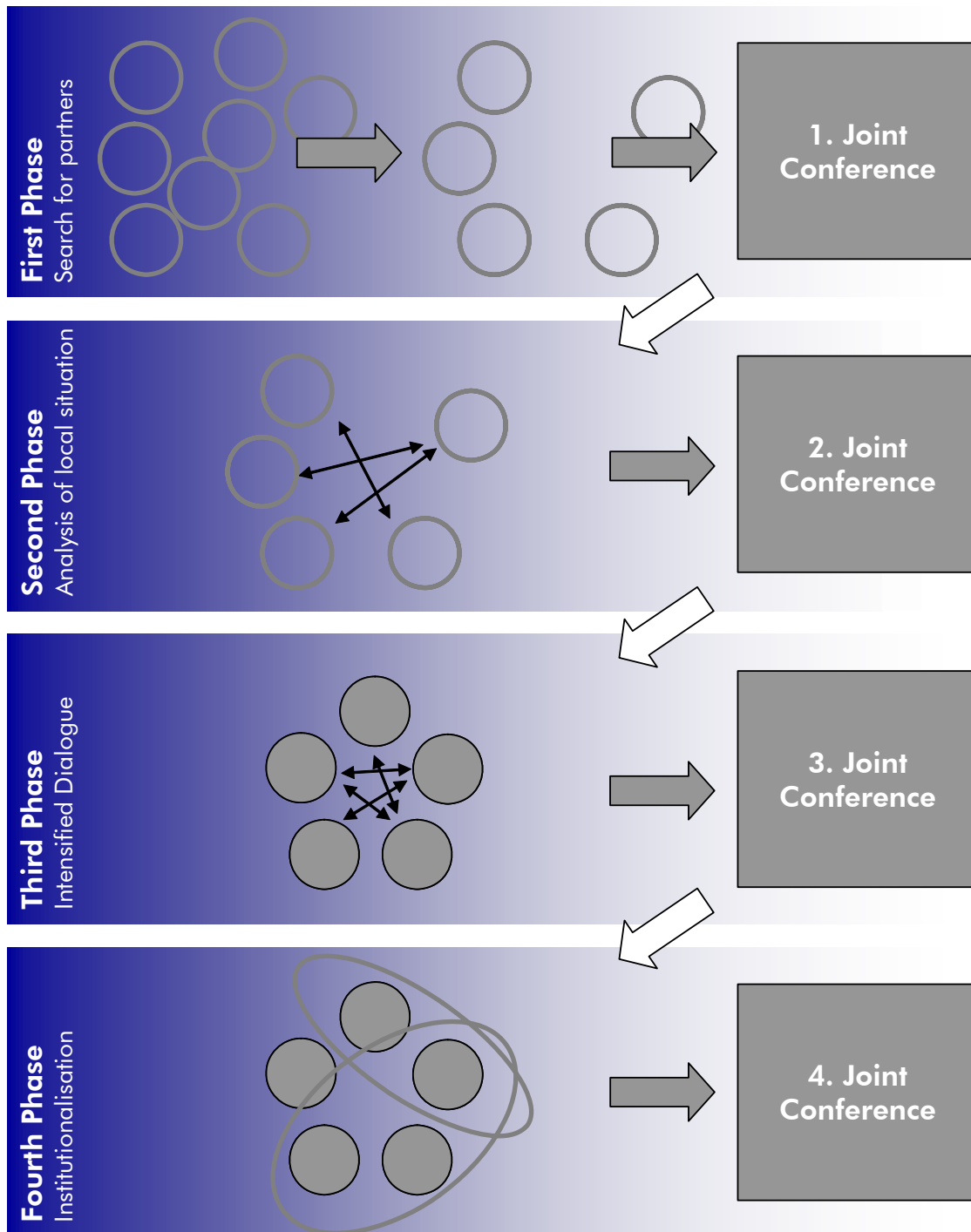
General network activities:

- Regular network meetings
- Thematic and practical support for network participants.
- Assistance to the organisation of workshops and conferences
- Management of network related tasks
- Public relations
- Contact and cooperation with other networks and the programme management (i.e. monitoring committee)

Thematic activities:

- Agenda setting and formulation of measures to be adopted at city level and assistance to the formulation of adequate methods.
- Evaluation of the results, reformulation and improvement of measures
- Scientific appraisal and deduction of generalized findings from the local results
- Policy recommendations and consulting services for cities outside the network
- Publication of the results in a final report, thereby contribution to the capitalization process intended by the URBACT II programme

Draft Project Structure



The proposed measures and thematic elements are open for further discussion and elaboration.

Contact and information

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December 19, 2007