

Coordination of EU funds in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania



Case study on the Joint Administrative Authority

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Horizontal Coordination in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

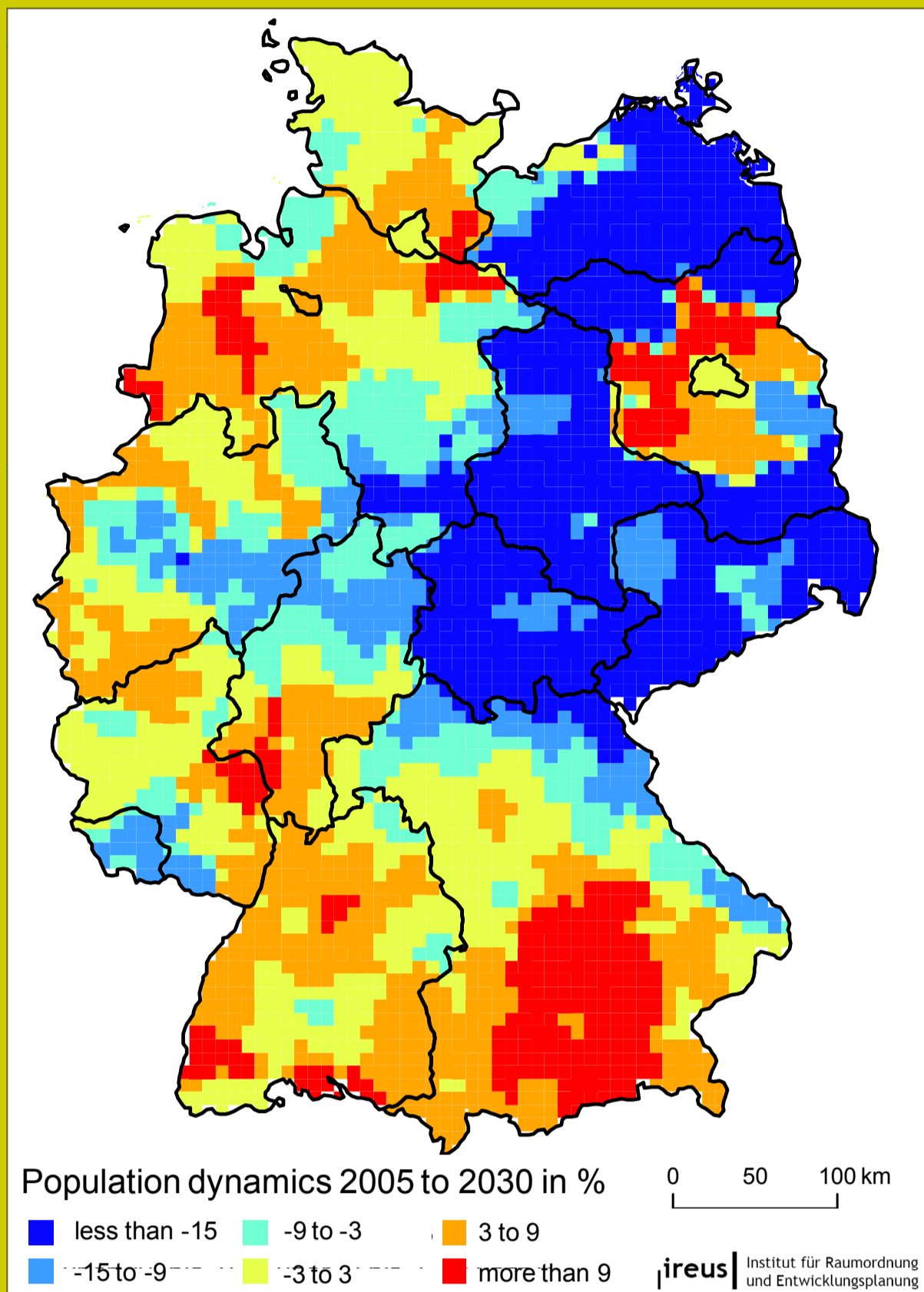


Fig. 1: Population dynamics in Germany, 2005 to 2030. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is located in the North West. (Source: Map generated by the Institute of Regional Development Planning based on projections of the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning)

The economic situation in the German federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is difficult: There is little economic vitality and competitiveness, which is reflected in a high unemployment rate, out-migration of labour and an ongoing brain drain (Fig. 1). Against this background, in July 2005 the government of the state decided on a joint strategy for the use of resources from the EU structural funds (ERDF and ESF) as well as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) in order to boost horizontal coordination.

The decision to follow a joint strategy was a consequence of positive experiences with the structures that had been set-up for structural funds in the former funding period (2000-2006), when a Joint Administrative Authority had been established in order to ensure a harmonised and integrated approach as well as intensive cooperation between the high number of stakeholders involved. In the period 2007-2013, the EAFRD was added to the Joint Authority's scope of responsibility, thus making use of the opportunity of appointing a single authority to be in charge of several operational programmes (cp. Reg. (EC) 1083/2006). In addition, the Joint Administrative Authority was transferred from the Ministry of Economics to the State Chancellery, in order to strengthen its cross-cutting role.

Fund-related interventions are dedicated to the overall objective of increasing economic vitality and creating and securing long-term jobs through sustainable economic growth (Fig. 2). The cross-fund strategy is reflected by a corresponding system of implementation aimed at efficient administration and monitoring of EU support.

Overall objective	Increasing economic vitality and creating and securing long-term jobs through sustainable economic growth						
Strategic objectives	Increasing regional quality and attractiveness of location by development of infrastructure		Strengthening of regional competitiveness esp. by increasing adaptability and competitiveness of employees and businesses		Developing knowledge and innovation potential in society		Improving labour market entry and social integration
Focus of ERDF, ESF and EAFRD	ERDF Developing infrastructure for sustainable economic growth	EAFRD Improving the environment and the countryside	ERDF Increasing competitiveness and adaptability esp. of SME	ESF Increasing competitiveness and adaptability of employees and businesses	ERDF Supporting innovation, research and development, education	ESF Improving human capital	ESF Improving entry for employees and social integration of disadvantaged persons
	EAFRD improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy			EAFRD improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector			
Cross-cutting objectives	Equal opportunities of women and men and non-discrimination						
	Environmental protection and sustainable development						

Fig. 2: The state's Joint strategy: Focus of programmes within the hierarchy of set objectives (source: EPLR-MV 2007:68).

Results: Improved Coordination through a Joint Administrative Authority

The Joint Administrative Authority supports the state's ministries in designing, delivering and evaluating of all of the programmes (structural funds and EAFRD):

→For this purpose, an inter-ministerial working group has been established by the Joint Administrative Authority, in which representatives of the ministries harmonise design, implementation and delivery of programmes. At the same time the working group serves as an arena for mutual learning.

→The fund- and sector-related thinking of the ministries was broadened by focusing on the needs of the Land (how to best use funds in order to achieve the set objectives?). However, Economic and Social Partners (ESPs) point out that there is still the need to further increase coordination between the ministries. According to their perception, ministries still tend to focus on their sector, which leads to inefficiencies, i.e. internal friction.

→The transfer of the Joint Administrative Authority to the state's chancellery is perceived as positive by all stakeholders as a means of minimising friction losses between ministries and giving more influence to the Joint Authority, thus increasing the position against the fund-administrating ministries.

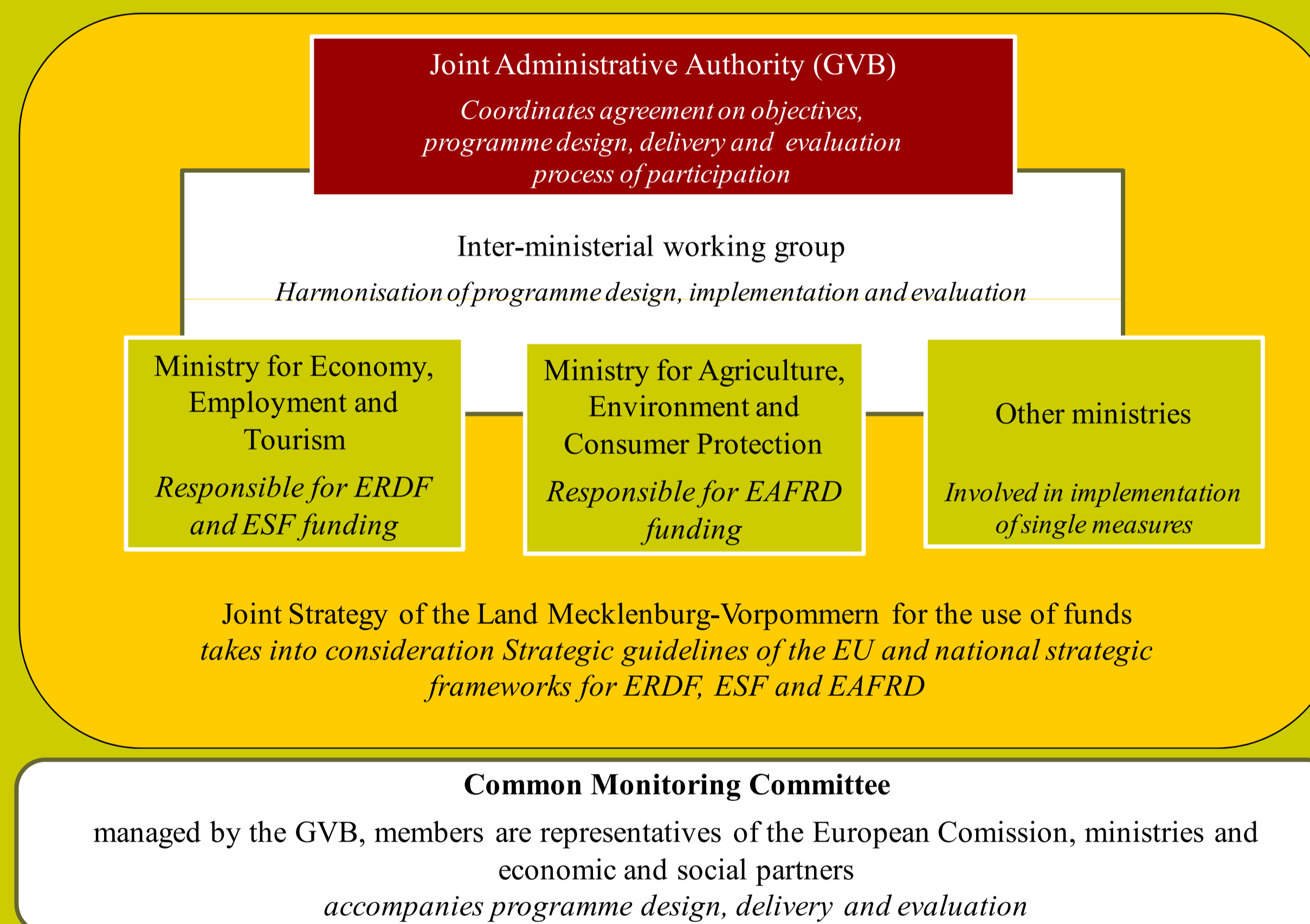


Fig. 3: Current structures of coordination in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

The Joint Administrative Authority coordinates the process of stakeholder participation which accompanies programme design, delivery and evaluation. The case study revealed regarding participation in the frame of the design of the RDP 2007-2013 that:

→Economic and Social Partners (ESP) participate quite actively in this process, and show a strong commitment as a result of their positive experiences in the former funding period.

→Active ESP involvement in the programming of the RDP 2007-2013 prolonged the process but turned out to lead to less conflicts on implementation; in addition it has stimulated a feeling of responsibility and commitment among ESP.

→ESPs strongly support improved coordination as this reflects their perception of EU funding: '[...] it doesn't matter from which fund money is provided as it is EU money anyway, so we simply try to find ways how to best make use out of these resources' (ESP).

Policy Learning Issues & Recommendations

Improve existing structures of coordination or support establishment of new coordination structures; e.g. regular meetings of all fund administrators can be very helpful in order to achieve a more integrated and more place-based programming.

Creation of a coordinating institution can be very helpful in order to improve horizontal coordination. However, the institution that is supposed to coordinate the different funds should not be integrated into one of the sectoral ministries (potential source of conflict), as coordination is cross-cutting.

Promote exchange of good and bad practice examples between regions (and also between Member States). Different media and kinds of exchange could be used for establishing these "learning arenas" (digital/online exchange, conferences...).

Bottom-up processes stabilize the institutions as local actors in local contexts actively contribute to the evolution of institutional set-up and have not only internalized the connected rules and norms but also shape them through new suggestions, claims for a right to say etc.

Key factors for a successful coordination are the willingness to cooperate in the first place which goes along with the necessity of willingness to integrated thinking and programming as well as mutual trust, communication and respect.

Think about better ways how to empower economic and social partners in order to enable them to participate more actively in the monitoring committee. Especially those partners with little financial and human resources have the feeling that they are not able to cope with all the information.