

# **Promoting dynamic interaction of universities and regional stakeholders**

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## **Abstract**

In the globalised knowledge society, the competitiveness and well being of municipalities and regions depend on local strengths and innovations. The future success will come to those large or small enterprises and to urban or rural areas that can meet global standards and join global networks and markets (Goddard 1997). Therefore, the availability of knowledge and skills has become as important locally as the physical infrastructure. The local environment has become as relevant as the national macro economic situation in determining the ability of enterprises to compete in the global economy. Accordingly, universities are expected more than ever to actively engage in the development of their regions. A regionally engaged university can become a key asset and powerhouse for local economic development. (Goddard 2000, p. 1)

The dense network of universities in Europe and in the Baltic Sea region carries out work of the highest standards. It lays ground for high quality innovation and learning environment. In this context the practical challenge is, that according to different surveys and studies, SMEs and local public authorities feel that universities are far away, theoretical and bureaucratic. It is hard to find right expert or contact person from the universities and the available co-operation possibilities are unknown. According to the EU's "Community Innovation Survey" less than 5% of innovative companies considered information from government or private non-profit research institutes, universities or other higher education institutions, being a very important source of information (Commission of the European Communities 2003, p. 7).

The reason for above-mentioned problems is, that universities have measured traditionally their knowledge creation capacity by the number and quality of scientific publications and graduated students or doctoral thesis. University researchers collaborate closely, but often without regard to securing wider economic value and social benefits from the knowledge they are creating.

Responding to the regional demands requires new kinds of resources and new forms of management and strategies that enable universities as institutions to make dynamic contributions to the regional development processes (Goddard 2000, p. 1). Regional development is an innovation process, which crucially depends on interaction. Interaction is the basis for learning and innovation and hence eventually for the economic prosperity of regions. Thus, central to successful innovation are the structures and modes of interaction between knowledge producers, disseminators and users. (Goddard 1997) There have to be formal mechanisms and chains through which the innovations and researched knowledge produced in universities disseminates effectively and flexibly to surrounding community. The keys to a learning region are the human infrastructure and the institutional mechanisms that foster interactive learning.

Within the one work package of the BSR INTERREG IIIB NP project A.S.A.P. "Efficient Administrative Structures as a Prerequisite for Successful Economic and Social Development of Rural Areas in Demographic Transition" 6 universities coming from Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Germany are looking for measures and mechanisms to facilitate dialogue with different regional stakeholders and to strengthen universities role in regional development within the pilot areas. Via different empiric activities, like questionnaires, interviews and case studies, partner universities have analysed Baltic Sea universities' success in managing regional development task and benchmarked models of the cooperation in different regions around the Baltic Sea. The idea is to elaborate effective and fruitful university-region cooperation models, which can promote rural development in practical and concrete way.

In this paper the first results of the 2-year study will be presented. Based on the first results of the study, the effective university-region cooperation model is a combination of web-based electronic tool, personal assistance, strategic group working and effective administrative structures.

Keywords: Universities' third role, knowledge economy, learning region, regional development.

## **1. Universities as powerhouses of their regions**

### **1.1. Importance of network knowledge**

Richard Florida has stated that "to be effective in this increasingly borderless global economy, regions must be defined by the same criteria and elements which comprise a knowledge-intensive firm: continuous improvement, new ideas, knowledge creation and organisational learning. Regions must adopt the principles of knowledge creation and continuous learning. In other words, they must become learning regions."

Within advanced economies it was acknowledged in the early 1990s, that knowledge would become one of the key factors for prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The reason behind is the complex and simultaneous process of globalisation and localisation. Although globalisation poses serious challenges for traditional spatial units of policy-making, it has become clear, that place continues to matter. A spatial unit that seems to gain importance in the knowledge economy is region. (Kaskinen et. al. 2006, p. 7)

Regional development is an innovation process, which crucially depends on interaction. Interaction is the basis for learning and innovation and hence eventually for the economic prosperity of the regions. Thus, central to successful innovation are the structures and modes of interaction between knowledge producers, knowledge disseminators and knowledge users. Hereby, networking and network knowledge are the vital elements in today's knowledge economy. Sustainable and effective networks are characterised by such considerations as reliability, honesty, co-operation and a sense of duty to others. Social capital is the glue of the well being network. Network knowledge refers not only to the skills of individuals but the transfer of knowledge from one group to another to form learning systems. (Goddard 1997) As network knowledge is highly dependent on interpersonal relations, it can most readily be developed within a particular region (Goddard 2000, p. 4).

### **1.2. Universities' third role**

Because knowledge and skills have become the prerequisites of SMEs' and regions' competitiveness, universities are expected more than ever to actively engage in the development of their regions. There is a growing concern that teaching and research within universities should be directed at least partly towards specific economic and social objectives. Nowhere is this demand for "specificity" more clear than in the field of regional development. The central argument is that universities should actively engage in the development of their regions instead of just being located in particular regions. While universities have always contributed to the social and cultural development of the places in which they are located through a sense of civic responsibility, the emerging regional development agenda requires regional engagement to be formally recognised as a "third role" for universities. (Goddard 2000, p. 1)

The Communication from the Commission "The Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge" (2003, p. 2) seeks to start a debate on the role of universities within the knowledge society and economy in Europe and on the conditions under which they will be able to effectively play that role. The growth of knowledge society depends on the production of new knowledge, its transmission through education and training, its dissemination through information and communication technologies, and on its use through new industrial processes or

services. Universities are unique, in that they take part in all these processes, at their core, due to the key role they play in the three fields of research and exploitation of its results, thanks to industrial cooperation and spin-off; education and training; and regional and local development, to which they can contribute significantly.

The European university world is not trouble-free, and the European universities are not at present globally competitive with those of our major partners, even though they produce high quality scientific publications. The Communication (2003, p. 2) notes a number of areas within which action is needed, and raises a series of questions such as:

- How to make universities contribute better to local and regional needs and strategies?
- How to establish closer co-operation between universities and enterprises to ensure better dissemination and exploitation of new knowledge in the economy and society at large?

The Communication from the Commission (2003, p. 7) notes that there exists currently little data available in Member States on the extent to which universities are commercialising their research, so that it is difficult to say how well universities across the EU are exploiting research results with the enterprise sector. However, some data is available through the “Community Innovation Survey”. The CIS asked enterprises about the most important sources of information for innovation. Less than 5% of innovative companies considered information from government or private non-profit research institutes, universities or other higher education institutions, being a very important source of information.

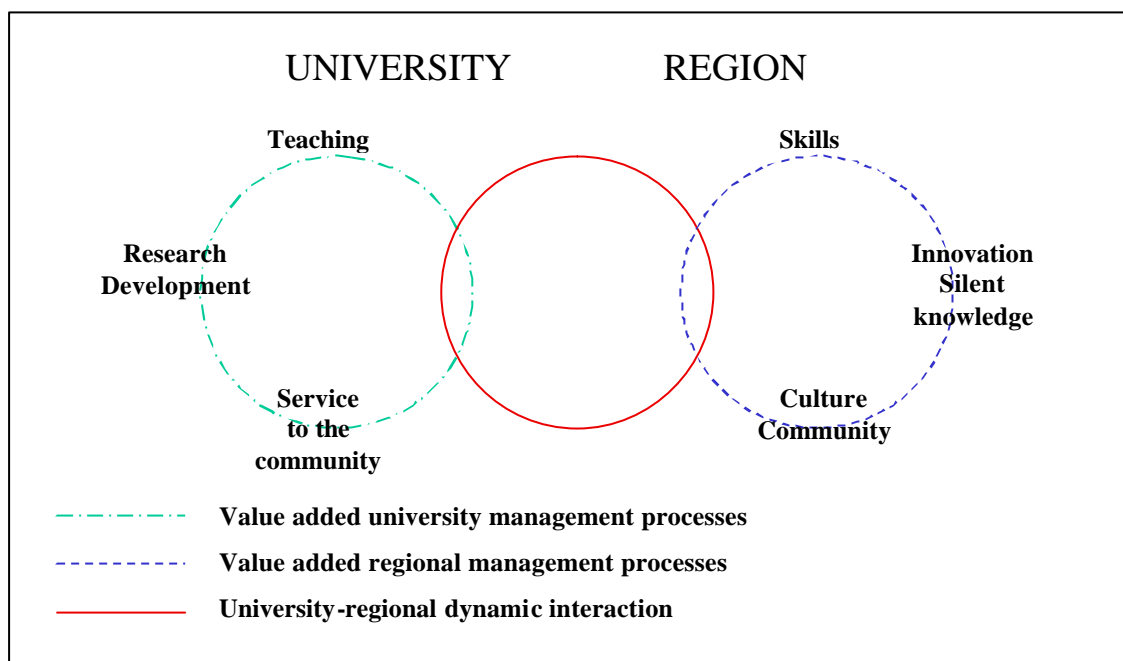
The dense network of universities in Europe and in the Baltic Sea region carries out work of the highest standards, which lays ground for high quality innovation and learning environment. In this context the practical challenge is, that, according to different surveys and studies, SMEs and local public authorities feel that universities are far away, theoretical and bureaucratic. It is hard to find right expert or contact person from the universities and the available co-operation possibilities are unknown. Universities have measured traditionally their knowledge creation capacity by the number and quality of scientific publications and graduated students or doctoral thesis. University researchers collaborate closely, but often without regard to securing wider economic value and social benefits from the knowledge they are creating.

### **1.3. University-region dynamic interaction**

Responding to the challenges of the knowledge economy requires new kinds of resources and new forms of management that enable universities as institutions to make dynamic contribution to the regional development processes (Goddard 2000, p. 1). One of the greatest challenges is, that there are few mechanisms within universities or regions which foster joined-up thinking or dialogue. The challenge for universities is how it manages its institutional diversity and how it prioritises areas of strategic engagement, which develops the region’s knowledge base to the benefit of all its citizens. (Goddard 2000, p. 25)

John Goddard and Paul Chatterton (Goddard 2000: 7) have created the model of university-region dynamic interface (Figure 1) that focuses upon the processes which link together all of the components within the university and the region into a learning system.

Figure 1: The university-region value added management process



In order for the university-region dynamic interaction to take place in regional development, the region must be able to define and articulate its needs. The challenge of the region is to develop a model for cooperation, in which all regional operations support the goals and strategies that are jointly agreed upon. Only through joint aims the region can define its needs for the university to respond to. The university, however, cannot respond to the needs of the region without sufficient intra-organisational links between teaching, research and community service roles. These mechanisms could include e.g. funding, staff development, incentives and rewards, communication etc.

It can be said that the successful university is a learning organisation in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts and the successful region has similar dynamics in which the university is a key player. The main idea is to develop a regional university-region interaction model which promote flexible and effective communication and cooperation between universities, companies, regional development agencies, municipalities, third sector organizations etc. and strengthens dissemination of already existing knowledge from universities to region via one contact point.

## 2. Promoting university-region dynamic interaction within the A.S.A.P. project

### 2.1. BSR INTERREG IIIB NP project A.S.A.P.

This article relates to the BSR INTERREG IIIB NP project A.S.A.P. “Efficient Administrative Structures as a Prerequisite for Successful Economic and Social Development of Rural Areas in Demographic Transition”. A.S.A.P. project promotes the comprehensive development of rural areas in demographic transition by using an integrated approach:

- Human potential as the basis,
- Efficient administrative structures as the agents, and
- Adapted structures and strategies as the keys.

The basic idea of the A.S.A.P. project is that effective public sector action is a cornerstone of spatially balanced and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. Especially rural areas need administrative support for compensating lower economic potentials for the benefit of their inhabitants. Administrative reforms at the local and regional level are going on in almost all countries around the Baltic Sea. These offer the opportunity to strengthen institutional capacities and to address specific needs of rural municipalities in order to safeguard rural development.

Within the A.S.A.P.'s work package 4 "Universities' 3<sup>d</sup> Task – Promoting University-Region Dynamic Interaction" six higher education institutions are looking for measures to facilitate dialogue with different regional stakeholders and to strengthen regional human potential. The partner universities are: Academy of Management and Agribusiness of Non-Chernozem Zone of Russia, Hochschule Wismar – University of Technology, Business and Design, Malmö University, Riga Technical University, Saaremaa University Centre and University of Turku as the coordinator of the activities. The idea of the work package is that when administrative reforms are planned in rural areas, universities should be linked to the new structures due to their specific expertise needed in today's knowledge society. In other words, the work package builds links and dialogue between universities, rural enterprises and development authorities with the idea to support sustainable regional development of Baltic Sea rural regions competing in a global knowledge economy.

The partner universities are implementing the theories of John Goddard about university-region dynamic interface into practice. The idea is to elaborate effective and fruitful university-region cooperation models for the named pilot regions: County of Southwest Finland, Leningrad Region, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Riga Area, Saaremaa County.

Within the 1<sup>st</sup> workshop of the partner universities in April 2006, the clear need for transnational and BSR wide exchange of experiences in the field of university-region collaboration was discovered. The main methods were chosen to be questionnaire to regional stakeholders within the pilot regions, the self-evaluation questionnaire to the partner universities and to the members of the 2 BSR University Networks, case study and study visits. The first results will be presented next.

### **2.1.1. Questionnaire concerning cooperation between universities and regional stakeholders**

The questionnaire for different regional stakeholders was delivered in pilot regions in June 2006. Idea of the questionnaire was to gather experiences from municipalities, public development organisations, representatives of private sector etc. in cooperation with universities.

Drawing comprehensive common conclusion from the surveys conducted in pilot regions is not possible, because the survey was not implemented in a same way in every pilot region. Regional characteristics and emphasis were considered, because the main idea was to give input for regional needs. However, this survey confirmed previous notes on the central problems in university-region cooperation. One can say, that the modes of cooperation were traditional and universities were not seen as important partners in the solving of ad hoc R&D problems or in the development of regional or organisational strategies although these should be the key modes within knowledge economy.

The regional actors knew many higher education institutions inside and outside their region. Not surprisingly the best-known institutions were also the most popular cooperation partners.

Most popular form of collaboration was hiring graduates or students as trainees. In Turku participating in seminars and workshops was highly popular, as 75% of organisations had done that, while in other regions this was a more rare type of cooperation. In Saaremaa and Wismar organisations had ordered continuing education or training while in Turku they tended to participate in education already available e.g. in Open University. It is fair to say that cooperation was more varied in Turku than in other regions, while many organisations had participated in many types of cooperation activities.

The central experiences from cooperation were positive all over, though obstacles did exist. Lack of time, initiative and resources in the organisation were seen as problems. In Saaremaa also the difficulty to find lecturers with practical experience on narrow subjects was a problem. In Wismar and Turku the recipients pointed out the bureaucratic nature of universities that made cooperation difficult. In addition, the needs and demands of organisations and universities did not always meet as universities were seen too theoretic and unwilling to conduct applied research.

However, organisations were keen to cooperate further. In Saaremaa continuing education was seen important. Hiring graduates and students was a popular form of cooperation everywhere. Joint projects were especially emphasized in Wismar. Further, several suggestions for easier and more intense cooperation were made. In all regions the availability of information was an issue: The organisations felt, that there was not enough information available or that it was hard to find. The structure of the universities was seen unclear and incomprehensible in Turku and in Wismar thus making cooperation more difficult.

### **2.1.2. Questionnaire concerning the role of universities in regional development**

The self-evaluation questionnaire was delivered to partner universities as well as to the members of the Baltic Sea Region University Network and the Baltic Sea University Programme in October 2006. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather the opinions on the regional development of the universities and to map the common development targets of the Baltic Sea Region.

In the first part universities were asked to describe regional development. The most common argument was that regional development means promoting regional approach and sustainable development. Regional development was also seen as promoting education and its development according to regional needs and as increasing cooperation and communication among actors. To lesser extent the answerers stressed regional development as promoting economic development.

Regional development was thought to fit universities' tasks well. The answerers emphasised the providing of education as the best way for universities to participate in regional development. Almost 40% of answers belonged to this category. Providing applied research and expert services were also put strongly forward. These were also the most common methods and tools of the universities in contributing to regional development. Also initiating development strategies and innovations, promoting cooperation and communication and participating in development projects were important ways of participation.

A majority of universities participates in the preparation of public local/regional development strategies. Universities have good relations to regional

development actors. Of 38 actors the universities named, in seven the university had a representative on the board, with 21 actors the relations were described as tight and regular and with ten actors occasional. The relations to other universities were not seen as tight: most of the universities considered that the universities in the region could cooperate more or that the cooperation has only recently increased.

Only one third of the universities have a special regional development strategy, but 78% of the universities have some strategy including aspects of regional development. Of these 78%, a vast majority saw the implementation of the strategy not completed.

The theme of the cooperation with municipalities is most often regional development or education development. Providing education and expert services are also common. With entrepreneurs the theme usually is providing research and education. The education, research and/or cooperation possibilities offered by university units were seen to meet the demands of regional stakeholders quite well. Large companies were seen as the most problematic. The demands of development organisations were seen well met. However, most of the universities do not have a designated unit to take care of practical day-to-day communication with regional stakeholders.

45% of universities have a sustainable development programme or are involved with a regional one. However, a third could not say whether a programme exists or not. Special education programmes in sustainable development were rare as well as research and education units, but short courses existed more widely.

A majority of universities (or one of their units) belongs to local, regional, national or international research or education network, which focuses on sustainable development. On-going research or education projects on sustainable development existed in one third of the universities, but 45% of the answerers did not know whether such existed or not.

One can find certain differences when comparing results of the questionnaires sent to regional stakeholders and universities. For example, when SMEs and municipalities thought that the needs and demands of organisations and universities did not always meet as universities were seen too theoretic and unwilling to conduct applied research, the universities evaluated that the education, research and/or cooperation possibilities offered by university units meet the demands of regional stakeholders quite well. One conflict is also that when organisations felt, that there was not enough information about cooperation possibilities available or that it was hard to find and that the structures of the universities were seen unclear and incomprehensible the universities felt that they have good relations to regional development actors.

### **2.1.3. Benchmarking university-region interaction practices**

The final outcomes of the ASAP project's work package 4 concentrating on promoting university-region dynamic interaction were to be the regional university-region cooperation models. To get an idea about the models and the types of cooperation the benchmarking of experiences was started. Some of the implemented practices are presented within the next chapters.

As John Goddard (2000, p. 20) highlights, universities are the repositories of knowledge about future technological, economic and social trends that need to be harnessed to help the region understand itself and to identify possible future directions. Universities can act as a gateway to global information and tailor this

information to meet the needs of different sectors of the regional economy. Public authorities need to explore mechanisms with universities for tapping into this knowledge base at both strategic and operational levels. In terms of strategy, events like a regional future search conference involving staff drawn from across the university and the public and private sector within the region is one possibility. At an operational level, gateway offices, which maintain an expertise database will need to be established if SMEs and small public and private organisations are to gain access to university knowledge.

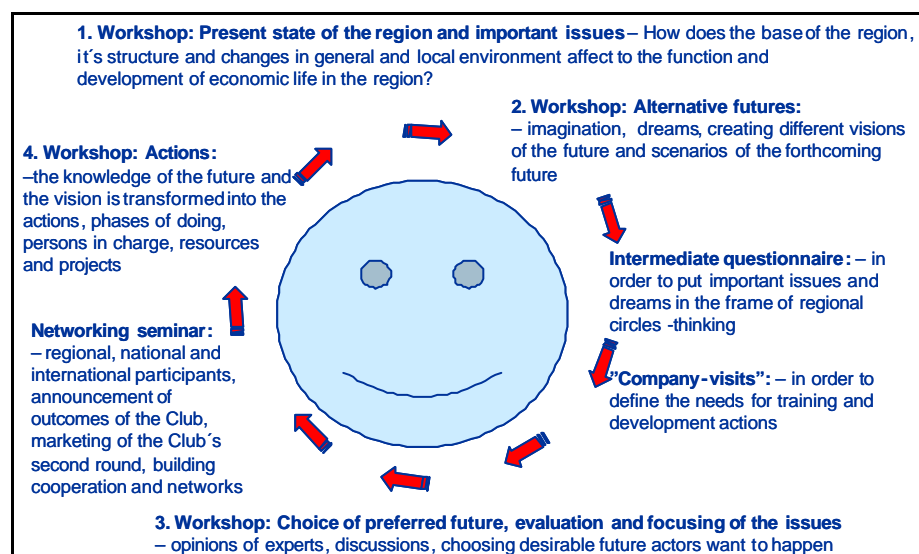
An obvious requirement of a regional human resource strategy is information about future labour market needs (Goddard 1997). Given the long time lag between the identification of needs and the development of the necessary skills, one of the fundamental requirements of a learning region is the sharing of intelligence between education and training system and employers. One materialized project in which university has helped the region to identify possible future directions is The Future Club in Loimaa Region in Finland.

### *The Futures Club in Loimaa Region*

The Futures Club is an innovative futures tool especially designed for developing the economic life of Loimaa region. At the same time it is a practical foresight process and a cooperative network of various regional actors such as business people, entrepreneurs, regional developers, representatives of educational institutes, municipal officials and other authorities. The Finland Futures Research Centre (FFRC) at the Turku School of Economics designs the method and practices of the Futures Club.

The Futures Club creates visionary leadership and governance by exploiting multiple futures research methods and practices like foresight (forecasting and back casting), scenario building and futures workshops. The dynamic process of Futures Club (one round) consists of four futures workshops in the duration of approximately one year (see Figure 2). After the first round, starts the second one selectively and also projects which have emerged during the first round.

Figure 2: The dynamic process of Future Club





### *Knowledge House*

Knowledge House was created in 1995 in North East England to overcome the barriers SMEs encountered when trying to access the knowledge resources of universities. In addition, the idea was to increase technology transfer taking place between local firms and universities. The purpose was to create a structure which would suite SMEs looking for help with a particular technical problem. (Charles et. al. 2005, p. 74-75, 108-109)

The first barriers SMEs encountered when trying to contact the university was the lack of knowledge whom to contact. Therefore, the Knowledge House offered a single point of contact for many universities. There is only one phone number and one e-mail address that offer a channel to the whole North East university network. Originally the Knowledge House was a physical drop-in centre for SMEs located in Newcastle but the model was expanded to one of a virtual network to capture the combined offer of all of the region's higher education institutes. The initial enquiry would be sent to all universities inviting them to suggest academics that could address the identified need. Ideally, the Knowledge House will give SMEs a choice of academic consultants and will facilitate a meeting for the firm's managers to meet with and select the most appropriate person for their needs. The Knowledge House service stretches from initial receipt and circulation of enquiries through project management and delivery to post-completion assessment of the service offered. This "cradle to grave" service makes Knowledge House relatively expensive to operate, but offers much improved client experience. (Charles et. al. 2005: 74-75, 108-109)

The service has no legal status, but its activities are overseen by the Universities of the North East<sup>3</sup> Board that consists of the vice chancellors of the participating universities. The Knowledge House is funded by a combination of the HEFCE HEIF2 initiative, EU Structural Funds and the universities themselves. The nature of work undertaken by the Knowledge House is extremely broad ranging from fine art restoration to the design of medical devices. So far, however, the common denominator seems to be design. Some 37% of number and 47% by value of the contracts are design-related. (Charles et. al. 2005: 74-75, 108-109)

### *University consortiums and provincial university-region networks in Finland*

In Finland, the Ministry of Education has highlighted the significance of universities' societal interaction. Universities' third task has been included in national university law next to the basic duties of education and research. The concrete content of the third task is still unclear, but in public debates societal interaction has often been strongly connected to regional development. (Mukkala et. al. 2006: 6)

In order to this third role to be fulfilled all over Finland, university consortiums and provincial university-region networks have been founded. There are six university consortiums in Finland in the regions that do not have a university of their own. The consortiums are not independent universities but are instead centres parented by the member universities. The provincial university-region network, on the other hand, is a cooperation model of educational institutes and other stakeholders within a region.

The university consortiums and the provincial university-region networks aim at developing the operational and financial cooperation and coordination in education, research and regional development. The basic idea behind this is to decrease overlapping operations of the higher education institutions (HEIs) within the region

and instead found new kind of collaboration reflecting the strengths and profiles of the HEIs. HEIs conduct together research that supports regional development and the executed educational programmes aim at lifting the educational level in the region. In the field of regional development, the HEIs develop networks of cooperation together with other regional actors.

The university consortiums and the provincial university-region networks operate on many fields. The traditional responsibility of HEIs is to organise education leading to a degree and conduct research. In addition, the institutions play an important role in developing their respective regions.

In the field of education the units provide education leading to a degree, whether it is bachelor, master or doctor. In addition, Open University education, extension studies and vocational supplementary education are provided. Many courses can be tailored to the needs of certain regional actor, if necessary. Especially courses in languages can be tailored to suite the needs of a certain enterprise in order for the students to learn the relevant vocabulary of their business field.

The HEIs also provide various kinds of research and expert services. These services can include extensive studies to a regional actor, as well as brief consultations on a specific problem. In addition, the HEIs may introduce the regional actors to students, who might make their thesis on a subject benefiting the actor. The HEIs can also provide their expertise in cooperation projects to the use of regional actors (e.g. the planning, preparing, applying and coordinating EU part-financed projects).

The HEIs can also provide their premises to the use of regional actors. E.g. laboratories for product testing are expensive to establish and to uphold. Thus HEIs with such premises might test the products of regional enterprises in their well-equipped laboratories. Some HEIs may provide their premises for conferences: they can organise a conference on request or only provide the premises for it.

University consortiums and the provincial university-region networks have many benefits. The cooperation between higher education institutes and the cooperation between HEIs and the region benefits all stakeholders. The cooperation between HEIs brings synergy, when overlapping in education and research can be decreased. The needs of the regions can be met as education, research and development work can be specially tailored to fit those needs. The HEIs, on the other hand, might receive more funding in their research, when the research is specifically directed to meet the needs of the region.

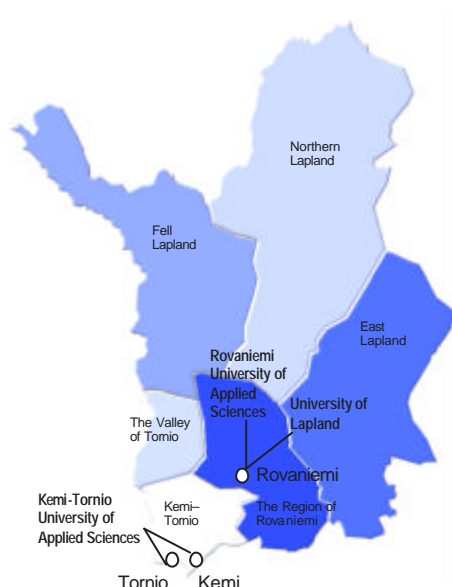
However, the university consortiums and the provincial university-region networks do not exist without difficulties. The HEIs are struggling in answering the demands of their respective regions, if the needs of the region are not well articulated. Reaching mutual understanding among many regional stakeholders is always challenging and different actors tend to emphasize different problems.

In addition to the regional problems of decision-making, also the decision-making within the academic institutes can be sometimes slow, which in turn slows down the further development of the consortiums and the provincial university-region networks. Also, universities tend to view cooperation with enterprises and public organisations with suspicion, since cooperation is believed to put the independency and objectivity of science on risk. This suspicion needs to be overcome so the universities might start to perceive the “third task” not so much as a task but as a principle guiding all activities.

### *Provincial University-Region Network of Lapland*

The Provincial University of Lapland is a network of sub-regions and HEIs in Lapland. It started out as a three-year project in 2003 but since the beginning of 2006 the provincial university has acted as a permanent organisation.

Figure 3: The sub-regions and higher education institutions in Lapland



The objective of the Provincial University is a well-balanced development of Lapland. The aim is to support the development work on the sub-regions and to improve availability of higher education. The differences between the sub-regions are considered and the know-how in the Provincial University is channelled to support the individual goals of the sub-regions. The provincial university also enhances cooperation between higher education institutions in Lapland.

The basic idea behind provincial university is to decrease overlapping operations. A common structure also makes the evaluation of strengths possible. It allows evaluating the resources in the region, in order to determine, what educational services needs to be imported.

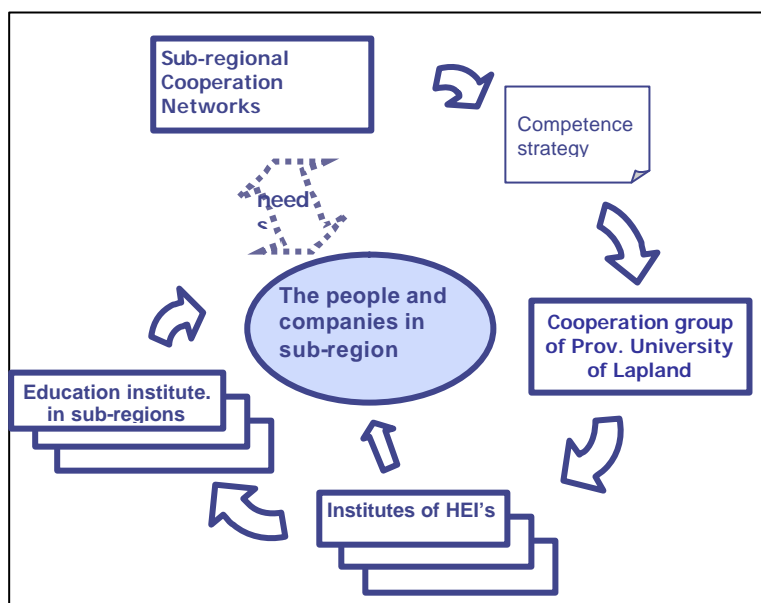
The sub-regional level of the organisation is comprised of *Cooperative Bodies* – one has been introduced to every sub-region. The Bodies consist of the representatives of sub-region's municipalities, regional development authorities, business sector, local education institutes and the HEIs of Lapland. The sub-regional Cooperative Body offers a common and permanent platform for sub-regional education, research and development needs and educational services of HEIs to meet. The Bodies elaborate the sub-regional development visions and plans for couple of years and define the sub-regional educational needs and the targets for research and development cooperation according to those needs. These plans are published in a form of sub-regional competence strategy. Within the regular meetings the needs and cooperation activities are updated.

The representatives of the higher education institutes form the *Cooperative Group*. The Group negotiates the services the sub-regions needs, either from the HEIs in Lapland or from actors outside the region. The Group prepares new educational

models, promotes the development of joint courses and gathers experiences from sub-regional cooperation and its results. The *Director of the Provincial University* prepares and executes the decisions made by the Cooperative Group.

The *Consultative Committee* consists of the representatives of State Provincial Office's department of education, Regional Employment and Economic Centre, Regional Council of Lapland and the HEIs. The Committee meets twice a year to give guidelines to the operations of the provincial university and to evaluate the progress so far.

Figure 4: Regional development within the structures of the Provincial University



Provincial University of Lapland has many benefits. The needs of the sub-regions are met as education and development work is especially designed to address those needs. The cooperation network also enables long-term planning in education, research and development work. Higher education institutions are committed to the provincial development, and resources are effectively used, due to the decrease in overlapping functions.

The finances for the provincial university come from various sources: Ministry of Education is an important financier as well as the municipalities and sub-regions. However, regional financiers also contribute to the university. Funds have also been received from the European Social Funds.

#### *Provincial university-region network of Southwest Finland*

The project's aim is similar with the Lapland case described above. Idea is to improve the availability of higher education, research and development services of the HEIs locating in the City of Turku. Education and research offered by the HEIs should meet the needs and requirements of the region.

The goal of the project is to build a university-region cooperation network for the area of Southwest Finland. The role of the project is to search and develop synergy benefits and new operation models out of partners' current activities and aims. The objective is to further partners' operation concepts so that they correspond better with the needs of municipalities, economic life and the population of the area.

The main difference with Lapland model is that the project in Southwest Finland has emphasised face-to-face meetings and personal consultancy between sub-regional higher education coordinators and local entrepreneurs. The central outcome of the project has been the network of sub-regional higher education coordinators. These persons coordinate issues relating to higher education and research within the sub-region and transfer education and research needs of the SMEs, municipalities and people to contact persons in higher education institutions. Higher education coordinator acts as a single contact point of the sub-region to whom to contact in issues of higher education. The person is a “middle-man” between the entrepreneur and academic society trying to solve communication and cooperation problems rising from different starting points and viewpoints.

The contract partners of the project are the University of Turku, Åbo Akademi University, Turku School of Economics, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Sydväst University of Applied Sciences, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Humak University of Applied Sciences and four economic sub-regions of Southwest Finland. Sub-regional development centres and regional higher education coordinators are the main regional counterparts of the higher education institutions.

#### **2.1.4. First conclusions of the work package 4 activities**

The central objective of the work package 4 within the A.S.A.P. project is to strengthen partner universities role in regional development processes. According to the earlier hypothesis and confirmed by the empiric survey the central problem in university-region cooperation is that SMEs and local public authorities feel that universities are far away, theoretical and bureaucratic. They don't find right experts or contact persons from the universities and the available co-operation possibilities are unknown. Thus, the university-region interaction models promoting flexible and effective cooperation between universities, SMEs, regional development authorities and municipalities will be elaborated.

There are two basic ideas behind the university-region cooperation model. The first one is active and purposeful networking both inside the university and within the particular region. University has to be active also within the regional networking if it wants to strengthen its role in regional development process. The other idea is that dialogue between university and region happens via one contact point when everyone knows who and how to contact.

Some university-region model solutions approaching the challenge from different viewpoints have been presented in this article. According to the first analyses, one can say that the effective model is a combination of web-based electronic tool (Knowledge House), personal assistance (model of Southwest Finland), strategic teamwork (Futures Club in Loimaa) and effective formal structures of cooperation (Provincial University of Lapland). The A.S.A.P. group has preferred so far the Lapland case as a main model solution. The reason for this is that although the electronic tools can facilitate communication the main emphasize should be in interpersonal relations and common teams. This is especially important when universities are starting cooperation with SMEs that don't have time to look for right contact persons from the Internet. The “middle-men” acting between the entrepreneur and academic society and trying to solve communication and cooperation problems rising from different viewpoints are needed.

The university-region interaction model should include at least the next elements:

- Named contact persons/groups/boards of the different stakeholders that are responsible for communication and dissemination within the regional network for their side.
- Synergy meetings and frequency of the appointments.
- Cooperation fields and topics
- Channels of knowledge or ways to transfer knowledge within the regional network
- The described roles of the network partners.

To go further there are at least three steps that university has to take when it prepares the cooperation model:

- Find the key local actors influencing to regional development (stakeholder mapping) and analyse the present relations to these actors.
- Form regional and theme-oriented cooperation groups within which dialogue with regional and local authorities is materialized and within which university can open the university “black box”, explain university’s interests and drivers, provide detailed knowledge of teaching and research portfolios and share overall expertise and know-how for the use of others.
- Restructure internal mechanisms in a way that supports single contact point approach, make university activities more responsive to regional needs and help to coordinate and manage regional links.

Although there are many thresholds in universities preventing the effective cooperation with regional stakeholders, one can’t blame only universities. Universities funding structure is one of the biggest problems. Universities or university professors and researchers don’t receive money according to third task. The majority of money from the Ministry of Education comes according to graduated students, doctoral thesis, educational programmes etc. Of course the alternative ways to work are always available. The final decision depends on university’s interests and choices. Does the university recognise the importance of regional engagement and what is the distinctive contribution of the university to the regional agenda?

Based on the results of the implemented questionnaires, one can say that the total potential of the universities is not used within regional development. Too often universities are like ivory towers preparing knowledge for themselves. Modes of cooperation with regional stakeholders consist too often only educational or research activities when the ad hoc R&D support, expertise in strategic development and well-equipped laboratories for product testing should be provided.

## **2.2. Approach to the realization of the A.S.A.P. activities in Russia**

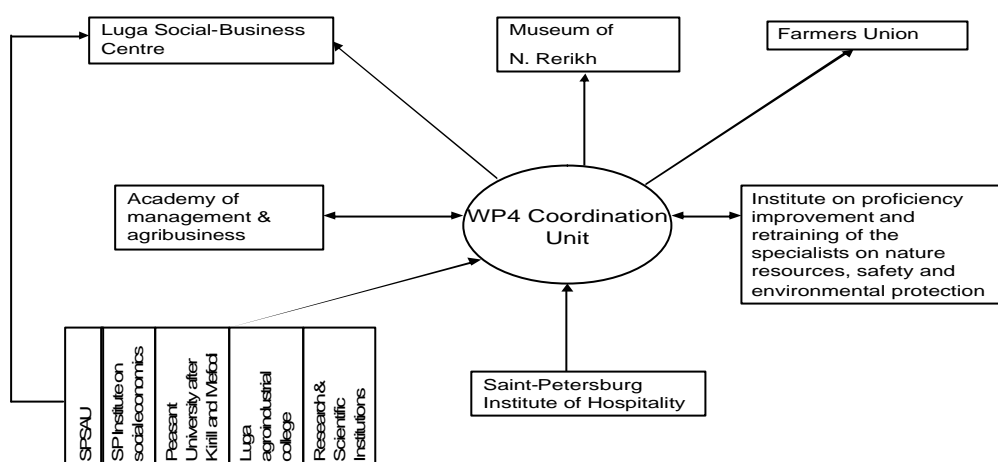
### **2.2.1. Background**

According to the law N 131 “About general principles of organizing local self-government” adopted in Russian Federation 01.01.2006 it is necessary to carry out administrative reforms, including reforms in management of rural areas on different municipal levels and in different areas of activity. Benchmarking of foreign experience, especially experience of Nordic countries where administrative reforms in rural areas were started much earlier, has been supported.

This aim is partly gained by two international projects in the frame of BSR INTERREG IIIB NP and TACIS “Efficient Administrative Structures as a Prerequisite for Successful Economic and Social Development of Rural Areas in Demographic Transition” (A.S.A.P.). There are 38 partners from 7 countries

(Germany, inland, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia, Estonia and Russia) in these two projects. And one of them is being realized in Russian Federation, in three pilot districts in Leningrad region (Luga, Priozersk and Volosovo) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Structure of interaction between pilot districts and educational institutions



Based on the questionnaires survey and SWOT analyses the most typical forms of activities were chosen in every of three pilot districts. Realization of WP4 in Russia was focused on these activities. The coordination unit of WP4 involved in cooperation the number of educational, information-consulting and other institutions which interact with 7 partners of A.S.A.P. in Russia including Committee on economy development of Government of Leningrad region, Academy of management and Agribusiness of Non-Chernozem Zone of Russian Federation, Institute on proficiency improvement and retraining of the specialists on nature resources, safety and environmental protection, Farmers Union of Saint-Petersburg and Leningrad region, Association for Assistance of Field Research & Development of Rural Territories as well as some others.

### 2.2.2. Luga pilot district

For Luga pilot district as a base for the WP4 realization the model of interaction between local administration, clients (large and small-scale governmental, joint-stock companies and individual entrepreneurs) and universities<sup>1</sup> was taken. The central role in this interaction plays a Social-Business Centre, which effectively acts in Luga district

The Centre celebrated 10 years in 2006 performs the functions of municipal foundation for support and promotion of economics and entrepreneurship in Luga district. There are more than 200 small-scale enterprises, 1500 individual entrepreneurs and they supply 18% of all the goods and services in the district. More

<sup>1</sup>From now on the term “Universities” are considered technical schools, colleges, universities, institutions of supplementary professional education, research institutions

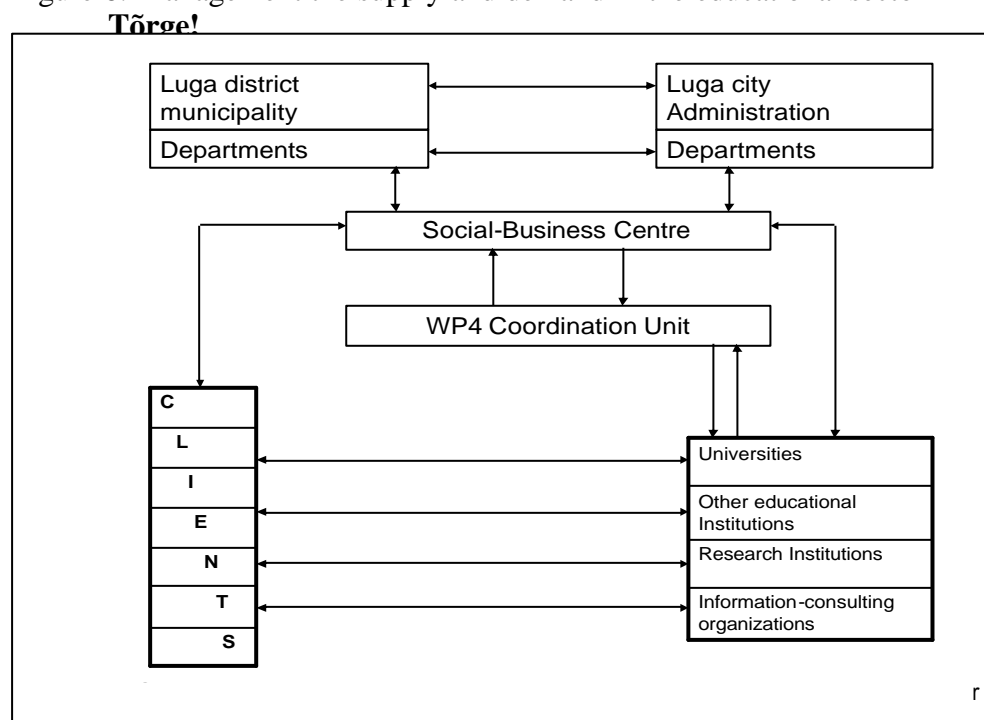
than ¼ population of the municipality “Luga district” is involved in the small-scale business.

Luga Social-Business Centre is a connecting link between the small-scale business, regional administration, employment centers and educational institutions. It provides education and individual consultations of beginning entrepreneurs through seminars, conferences and meetings on experience exchange. Besides this the centre helps to start business giving micro-credits and legalizing enterprises. It involves teachers and specialists of Luga and Saint-Petersburg universities in the development and realization of educational programs for different local target groups. And last but not least it has successful experience in participation in international projects. In 2002 within the frames of the Swedish “WERAN” project the Saint-Petersburg social-economic institute and the Luga social-business center with the active help of the Committee for support of small, medium business and consumer market established the autonomous nonprofit organization “Vera” Resource Center” which objectives are to:

- Help women to find their place in the society,
- Promote development of women’s business,
- Strengthen women’s position in the society,
- Render assistance in forming networks of professionally active women.

So currently Luga Social-business Centre is a multi-type effectively acting structure, which actively cooperates with administration staff both Luga city and Luga municipality and Committee on development of small-scale business and consumption market. This is a structure, which plays a significant role in social-economical development of rural territories in Luga municipality using expertise and knowledge of Universities. Figure 6 shows the place of Social-business Centre in the management of demands and supply of educational services in Luga municipality.

Figure 6: Management the supply and demand in the educational sector in Luga





In the beginning of 90-s the important trend in the development of educational and information-consulting services was the establishment of branches and representations of St. Petersburg and Moscow institutions of higher education in Leningrad region, directly in rural areas. Besides this the independent higher educational institutions were established in Leningrad region.

And Luga city has a great advantage in comparison with other ASAP pilot districts as well as with the rest districts of Leningrad region. First of all because in 1991 the Peasant State University named after Kirill and Mifody was opened. There are the following faculties in the university: Pedagogical, Economics, Juridical, Biotechnical, Painting, Landscape design, Faculty of Secondary professional education and Faculty of professional retraining and proficiency improvement. Besides that in November 2006 on the base of three technical schools-lyceums in Luga district Agro-industrial College was created. The college gives education in a wide specter of specialties: agriculture, trade, construction, social issues, services, etc. In 2007 about 800 students (mostly locals) studied in the college. More than 90% of them continued to live and work in Luga. All together five branches of higher educational institutions of Saint Petersburg and Moscow were opened in Luga.

Administrative structures and social-business center have close contacts with Saint-Petersburg agrarian university, Academy of management and agribusiness, Research Institutions of the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences and with other institutions in the area of education and information-consulting area.

The situation in other pilot districts is very much different. Thus, in Volosovo there is only one technical school – Agricultural College “Beseda”. It gives education in the following specialties: management, construction, agronomy, zoo-techniques, veterinary, and farm organization. In Priozersk district there are three technical schools, which educate in working professions mainly for industry and agriculture.

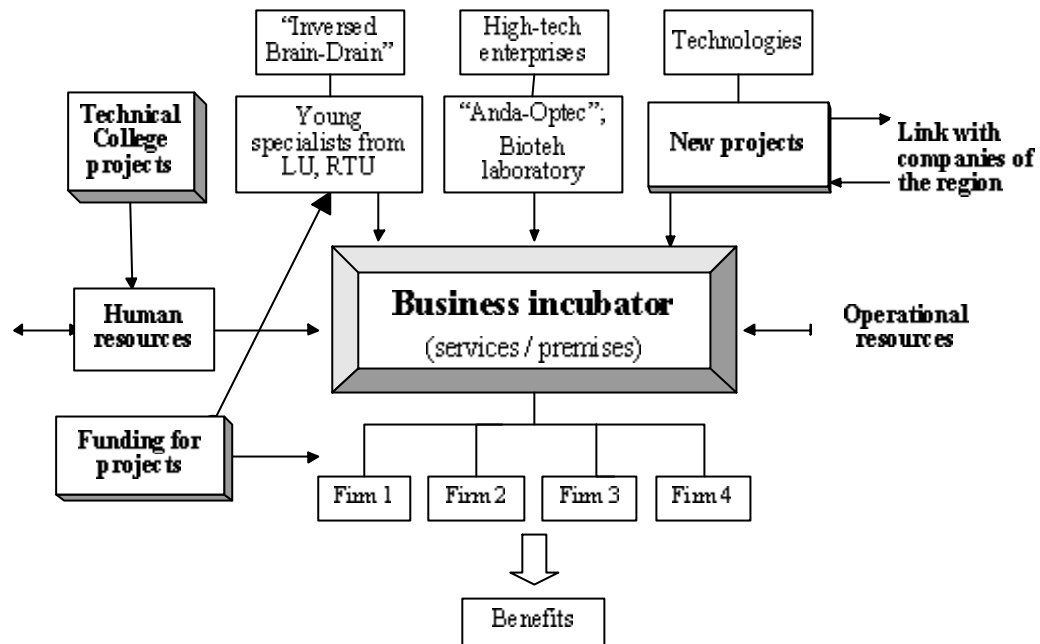
So Luga municipality has rather developed sector of educational services that can be transferred to the two other pilot districts of ASAP. This may be realized in the frame of the tripartite agreement on cooperation between the pilot districts. The elaboration and signing of the agreement will be initialized by activity of WP4.

In this case it will be reasonable to use Latvian experience of Business-incubator in Livani for the development of Luga Business centre as well as for the development of the other pilot districts.

Livani district (incl. town of Livani and two villages) lies in the southeastern part of Latvia, in Latgale region (167 km from Riga). Industry has been the basis for development of Livani for almost two centuries. The changes in Latvia's economy after restoration of independence were painful for the town. The reason for that was the extremely high portion of industrial facilities, equipment and labour, which became obsolete in the new economic situation. In early 1990s, Livani got its sad nickname, the „unemployment capital” of Latvia having unemployment rate of 35%. As a result of various measures, it has now gradually decreased till 12%. One of the local municipality's measures for promoting employment in the town was the idea of establishing **Livani Business Incubator**.

Figure 7 depicts the initial development context of Livani Business Incubator and shows that the incubator was planned not only as a separate infrastructure or entrepreneurship development project, but Livani district development project in broader sense tackling array of socio-economic problems.

Figure 7: Livani Business incubator development context



- 3) Closer cooperation with Livani district's high-tech and other enterprises – efficient instrument for fostering economic activity in the region through joint project, services provision or other cooperation forms.

Of course, it should be taken into account that successful realization of Livani idea was possible with the great financial support in the frame of series of international projects. However it doesn't mean that this idea cannot be transformed and applied in Leningrad region.

It is also reasonable to use the experience of the Riga Technical University Distance Education Study Centre in the work and development of the Peasant University and start cooperation between them. The students from Peasant University could take part in number of programs offered by Distance Education Study Centre and, thus, receive an international certificate of both universities. In the future the Peasant University could start giving such courses by its own.

Some activities on development of rural areas (and particularly Luga municipality) are realized in cooperation with the other TACIS project "Sustainable development of rural area of Leningrad Region (RurDV)".

For example on the base of cooperation between two TACIS projects and two INTERREG projects an international seminar "Administrative reforms as a way of transition towards sustainable use of nature and human resources" was held at Saint-Petersburg Agrarian University in December 2006. About 20 specialists from Germany, Sweden, Finland and number of other countries discussed with Russian specialist different questions related regional development. In the frame of the seminar a study tour to Luga was organized for the foreign participants. They had meetings with representatives of local municipality and got acquainted with their activities.

We hope that such interaction between international projects will give a significant synergy effect for the development as pilot districts as rural areas in a whole.

### **2.2.3. Volosovo pilot district**

In Volosovo pilot district another model of cooperation between administration, local citizens and educational institutions is being analyzed and elaborated. It is more related to the social-cultural development of individual.

On the district territory in Izvara settlement there is an unique complex of nature, architecture, history and culture – "Museum-estate of N.K.Rerikh" (Nikolay Rerikh – (1874-1947) – a famous Russian painter, scientist, philosopher and traveler became generally recognized as an initiator of international pact on protection of cultural values (Rerikh's pact, which was signed in Washington in 1935.).

This social-cultural Centre in the district offers:

- Exhibitions
- Lectures
- Courses on culture and history
- Cultural events
- Ecological camps

It closely cooperates with businessmen, schools, Russians and International public and cultural organizations. It has 14000 visitors per year.

In July 2006 the Governor of Leningrad Region Valery Serdjukov signed an order on elaboration of a project on creation of specially protected nature area "Nature memorial" on the territory of the museum.

The strengthening role of the Museum not only in social-cultural but also in social-economical development may be achieved through the effective cooperation with a specialized in these fields educational institution. That's why Saint-Petersburg Institute of Hospitality (SPIH) was involved in the activity in WP4. SPIH has a mission to train highly skilled professionals for tourist industry and to further the development of tourist activities in the Northwest region of Russia. The special attention in the educational programs is given to environmental protection and rational use of natural resources in tourism, to development of eco-and agri-tourism.

SPIH gives education not only in Hospitality Management, Tour and Travels Management, Food Service Management, Financial Management in Tourism, Trade Enterprises Management, Hotel and Tourism Business, but also in Socio-cultural Services. St. Petersburg Institute of Hospitality has a good experience in international cooperation and is one of the organizers of the round table "Tourism, Ecology, Youth" in the frame of International ecological forum "Baltic Sea Day" (HELCOM). It is very important that SPIH acts not only as an academician organization, but tries to set practically active relationships with rural municipalities.

Thus the activity in the frame of WP4 in Volosovo has a different character in comparison with Luga district. Here we plan close cooperation with Estonian A.S.A.P partner, Saaremaa University Centre from the island Saaremaa, particularly in the field of using historical cultural values and building partner relationships between different universities and administrative structures for the effective development of rural territories. Also experiences of the Finnish University Consortiums will be elaborated (see chapter on University Consortiums)

Saaremaa University Centre (SUC) is a non-governmental organisation founded by the University of Turku, University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology, Tallinn University, Estonian University of Life Sciences and Saaremaa County Government in September 1997. The organisation supports the cooperation of its member universities in the West-Estonian region and finds new areas of activity for the institutions of higher education, considering their academic and research potential. As the name of the organisation says, its target region is Saaremaa County, but from the very beginning, some projects of SUC have extended to the neighbouring counties of Hiiumaa and Läänemaa. Through development programmes and projects, the centre wishes to promote both its member organisations and the individuals participating in them. SUC also seeks to support innovation in Saaremaa region, to find new ways and forms of extension and further education programmes of the universities, and to promote their member universities among prospective new students.

#### **2.2.4. Priozersk pilot district**

In the third pilot district, Priozersk, we have focused on the interaction between municipality administration, individual entrepreneurs (farmers) and agricultural cooperatives in the area of business and alternative activities development in the rural territories based on cooperation with educational institutions, social organizations, unions and funds.

Distinctive feature of the Priozersk district is a high development of agriculture sector (both large-scale joint stock companies and individual farms). The assignment of employees in agriculture is 18.3% when in construction it is only 4.9%, transport and communication – 4.9% and in health services – 4.5%.

Farmers Union of Saint-Petersburg and Leningrad Region, one of the A.S.A.P. partners, actively works in this district. It has joint activities with farmers and administrative structures. Farmers Union took part in an investigation of development of consumers' cooperatives and small-scale enterprises in Leningrad Region. According to this investigation the information-consulting services are mainly needed in the following forms and areas:

- Courses and materials on training and retraining of specialists for agricultural cooperatives
- Specialized courses for the administrative staff in agricultural sector and in municipalities.

Farmers Union of Saint-Petersburg and Leningrad Region has taken the leading functions in the WP4 activities in this district. With the support of administration of Priozersk municipality and together with non-commercial partnership "Farmers of Priozersk district" the Farmers Union organized number of education seminars. The following topics were highlighted on the seminars: possibilities of getting state support from different budgets for farmers, measures, envisaged in priority national project on development of small forms of management, conditions of accordance of proceeds of credit from different banks, current legislation, regulating different spheres of activities of small forms of management in the village. Chairman of Committee on agro-industrial complex of Leningrad region, head of Priozersk Municipality and 52 farmers and owners of private subsidiary plots took part in the seminar.

Of course, the Farmers Union involves specialists from educational institutions and administrative organizations to this form of activity. Another example for regional networking activities can be studied at Wismar University situated in the North-East of Germany between the Cities of Lübeck, Rostock and Schwerin. In the field of education a major national project named EGOS is being carried out by Wismar University with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Mecklenburg Western Pomerania as well as from the EU. Approximately 35 network partners from the private sector, associations, schools, training centres, chambers of commerce and public authorities are aiming to develop a network for regional educational development. The main emphasis is on basic and advanced training in mathematical, natural science and technical fields. By means of this project the network wishes to strengthen the regional economy and education in order to improve the skills of qualified staff of the region. In this way the shortage of qualified staff, that is one result of the emigration of recent years, can be counteracted. Universities need to consider the needs of all generations in the educational development process. The socio-economic environment of the Wismar region can be characterised by the demographic change towards a growing number of the older people. New strategies for modifying the existing infrastructure according to the needs of the older generation need to be developed. The relative shortage in young people will be a challenge for the financial assurance of education in the region. The educational quality as well as the extent of the education system has a significant impact of the future quality of the staff. This has consequences for the economic sector, its range of development and the quality of the products and services offered by the companies.

The generation and transfer of knowledge are getting more and more important for the competitiveness of the university and for the whole region. The ability to keep qualified staff in the region in order to fight the regional brain drain the university is in strong collaboration with the regional stakeholder's trying to push innovations and regional competitiveness in order to create new high qualified jobs. The region becomes

more interesting for new investors who, in turn, enrich the whole region. Within this development the strong collaboration with the Technology and Commercial Centre (TGZ) has been a long tradition. The TGZ aims to support and keep an eye on young, technologically oriented, companies.

In order to keep qualified graduates in the region it offers an attractive range of production sites, laboratories and office spaces as well as modern conference and communication facilities. The close collaboration with Wismar University stresses the support for outsourced companies taking their first independent steps in the initial years of their business operations. Within this existing network the Technology and Research Centre was launched in the beginning of the 90'ies also established in the TGZ. It opens up opportunities for research in close collaboration with industry and commerce. Since 2006 Wismar University is a partner in the regional planning council playing a major role in the development of regional soft factors. In cooperation with the regional development authorities the university is working on a regional strategy for soft factors in order to raise the level and quality for the business environment in Wismar region.

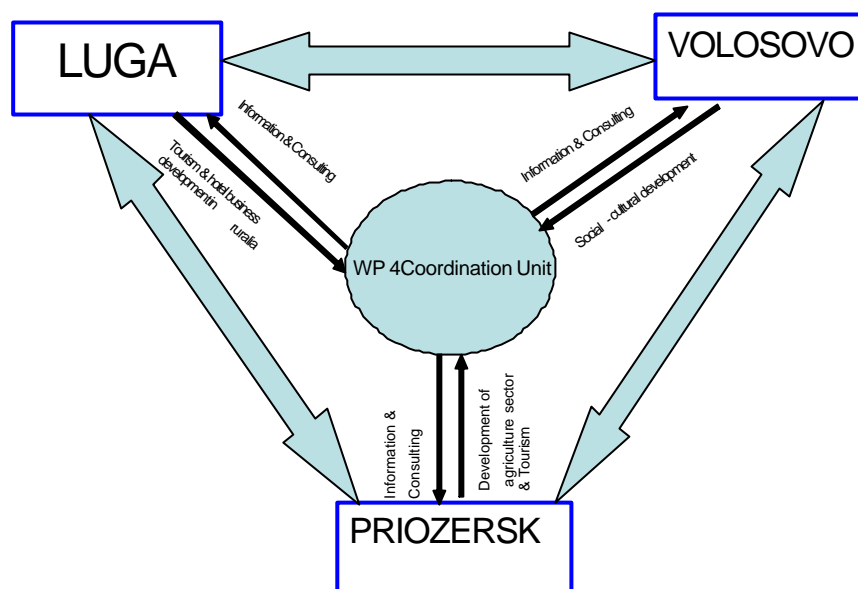
Priozersk district has unique natural conditions, which could help in the development of different types of tourism. The Eastern part of the district is situated on the shore of the biggest (after Caspian sea) internal lake in Europe – Ladoga Lake. Numerous rivers and lakes connect this district with Vyborg district and with Finland by the internal seaways. Rivers and lakes are rich with fish, forests – with mushrooms, berries and herbs. The fauna is also very much diverse.

There are 17 resorts for fishermen and hunters, 4 regional nature reserves on the territory of the district. Islands Konevets and Valaam where monasteries are situated are especially popular among Russian and foreign tourists. Administration of Priozersk municipality and Government of Leningrad Region pay a significant attention on the tourism development in the district. At the same time it is necessary to underline that tourism in Priozersk district (as well as in other districts of Leningrad Region) has mainly so-called “traditional” features. It means that tourists are accommodated in local hotels and tourist resorts. The agri-tourism, which supports the accommodation of tourists on the farms and private houses, is weakly developed. At the same time Administrations of the communities, which situated far away from the pilots districts centers and have low level of economy development especially hope on the agri-tourism as a mean of a “brining life” to the communities. Unfortunately there is a serious problem in training specialists for the agri-tourism sector. Governmental technical schools and lyceums mainly educate specialists in traditional tourist services. Only in a small extent they have courses for those who'd like to be specialized in the agri-tourism. Thus, in the Agi-technical Lyceum 41 in Michurinskoe settlement of Priozersk district there is a special course “farmers wife”. In Luga Agri-industrial college it possible to get such specialties as: administrator, barmen, chef-cook, waiter, etc. If theses kind of specialists could get extra training and education there would be possible to prepare them for the work in agri-tourism. It is also necessary to give the possibility to the locals who are interested in starting their own agri-tourist enterprises for getting knowledge in this area. The WP4 gives a special role in organization and providing such kind educational services to Saint-Petersburg Institute of Hospitality.

### 2.2.5. Summary of the Russian approach

Each of the pilot districts has special features and “main objects”, better than other prepared for the cooperation with educational and administrative structures in the information and education sectors.

Figure 8: Model of cooperation between three pilot districts.



Among educational institutions, which could effectively cooperate with administrative structures and consumers of educational services, it is necessary to highlight the academies and institutions of supplementary education. These institutions mainly retrain and proficiently improve top managers and specialists, who already have higher education.

In September 2006 it was made a survey among rectors of the leading Russian academies and institutions of supplementary education in agriculture, who participated in All-Russian conference “Development of effective market economy and formation of personnel potential of Russian agricultural sector”, which was held at the base of Academy of management and agribusiness of Non-Chernozem Zone of Russian Federation. The survey showed the great role and effectiveness of supplementary education in rural areas and the strong and flexible relationship between this kind of educational institutions and administrative structures. At the same time the survey made in the pilot districts showed that local stakeholders feel lack of information about these institutions.

As a rule the institutions of supplementary education have departments specialized on scientific, methodical and information-consulting services which could extend the area of activity and take responsibility for the coordination or at least unification role in the realization of this or that models of partners relationship in rural areas. Important to mention that in Russian Federation there is a developed net of

institutions for supplementary education not only in agricultural sector but also in the culture, health services, state governmental services, etc.

The rectors of three key agrarian institutions for supplementary education in North-West Region of Russian Federation situated in Kaliningrad, Petrozavodsk and Novgorod showed a great interest in participation in A.S.A.P., especially in WP 5 (dissemination of the project results). Additionally to the 3 project pilot districts the survey was also made in Novgorod region. Three directors of agricultural colleges – educational institutions, which have closest contacts with local administrative and other stakeholders in Novgorod region, would like to participate in WP 5 as well.

In a high importance for the development and coordination of the activity in the frame of WP4 there were seminar in Rovaniemi, Finland. The project partners were acquainted with the Provincial University-Region Cooperation model of Lapland (see chapter above). In September this year in Saint Petersburg it is planned to discuss in detail the possibility of adaptation of foreign experience to the conditions of the North-West Region of Russian Federation. The complete materials, summarizing the activity in the frame of WP4 will be presented at the final A.S.A.P. conference in November in Ludwigslust, Germany.

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