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# **Joint Transnational Strategy against the Brain-Drain of Well Educated Young Women and Joint Action Plan**

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## CONTENTS

Contents .....	3
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Executive Summary .....	12
3. Background.....	19
4. Methodology .....	21
5. Problems addressed .....	24
6. Transregional needs for change .....	28
7. Transregional forecast.....	32
8. SWOT analysis .....	37
9. Mission, vision, development directions and main objectives.....	39
10. Fields of intervention, pilot actions, lessons for the future .....	44
11. Strategy communication and monitoring .....	50
12. Strategy implementation – Joint Action Plan.....	51
13. References .....	57
14. Annexes.....	59
Annex 1 - Problems in numbers (detailed analysis).....	60
Annex 2 - Regional SWOTs.....	71

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Europe 2020 Targets .....	5
Figure 2: The process of strategy development .....	22
Figure 3: Set of common problems regarding women's labour market situation .....	29
Figure 4: Population growth in EU and its neighbourhood in 2030 .....	33
Figure 5: Annual net migration 2010-2030 (baseline).....	34
Figure 6: Regional gender structures among young adults.....	35
Figure 7: Sex balance in the age group 20-24 (2011) .....	36
Figure 8: General SWOT .....	37
Figure 9: Development directions and corresponding sets of actions .....	41
Figure 10: Implementation strategies .....	42
Figure 11: Potential fields of actions.....	44
Figure 12: Programme and project ideas .....	45
Figure 13: Recommendations from the WOMEN Project pilot initiatives .....	47
Figure 14: Joint Action Plan – graphically.....	52
Figure 15: Joint Action Plan .....	53

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When discussing the brain-drain of well educated, young females and the ways to limit its negative impacts, many socio-economic realities and policy issues come to play. While the key elements of the European integration, such as the free movement of people, goods, capital and services, ask for greater flexibility and mobility of the labour force, migratory processes create considerable social and economic costs and unevenly impact the immigration and emigration regions.

### **Europe 2020**

A useful perspective on the subject is provided by looking closer at the Europe Strategy 2020 which is the European Union's ten-year growth strategy<sup>1</sup>. It is expected to promote growth that is smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive. Five key targets have been set for the EU with respect to the 2020 Strategy: employment; education; research and innovation; social inclusion and poverty reduction; and climate/energy. The strategy also includes seven 'flagship initiatives' on which the EU and national authorities mutually reinforce their efforts: innovation, digital economy, employment, youth, industrial policy, poverty reduction, and resource efficiency.

**Figure 1: Europe 2020 Targets**

Europe 2020 Targets at EU level	
1. Employment	• 75% of 20-64 year-olds to be employed
2. R&D / Innovation	• 3% of the EU's GDP (public and private combined) to be invested in R&D/Innovation
3. Climate change / energy	• greenhouse gas emissions 20% lower than 1990 (or even 30%, if the conditions are right) • 20% of energy from renewables • 20% Increase in energy efficiency
4. Education	• Reducing school drop-out rates below 10% • At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing tertiary education
5. Reducing poverty and social exclusion	• Lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion

Source: Europe 2020 Handbook for Local and Regional Authorities, Committee of the Regions, 2011, p. 10.

At the EU level key decisions are being taken to complete the single market in services, energy and digital products, and to invest in essential cross-border links. At national level obstacles to competition and job creation are to be removed. Europe 2020 relies heavily on the new governance

<sup>1</sup> Europe Strategy 2020: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm)

structures and processes that the EU has been putting in place since 2010. At the heart of these is the European Semester, a yearly cycle of economic policy coordination involving EU level policy guidance by the European Commission and Council, reform commitments by the Member States and country-specific recommendations prepared by the Commission and endorsed at the highest level in the European Council. These recommendations are to be taken on board in the Member States' policies and budgets. Some most relevant recent (2013) recommendations<sup>2</sup> for the countries in which the Project WOMEN regions<sup>3</sup> are located, linked to the issues of gender balance and increased participation of women in labour force, are as follows:

- Germany: The labour market situation is currently favourable, however due to a shrinking population Germany will face shortages in the labour market in the medium-term, in particular for qualified labour. **It is necessary to increase full-time employment of women and to raise educational level of people with migrant background. The tax wedge on low income workers is still too high.** Germany should lower taxes and social security contributions to increase disposable income for poorer people and to strengthen domestic demand.
- Austria: **Austria has the third highest gender pay-gap in the EU and a high share of part-time work among women. In order to redress these imbalances Austrian authorities need to ensure appropriate childcare and long-term care.** The potential of people with a migrant background should also be fully tapped, notably through improving the recognition of their qualifications. The **tax burden for low income earners continues to be a disincentive to full-time employment of women** and to labour market participation of migrants. This should be reduced by shifting taxation towards other sources, considered less detrimental to growth such as recurrent taxes on immovable property.
- Slovenia: Slovenia should ensure that wage developments support its external competitiveness and **create jobs**. It should counter the rise in unemployment by ensuring that recent reforms improve labour market segmentation. The government should also **step up active labour market policies and address the skills mismatch, for example, by improving vocational education and training**. Slovenia has a high number of regulated professional services and it should step up efforts **to remove unnecessary restrictions to [regulated professional services] entry and practice**.
- Hungary: In Hungary **a low employment rate is paired with one of the lowest rate of labour market participation in the EU. Unemployment risks are higher for low-skilled workers, youth, women, especially those with children, and older workers.** Hungary should **enhance the Public Employment Service and promote active labour market policies and lifelong learning**. The social situation continues to worsen with 31% of the population at risk of

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<sup>2</sup> Europe Strategy 2020 in each country: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/index_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Saxony-Anhalt, Germany; South Transdanubia, Hungary; Pomurje, Slovenia; Styria, Austria; Podlaskie, Poland; Rzeszowskie, Poland.

poverty or social exclusion and a high percentage of people facing severe material deprivation. Poverty continues to disproportionately affect disadvantaged territories and communities, in particular the Roma and should be urgently addressed through the National Social Inclusion Strategy.

- **Poland: Too few women and older people are working in Poland. Older workers, especially women, are not benefitting from the recent increase in employment owing partly to a lack of affordable childcare and care for dependent adults.** Poland should also reduce social benefits for miners and farmers to increase incentives to work in other sectors.

The above recommendations address the structural problems related to the labour market, and more specifically to female participation in the labour force, gender pay-gap, gender related risk of unemployment, and the necessary infrastructure which would encourage women to take full time employment: e.g. affordable childcare and care for dependent adults.

It is not difficult to imagine that the above mentioned and other related problems, identified at the macro-level, are magnified in the regions which are losing disproportionately large numbers of young educated females, i.e. the problems which this Joint Transnational Strategy addresses.

## ***Migration***

Migration brings change for those who move and those who stay, i.e. both in the sending and receiving localities and regions. The evaluation of relative benefits and costs of migration is very difficult. **While some benefits are of immediate and easily identifiable nature, such as: employment, wages earned, increased economic output, the costs are often deferred, hidden and diffused, e.g. family disintegration, shortage of skills in sending regions, weakened social cohesion in receiving regions. Migration has impacts on the economy (employment, GDP), but also on public services and in the social sphere.**

For example, as evidenced by a recent study of the Polish Academy of Science<sup>4</sup>, the large scale emigration from Poland to Western Europe causes not only depopulation but also: low birth rates, ageing communities, and destabilized families. The number of emigrants from Poland since the country's accession to the EU has exceeded 2 million (out of 38 millions) and the regions covered by the Project WOMEN are among those with greatest population losses: Podlaskie-9.1%, Podkarpackie - 8.4% (second and third worst cases after Opolskie -10.6%). These tendencies disrupt the socio-economic structures of the emigrant regions and negatively impact their development. It is expected that the emigrants and their children will not return to the country, causing the future birth rates and the share of young population (<15 years of age) to decline by some 10 percentage points, and the share of productive age population to decline by 7 percentage points. Despite large inflow of remittances, the positive impact on the national economy is limited, as these funds are primarily

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<sup>4</sup> Polish Academy of Science report on effects of emigration (December, 2013):  
<http://www.aktualnosci.pan.pl/index.php/77-uncategorised/1382-raport-komitetu-badan-nad-migracjami-pan-w-kwestii-skutkow-emigracji-mieszkancow-polski-do-krajow-unii-europejskiej>

used for consumption. Emigrant families are among those facing higher probability of divorce. Emigration causes disintegration of multi-generation families, resulting in greater demand for institutional care of the elderly.

**The economic integration of migrants (third-country nationals) in the EU is low** (employment rate under 60% and unemployment rate around 20%), and does not indicate any improvements since 2008. Negative gaps between the rates of employment and unemployment of nationals and migrants are common in Europe, and persistent.<sup>5</sup> The migrant human capital is also underutilized as the recognition of foreign qualifications is not smooth and there is a range of discriminatory practices (lack of information, lengthy recognition processes). **Migrant women are more disadvantaged than migrant men and national women.** There is a **very high inactivity rate of third-country women** (43%), caused by a number of economic and socio-cultural factors.

The recipient countries and regions, as evidenced by the example of the United Kingdom, face many challenges related to the influx of migrants. The scale of migration to the UK is unprecedented, with high costs posed to the social services. More than 600,000 unemployed EU migrants live currently in Britain, with a cost of 1.8 billion Euros to the National Health Service alone. The number of non-active migrants has risen by over 40% between 2006 and 2012.<sup>6</sup> These trends create pressures and political sentiments, going even as far as to question the continuation of the country's membership in the EU. The UK has reacted by the introduction of new rules designed to limit the access by migrants from other European Union states to the national welfare system – wider benefits will only be made available to those with a minimum income classed as workers rather than jobseekers.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Brain drain***

Increased labour mobility across borders becomes more common. It can stimulate more efficient use of talent and help balancing labour supply and demand at the EU levels. Theoretically positive, such development is also seen as a cause of concern among analysts. The combination of a competitiveness deficit in the periphery and in weaker European regions, coupled with outmigration of the young and educated population, including scientists and entrepreneurs, leads to brain-drain in locations most needing talent.

The recent crisis and the structural problems in some EU regions have led to greater numbers of labour migrants following one direction – from the countries and regions of the periphery to the

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<sup>5</sup> International Organization for Migration, 2013: Migration, Employment and Labour Market Integration Policies in the EU – 2011 (Study funded by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the EC).

<sup>6</sup> The Telegraph, October 12, 2013: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/10375358/True-scale-of-European-immigration.html>

<sup>7</sup> EurActive: Britain sets out new test to limit EU migrant benefits, 19 February, 2014: [http://www.euractiv.com/uk-europe/britain-sets-new-test-limit-eu-m-news-533610?utm\\_source=EurActiv%20Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=ef9f0079a7-newsletter-daily-update&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_bab5f0ea4e-ef9f0079a7-245512265](http://www.euractiv.com/uk-europe/britain-sets-new-test-limit-eu-m-news-533610?utm_source=EurActiv%20Newsletter&utm_campaign=ef9f0079a7-newsletter-daily-update&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bab5f0ea4e-ef9f0079a7-245512265)



countries of northern Europe.<sup>8</sup> **Highly skilled, multilingual professionals, scientists and other highly educated persons have been forced by the economic realities of their countries to leave for work to the most promising, economically advanced locations.** Although it can be expected that after gaining experience they will eventually return, this is rather unlikely.

The major challenges identified in relation to the recent brain-drain intensification are very serious. **Short- to medium-term negative prospects for the brain-drain countries and regions are multiple:**

- **slower progress towards high-value added economy and competitiveness,**
- **hindered innovation and adaptation, and thus**
- **lower economic gains and difficulties in keeping current standards of living.**

This low-growth and low-skills economic model is very risky. The reversal of this trend is unlikely without a major rethinking of the current EU policies. The basic requirement here will be to create conditions in which the educated young can find decent jobs or set up promising businesses at home.

Quite often the imbalances in qualified labour are similar in the outmigration and immigration destinations (e.g. physicians, healthcare personnel, ICT specialists, managers and business professionals, experts in technical fields). With significant differences in income levels compared at the purchasing parity, faced with the possibility to gain experience and knowledge in the national and European centres of economy, the educated young are prone to emigrate.<sup>9</sup> The trend of continued brain-drain at the European level is perpetuated and exacerbated by the fact that the existing differentials in pay between Western and Eastern Europe are entrenched and supported by the EU central funding of research programmes.<sup>10</sup> Scientists receive hugely different pay reflecting the income gaps between more and less developed countries, even when controlled for the local costs of living. The principle of equal pay for equal work is not in place<sup>11</sup>, and makes the less developed countries and regions even much less attractive in the eyes of highly skilled professionals.

Increased overall spending on innovation and research, and support to innovation-based businesses in the regions losing working-age population, can be one of the ways to address the problem of brain drain. The natural opportunity to do so depends on the content and priorities of the operational programmes under the EU 2014-2020 funds. Also the fund “Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation” (800M Euros) provides measures to target weaker regions by teaming institutions, twinning research personnel, seeding centres of excellence, and supporting organizational changes.

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<sup>8</sup>EurActive, 26 November 2013: <http://www.euractiv.com/innovation-enterprise/brain-drain-new-challenge-eurozo-analysis-531938>

<sup>9</sup>EurActive, 17 September 2012: <http://www.euractiv.com/socialeurope/czechs-seek-replacements-drained-news-217184>

<sup>10</sup> Galsworthy, M. (2013): Bring in fair play policies to stop Eastern Europe brain drain: <http://theconversation.com/bring-in-fair-pay-policies-to-stop-eastern-europe-brain-drain-19414>

<sup>11</sup> European Commission: Remuneration of researchers in the public and private sectors (2007): <http://www.eui.eu/Documents/MWP/AcademicCareers/SalaryComparisonEUreport2007.pdf>

## **Gender equality**

According to a recent report by the EU<sup>12</sup>, gender gaps remain prominent in labour markets and pose serious social risks. Women have historically found themselves at a disadvantage in the job markets and in the social context. **Significant gender differences persist in the key areas:**

- **Labour market participation,**
- **Level of pay,**
- **Risk of poverty.**

Women also accumulate fewer hours worked in their employment which in reality expands the gender gap further and has consequences in retirement. Even the recent financial and economic crisis in Europe, which has mainly impacted male dominated sectors, has not managed to drastically reduce these persistent gaps. This gender inequality constitutes an underutilization of human capital and results in lower GDP.

Gender equality policies are basically multifaceted. They are rooted in the national family and labour market policies, and closely linked with the educational and social policies. When considering the career opportunities of women, national traditions and societal contexts play a crucial role. The right policy mixes, and institutional and societal changes are needed to narrow the above mentioned gender gaps. Some promising solutions which equalize the men and women employment rates and hours worked have been identified:

- Gender-equal working time,
- Availability of flexible working time arrangements,
- Incentives for the division of unpaid work within couples and employment-friendly, accessible and affordable childcare.

The EU gender equality strategy<sup>13</sup> spells out a series of actions based around five priorities: the economy and labour market; equal pay; equality in senior positions; tackling gender violence; and promoting equality beyond the EU. They include:

- Getting more women into the labour market and helping to reach the Europe 2020 target employment rate of 75% overall for women and men;
- Putting forward targeted initiatives to get more women into top jobs in economic decision-making;
- Promoting female entrepreneurship and self-employment;
- Instituting an annual European Equal Pay Day to raise awareness of the fact that women continue to earn an average of nearly 18% less than men across the EU;
- Working together with all Member States in combating violence against women, especially eradicating female genital mutilation in Europe and beyond.

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<sup>12</sup> European Commission, 2014: Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2013: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7684&furtherPubs=yes>

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, 2010: EU Gender Equality Strategy  
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&furtherNews=yes&langId=en&newsId=890>

### ***Social and economic cohesion***

Demographic changes pose many challenges to the EU cohesion policy. Balanced development among the European countries and regions is negatively impacted by ageing society, migratory tendencies, changing life styles and family structures.

Some of the policy responses recommended by the OECD <sup>14</sup> are the following:

- Implementing family friendly support structures and mechanisms: financial assistance, social infrastructure and employment flexibility, taking into account the diversity of family units, as well as the regional and local contexts.
- Promoting and implementing innovative education programmes: distance education, open universities, to offer education opportunities where vocational facilities are not available. Tertiary education will have impact on the regional and local knowledge pool in the long term.
- Encouraging lifelong learning: initiatives to promote lifelong learning values among employers and employees.

These responses require structural interventions in combination with awareness raising and attitudinal changes.

### ***The strategy***

This Joint Transnational Strategy serves the following main purposes:

- to bring together scientific knowledge and good practices from European regions against brain drain of young women;
- to serve as a reference document for the realization of pilot initiatives within the Project framework;
- to mitigate the brain-drain of well-qualified young women from rural Central European regions based on the scientific results and recommendations from the ESPON targeted analysis SEMIGRA;
- to guide future collaboration of partners on the subject;
- to impact policies on European and national levels (mainstreaming).

This experience-based and pilot-tested strategy will be very valuable for all rural and peripheral regions in (Central) Europe challenged by the brain-drain of well-educated young women.

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<sup>14</sup>OECD, 2012: Prioritizing actions for demographic transitions and ageing in selected regions of Poland: [http://www.efs.gov.pl/Wiadomosci/Documents/Cristina\\_Martinez\\_Fernandez.pdf](http://www.efs.gov.pl/Wiadomosci/Documents/Cristina_Martinez_Fernandez.pdf)

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ***... about the project and the strategy...***

The Project WOMEN, a collaborative undertaking in 2012-2014 among six European regions: Saxony-Anhalt, Germany; South Transdanubia, Hungary; Pomurje, Slovenia; Styria, Austria; Podlaskie, Poland, and Rzeszowskie, Poland; under the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, has aimed to put into motion a Transnational Strategy and Joint Action Plan to combat the brain-drain of well-educated young women from rural regions. Transnational learning and support have been regarded as essential elements for a successful delivery of appropriate actions. This main objective was translated into more concrete results:

- to improve the labour market access of women, their career and leadership opportunities,
- to enhance so-called pull-factors reducing the proneness of well-educated young women to consider migration, e.g. their home region's image, social networks,
- to capitalise good practices as role-models towards key actors in employment and regional development.

The Strategy's objectives in each participating region have been supported by the following pilot initiatives:

- image campaigns,
- concerted training of demography managers,
- coaching to help capitalising the gained knowledge in delivering change on company-levels (transnational tool development).
- strengthening and establishment of social networks of business women

The Joint Transnational Strategy serves the following main purposes:

- to bring together scientific knowledge and good practices from other European regions against brain drain of young women,
- to serve as reference document for the realization of pilot initiatives within the Project framework,
- to mitigate the brain-drain of well-qualified young women from rural Central European regions based on the scientific results and recommendations from the ESPON targeted analysis SEMIGRA (2012),
- to guide future collaboration of partners on the subject,
- to impact policies on European and national levels (mainstreaming).

This experience-based and pilot-tested strategy will be very valuable for all rural regions in (Central) Europe challenged by brain-drain of well-educated young women.

### ***... addressing complex and interrelated problems...***

When discussing the brain-drain of well educated, young females, and the ways to limit its negative impacts, many socio-economic realities and policy issues come to play:

#### *Europe 2020*

A useful perspective on the subject is provided by looking closer at the Europe Strategy 2020 which is the European Union's ten-year growth strategy<sup>15</sup>. It is expected to promote growth that is smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive. Five key targets have been set for the EU with respect to the 2020 Strategy: employment; education; research and innovation; social inclusion and poverty reduction; and climate/energy. The strategy also includes seven 'flagship initiatives' on which the EU and national authorities mutually reinforce their efforts: innovation, digital economy, employment, youth, industrial policy, poverty, and resource efficiency. In the process towards EU 2020 goals, some of the most relevant recent (2013) recommendations<sup>16</sup> for the countries in which WOMEN regions are located, address the structural problems related to the labour market, and more specifically to female participation in the labour force, gender pay-gap, gender related differentiated risk of unemployment, and the necessary infrastructure which would encourage women to take full time employment, e.g. affordable childcare and care for dependent adults.

It is not difficult to imagine that the above mentioned and other related problems, identified at the macro-level, are magnified in the regions which are losing disproportionately large numbers of young educated females, i.e. the problems which this Joint Transnational Strategy addresses.

#### *Migration*

Migration brings change for those who move and those who stay, i.e. both in the sending and receiving localities and regions. The evaluation of relative benefits and costs of migration is very difficult. While some benefits are of immediate and easily identifiable nature, such as: employment, wages earned, increased economic output, the costs are often deferred, hidden and diffused, e.g. family disintegration, shortage of skills in sending regions, weakened social cohesion in receiving regions. Migration has impacts on the economy (employment, GDP), but also on public services and in the social sphere.

#### *Brain drain*

The recent crisis and the structural problems in some EU regions have led to greater numbers of labour migrants following one direction – from the countries and regions of the periphery to the countries of northern Europe.<sup>17</sup> The major challenges identified in relation to the recent brain-drain intensification are very serious. Short- to medium-term negative prospects for the brain-drain countries and regions are multiple:

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<sup>15</sup> Europe Strategy 2020: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Europe Strategy 2020 in each country: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/index_en.htm)

<sup>17</sup> EurActive, 26 November 2013: <http://www.euractiv.com/innovation-enterprise/brain-drain-new-challenge-eurozo-analysis-531938>

- slower progress towards high-value added economy and competitiveness,
- hindered innovation and adaptation, and thus
- lower economic gains and difficulties in keeping current standards of living.

This low-growth and low-skills economic model is very risky. The reversal of this trend is unlikely without a major rethinking of the current EU policies. The basic requirement here will be to create conditions in which the educated young can find decent jobs or set up promising businesses at home.

### *Gender equality*

According to a recent report by the EU<sup>18</sup>, gender gaps remain prominent in labour markets and pose serious social risks. Women have historically found themselves at a disadvantage in the job markets and in the social context. Significant gender differences persist in the key areas:

- Labour market participation,
- Level of pay,
- Risk of poverty.

The right policy mixes, institutional and societal changes are needed to narrow the above mentioned gender gaps. The EU gender equality strategy<sup>19</sup> spells out a series of actions based around five priorities: the economy and labour market; equal pay; equality in senior positions; tackling gender violence; and promoting equality beyond the EU. They include:

- Getting more women into the labour market and helping to reach the Europe 2020 target employment rate of 75% overall for women and men;
- Putting forward targeted initiatives to get more women into top jobs in economic decision-making;
- Promoting female entrepreneurship and self-employment;
- Instituting an annual European Equal Pay Day to raise awareness of the fact that women continue to earn an average of nearly 18% less than men across the EU;
- Working together with all Member States in combating violence against women, especially eradicating female genital mutilation in Europe and beyond.”

### *Social and economic cohesion*

Balanced development among the European countries and regions is negatively impacted by ageing society, migratory tendencies, changing life styles and family structures. Some of the policy responses recommended by the OECD<sup>20</sup> are the following:

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<sup>18</sup> European Commission, 2014: Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2013: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7684&furtherPubs=yes>

<sup>19</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&furtherNews=yes&langId=en&newsId=890>

<sup>20</sup> OECD, 2012: Prioritizing actions for demographic transitions and ageing in selected regions of Poland: [http://www.efs.gov.pl/Wiadomosci/Documents/Cristina\\_Martinez\\_Fernandez.pdf](http://www.efs.gov.pl/Wiadomosci/Documents/Cristina_Martinez_Fernandez.pdf)

- Implementing family friendly support structures and mechanisms: financial assistance, social infrastructure and employment flexibility, taking into account the diversity of family units, as well as the regional and local context.
- Promoting and implementing innovative education programmes: distance education, open universities, to offer education opportunities where vocational facilities are not available. Tertiary education will have impact on the regional and local knowledge pool in the long term.
- Encouraging lifelong learning: initiatives to promote lifelong learning values among employers and employees.

### ***...the WOMEN project approach...***

The development of this Joint Transnational Strategy takes into account that the subject area of brain-drain of young, educated women is a multifaceted phenomenon, conditioned by and leading to a large number of social and economic factors. It is believed that the European value added of the approach taken comes primarily from the fact that the Strategy has been developed as a document that is: experience-based, pilot-tested, balanced and triangulated in terms of data, information sources, and techniques. This format should make the Strategy valuable first of all to those rural regions in (Central) Europe which are challenged by the brain-drain of well-educated young women, and secondly to all other regions experiencing imbalances and negative tendencies in their gender characteristics.

### ***...from defining problems to practical actions and recommendations...***

The following findings and observations, derived from the Project SEMIGRA (2012)<sup>21</sup>, are most relevant to the issues covered by the Project WOMEN:

- Unbalanced sex ratio structures are closely associated with structural difficulties,
- Regions with structural difficulties deepen out-migration patterns by perpetuating a negative self-image,
- Pro-family labour conditions and work opportunities for men and women are needed,
- Problems of selective depopulation are not well known and therefore often not properly addressed.

The following findings and observations collected from multiple sources and directly from the Project WOMEN, provide valuable insights into the brain drain of young educated females.

- Interdependencies between unbalanced sex structures and other aspects of regional competitiveness and attractiveness need to be considered;

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<sup>21</sup>ESPON: Semigra Project: [http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Menu\\_TargetedAnalyses/semigra.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/semigra.html)

- Sex ratio imbalances are region- and locality-specific and need to be addressed by tailored interventions;
- Long term strategic development perspectives, specifically the EU 2020 goals, and regional sex ratio imbalances need to be addressed comprehensively.

Interventions and policies tailored to the needs of regions affected by brain-drain of young educated women need also to take on the broader perspective of trends prevailing in Europe and beyond, specifically in demography.

According to the main fields of targeted actions by the Project WOMEN, the most common problems can be divided into three different spheres:

- Conditions on the labour market - there is perceived importance of the regional labour markets' conditions for the decision-making processes of well-educated young women when it comes to migration (lack of appropriate jobs for skilled workers, missing career prospects and comparably lower wages in rural areas, the inability of regions to adapt new economic structures and to develop innovative approaches, lack of opportunities for flexible work and rigid company structures);
- Shortcomings of the technical and social infrastructure - unfavourable especially for women with families who want to or have to work (e.g. problems of mobility due to bridging long distances to education or childcare facilities, or of access to nurseries, kindergartens or healthcare facilities);
- Social and institutional barriers for women on the labour market - several forms of barriers which young women have to face when first entering or re-entering the labour market (e.g. salary gaps favouring men over job offers which are directly or implicitly directed to men, putting women to lower paid or lower valued jobs after returning from maternity leave, 'glass ceiling' hindering women to reach higher valued positions).

These barriers are mainly thought to be a result of persistent traditional role-models which locate women at home caring for the children and the household, while men are perceived as the ones who provide income for the whole family.

Demographic imbalances among regions of Europe are not only limited to the overall population numbers. They are also present in the population structure. In respect to the brain-drain of well educated women, the gender-ratios are particularly relevant. Regions with relatively high GDP, good welfare and low unemployment, are attractive to migrants. The in-migrants usually can expect there better job opportunities and good access to general infrastructure. On the other hand they are needed to support economic growth and fill in the labour deficits. Regions with low GDP and high unemployment, especially among young educated people, find it difficult to offer jobs and other long-term prospects for their inhabitants, let alone potential in-migrants. Potential for growth is curtailed and the quickly ageing population adds social costs. In addition, some regions are faced with gender selective migration. High out-migration of young women can have negative long-term impact on population growth – this imbalance is particularly acute in peripheral rural areas. Women tend to migrate more often than men, both for family and career reasons.



**The loss of educated women constitutes an often overlooked demographic handicap, which leads to long-term losses in fertility, weakens social networks, and negatively impacts the overall performance of regions.**

This Joint Transnational Strategy against the brain drain of young well-educated women creates a vision of predominantly rural regions able to retain and attract young educated women to improve regional gender ratio structures by proactively promoting of female employment and entrepreneurship, improving work and social environments, supporting wide use of information and communication technologies, and transmitting positive perceptions of women in regional development and regions themselves. The strategy will be executed by the Joint Action Plan of all WOMEN partner regions, covering the following types of actions:

- AWARENESS RAISING - increasing awareness and appreciation of women's involvements in society and economy, and their contributions; informing and mainstreaming policy responses at the EU, national and regional levels: information campaigns, exchanges and publications;
- DEMONSTRATION - showcasing female role models through awards, media stories, mentoring and competitions;
- INSTITUTIONALISATION – establishing and strengthening women's networks, demography coaching to businesses and public organizations, introduction of women-friendly work and education, design and implementation of pro-women strategies and programmes;
- EVIDENCE BUILDING (RESEARCH AND GENERATION OF NEW ACTIONS) – research and studies on relevant themes, programme and project development, evaluation of actions.

**It is considered necessary to treat the brain drain of young well-educated women by complex interventions, combining several elements of the above categories as the main expected significant positive societal changes (greater appreciation of women's role in economy and society; prevention of brain drain of well-educated young women from rural and peripheral regions) cannot be otherwise achieved.**

The main recommendations stemming from the experiences of pilot actions undertaken by the Project WOMEN partners, can provide valuable guidance for initiatives addressing the problem of brain drain of young educated women and the associated challenges:

- Linkage of pilot actions provides synergy effects – all areas of awareness raising, demonstration, institutionalization and evidence building, feed and reinforce each other. Initiatives combining several elements in an integrated manner produce synergies;
- Target group oriented actions are effective – there are significant differences among different actors and populations, arising from age, location, social, economic and cultural contexts. Interventions need to be differentiated towards these different sub-groups;
- The impact of key persons and role models is significant—opinion leaders and change agents provide invaluable assets in awareness raising and initiating positive societal changes;
- Awareness raising of gender issues on political level is necessary –gender issues and demographic change are often considered unfit for policy interventions, either as too complex or seemingly independent phenomena, leaving key problems poorly understood and interventions running short of making impacts on larger scale;

- Awareness of the impacts of demographic change needs to be considered – the lack of awareness among decision-makers and among the general public results in businesses and public agencies being unprepared to deal with demographic challenges;
- Solutions need to be tailor-made and flexible - an in-depth and place based consideration is a crucial precondition to meet certain needs and demands in the particular setting and in order to make the action really a success;
- Introduction of demography coaching requires long-term commitment – coaching and consulting in the realm of demographic adaptability of businesses and other organizations is in its very initial stages, while beneficial it needs long-term support to be further developed;
- Further establishment and support of networks will produce positive and lasting results – professional and social networks are powerful vehicles for carrying awareness and instituting real change that need to be strategically supported;
- Sustainability of change requires long-term efforts and smart sequencing of actions–pilot actions which prove effective need to be unfolded into larger scale interventions to ensure impacts and lasting results, in order to invite structural changes such as demographic coaching, mental change through awareness raising and demonstration is needed.

The WOMEN regions invite other regional actors, the national governments and the EU bodies, to consider similar actions and to adopt recommended approaches to policy and practice of demographically and gender balanced development.

### 3. BACKGROUND

Predominantly rural regions located at the periphery of Central Europe are challenged by a persisting outbound migration especially of young people which leads to skill shortages for the economy and has severe consequences for the future demographic development of the area. Statistical data shows that among people leaving their home regions, well-educated young women are proportionally overrepresented. This in turn results in severe sex-ratio imbalances in the age group of 16-35 years olds challenging the social cohesion. Research has revealed that most women migrate at fairly young ages – often before even entering the employment market – with the ambition to succeed professionally as the main reason. At the same time, the employment rate of young women remains below its potentials with many resources still untapped. The creation of better conditions for women seeking a professional career in addition to a family is therefore an important goal of territorial development.

The Project WOMEN<sup>22</sup> has aimed to put a Transnational Strategy and Joint Action Plan into action to combat the brain-drain of well-educated young women from rural regions. Transnational learning and support have been regarded essential elements for a successful delivery of appropriate actions. This main objective goes along with the more specific aims:

- to improve the labour market access of women, their career and leadership opportunities,
- to enhance so-called pull-factors reducing the proneness of well-educated young women to consider migration, e.g. their home region's image, social networks, etc.,
- to capitalise on good practices and role-models towards key actors in employment and regional development.

The raising of awareness for women potentials and the needs to take early actions amid expectable skill shortages have been further goals of WOMEN. Finally, the project aimed to impact policies on

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<sup>22</sup> Partner regions and organizations:

- Saxony-Anhalt, Germany: Ministry of Regional Development and Transport (lead partner); BSWA – Educational Institute of Industry and Commerce (Bildungswerk der Wirtschaft Sachsen Anhalte.V.);
- South Transdanubia, Hungary: DDRF – South Transdanubian Regional Development Limited Company (Dél-Dunántúli Regionális Fejlesztési Zrt); South Transdanubian Regional Resource Centre (Dél-Dunántúli Regionális Forrásközpont Kht.);
- Pomurje, Slovenia – University for Adult Education Murska Sobota (Ljudska univerza Murska Sobota); ISD – Institute for Social Development Murska Sobota (ZSR – Zavod za socialni razvoj Murska Sobota);
- Styria, Austria: Innovation Region Styria GmbH; zamSteiermark GmbH;
- Podlaskie, Poland: Podlaska Regional Development Foundation (Podlaska Fundacja Rozwoju Regionalnego);
- Rzeszowskie, Poland: Rzeszow Regional Development Agency (Rzeszowska Agencja Rozwoju Regionalnego S. A.).
- Other partners: IfL – Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (Leibniz Institut für Länderkunde); core-consult GmbH & Co. KG.

European and national levels to better assist regions whose economic and demographic development is threatened by brain-drain.

The Central European transnational cooperation area and its attractiveness as a location for economic activities is seriously threatened by brain-drain, especially of well-educated young women. The key actors decided to bundle their resources to capitalize from latest research results, including SEMIGRA's recommendations, to define a Transnational Strategy and Joint Action Plan limiting further depopulation and competitive disadvantages. Though the graveness of the current situation differs from region to region, due to different birth-rates (relatively high in Eastern Poland, very low in Saxony Anhalt) and varying cultural backgrounds (e.g. role of women in society, family values), all partner regions have negative total migration balances. Statistics show furthermore that depopulation tendencies are particularly strong among younger generations and among better-educated segments of populations. All partner regions report shortages of skilled labour. Regional development strategies of all concerned countries and regions recognize the need to take mitigating actions to preserve a sufficient quantity and quality of human resources supporting business activities.

In this respect, the Joint Transnational Strategy and Action Plan have become the core outputs of the Project, followed by a Memorandum of Understanding, guiding the strategy implementation by partners beyond the Project lifetime.

The Strategy's objectives in each participating region have been supported by these pilot initiatives:

- image campaigns,
- concerted training of demography managers,
- coaching to help capitalising the gained knowledge in delivering change on company-levels (transnational tool development).
- strengthening and establishment of social networks of business women

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The development of this Joint Transnational Strategy takes into account that the subject area of brain-drain of young, educated women, is a multifaceted phenomenon, conditioned by and leading to a large number of social and economic factors.

It is believed that the European value added of the approach taken comes primarily from the fact that the Strategy has been developed as a document that is:

- experience-based,
- pilot-tested,
- balanced and triangulated in terms of data, information sources, and techniques.

This format should make the Strategy valuable first of all to those rural and peripheral regions in (Central) Europe which are challenged by the brain-drain of well-educated young women, and secondly to all other regions experiencing imbalances and negative tendencies in their gender characteristics.

The Strategy development methodology combines different data and information sources, learning processes, and structured outputs:

- Initial inputs - recommendations resulting from SEMIGRA and good practices in other affected EU regions;
- Events – meetings, approvals, non-task oriented pieces: discovery meetings and stage approvals: Internal project meetings, meetings with stakeholders and external experts, internal and regional research, European desk research, study visits;
- Tasks – internal work-papers and processes - Identification and evaluation of best practices – regional, national, international (study visits results);
- Deliverables – documents developed.

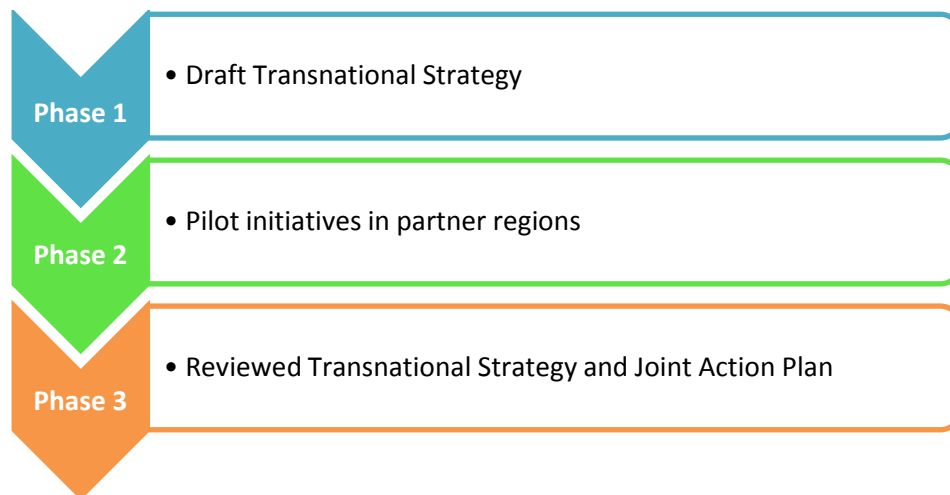
The Strategy has been developed using a number of general methods, under which a mixture of research, analytical and planning techniques and tools have been applied:

- Analysis of the strategic environment: statistical quantitative descriptive analysis, qualitative methods (e.g. case studies, expert surveys), comparative analysis, etc.
- Development of strategic options: forecasting, consultations, strategic synthesis (SWOT method), etc.
- Strategy testing and selection (pilot activities): action learning, peer reviews, etc.
- Description and planning of strategies: strategic planning, operational planning, communication and monitoring design, etc.

The methodology follows a three-step process, through which theoretical concepts and hypotheses are verified by joint action learning (pilot initiatives in the partner regions) under different regional conditions. The variations in implementation environments allow pulling common and diverging

factors, and to construct a Joint Strategy that is applicable and sensitive to different regional specificities. In a simplified manner the process is illustrated below:

**Figure 2: The process of strategy development**



Source: Own elaboration

#### *Phase 1 – Drafting Transnational Strategy*

Building on the first work phase's learning, the draft Transnational Strategy as the basis for the second project phase, was partially elaborated.

Building on recommendations resulting from SEMIGRA and good practices in other affected EU regions, the Transnational Strategy was drafted ahead of results of the pilot initiatives.

#### *Phase 2 - Pilot initiatives in partner regions*

Project partners elaborated the Transnational Strategy and tested the implementation of activities designed:

- to capitalise best practices undertaken by businesses, entrepreneurs and local public authorities,
- to improve the image of their regions as areas where young people can succeed professionally,
- to deliver change in the personnel and organisational management of companies (e.g. regarding their family-friendliness, demographic balance, participation of women in internal knowledge management processes),
- to enhance social networks between young professional women aiming to increase their emotional attachment to the home region.

Each region has been visited twice by a peer review team composed of representatives from three transnational partner regions (at least one representative being an external stakeholder) to receive a “friendly review” and recommendations to optimise activities. At the same time, visiting peer review team members could directly contribute their knowledge and assess the transferability of successful approaches to their own regions. In the final work phase, the pilot initiatives’ learning has been the basis to review the Transnational Strategy and to define future actions (Joint Action Plan). Draft decisions for the relevant decision-makers have been formulated in the final activities to ensure the durability of the approaches and activities.

### *Phase 3 - Reviewed Transnational Strategy and Joint Action Plan*

Following a transnational peer review, the learning has processed by the revision and finalisation of the Transnational Strategy, and elaboration of a longer-term Joint Action Plan, of which implementation is to be governed by a Memorandum of Understanding.

## 5. PROBLEMS ADDRESSED

The problem in focus is the brain drain of well educated women in their working age. Unbalanced sex ratio structures in the younger age groups are associated with socio-economic disparities and low territorial cohesion. A shortage of young women has negative consequences in demographic development, the labour market, social cohesion and image of rural communities. Gender-related differences in migration also play an important role. The question is how regions can minimize losses by formulating gender- and age-sensitive policies to counteract selective depopulation.

### *Earlier observations and lessons learned*

The following findings and observations derived from the Project SEMIGRA (2012)<sup>23</sup>, are the most relevant to the issues covered by the Project WOMEN:

#### ■ **Unbalanced sex ratio structures are closely associated with structural difficulties**

Analysis of three important age groups (20-24, 25-29 and 30-34 years old) showed that a massive deficit of women is located in rural Eastern Germany, and a moderate deficit in other agrarian regions, and it corresponds to “male-oriented” economies. The sex ratio imbalances are highly dependent on institutions and structures (labour market, education system, regional economic situation) and national/regional cultures (traditions, accepted gender roles). The relation between the regional and the national contexts is critical, and intraregional disparities between (regional) urban centres and very small rural communities have fundamental impact on migration issues.

#### ■ **Regions with structural difficulties deepen out-migration patterns by perpetuating a negative self-image**

Brain drain and sex ratio imbalances disavouring women have negative impact on the future of regions. The young (15-18 years old) perceive home regions affected by brain drain as places with limited opportunities and adjust their future plans. For girls, stronger interest in social relations and greater professional ambitions are typical. These factors make young educated women more prone to out-migration. Addressing these tendencies requires attention to personal relations and cultural issues. Also, the attitudes of parents and other adults are an important factor that needs to be tackled as they tend to advise the young to leave the home regions.

#### ■ **Pro-family labour conditions and work opportunities for men and women are needed**

The analysis of various individual decisions in the life of young women shows that the stage of life between 30-35 years of age often changes migration behaviours. Jobs, children and homeownership are seen as anchors to the home region. Keeping or attracting young women should therefore consider supporting dual-earner families by appropriate social services and also career opportunities for men.

#### ■ **Problems of selective depopulation are not well known and therefore often not properly addressed**

<sup>23</sup> ESPON: Semigra Project: [http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Menu\\_TargetedAnalyses/semigra.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/semigra.html)



While the problem of general outmigration of young people is widely commented and known, the issues related to the unbalanced sex ratio structures caused by excessive outmigration by women are not obvious. Low awareness among the general population and experts is one of the factors limiting interventions to counterbalance the brain drain of young women, which add to the structural difficulties of limited job opportunities and limited access to higher education.

### ***Specific observations***

The following findings and observations, collected from multiple sources and directly from the Project WOMEN, provide valuable insights into the brain drain of young educated females:

#### **■ Interdependencies between unbalanced sex structures and other aspects of regional competitiveness and attractiveness need to be considered**

Migratory pressures and brain drain tendencies are effectively associated with a host of conditions. Globalisation, greater interconnectedness and intensified competition make place-of-work and domicile related decisions more complicated. While it is not easy to determine and attribute a definite causality effect to the interrelated factors which force young and educated women to migrate, there are some symptomatic perspectives that provide a large part of the explanation. In general, the European regions which show higher rates of in-migration tend also to show higher rates of visitors. **The regional attractiveness related to work has important overlaps with the attractiveness to visitors: accessibility, good infrastructure and amenities, heritage, etc.** The regions with net out-migration or low levels of net-migration and with low visitor arrival rates, commonly also show relatively low levels of GDP per capita and higher unemployment rates.<sup>24</sup>

**Exporting labour from the regions of low and moderate attractiveness is not a sensible long-term regional development strategy. Just the opposite needs to happen – these regions need to rethink their assets and identify ways to attract more visitors and eventually also more in-migrants.** Some of the territories can benefit from their endogenous assets (unspoiled nature, cultural heritage) to develop specific products and services, while another, non-exclusive way is to form tight economic and social links with international and interregional growth poles.

#### **■ Sex ratio imbalances are region- and locality-specific, and need to be addressed by tailored interventions**

There are some pan-European trends in the regional pattern of sex ratio imbalances, however there are many national as well as regional peculiarities. In the national context an unbalanced sex ratio is partly capable of mirroring societal changes – especially with regard to the position of women in society and changes on the labour market connected to the transition to a post-industrial knowledge- and service-based economy. Other numerous factors influence the sex ratio balances: education,

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<sup>24</sup>ESPON Territorial Observation No 6: Regions and Cities in the World Economy, May 2012:  
[http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/TerritorialObservations/TO6\\_May2012/TO-6\\_Regions\\_and\\_cities\\_in\\_the\\_global\\_economy.pdf](http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/TerritorialObservations/TO6_May2012/TO-6_Regions_and_cities_in_the_global_economy.pdf)

labour market, regional economic situation, culture and perceptions of gender roles. These factors tend to be diverse across and within regions, and need careful crafting of appropriate interventions.

**Place-based, regions-specific interventions which provide business friendly environments, improve accessibility, and foster innovation, qualifications and skills, will have profound impact. From the national perspectives, a diversified and balanced, de-concentrated economy, based on a larger number of second-tier cities complementing the capital cities, can provide a win-win solution which lessens the migratory and brain drain pressures.**

The positive effects of second-tier cities, i.e. regional capitals on gender balance and women participation in the labour market, are especially visible in WOMEN regions where sex ratio imbalances are relatively strong, e.g. in Podlaskie and Podkarpackie (PL), South-Transdanubia (HU).

■ **Long term strategic development perspectives, specifically the EU 2020 goals, and regional sex ratio imbalances need to be addressed comprehensively**

Regional labour force participation rates of women differ significantly among European regions. The regional differentiation within individual countries is high and explained by region-specific factors. Cultural aspects and societal traditions seem to play an important role. In this context, structural changes are as much needed as attitudes-shaping incentives and interventions. Regions experiencing relatively high youth unemployment rates, both in the national and the EU contexts, are prone to be affected by more emigration pressures. **Promotion of gainful employment of young women and associated assistance are the main elements worth considering.**

Some countries were already close to meeting most of the strategic goals of 2020 (80% index) by 2009-2010 – mostly concentrated in the Nordic states, southern Germany, several French regions, and South England (Centre-North Europe). Some capital regions scored particularly high as well (Île-de-France, Greater London, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, and Ljubljana). On the other hand, several regions scored less than 40% - Eastern Romania, Észak-Magyarország (Hungary), Southern Italy and Southern Spain, Spanish outermost regions (South and South-East Europe).<sup>25</sup>

Population trends seem to follow, although not perfectly, the variations in regional attractiveness and advancements in strategic development goals. **Where strategically perceived development conditions are good, the summative effects of natural population growth and migration tend to be positive. Regions and locations exhibiting the highest scores in terms of Europe 2020 goals will have significant advantages in attracting the well-educated young, among them women. The regions still lagging behind in terms of Europe 2020 goals, need to seriously consider these linkages.**

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<sup>25</sup> ESPON Atlas, June 2013: Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy, p. 66:  
[http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/ATLAS2020/194650\\_ESPON\\_ATLAS -  
Final\\_version.pdf](http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/ATLAS2020/194650_ESPON_ATLAS_-_Final_version.pdf)

### **Wider context**

The interrelatedness and complexities within the three broad groups of socio-economic dimensions: demography, relative attractiveness and advancement in strategic development goals, ask for comprehensive studies and context-specific interventions. **Interventions and policies tailored to the needs of regions affected by brain-drain of young educated women need also to consider the broader perspective of trends prevailing in Europe:**

- The European population is increasing and the number of regions with growing populations is expanding.
- Territorial cohesion is challenged by the polarisation of the demographic patterns between the east and west of Europe (and to a lesser extent between the north and south)—population decline is a dominant feature in Eastern Europe.
- Capital regions in Europe, and also their immediate neighbouring regions, mainly in Eastern Europe, show favourable demographic development and can prevent excessive out-migration abroad.
- Regions facing depopulation are mostly located in the outer band of eastern and northern parts of Europe, in periphery, and should be the focus of attention.
- Imbalances in population growth attributable mostly to interregional migration within countries are significant and may pose a challenge to balanced regional development, just as much as urban/rural variations observed at the local levels. Over 80% of urban regions reveal positive demographic development.
- Ageing Europe will require additional labour force and services practically across the board, and population growth much stronger outside of Europe will sustain migratory pressures towards Europe.

## 6. TRANSREGIONAL NEEDS FOR CHANGE

To better understand the situation and dynamics in the regions with imbalances in male and female populations, and with significant outmigration of young, well educated women, it is worth taking into account the shared and differentiated opinions and views of regional stakeholders and experts. While statistical data is of crucial importance to identify the dominant forces behind the regional brain drain, a qualitative perspective can provide useful insights and answers to what and why is happening, and what can be done to strengthen the positive, as well as to counter the negative tendencies.

For that purpose, a survey among experts from all participating regions was carried out between April and May 2013. The analysis below draws directly from the findings of this survey<sup>26</sup>. According to the main fields of targeted actions by the Project WOMEN, the following aspects were of particular interest:

- The situation of women on the regional labour market (e.g.: labour market agencies, local businesses, female entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, trade unions, job centres, representatives of educational institutions),
- The image of the region (e.g. representatives of regional and local planning policy, regional planning authorities, regional politicians),
- Further important aspects: educational, cultural and social issues.

The survey made clear that several problems, like unfavourable labour market conditions, certain social and institutional barriers, and disadvantageous conditions of the regional social and technical infrastructure, are common issues shared among all the case study regions. The interviews provided insights to what extent each of these issues is virulent in the regions under consideration and revealed different regional levels and focal points of the mentioned problems.

The common problems can be divided into three different spheres:

- Conditions in the labour market
- Shortcomings of the technical and social infrastructure
- Social and institutional barriers for women on the labour market.

Although these issues have been mentioned among the case studies basically in the same way, they have to be considered in the specific contexts of each region, since the perception and evaluation of the experts is influenced by the national and regional conditions as well as their personal experiences. The most common aspects are presented in the following figure:

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<sup>26</sup> WOMEN Working Paper: Results of the Expert Interviews, 2013.

**Figure 3: Set of common problems regarding women's labour market situation**



Source: WOMEN Working Paper: Results of expert interviews, 2013.

In addition to the common problems, some region-specific aspects have been identified:

- Unattractive living conditions for younger people (offers on labour market and cultural and leisure facilities do not match interests of young people) - Saxony-Anhalt (Germany)
- Lack of regional identity leads to a 'culture of migration' - Saxony-Anhalt (Germany)

- General depopulation processes due to economic development (diversified economic structure missing) - Pomurje (Slovenia)
- Mismatch between perceptions of living conditions, education and career opportunities – Styria (Austria)
- Changing lifestyles vs. traditional role-models - Podlaskie (Poland)
- Remoteness and unfavourable living conditions - Podlaskie (Poland)
- Conservatism of labour market - Podkarpackie (Poland)
- Barriers for women (re-)entering the labour market - Podkarpackie (Poland)
- Lack of appropriate workplaces for young, well educated women due to low innovativeness of the regional economy - South-Transdanubia (Hungary)

### ***Labour market***

The conducted interviews within the case studies strikingly illustrate that **there is perceived importance of the regional labour markets' conditions for the decision-making processes of well-educated young women when it comes to migration**. The lack of appropriate jobs for skilled workers with high education, missing career prospects for this group and comparably lower wages in the rural areas constitute important push factors leading young women to check their opportunities elsewhere – preferably in bigger cities. Furthermore the inability of most of the case study regions to adapt to new economic structures properly and to develop innovative approaches towards them does not let expect substantial improvements of the current situation. As a result of this the lack of opportunities for flexible work, part-time work and telework are a common problem. In addition to the lack of jobs to which such forms of work could apply to many employers are considered as unwilling to introduce them due to rigid structures in many companies.

Although the migration for educational purposes was addressed several times (especially in Pomurje and Styria) the regional offers for education have not been identified as a main problem adding to migration processes of the regions. Moreover, it was considered a more important problem that people do not return after they received their education outside the respective region due to missing job offers in the concerned regions. Furthermore, the harmonization between educational offers and labour market needs were mentioned as necessary to improve labour market prospects particularly for graduates. Not the regional equipment with educational facilities but making proper use of its outcomes seems to be the most pressing challenge in this regard within the observed regions.

### ***Social and technical infrastructure***

Besides the mere labour market situation the **conditions concerning social and technical infrastructure were often mentioned as unfavourable especially for women with families who want to or have to work**. The specific impact of these shortcomings differs slightly between the regions but especially ranges around problems of mobility due to bridging long distances to education or childcare facilities, or of access to nurseries, kindergartens or healthcare facilities, which is sometimes a matter of finances and sometimes a matter of lacking vacancies. The effort to cope

with such conditions and to balance family and work at the same time was considered as too difficult or too deterrent for young women, who then rather decide to move to cities where the infrastructural conditions are more likely better.

### ***Social and institutional barriers for women***

Furthermore, nearly all respondents in the case study regions identified several **forms of barriers which young women have to face when first entering or re-entering the labour market**. Especially mothers appear to be disadvantaged in most of the examined regions. Although officially prohibited and often not obviously visible, the experts **identified different forms of gender-related discrimination on the labour market in each of the case studies**, reaching from salary gaps favouring men over job offers which are directly or implicitly directed to men to putting women to lower paid or lower valued jobs after returning from maternity leave. Most strikingly, **almost everywhere the interviewed experts identified a 'glass ceiling' hindering women to reach higher valued positions**.

**These barriers are mainly thought to be a result of persistent traditional role-models which locate women at home caring for the children and the household while men are perceived as the ones who provide income for the whole family**. Although some of the experts identified a change in this regard leading to more equality between the sexes in questions of organizing family and work they also consider old-fashioned values especially persistent in rural areas, of which most parts of the examined regions consist of. Notably this matter of gender roles was of different importance to the interviewees in the different regions. For example, in Saxony-Anhalt it was mentioned but generally played a minor role while in South-Transdanubia and in the Polish regions it seemed to be a more determining factor for explaining women's unequal participation on the labour market and their likelihood to leave for better conditions which they mostly would expect in more urban areas.

These expectations partly come from certain internal and external images of urban areas and the regions themselves. Although the interviewed experts mostly did not hold regional images as primarily responsible for the eventual decision to migrate most of them stated that they actually could add to the decision. A common opinion was also that image campaigns could have an impact on the internal and external perception of the respective region but to what extent they are able to influence migration behaviour the respondents were of divided opinion. In most cases image campaigns were only estimated useful, if supported by concrete political, economic or civic measures that could be promoted to the outside and attract investors or migrants.

## 7. TRANSREGIONAL FORECAST

The future situation in regions affected by brain drain will heavily depend on wider demographic and socio-economic factors. **Population growth in the EU and its neighbourhood will have a major influence on territorial developments in Europe. Human resources, their structure and skills, are the key drivers of development, especially when migration comes into play. The diverse demographic patterns in Europe and its neighbourhood indicate a high level of interest in migrating to the EU in the future, and also a high level of interest to migrate within the EU - to the most competitive regions and cities.**

ESPON provided a population projection for Europe and neighbouring countries till 2030 based on the national population variation forecasts for 2000-2030, using the United National World Population Prospect.<sup>27</sup> This projection shows clear differentiation of annual population growth rates between Europe and the surrounding areas. While the eastern neighbours are expected to undergo a slow population decline, the southern ones will experience population increases. Beyond the immediate neighbourhood, population growth in North Africa can be as high as 3% annually. Within Europe there is a clear demographic divide between the West and East. Norway, Switzerland, and western EU countries are expected to have a stable or slightly increasing number of population. On the other hand, almost all countries east of Germany, may be faced with decreasing population.

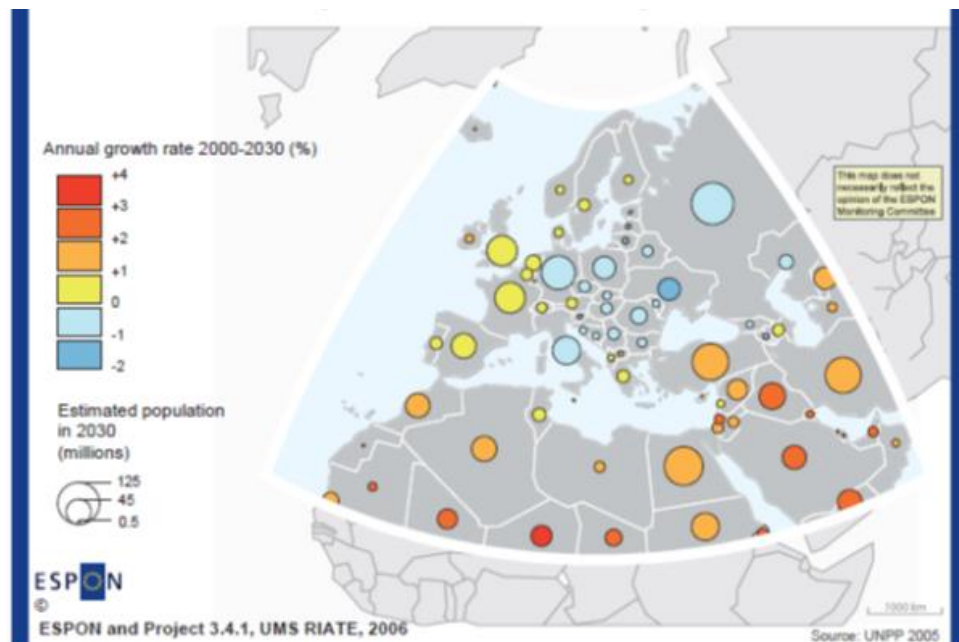
The demographic dynamics in Europe and its neighbourhood, given large disparities in economic opportunity, will continue, if not increase, the migratory pressures which have already been at work. Continued internal migration from the East to West in Europe is expected. In many of these countries the labour market will require an influx of human resources to sustain economic development. While there are sources of immigrants from outside of Europe, this solution will be difficult politically and most of the incomers will prefer to settle in the European regions and cities offering the highest levels of living. The largest cities in Western Europe will attract both waves of immigrants and the regions already losing population due to out-migration will have to respond with much stronger incentives to promote settlement by new inhabitants. Recalibrating their economic structures and linking to the more developed centres can be viable options.

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<sup>27</sup> ESPON Territorial Observation No 1 - "Territorial dynamics in Europe: Trends in population development", November 2008:  
[http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Publications/Menu\\_TerritorialObservations/trendsinpopulationdevelopment.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Publications/Menu_TerritorialObservations/trendsinpopulationdevelopment.html)



**Figure 4: Population growth in EU and its neighbourhood in 2030**



Source: ESPON – Map of the month, January 2009:

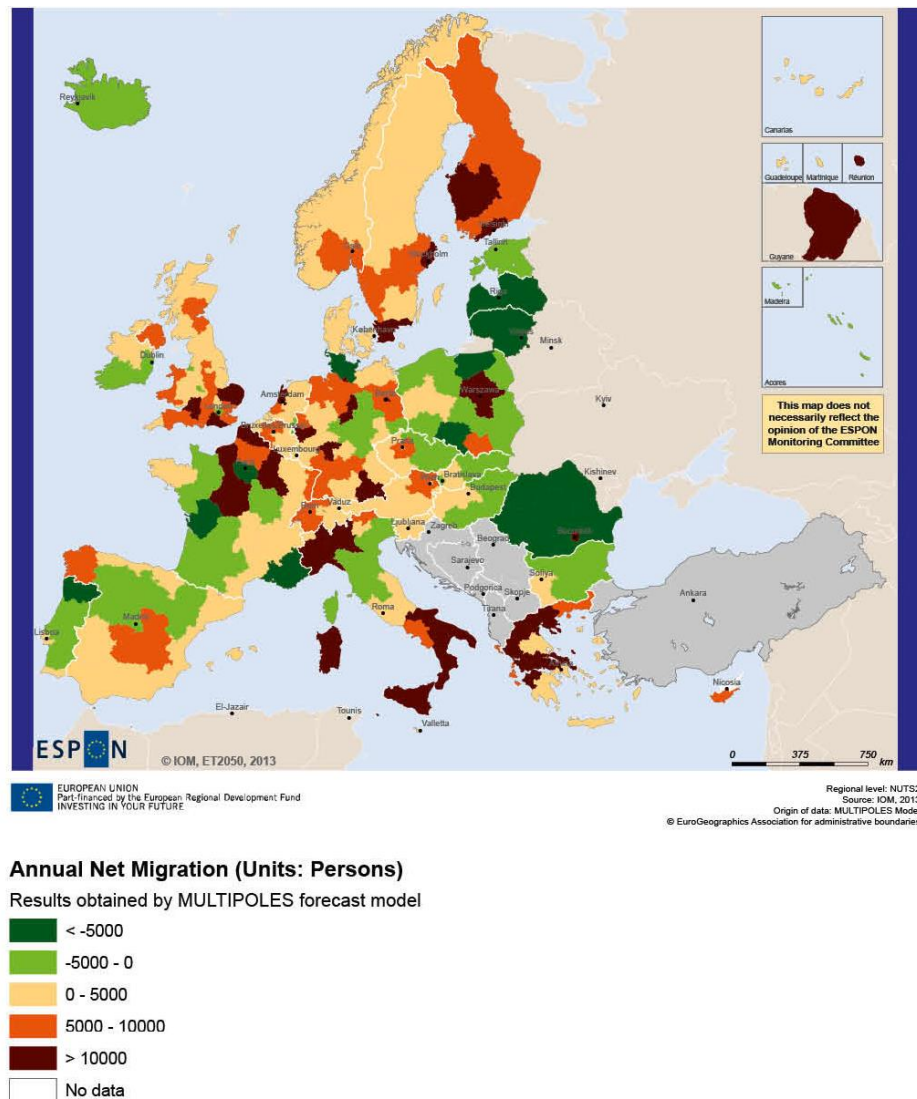
[http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/MapsOfTheMonth/MapJanuary2009/map\\_8\\_population\\_growth\\_2030\\_homepage.pdf](http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/MapsOfTheMonth/MapJanuary2009/map_8_population_growth_2030_homepage.pdf)

The demand for labour migrants will grow globally, and a significant part of that growth will be attributed to Europe – by 2050 Europe will need over 60 million labour migrants.<sup>28</sup> Many regions, especially in Eastern and Baltic countries, and some remote areas, will continue losing population due to emigration. This is mainly caused by the migration encouraging factors: demographic and income differentiation along the divisions: east-west and north-south. Out-migration of highly skilled labour force is expected to continue to increase among such countries as Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. Other countries of the east and south may also need measures to address imbalances caused by out-migration. Regions, especially remote and rural, are expected to lose population, as is the case of Poland and Romania. Ageing population and stagnating economic growth are associated with these tendencies.

Total migration is expected to continue increasing in Europe until 2030. Regional imbalances might be reinforced especially by migration from the east to west of Europe, posing a serious challenge to the development of regions affected by depopulation and brain-drain.

<sup>28</sup> ESPON, Evidence Brief No. 6, November 2013, Post-crisis migration trends:  
[http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/EvidenceBriefs/EEB6-Post-crisismigrationtrends/ESPON\\_EVIDENCE\\_BRIEF\\_NO\\_6\\_Final.pdf](http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/EvidenceBriefs/EEB6-Post-crisismigrationtrends/ESPON_EVIDENCE_BRIEF_NO_6_Final.pdf)

Figure 5: Annual net migration 2010-2030 (baseline)

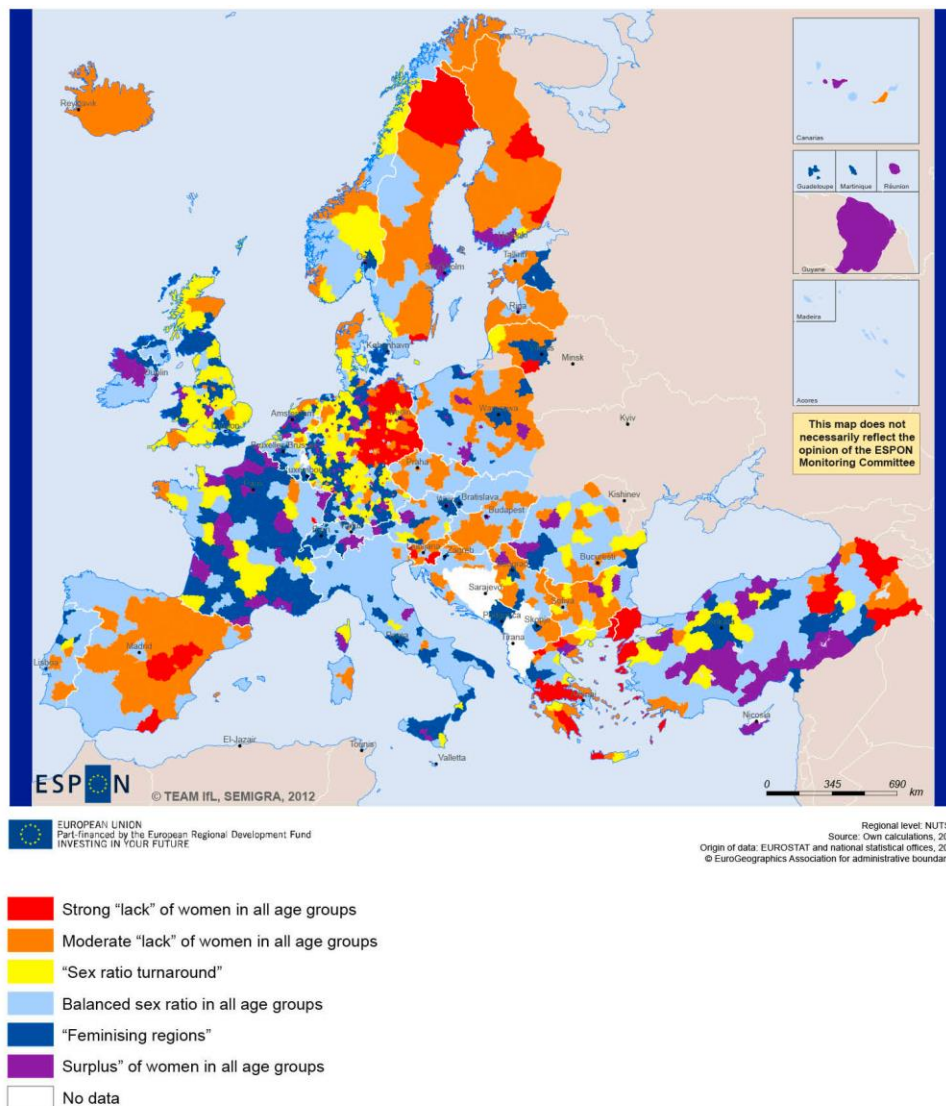


Source: ESPON, Evidence Brief No. 6, November 2013, Post-crisis migration trends.

Demographic imbalances among regions of Europe are not only limited to the overall population numbers. They are also present in the population structure. In respect to the brain-drain of well educated women, the gender-ratios are particularly relevant. Regions with relatively high GDP, good welfare and low employment, are attractive to migrants. The in-migrants usually can expect there better job opportunities and good access to general infrastructure. On the other hand they are needed to support economic growth and fill in the labour deficits. Regions with low GDP and high unemployment, especially among young educated people, find it difficult to offer jobs and other long-term prospects for their inhabitants, let alone potential in-migrants. Potential for growth is curtailed and the quickly ageing population adds social costs. In addition, **some regions are faced with gender selective migration. High out-migration of young women can have negative long-term impact on population growth – this imbalance is particularly acute in peripheral rural areas.**

Women tend to migrate more often than men, both for family and career reasons. **The loss of educated women constitutes an often overlooked demographic handicap, which leads to long-term losses in fertility, weakens social networks, and negatively impacts the overall performance of regions.**

**Figure 6: Regional gender structures among young adults**

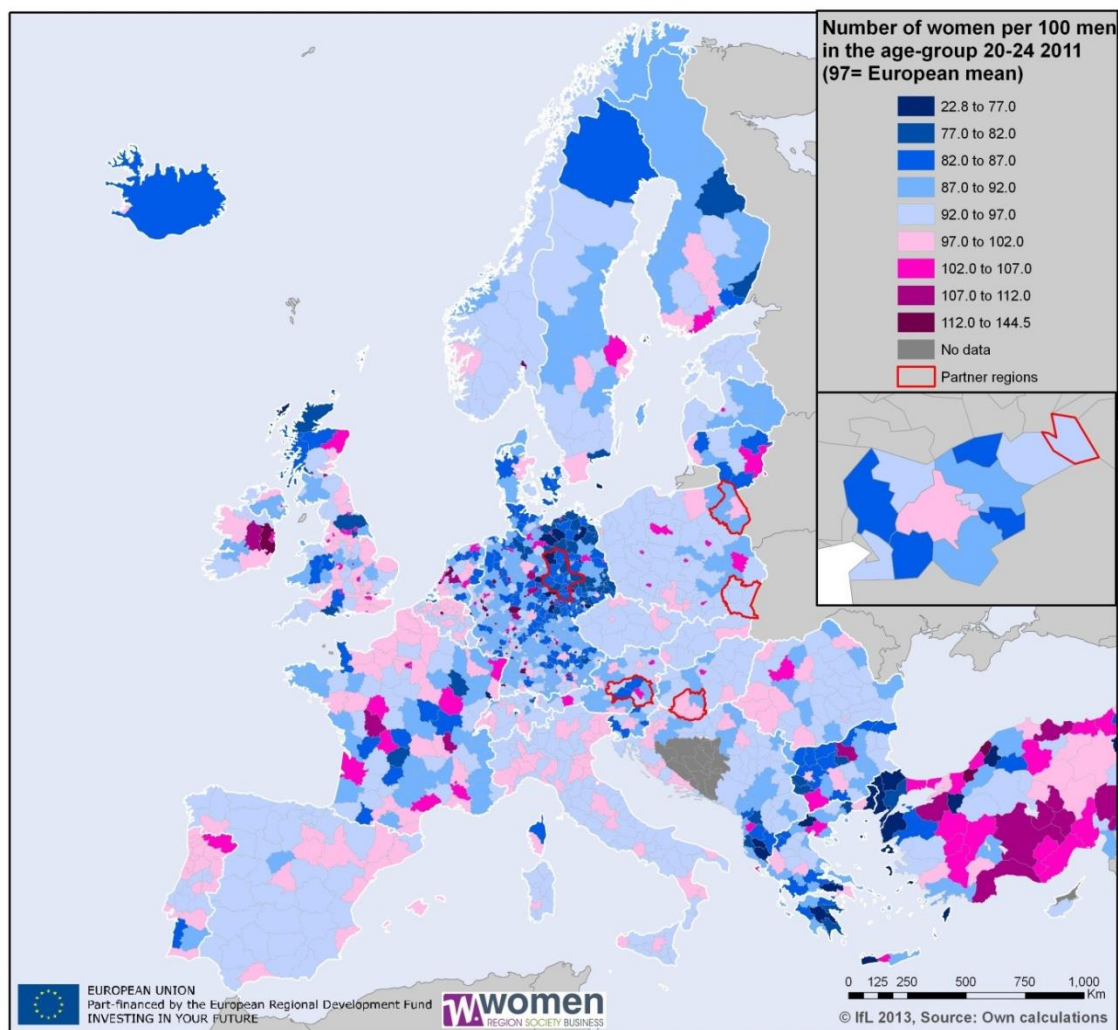


Source: ESPON, Evidence Brief No. 6, November 2013, Post-crisis migration trends.

**Sex ratio imbalances with significant deficits of young women are prone to put regions at a significant disadvantage. Gender selective migration, with out-migration of women which is common among peripheral and rural regions, leads to future demographic losses, negatively affecting family formation, fertility, and social structures.**

At the European level, eastern parts of Germany are examples of concentrated deficits of young women (20-24 years old). These areas find it difficult to become competitive and attractive in comparison to other German regions, despite immense national and EU-funded support. Similarly, but to a lesser extent, the WOMEN regions (with the exception of South-Transdanubia (HU)) show negative sex balance of young women. This gap has to be addressed in order to provide ground for improved social and economic cohesion.

Figure 7: Sex balance in the age group 20-24 (2011)



Source: Project WOMEN, 2014.

The future outlook for brain-drain affected regions is rather gloomy. Without addressing this problem with structured interventions, it is highly unlikely that these regions will be able to reverse the trend of educated young, especially women, leaving permanently. **Greater de-masculinization of existing sectors, and adoption of newest information and communication technologies, will be needed to make work more inviting to educated women. In parallel, conditions associated with family life and work-life balances need to be improved, to make more women participate in the labour market.**

## 8. SWOT ANALYSIS

Regions affected by depopulation and/or brain drain of the educated young, including women, exhibit shared general characteristics, moderated by region-specific factors. It is useful to look into these general conditions accompanying the brain drain, to come up with interventions which can lessen or reverse the negative consequences for regional competitiveness and cohesion.

**Figure 8: General SWOT**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable costs of living relative to national and international benchmarks, especially when real estate prices are considered, and if employment is available</li> <li>Less competitive employment and higher chances of long-term employment in traditional (and public) jobs without the need to reskill or to obtain further education</li> <li>Living near to nature, in relatively safe conditions, clean, good quality environment and beautiful surroundings, promoting 'green' lifestyles and often near nationally and internationally renowned tourist attractions</li> <li>Availability of basic (often not crowded) public infrastructures including child care, and health care, especially beneficial if higher education possibilities are open nearby</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low incomes and GDP compared nationally and internationally, with wage differences prompting migration</li> <li>Weak, inflexible economic and labour market structures, and the related lack of jobs, especially for academically educated labour</li> <li>Dominance of traditional economy, agriculture and raw-material-based industries, employing mostly males, low diversification</li> <li>Low and underdeveloped tradition of entrepreneurship, especially female entrepreneurship</li> <li>Commonly shared perceptions of limited possibilities of the regional labour market and development opportunities, inhabiting the young to plan their future locally</li> <li>Infrastructural and social barriers to be active, involved, and connected: lack of critical masses, lack of convenient and affordable public transport, insufficient social infrastructure (social networks, clubs, associations, meeting places)</li> <li>Mainly 'bonding' social capital based on traditional ties, excluding newcomers, and limiting acceptance of diversity – dull, intolerant atmosphere prevailing</li> </ul>



Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Changes in society, the labour market and economic structures leading to more diversified sectoral split and more jobs for women (social services, health care directed to ageing populations, tourism, new technologies)</li> <li>■ Out-migration lessens pressures on regional labour markets, especially in the qualified professions, with possibilities of brain gain through in- and re-migration</li> <li>■ Opportunities related to the use of modern ICT: internet, telework, online shopping, etc., making remote and rural areas more easily accessible and more attractive</li> <li>■ Changes in societal values and lifestyles: ecological consciousness, quality living, ecotourism, reconciliation of family life and employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Dwarfing growth factors due to rigid economic structures, increasing disconnection with modern sectors, rural retardation</li> <li>■ Impacts of deepening brain drain and related vicious circles: shortages of skilled female labour force, inhibited innovation, negative birth rates, and resulting decline in educational and social infrastructure, pauperization of society</li> <li>■ Changes in funding models, withdrawal of the state for efficiency reasons, and growing unattractiveness to stay and to re-migrate, especially from the perspective of young academically educated</li> <li>■ Worsening image of the regions as places of limited opportunities, growing social tensions, prejudices and low tolerance towards external environments</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration based on SEMIGRA SWOT, 2012, and the implementation of the Project WOMEN, 2013-2014.

Each of the regions involved into the Project WOMEN has its own specifics related to the situation of young educated females and their choices regarding a place to work and live. In order to take into account a variety of combinations of factors contributing to the present situations and the most appropriate actions to be taken in different regional settings, separate SWOT analyses have been produced for all regions participating in the Project WOMEN, based on the statistical data and the opinions gathered through interviews and exchange of experiences. The region-specific SWOTs are provided in the annexes.

## 9. MISSION, VISION, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS AND MAIN OBJECTIVES

The following policy objectives to combat the brain-drain of well-educated young women from rural and peripheral regions have been predefined for the Joint Transnational Strategy:

- to improve the labour market access of women, their career and leadership opportunities,
- to enhance so-called pull-factors reducing the proneness of well-educated young women to consider migration, e.g. their home region's image, social networks, etc.,
- to capitalise on good practices as role-models towards key actors in employment and regional development.,

and also:

- to raise awareness for women potentials and the needs to take early actions amid expectable skills shortages,
- to impact policies on European and national levels to better assist regions whose economic and demographic development is threatened by brain-drain (mainstreaming).

The Strategy has been expected to support fostering knowledge development by:

- enhancing the conditions that allow young women to participate in knowledge management processes to obtain the necessary qualifications to achieve professional careers without migration,
- achieving economic competitiveness of rural areas by actions limiting brain-drain,
- elaborating innovative approaches to the management of demographic change, and
- creating a transnational network between stakeholders from regions subject to similar patterns in their demographic development.

All of the above expectations and preliminary objectives have been verified and tested by the partner regions of the Project WOMEN, through action-based learning, discovery and systematization of findings. Based on a thorough research and experience, the following strategic construct has been developed:

### ***Mission***

The strategic mission undertaken by the WOMEN partner regions in response to brain-drain of young well educated women from rural areas is to intervene comprehensively and with proper consideration of the broader and immediate contexts:

- at the level of economic structures by improving employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women, including the use of information and communication technologies;
- at the level of social and cultural infrastructure for young people, women and families, aimed at creating family-friendly work and leisure environments;
- at the level of perceptions of home regions' image and perceptions of successful women and their contributions to regional development.

## ***Vision***

Predominantly rural and peripheral regions are able to retain and attract young educated women to improve regional gender structures by proactively promoting female employment and entrepreneurship, improving work and social environments, supporting wide use of information and communication technologies, and transmitting positive perceptions of women in regional development and regions themselves.

## ***Development directions***

Partner regions and other regions which will demonstrate support to the Strategy in the future, shall focus on the following general development directions:

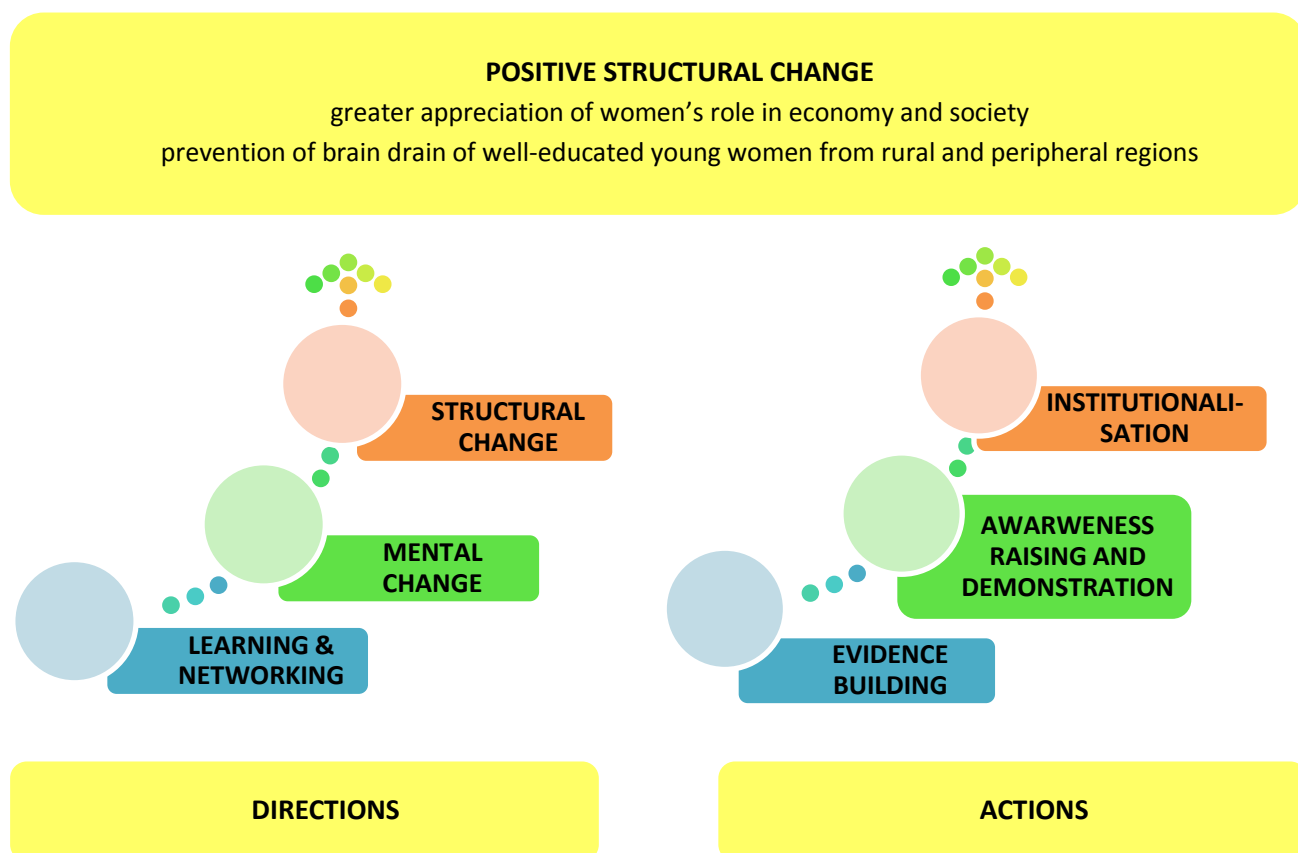
- **STRUCTURAL CHANGE** - positively changing work and social conditions with relation to women employment, engagement, and achievement;
- **MENTAL CHANGE** - raising awareness of women potentials and contributions to regional development and informing higher level policies at national and European levels to combat the brain-drain;
- **LEARNING AND NETWORKING** - fostering knowledge on the causes and effects of excessive migration of educated women and disseminating experiences within transnational learning and practice communities faced with similar demographic challenges.

These broad strategic directions are expressed by practical actions, agreed among WOMEN partner regions and detailed in the Joint Action Plan, falling into the following cross-related main categories:

- **AWARENESS RAISING** - increasing awareness and appreciation of women's involvement in society and economy, and their contributions; informing and mainstreaming policy responses at the EU, national and regional levels: information campaigns, forums, seminars, publications, use of traditional, online and social media, etc.;
- **DEMONSTRATION** - showcasing female role models through awards, media stories, mentoring and competitions;
- **INSTITUTIONALISATION** - establishing and strengthening existing women's networks, demography coaching to business and public organizations, introducing women-friendly work and education arrangements, designing and implementing pro-women strategies and programmes;
- **EVIDENCE BUILDING (RESEARCH AND GENERATION OF NEW ACTIONS)** - research and studies on relevant themes, programme and project development, evaluation of actions.



**Figure 9: Development directions and corresponding sets of actions**



Source: Own elaboration within the Project WOMEN.

### **Main strategic objectives**

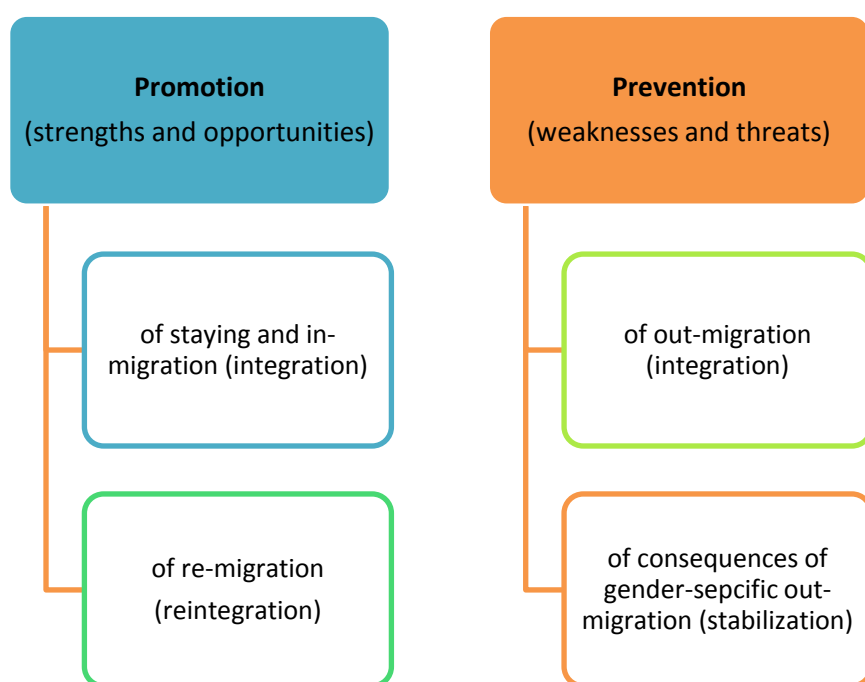
- Partner regions are able to design and implement individual and joint programmes and projects aimed at improving the situation of young well-educated women in predominantly rural areas which address brain-drain related issues.
- Partner regions are able to effectively network and to communicate positive, innovative practices in combating brain-drain of young well educated women, and to mainstream policy recommendations at regional and higher levels.
- The tendency to lose disproportionately large numbers of young well-educated women to out-migration is diminished and gender ratios in affected regions are improving by 2020.

The actors involved in the Joint Transnational Strategy have limited leverage in terms of global or macro-economic conditions. Therefore the strategic objectives have to be formulated realistically. The pilot actions implemented under the Project WOMEN have made significant inroads in terms of understanding the complex networks of facts and factors contributing and counterbalancing brain drain of educated women from rural regions. Partners are confident in their understanding of the relevant phenomena and ready to further their involvement in a variety of programmes and projects

both individually and jointly: studies and analysis, as well as interventions in the above defined development directions.

The strategic objectives will be reached by applying **various implementation strategies** in response to the situation and trends analysis. Promotion strategies will be used to build existing strengths and exploit opportunities, and prevention strategies to reduce weaknesses and diminish risks associated with identified threats.

**Figure 10: Implementation strategies**



Source: Own elaboration within the Project WOMEN.

Decisions to stay in the home regions can be supported by a palette of interventions that improve work and entrepreneurial opportunities, technical and social infrastructure, and build positive image of women in society and of the region itself. These should be the primary activities utilized in response to endogenous assets and arising opportunities. In-migration in predominantly rural areas is sporadic with the exception of vicinities of larger cities. Rural communities are locked-in socially and display mostly 'binding' social capital. The response here should focus on improving the openness of rural communities to diversity, tolerance and creating a welcoming culture. Another way to look at in-migration is to consider visitors as the primary target – the more attractive the region becomes to visits, the higher the chances it will be also attractive to work and settle. Re-integration of returning migrants becomes indispensable when regional labour markets become deficient in skilled workers. Strategies to attract back young people after they complete education and gain professional

experience are important. Skilled in-migrants bring new ideas and generally boost regional development. Attracting young women to come back may require provision of jobs for male partners, good environment to cater to the needs of families raising children, etc.

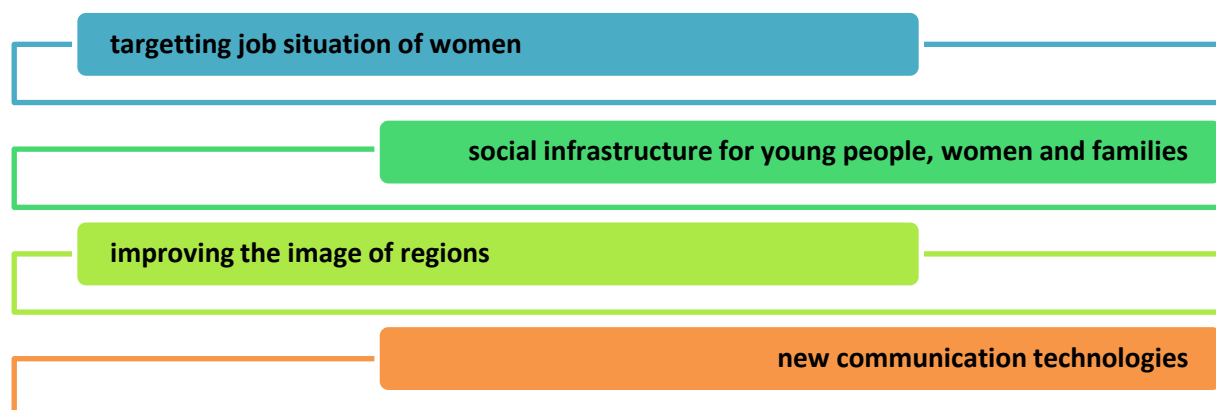
Preventive measures are intended not to directly discourage out-migration but rather to show viable options and opportunities connected to staying in the region. For example, provision of information on regionally available jobs can be helpful. Measures that support the communication between companies, institutions and networks in the home region and young people studying away from the home region should be improved. Negative consequences of out-migration can be addressed mainly by provision of accessible and high quality public services and goods (schools, health care, technical infrastructure, public transport), and generally stopping the vicious circles by seeking break-out solutions: e.g. through new public and private investments.

## 10. FIELDS OF INTERVENTION, PILOT ACTIONS, LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

Based on the SEMIGRA research results, the WOMEN project looked separately at four fields of actions:

- Measures targeting the job situation for women
- Measures focusing on social infrastructure for young people, women and families
- Measures capable of improving the image of regions under consideration and in particular targeting young women
- Measures that aim at fully exploiting all possibilities offered by new communication technologies with regard to social networks, supply of goods and services as well as regional development in general

**Figure 11: Potential fields of actions**



Source: Own elaboration based on Project SEMIGRA.

These four areas of intervention are important and interrelated. Under the WOMEN Project it was feasible to cover some of them in more depth while others could be only treated partially or indirectly. Through the WOMEN pilot initiatives in all partner regions, social and professional women's networks have been supported or even established, awareness and image campaigns implemented, and some job situation related initiatives opened, e.g. demography coaching for businesses. In the future, the key fields of actions will be fertilized by corresponding programme and project ideas as suggested below, and others, developed in response to new findings and region-specific challenges:

**Figure 12: Programme and project ideas**

Targeting the job situation for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting regional job opportunities and making women aware of them (NW)</li> <li>Supporting female entrepreneurship and female run start-ups (NW)</li> <li>Supporting flexible, innovative forms of employment, compatible with family situations (DC)</li> <li>Supporting female careers, professional development and networking (NW)</li> <li>Fostering family friendly labour market and labour relations (DC)</li> <li>Showcasing professionally, economically and socially successful women (IC)</li> <li>Promoting diversification of female education and equal participation of women in science and technical qualifications</li> </ul>
Focusing on social infrastructure for young people, women and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing quality child and elderly dependents facilities</li> <li>Promoting women and youth associations, interest clubs, meeting places, etc.</li> <li>Stimulating civic engagement of women and youth, volunteering and social work</li> <li>Promoting attractive general interest services and cultural activities, specifically suitable for families</li> <li>Fostering political engagement of women</li> </ul>
Improving the image of regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting female role models and women contributing to regional development (IC)</li> <li>Promoting female friendliness, diversity and tolerance as regional values (IC)</li> <li>Raising awareness on local and regional assets which can attract visitors and migrants (technological achievements, economic opportunities, academic successes, nature and environment, culture) (IC)</li> </ul>
Promoting new communication technologies and accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving ICT infrastructures, especially in rural communities, and other advanced technical infrastructure</li> <li>Developing strong ICT competences among women</li> <li>Showcasing ICT-enabled work arrangements (work from home, telework, etc.)</li> <li>Promoting e-government, other e-services, their use and use of social networks, especially by women</li> <li>Ensuring better public transport, flexible and innovative transport solutions</li> </ul>

Covered by WOMEN Project: DC - Demography Coaching, IC - Image Campaign, NW – Networks.

Source: Own elaboration within the Project WOMEN.

**The change of labour market structures is probably the most direct way to counterbalance brain drain of educated women, and at the same time the most difficult.** Regional actors are not able to shift macro-economic trends or to restructure regulatory frameworks. There are however possibilities to infuse change and changed behaviours both by women and employers towards greater economic female participation. New sectors can be supported which favour female employment like tourism, health care, provision of various types of services. With increased automation and digitalization of industries, more gender-balanced education and work can be promoted. Reconciliation of work and family life is a win-win option for employees and employers, and needs increased awareness and cost-benefit considerations. New forms of flexible employment (work sharing, telework) can be more attractive to women, especially in the family development stage.

**Regional and local service infrastructure (public and private) is vital to maintain the standard of living in predominantly rural, less densely populated areas.** If women are employed, and that will be mostly in case of dual-earner families, good access and quality of child care facilities and schools, and other basic services are critical. While governments can gain efficiency by concentration of public services, limiting access and quality in less populated areas hampers local economies and social structures. Finding a proper balance with consideration to families' needs is required and can be supported by increasing civic engagement, community-based actions, and volunteering. Availability of common services is related to quality of work and social life, and image of the region.

Local and regional self-perceptions in predominantly rural regions are often negative. **Regional internal and external image is somehow a reflexion of confidence. Positive marketing and public relations are not only important to change the image of region, but also to improve the perceptions of potential and contributions made by women.** Female role models are powerful magnets for other women to consider their futures with the home region. These positive elements should be used to make a positive mental change about the regions.

**New information and communication technologies open up the possibilities to stay connected and updated regardless of location. They can be a great tool for rural communities and regions to have access to high-value and specialised goods and services. They can also provide direct work and educational opportunities over distance.** Improving access to modern ICT (broadband internet, mobile telephony) in rural societies is a precondition to modern living. Making people aware of and able to use these technologies is necessary to benefit from the benefits offered. Young females should be encouraged to keep up with technological developments not only to stay connected but also to be able to enjoy more work opportunities in technical fields.

In relation to the future actions, programmes and projects at transnational, national and regional levels, the Project WOMEN offers the following key lessons learned and recommendations:

**Figure 13: Recommendations from the WOMEN Project pilot initiatives**

<b>Linkage of pilot actions provides synergy effects</b>
<p>The linkage between different pilot actions turned out to be a very successful way to strengthen the individual measure. Here the WOMEN Award was an important key to support the image campaign. In particular the success stories of the applicants of the award helped to identify female role models and therefore to foster the image campaign. Beyond that networks were partly involved into the awareness raising campaign to make them more visible and to foster cooperation. In addition the demography coaching seminars were linked with network events and applicants of the award were targeted as network members as well. Those possibilities to link the different actions among each other improved the efficiency and success of the individual pilot initiatives considerably. Therefore it is highly recommended to promote the linkage and active entanglement of the initiatives. For this purpose, a close cooperation between the responsible partner institutions is a necessary precondition. Additional improvements could be reached if already existing local projects and initiatives would be stronger connected with the WOMEN pilot activities.</p>
<b>Target group oriented actions are effective</b>
<p>A key issue for the success of the activities is the necessity to define on the one hand concrete and narrow target groups (e.g. with regard to age groups, certain phases in life and certain socio-economic backgrounds) and on the other hand to keep the target group open to as many interested persons as possible. This applies in particular to the direction of the image campaign as well as to the network building. An opening of the target group might be of importance with respect to very sparsely populated regions in rural Europe and the difficulties to find enough participants in networks, applicants for the award and also participants that take part at demography coaching seminars. The thorough consideration of certain target groups with their specific living situation, needs and interests is at least crucial for the success and acceptance of the actions. For different age groups specific measures should be taken. The evaluation of the pilot actions revealed that it is highly challenging to address women who did not decide yet to leave or stay in the region due to reasons for career. In order to reach this group which has partly no concrete life plans in mind, specific strategies are required- other than those to address business women who are already settled in the region. Examples for targeting the youngest are additional cooperation with schools or with local clubs in order provide information about existing job prospects on local labour markets. Basically, the aim of the project to target first of all the high qualified groups of the population has to be re-considered and adjusted to the local realities. The improvement of the local living situation of women with lower qualification is also an issue, which should not be forgotten.</p>

<b>The impact of key persons and role models is significant</b>
In all pilot actions the significance of experienced and dedicated key persons became very clear. This applies in particular for the network leaders, the applicants of the award, for the role models of image campaigns as well as the personality of the demography coaches. The communication of success stories and the exchange with key persons can create a positive attitude towards the living conditions of women. These positive effects could be strengthened in order to stronger target the very young age groups as the identified key women could also act as mentors in the frame of school and training projects.
<b>Awareness raising of gender issues on political level is necessary</b>
To raise awareness for gender issues on regional level is on the one hand a precondition to make the pilot actions more visible and to gain political support. In some rural contexts in Europe gender issues are not taken that serious. Therefore projects that support the interest of women are hardly prioritized. On the other hand the pilot actions in the frame of the WOMEN project made a valuable contribution to raise exactly this awareness for the living conditions of young women in the regions under consideration. The same applies for the consciousness for the consequences of the demographic change.
<b>Awareness of the impacts of demographic change needs to be considered</b>
The awareness concerning demographic change is very different in the case study regions and strongly depends on the political and economic situation and priorities. If for example only a lack of jobs is perceived in the region and not a future lack of skilled work force the intention of the demography coaches can hardly be transferred to enterprises and policy makers. Based on an assessment of the existing awareness or perceived pressure to deal with demographic challenges, the starting point of measures can be defined more concretely and efficiently.
<b>Solutions need to be tailor-made and flexible</b>
The evaluation of the pilot actions indicated, that basically, an in-depth and place based consideration is a crucial precondition to meet certain needs and demands in the particular setting and in order to make the action really a success. Region specific strategies should beyond others consider the level of awareness for demographic change or gender issues within the political and economic sphere as well as the particular situation of young women on the local labour markets, educational possibilities and prevailing family models.
<b>Introduction of demography coaching requires long-term commitment</b>
Based on the (recommended) region-based approaches and an assessment of the awareness the introduction of a demography coach is reasonable. The coach should focus on and intensify the awareness raising and consultancy within the regional economy respectively enterprises or businesses. Amongst others the coach should e.g. consult business associations to open the door to the regional economy. For this purpose a long-term financing of the appointment of a demography coach has to be ensured. Taking into account the experiences of the demography coach initiative, a mentoring system instead of coaching seminars are a reasonable approach. Besides developing individual tailor-made solutions for the specific situation of each company and its human resources policy, the coach should act as a mediator for the economic and political realm.



### **Further establishment and support of networks will produce positive and lasting results**

Since key persons turned out to be decisive for the success of networks it is of great importance to identify personalities that have a strong influence within the region and that are also role models for women. However, the networks should not only support the exchange of knowledge and experiences as well as awareness of female success stories. Beyond that the network should also actively integrate the participating women and communicate reasons to stay and concrete opportunities to start a career in the region based on the expertise of (established) women. A key task to ensure the sustainability of the networks is turning rather passive participants into active network members and to install strong personalities as network leaders.

### **Sustainability of change requires long-term efforts and smart sequencing of actions**

Basically all pilot actions are measures that unfold their efforts in the long-run. Taking that into account the focus should be on the sustainability of the initiatives. With regard to the demography coaching a solution could be the continuation of a mentoring program to further consult companies and raise awareness for the WOMEN issues. A long-lasting engagement of a demography coach (external expert) should aim at awareness raising, networking and distribution of information. Basically, to strengthen the efficiency of the single pilot actions it should be considered if first the awareness rising measures are implemented before actions that are more content related like the demography coaching are introduced. The demography coaching requires partly a kind of awareness for the challenges of demographic change and shortage of skilled labour in the region to generate a real demand.

Source: Own elaboration within the Project WOMEN (Summary Peer-Review Reports, August 2014).

## 11. STRATEGY COMMUNICATION AND MONITORING

The communication of the strategy is necessary to increase impacts and create momentum for broader actions as well as to stimulate policy changes. Communication is directed to four target groups:

- stakeholders in regional development and demographic change management within the partner regions (decision-makers of relevant institutions, politicians and mayors of local public authorities, labour market agents);
- stakeholders and key actors from other European regions addressed to consider the transfer and repetition of successful approaches;
- policy-makers on European and national levels whose awareness for the problems related to the outbound migration of well-educated young women in view of the mainstreaming of activities shall be increased;
- the general public to increase the societal awareness and readiness to embrace change.

The particular communication actions and approaches are foreseen with regards to the above identified target groups by all partner regions within their proposed Regional Action Plans, in line with the Joint Action Plan.

Monitoring of progress towards strategic goals is ensured by all partner regions in their Regional Action Plans. Full commitment to future communication and monitoring of progress is expressed by the Memorandum of Understanding, underpinning this Transnational Strategy, signed by all partner regions.

## 12. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION – JOINT ACTION PLAN

**The Joint Action Plan (JAP)**, emanating from and at the same time making the Transnational Strategy actionable, is built on the work carried out in the implementation of the Project WOMEN in all partner regions, specifically on pilot actions undertaken by partners and exchanges of experiences, peer reviews, and other shared learning processes. The main benefits of the JAP are associated with its applicability and feasibility as a document based on consensus, common experiences, and willingness to continue collaboration on the topics covered by the Project WOMEN. Furthermore, the JAP is underpinned by a strategic commitment of all partners expressed by the Memorandum of Understanding which regulates provisions made for sustainability of the interventions initiated within the Project.

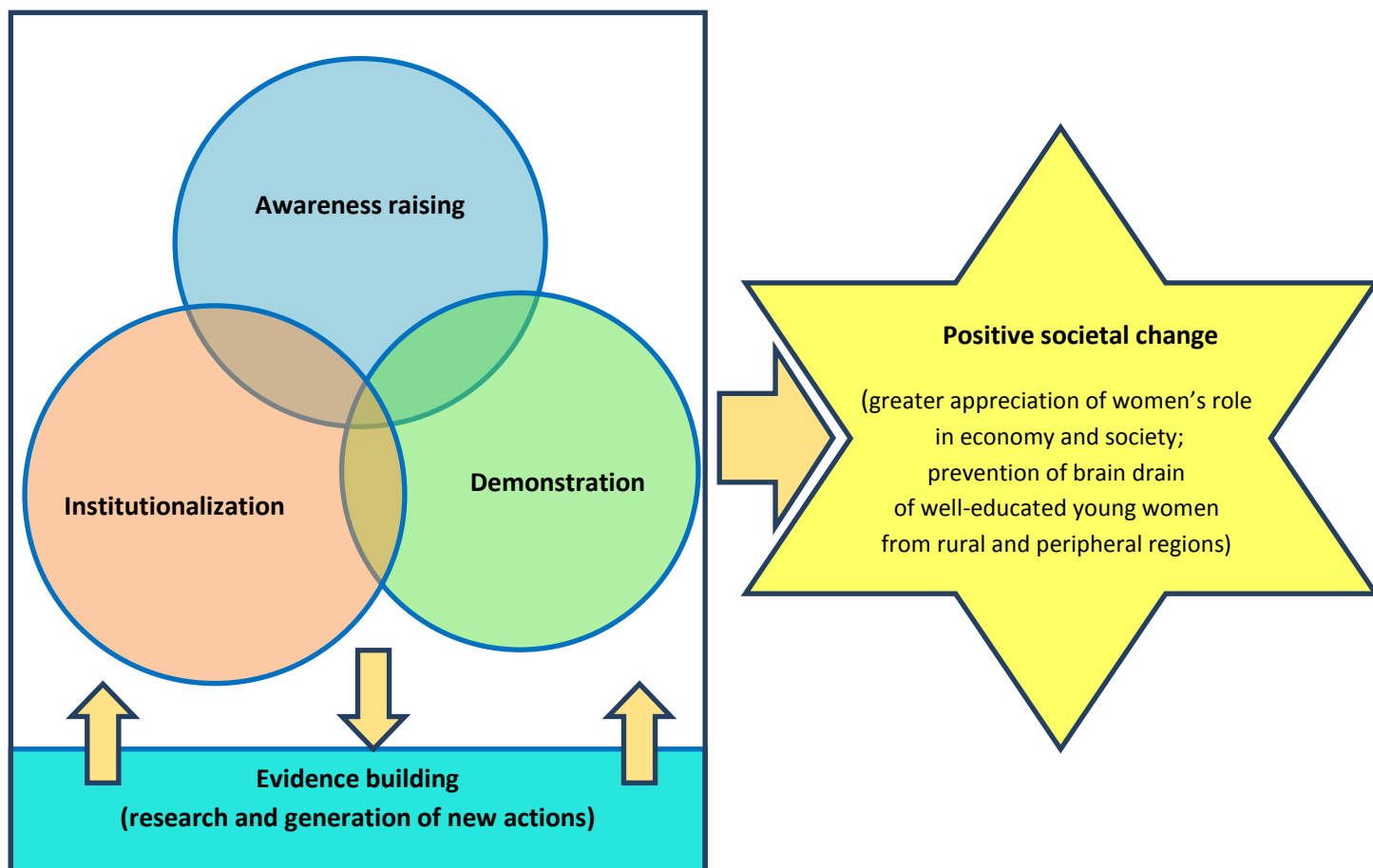
The basic types of actions, agreed among WOMEN partner regions, fall into the following cross-related main categories:

- awareness raising,
- demonstration,
- institutionalisation,
- evidence building (research and generation of new actions).

It is considered necessary to treat the brain drain of young well-educated women by complex interventions, combining several elements of the above categories as the main expected significant **positive societal changes** (greater appreciation of women's role in economy and society; prevention of brain drain of well-educated young women from rural and peripheral regions) cannot be otherwise achieved.

The Joint Action Plan is considered a formula for the next steps after the Project has ended. Project partners see it as a coherent guiding document for future joint and individual actions in the domain of counteracting the brain drain of young well-educated women from their regions.

Figure 14: Joint Action Plan – graphically



Source: Own elaboration within the Project WOMEN.

The areas of intervention (awareness raising, demonstration, institutionalisation, evidence building: research and generation of new actions) are presented separately for the purpose of greater clarity. In practice however, most of these elements should be integrated into single actions or programmes/projects as they are closely interrelated and cross-feed one another. The approach taken to this Joint Action Plan is based on the common lessons learned from Project WOMEN and the specifics of each regional situation and partners' positions, capacities, and institutional interests. This combination of agreed joint priorities and individual expressions is believed to provide an optimal approach to common and differentiated regional perspectives.

Figure 15: Joint Action Plan

Areas of intervention	Basic lessons learned	Recommendations for future actions	Examples of future actions from WOMEN's regions
<b>A. Awareness raising</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>among decision-makers (regional, national, EU-level)</li> <li>among target groups</li> <li>among companies</li> <li>among general public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness activities are effective only if involving key stakeholders from the target groups and key decision-makers.</li> <li>Awareness campaigns need to be targeted so they can reach the right audiences (women, politicians, business leaders, etc.).</li> <li>Awareness campaigns need to be region-specific, taking into account cultural differences, prevailing perceptions, and advancement of the themes.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue broad awareness actions: forums, seminars, publications, publicity campaigns (funds permitting).</li> <li>Link awareness to mainstreaming: include issues in policy dialogue, require political leaders to take a position, lobby for addressing issues by legislation and practice-change at regional, national, EU-level.</li> <li>Focus and tailor awareness to specific issues of young women's brain drain: employment, social life, family life.</li> <li>Make recipients aware of relations between brain drain of young women and broad negative demographic impacts.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Styria (Austria) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further networking and women's corners development</li> </ul> </li> <li>Saxony-Anhalt (Germany) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blog/ Facebook continuation: <a href="http://blogausland.de">blogausland.de</a></li> <li>Touring exhibition: Female friendly Saxony-Anhalt</li> </ul> </li> <li>South-Transdanubia (Hungary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining webpage: <a href="http://www.lepjesmaradj.hu">www.lepjesmaradj.hu</a> and Facebook profile: Lépjesmaradj</li> <li>Organization of events for network and stakeholders</li> </ul> </li> <li>Podlaskie (Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of women role models in media</li> <li>Promotion of women's entrepreneurship</li> </ul> </li> <li>Podkarpackie (Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media promotion of women's profiles</li> </ul> </li> <li>Pomurje (Slovenia) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness raising on demographic changes and continued dissemination of WOMEN Project results</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>B. Demonstration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>role models (persons,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role models are indispensable to show positive change and its</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify different (and more) role models and work directly with and</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Styria (Austria) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role models advocacy actions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Areas of intervention	Basic lessons learned	Recommendations for future actions	Examples of future actions from WOMEN's regions
<p>companies, organizations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– recognition and promotion of positive change (awards, competitions, forums, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>feasibility ('I can, if she/he can').</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Demonstration can be based on any positive examples and successes (individuals, businesses, including benefits arising from demography coaching, schools, networks, families, etc.).</li> </ul>	<p>through them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Use multiple models and multiple demonstration strategies: awards, media stories, mentoring, competitions, etc., depending on the topic and regional specificity.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Saxony-Anhalt (Germany) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promotion of role-models / Story-telling</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ South-Transdanubia (Hungary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promotion of role-models / Story-telling</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Podlaskie (Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organisation of seminars with role models</li> <li>– Organisation of conferences with role models</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Podkarpackie (Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Conference on young women in region</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Pomurje (Slovenia) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Continued 'Women Awards' competitions</li> <li>– Promotion of female role models</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Areas of intervention	Basic lessons learned	Recommendations for future actions	Examples of future actions from WOMEN's regions
<b>C. Institutionalization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Establishing and strengthening women's networks</li> <li>– Demography coaching for business and public organizations</li> <li>– 'Change on the ground' actions (e.g. flexible work, on-site/tele work arrangements, provision of child-care)</li> <li>– Strategies, programmes, and action plans on EU-, state- and regional levels</li> <li>– Introduction of female-sensitive statutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Subject and target group networks (business women's and social women's nets, young women's clubs, etc.) are a powerful change factor, leading to institutionalization and better voicing of issues.</li> <li>■ Networks need support to be established and need long-term support to build sustainability; one-off actions are ineffective.</li> <li>■ Role models and key stakeholders need to be involved directly into networks or as strong supporters.</li> <li>■ Demography management needs to become a standard function (institution) among companies and public organizations to address issues of brain drain of women related to employment and work-life relations.</li> <li>■ Specific 'change on the ground' actions need to be tailored to target group's needs and regional situations.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide financial and non-financial, long- term support to women's networks (organizational, promotional support, in-kind contributions, joint projects).</li> <li>2. Involve high-level players in and around networks (change agents, issue ambassadors, leaders, role models).</li> <li>3. Make networks focused on issues, not self-centred clubs. Networks need to work and lobby for more participation of women in business, society, politics.</li> <li>4. Support subject-related networks in reaching out to target groups through mentoring, sponsoring, building nets of networks.</li> <li>5. Promote and introduce new functions of demographic coaches to companies and other organizations with three elements integrated: promotion of new services, development of coaches and training/professional capacity building, standardization and quality assurance of demography-coaching among regions.</li> <li>6. Work out other 'change on the ground' actions in direct collaboration with target groups.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Styria (Austria) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Creating demography services for companies</li> <li>– Network development for women Deutschlandsberg</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Saxony-Anhalt (Germany) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Establishing the state programme "Gender equality in Saxony-Anhalt"</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ South-Transdanubia (Hungary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organization of training with the University of Pécs</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Podlaskie (Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strengthening women's networks</li> <li>– Using the existing demography management to promote this instrument among companies</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Podkarpackie (Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strategy on gender equality for the region</li> <li>– Promotion of demography coaching and other practical actions for women</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Pomurje (Slovenia) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Further development of women's network with emphasis on female entrepreneurship</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Areas of intervention	Basic lessons learned	Recommendations for future actions	Examples of future actions from WOMEN's regions
<b>D. Evidence building (research and generation of new actions)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and studies focused on the relevant themes, underpinning all other areas of intervention</li> <li>Development and application for new projects to stabilise, sustain and strengthen the impacts of implemented actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research allows for evidence-based actions and reflective learning based on evaluating changes introduced.</li> <li>Studies can and should be integrated with change initiatives to make them more relevant and to allow better evaluations.</li> <li>New projects and programmes should be based on results and recommendations of WOMEN.</li> </ul>	<p>Research and new activities related to the subject should further concentrate on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of the regional peculiarities with regard to gender questions: How are gender issues negotiated in national and regional contexts? (evaluating the impact of awareness raising).</li> <li>Surveys taking the biographies, expectations and needs of young women and men living in shrinking regions into account (to make strategies like networks, image campaigns more target oriented).</li> <li>Research and counteracting activities on the migration decisions and patterns of rural youth (discussions particular to rural experiences are absent from most considerations of public policy, e.g. educational).</li> <li>Paying attention also to the situation of young men living in rural areas since they appear in some regions as a socio-economically more disadvantaged group.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Styria (Austria) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot action "participation processes" in selected regions</li> <li>Demography consultancy development</li> </ul> </li> <li>Saxony-Anhalt (Germany) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of individual mobility in rural areas</li> <li>Support of social innovation in rural areas</li> </ul> </li> <li>South-Transdanubia (Hungary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating in other projects, which will be based on the WOMEN</li> </ul> </li> <li>Podlaskie (Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of new projects and support of international projects on women</li> </ul> </li> <li>Podkarpackie (Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New project on women (regional)</li> <li>New project on women (transnational)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Pomurje (Slovenia) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New projects stemming from WOMEN</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration within the Project WOMEN.



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## **1. ANNEXES**

1. Annex 1 – Problems in numbers
2. Annex 2 – Regional SWOTs

## ANNEX 1 - PROBLEMS IN NUMBERS (DETAILED ANALYSIS)

The problem in focus is the brain drain of well educated women in their working age. Unbalanced sex ratio structures in the younger age groups are associated with socio-economic disparities and low territorial cohesion. A shortage of young women has negative consequences in demographic development, labour market, social cohesion and image of rural communities. Gender-related differences in migration also play an important role. The question is how regions can minimize losses by formulating gender- and age-sensitive policies to counteract selective depopulation.

### ***Earlier observations and lessons learned***

The following findings and observations derived from the Project SEMIGRA (2012)<sup>29</sup>, are the most relevant to the issues covered by the Project WOMEN:

#### **■ Unbalanced sex ratio structures are closely associated with structural difficulties**

Analysis of three important age groups (20-24, 25-29 and 30-34 years old) shows that a massive deficit of women in all considered age groups is located in rural Eastern Germany and a moderate deficit of young women in the considered age groups is overrepresented in agrarian regions and corresponds to “male-oriented” economies. The identified sex ratio imbalances are highly dependent on institutions and structures (labour market, education system, and regional economic situation) and national/regional cultures (traditions, accepted gender roles).

Regional variations related to the extent of deficits of women and the underlying factors show the influence of basic differences in the economic, political and socio-cultural framework conditions. The relation between the regional and the national contexts is critical, and intraregional disparities between (regional) urban centres and very small rural communities have fundamental impact on migration issues.

#### **■ Regions with structural difficulties deepen out-migration patterns by perpetuating bad self-image**

Brain drain and sex ratio imbalances disavouring women have negative impact on the future of regions. The young (15-18 years old) perceive home regions affected by brain drain as places with limited opportunities and adjust their future plans. For girls, stronger interest in social relations and greater professional ambitions are typical. These factors make young educated women more prone to out-migration and addressing these tendencies requires attention to personal relations and cultural issues.

Also, the attitudes of parents and other adults are an important factor that needs to be tackled as they tend to advise the young to leave the home regions. These negative perceptions are often

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Menu\\_TargetedAnalyses/semigra.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/semigra.html)

reinforced by the lifestyles attributed to large urban centres and promoted by mass media. Actions targeted to improve the perceptions of home regions are required.

■ **Pro-family labour conditions and work opportunities for men and women are needed**

The analysis of various individual decision situations in the life of young women shows that the stage of life between 30-35 years of age often changes migration behaviours. Jobs, children and homeownership are seen as anchors to the home region but at the same time quite often migration by females is related to the career paths of their partners. Family formation period often provokes return to more traditional gender roles. Keeping or attracting young women should therefore consider supporting dual-earner families by appropriate social services and also career opportunities for men.

■ **Problems of selective depopulation are not well known and therefore often not properly addressed**

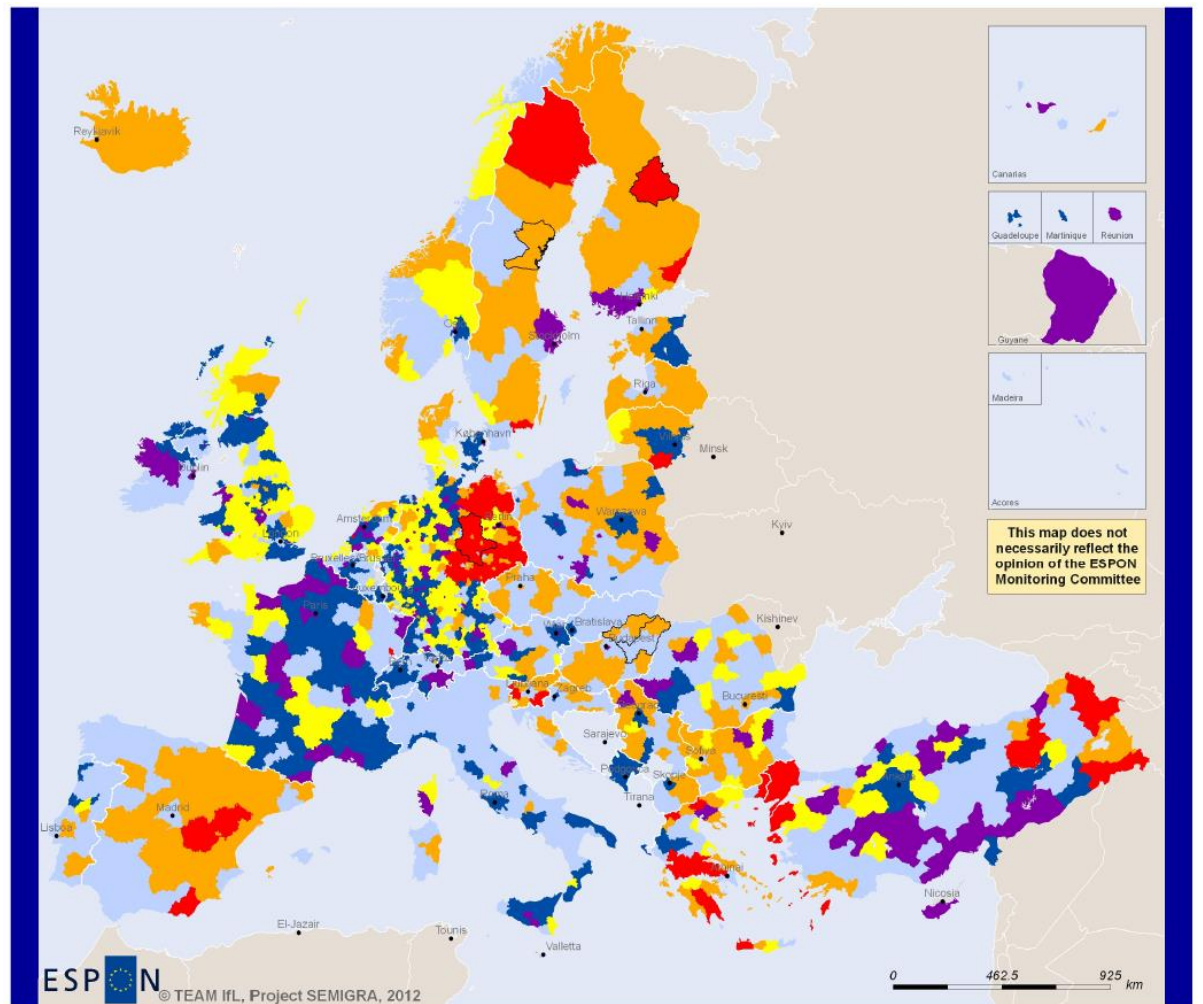
While the problem of general outmigration of young people is widely commented and known, the issues related to the unbalanced sex ratio structures caused by excessive outmigration by women are not obvious. Low awareness among the general population and experts is one of the factors limiting interventions to counterbalance the brain drain of young women, which add to the structural difficulties of limited job opportunities and limited access to higher education.

***Specific observations***

The following findings and observations collected from multiple sources and directly from the Project WOMEN provide valuable insights into the brain drain of young educated females.

There are some pan-European trends in the regional pattern of sex ratio imbalances, however there are many differences, and national as well as regional peculiarities. In the national context an unbalanced sex ratio is partly capable of mirroring societal changes – especially with regard to the position of women in society and changes on the labour market connected to the transition to a post-industrial knowledge- and service-based economy. Other numerous factors influence the sex ratio balances: education, labour market, regional economic situation, culture and perceptions of gender roles. These factors tend to be diverse across and within regions, and need careful crafting of appropriate interventions.

**Figure 1: Typology of regional sex ratio structures in young adulthood (20-24, 25-29, 30-34 years old)**



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### Legend

- Cluster 1: Strong "lack" of women in all age groups
- Cluster 2: Moderate "lack" of women in all age groups
- Cluster 3: "Sex ratio turnaround": "Surplus" of men in the youngest age group, "surplus" of women in the oldest age group
- Cluster 4: Balanced sex ratio in all age groups
- Cluster 5: "Feminising regions": Balanced sex ratio in the youngest age group, "surplus" of women in the oldest age group
- Cluster 6: "Surplus" of women in all age groups
- No data

Regional level: NUTS 3  
Source: Own calculations, 2011  
Origin of data: EUROSTAT and national statistical offices  
© EuroGeographics Association for administrative boundaries

Source: SEMIGRA Results, 2012.

The regions covered by the Project WOMEN experience different levels of sex ratios imbalances, mostly described as 'moderate lack of women' in all age groups. Some locations in and around major regional urban centres are characterised by balanced sex ratio in the youngest age groups and by a 'surplus' of women in the oldest age groups. None of the regions concerned can be considered a balanced sex ratio territory.

Migratory pressures and brain drain tendencies are effectively associated with a host of conditions and differences among countries, regions, and localities. Globalisation, greater interconnectedness and intensified competition make place-of-work and domicile related decisions more complicated and at the same time open wider alternatives.

While it is not easy to determine and attribute a definite causality effect to the interrelated factors which force young and educated women to migrate, there are some symptomatic perspectives that provide a large part of the explanation. In general, the European regions which show higher rates of in-migration tend also to show higher rates of visitors. The regional attractiveness related to work has important overlaps with the attractiveness to visitors: accessibility, good infrastructure and amenities, heritage, etc. The regions which are characterized by either net out-migration or low levels of net-migration combined with low visitor arrival rates, commonly also show relatively low levels of GDP per capita and higher unemployment rates.<sup>30</sup>

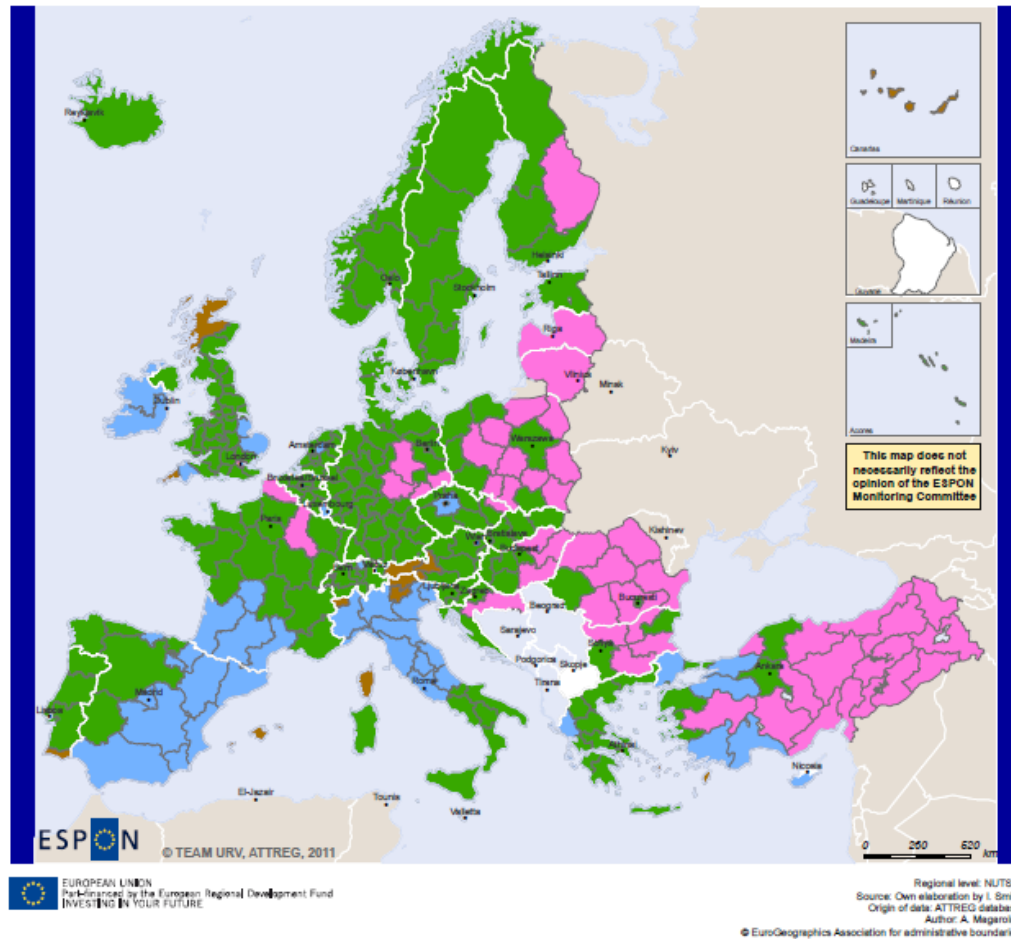
Exporting labour from the regions of low and moderate attractiveness is not a sensible long-term regional development strategy. Just the opposite needs to happen – these regions need to rethink their assets and identify ways to attract more visitors and eventually also more in-migrants. These pressures and challenges are often identified in relation to the disparities in attractiveness between the capital cities and national/international economic centres (key economic functions and job opportunities) and other less attractive, especially peripheral regions. Some of the territories can benefit from their endogenous assets (unspoiled nature, cultural heritage) to develop specific products and services, while another, non-exclusive way forward is to form tight economic and social links with the localities which play the role of international and interregional growth poles.

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<sup>30</sup>ESPON Territorial Observation No 6: Regions and Cities in the World Economy, May 2012:  
[http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/TerritorialObservations/TO6\\_May2012/TO-6\\_Regions\\_and\\_cities\\_in\\_the\\_global\\_economy.pdf](http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/TerritorialObservations/TO6_May2012/TO-6_Regions_and_cities_in_the_global_economy.pdf)



**Figure 2: Attractiveness of regions to migrants and visitors**



#### Typology classes \*

- CLASS 1: low net migration rate (2001-07) and low visitor rate (2001-04)
- CLASS 2: mid-level net migration rate (2001-07) and mid-level visitor rate (2001-04)
- CLASS 3: high net migration rate (2001-07) and mid-level visitor rate (2001-04)
- CLASS 4: high net migration rate (2001-07) and high visitor rate (2001-04)
- NO DATA

\* Ward's method hierarchical clustering algorithm based on normalised MM2\_20 and MT2\_43 indicators (4 cluster solution retained).

Source: ESPON Territorial Observation No 6: Regions and Cities in the World Economy, May 2012.

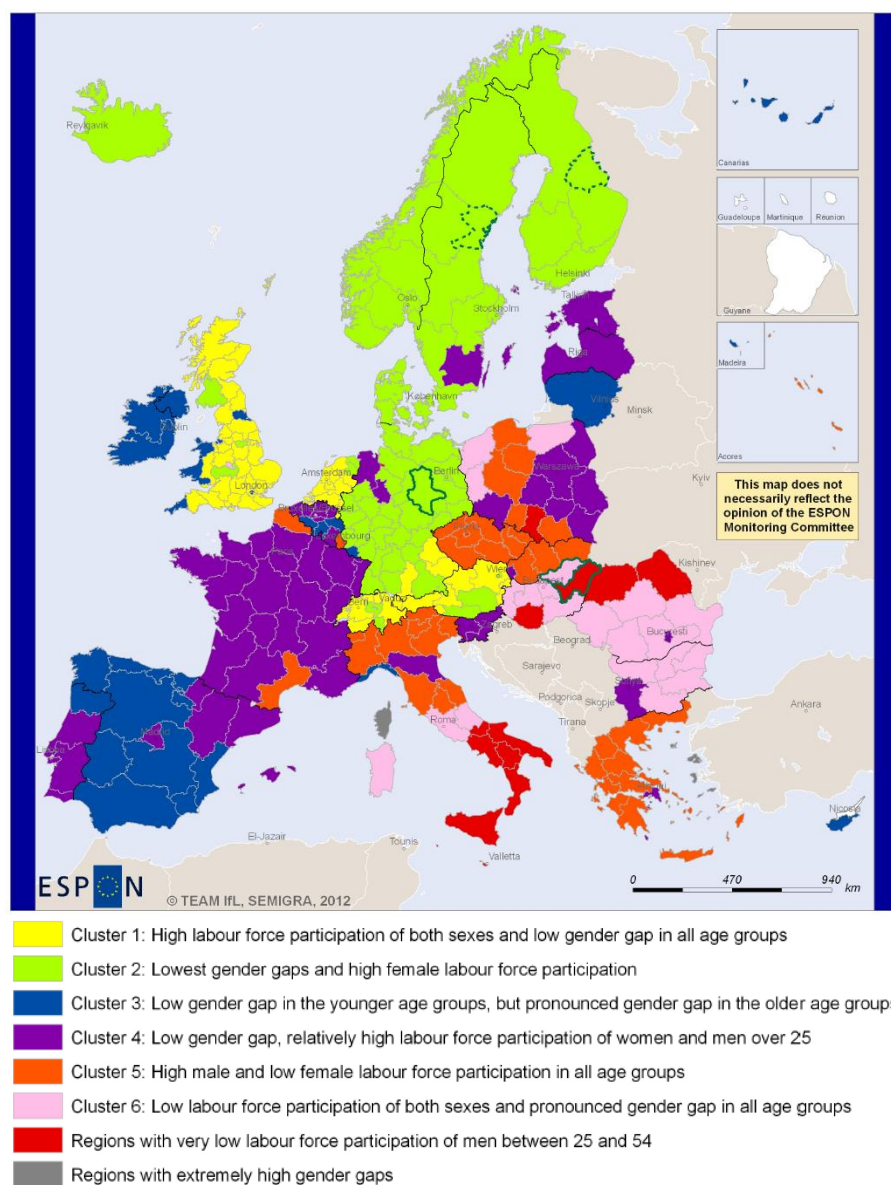
In today's competitive settings, regions increasingly compete to attract intangible resources such as human capital, which are seen as crucial drivers of regional development. In consequence, the relative and perceived attractiveness of regions becomes more and more important as a background factor shaping the future development patterns. While good economic conditions are generally associated with localization attractiveness, they are not the only and not necessarily the dominant factor. Opening a region to tourists and allowing in-migrants to develop their potential can regenerate regions and significantly increase their attractiveness. Outmigration can be both a negative (risk of long term disintegration) and positive (short term adjustment) factor, depending on



the resulting overall changes in regional productivity and competitiveness. **Place-based, regions-specific interventions which provide business friendly environments, improve accessibility, and foster innovation, qualifications and skills, will have profound impact. From the national perspectives, a diversified and balanced, de-concentrated economy, based on a larger number of second-tier cities complementing the capital cities, can provide a win-win solution which lessens the migratory and brain drain pressures.**

The positive effects of second-tier cities, i.e. regional capitals on gender balance and women participation in the labour market, are especially visible in WOMEN regions where sex ratio imbalances are relatively strong, e.g. in Podlaskie and Podkarpackie (PL), South-Transdanubia (HU).

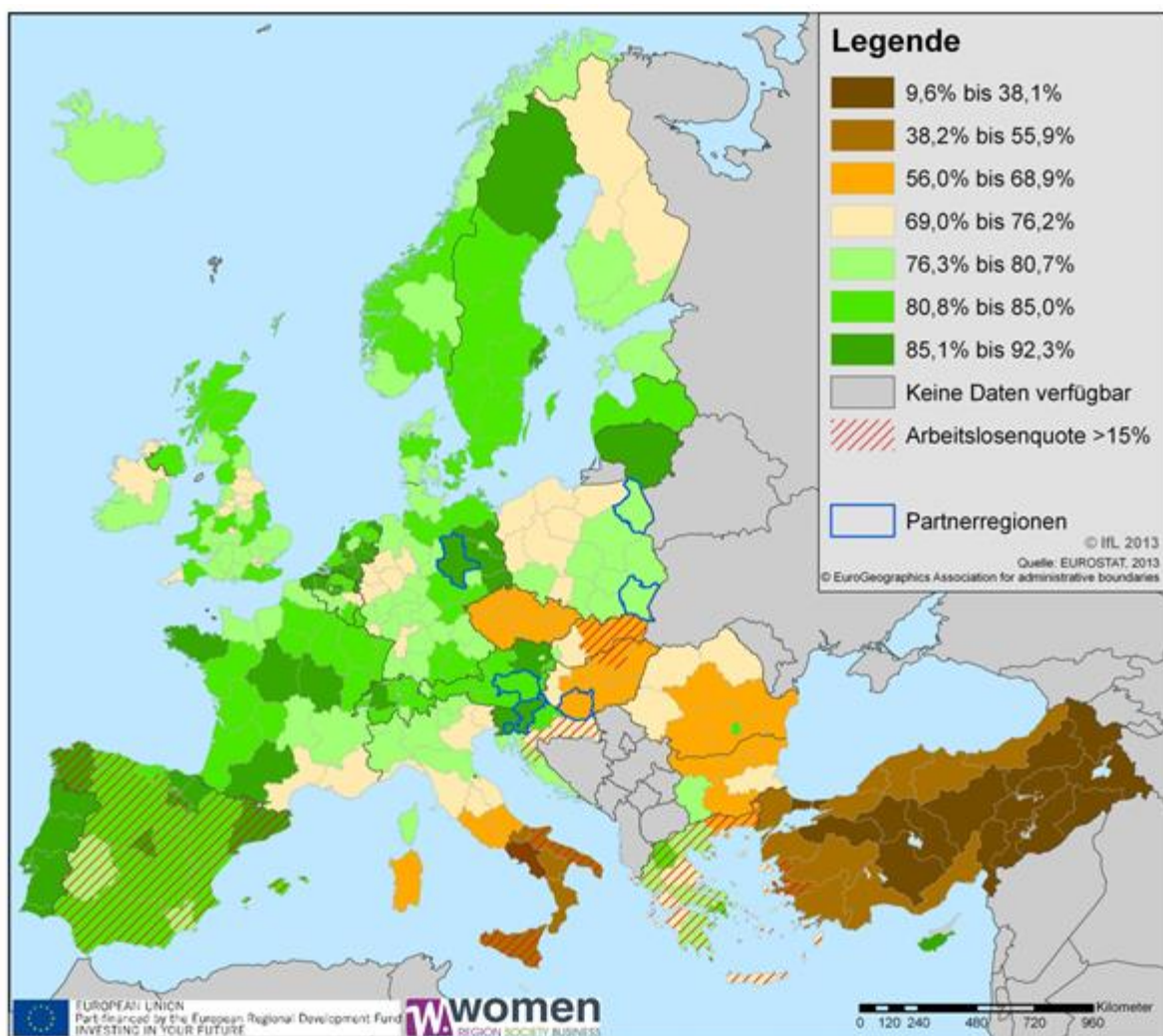
**Figure 3: Gender balance and women participation in the labour market (2012)**



Source: Project SEMIGRA Results, 2012.

Regional labour force participation rates of women differ significantly among European regions. Relative to the EU average of 77.3% of women between 25 and 34 years of age in the labour force, only the regions of Saxony-Anhalt (DE), Pomurje (SV), and Styria (AU), fair significantly better. Podlaskie (PL), Podkarpackie (PL), and South-Transdanubia (HU), show results either close to or below the EU average. Although there are some general European patterns in this respect, the regional differentiation within individual countries is high and explained by region-specific factors. Cultural aspects and societal traditions seem to play an important role. In this context, structural changes are as much needed as attitudes-shaping incentives and interventions. Promotion of gainful employment of young women and associated assistance are the main elements worth considering.

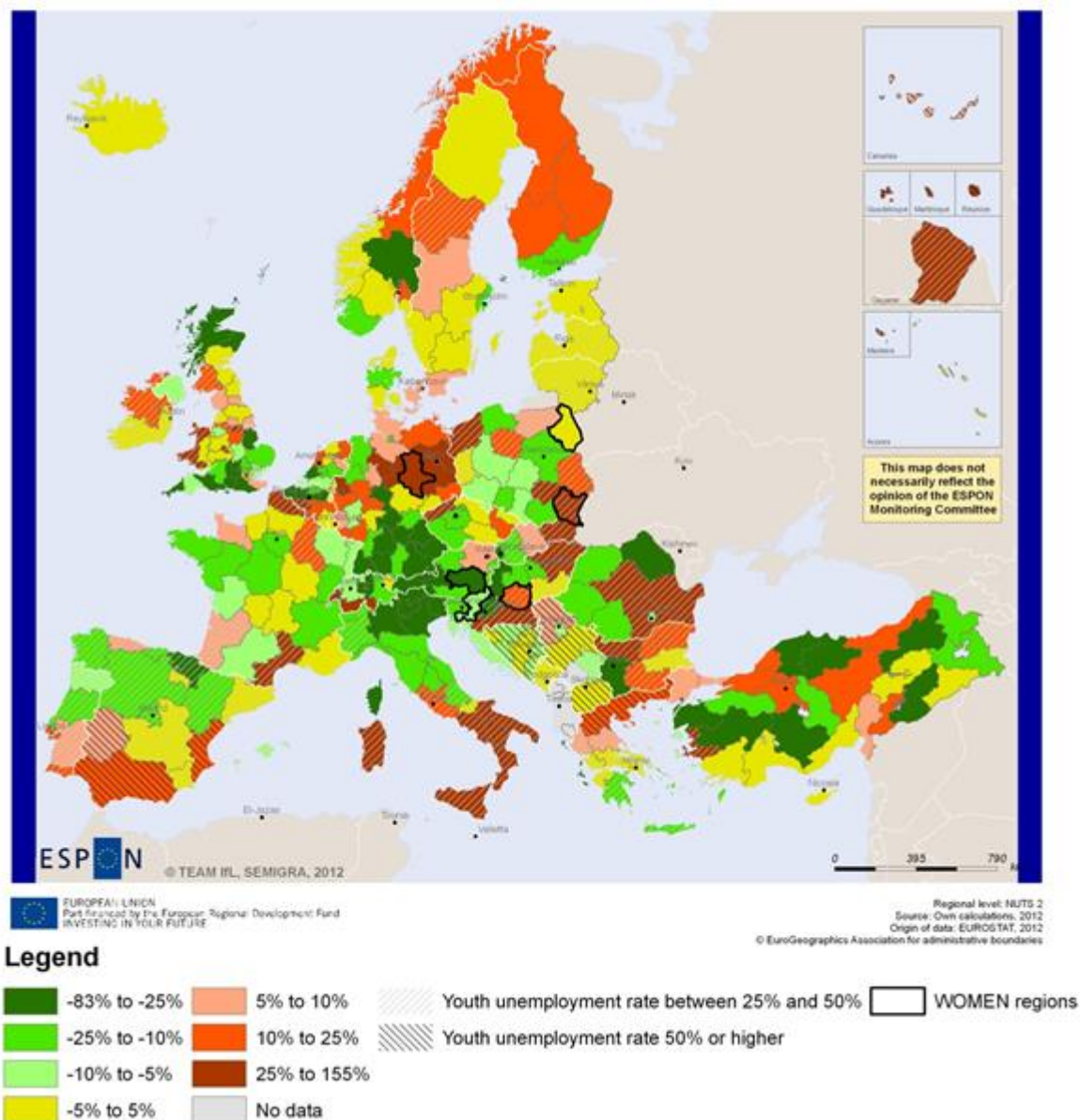
**Figure 4: Regional labour force participation rate of women in the age group 25-34 years old, 2011 (EU mean = 77.3%)**



Source: Project WOMEN, 2013.

Regional peculiarities related to the successful young females' participation in the economy, and their decisions to migrate, are further intensified by employment opportunities open to young people. Regions experiencing relatively high youth unemployment rates, both in the national and the EU contexts are prone to be affected by more emigration pressures. The WOMEN regions in this respect, with the exception of Styria (AU), have uninviting labour markets for the young in general, and for the young women in particular.

**Figure 5: Youth unemployment rates relative to the national mean, 2011**

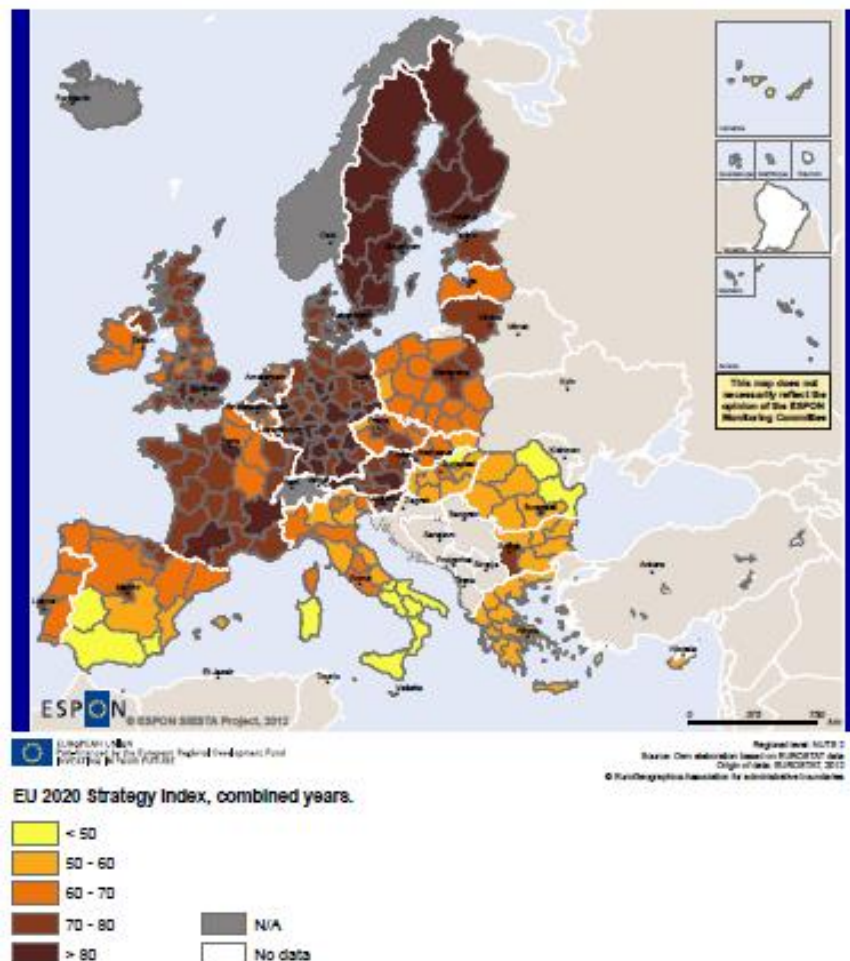


Source: SEMIGRA Results, 2012.



Another useful perspective on the relevant attractiveness or advancement of regions, and therefore their potential to attract and sustain the well-educated young, is given by measuring the aggregate index of achievement of Europe 2020. As it turns out some countries were already close to meeting most of the strategic goals of 2020 (80% index) by 2009-2010 – mostly concentrated in the Nordic states, southern Germany, several French regions, and South England (Centre-North Europe). Some capital regions scored particularly high as well (Île-de-France, Greater London, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen ,Ljubljana). On the other hand, several regions scored less than 40% - Eastern Romania, Észak-Magyarország (Hungary), Southern Italy and Southern Spain, Spanish outermost regions (South and South-East Europe).<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 6: Regional Europe 2020 Strategy aggregate index, 2009-2010**



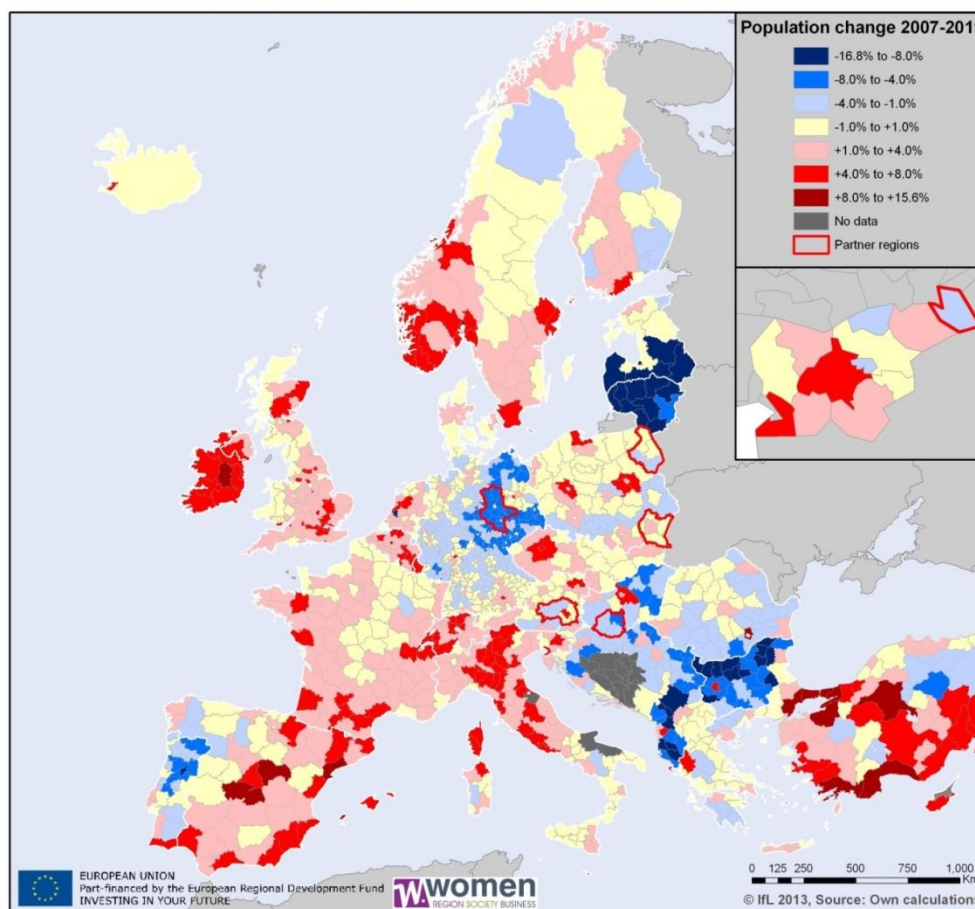
Source: ESPON Atlas, June 2013: Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

<sup>31</sup> ESPON Atlas, June 2013: Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy, p. 66:  
[http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/ATLAS2020/194650\\_ESPON\\_ATLAS\\_-\\_Final\\_version.pdf](http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/ATLAS2020/194650_ESPON_ATLAS_-_Final_version.pdf)

It is clear that regions and locations exhibiting the highest scores in terms of Europe 2020 goals will have significant advantages in attracting the well-educated young, among them women. In this respect, the WOMEN regions reflect the general divisions across Europe, with the more peripheral ones lagging behind and the more central ones being closer to EU 2020 goals. It can be expected that these structural and policy settings will further complicate women's situation in Podlaskie (PL), Podkarpackie (PL), and South-Transdanubia (HU), and other regions of Central and Eastern Europe.

Population trends seem to follow, although not perfectly, the variations in regional attractiveness and advancements in strategic development goals. Where strategically perceived development conditions are good, the summative effects of natural population growth and migration tend to be positive. Where the conditions are weak, the net population change tends to be negative. All WOMEN regions experience population losses, from moderate to high, confirming that adjustments are needed to fulfil the strategically defined parameters of a modern, efficient and sustainable society and economy.

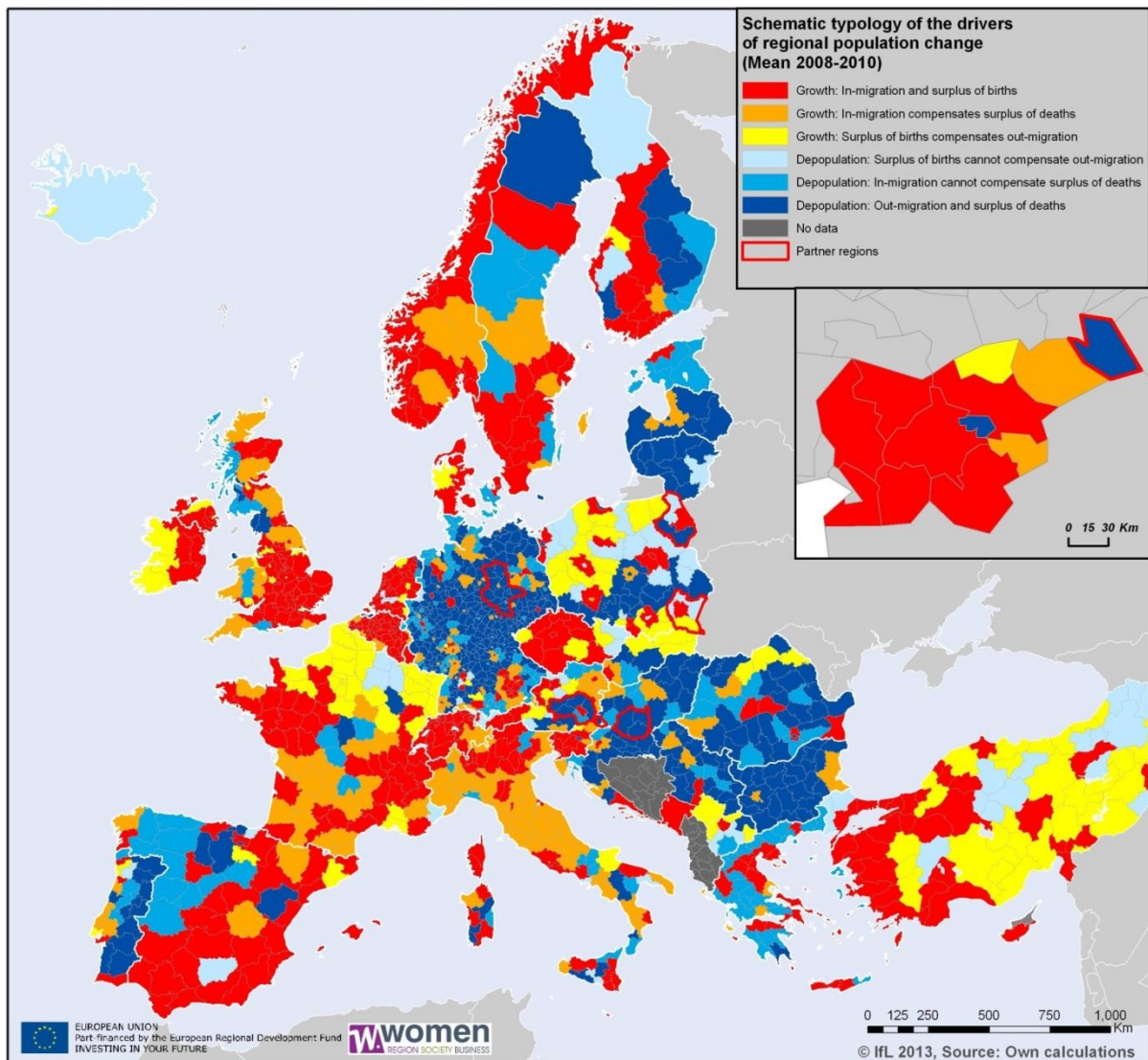
**Figure 7: Population change (2007-2011)**



Source: Project WOMEN, 2014.

All WOMEN regions seem to find it difficult to sustain population numbers, the ones in the EU periphery still compensating out-migration, at least partially, by surplus of births (Podlaskie (PL), Podkarpackie (PL)), and others losing population both due to out-migration and surplus of deaths.

**Figure 8: Population development by components (2008-2010)**



Source: Project WOMEN, 2014.

## ANNEX 2 - REGIONAL SWOTS

	Saxony-Anhalt(Germany)	Pomurje (Slovenia)	Styria (Austria)	Podlaskie (Poland)	Podkarpackie (Poland)	South-Transdanubia (Hungary)
Main Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional beauty strengthening identification with home region.</li> <li>Affordable cost of living, properties.</li> <li>Strong regional civil society.</li> <li>High percentage of school graduates with university entry qualification (particularly girls).</li> <li>Universities as important location factor, currently popular with German youths from the west.</li> <li>Female jobs established in local culture, gainful employment of mothers accepted, egalitarian families.</li> <li>Child care: tight-knit network, good facilities, good educational care.</li> <li>Range of training opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easy accessibility mainly connected to three state borders in the region and short distances within and to/from the region.</li> <li>Good quality of environment, not crowded, uncongested space.</li> <li>Relatively low living costs.</li> <li>Easier and improving access to public services.</li> <li>Strong and deep social networks.</li> <li>Increasing public support and improving policies towards families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vibrant towns of rural character (under 10.000 inhabitants) and a relatively high level of living.</li> <li>A mixed structure of companies (industrial, agricultural and services) present in the region.</li> <li>Good cooperation between the regional actors.</li> <li>Relatively high level of knowledge in demography, networking and public relations.</li> <li>Good demographic prospects for the coming years for the region.</li> <li>The topic of gender balance is actively addressed in the region: "Women and Equality Strategy 2020" (political level agreement).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relatively large proportion of young people population, especially in working age.</li> <li>Strong regional capital – the agglomeration of Bialystok city.</li> <li>Favourable environmental conditions and low costs of living.</li> <li>Abundance of domestic raw materials necessary for the development of agro-food, wood, and construction industry.</li> <li>Favourable conditions for the development of eco agriculture, including the production of organic products.</li> <li>Region's location next to the EU borders with international trade potential.</li> <li>Developed system of secondary and higher education and increasing proportion of population with higher education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Richness and diversity of nature, cultural and historical environment in rural areas encouraging development of tourist services and allowing high quality of life.</li> <li>Relatively high level of social activity, e.g. large number of NGOs.</li> <li>Educational structures and good practices of cross-border co-operation (e.g. in Carpathian Euroregion).</li> <li>Relatively high potential of companies in the field of modern technologies resulting in high demand for specialists and services.</li> <li>Existence of special economic zones, technological and industrial parks as well as business incubators.</li> <li>A relatively large number Business Environment Institutions within industrialised areas of the region with diverse scope of services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of a relatively large pool of labour force.</li> <li>Developed system of vocational training in the region, suitable for quality training and supply of labour force.</li> <li>Complex labour market programmes traditionally producing good results.</li> <li>Two universities in the region decisive in R&amp;D&amp;I.</li> <li>An improved infrastructure promoting job creation and expansion of employment on the primary labour market.</li> <li>Favourable agro-ecological potential.</li> <li>Rate of employment of higher education diploma holders continuously increasing.</li> </ul>



	Saxony-Anhalt(Germany)	Pomurje (Slovenia)	Styria (Austria)	Podlaskie (Poland)	Podkarpackie (Poland)	South-Transdanubia (Hungary)
Main Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Male-dominated sectors (agriculture, technical jobs).</li> <li>Limited female entrepreneurship tradition; women oriented towards typical female jobs.</li> <li>Low wages.</li> <li>Inflexible administration impeding change.</li> <li>High percentage of youths without secondary education.</li> <li>Poorly equipped schools.</li> <li>Region associated with environmental pollution.</li> <li>Facets of a negative image: “no future”, “loser region”.</li> <li>Accessibility and infrastructure inadequate in many rural areas.</li> <li>Few/no leisure opportunities for young people, particularly for girls/young women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relatively low purchasing power connected with salary levels.</li> <li>Limited business opportunities, less robust business interactions.</li> <li>High level of unemployment</li> <li>Limited public services, especially in culture and leisure.</li> <li>Accessibility issues: transport within and external.</li> <li>Poor image of the region.</li> <li>Traditional social and economic structures, weak entrepreneurial skills, conformist attitudes.</li> <li>Depopulating areas and ageing society, negatively impacting the economic and social structures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited accessibility, specifically underdeveloped public transportation in many parts of the region.</li> <li>Depopulating, shrinking isolated localities.</li> <li>Limited work and business opportunities in the shrinking areas, needing special activation policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High unemployment, especially among youth and the rural population (hidden).</li> <li>Outflow of population from rural areas and region due to low quality of life and lack of job prospects, low competitiveness of the regional economy.</li> <li>Low comparative wages - salaries of employees with the same qualifications are significantly lower from in the central Poland regions and other highly-developed countries.</li> <li>Poor practical preparation of graduates vocational schools and technical colleges, lack of sufficient number of hours of professional practice.</li> <li>Low knowledge and technology transfer (unsatisfactory innovation) to the business, especially for local producers from the local research centres.</li> <li>Poorly developed technical and social infrastructure in rural areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic differences as well as uneven access to public services between urban and rural areas.</li> <li>Education offer unadjusted to the needs of the regional economy.</li> <li>High level of unemployment, especially among young people.</li> <li>Relatively low average remuneration, high numbers of people at risk of poverty and exclusion.</li> <li>Lack of programmes of assistance to families with many children.</li> <li>Small number of nurseries, kindergartens, low participation in pre-schools in rural areas.</li> <li>Lack of network links between BEI; insufficient level of BEI venture financing.</li> <li>Low level of social capital expressed by low social trust indicators and insufficient level of civil dialogue.</li> <li>Poor ability of NGOs to generate own financing.</li> <li>Limited access to specialised medical services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unfavourable demographic situation.</li> <li>Narrowed and under-segmented local labour market, leading to migration of labour force out of the region.</li> <li>One-third of the potential free labour force only has elementary education.</li> <li>Large share of unemployed in the endangered segments with serious disadvantages on the labour market (e.g. career starters).</li> <li>Low activity levels and employment in most segments of the labour market.</li> <li>Spatial disequilibria, deterioration of the labour market of nine micro-regions.</li> <li>Limited opportunities to move from public employment to the primary labour market.</li> <li>Few companies use division of tasks, remote work, flexible working hours (difficulties in combining family life and work).</li> <li>Low share of female senior managers.</li> </ul>



	Saxony-Anhalt(Germany)	Pomurje (Slovenia)	Styria (Austria)	Podlaskie (Poland)	Podkarpackie (Poland)	South-Transdanubia (Hungary)
<b>Main Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ New opportunities in female employment:</li> <li>- skilled workers shortages related to demographic change</li> <li>- location-independent work (e.g. telework)</li> <li>- generation change in companies</li> <li>- growth of tourism.</li> <li>■ Universities as focal points of innovation</li> <li>■ Improving family and career compatibility.</li> <li>■ Promotion of women</li> <li>■ Proximity to Berlin and Leipzig (urban growth centres).</li> <li>■ Vacant buildings and low costs of living.</li> <li>■ Improvement of facilities and infrastructure (i.e. flexible solutions, social opportunities in rural areas, spanning generations).</li> <li>■ Opportunities from voluntary involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increasing use of ICT (work from home, new technologies and approaches to advertising, selling, buying products, etc.)</li> <li>■ Economic opportunities arising from increasing value of healthy, ecological local products.</li> <li>■ Increasing appreciation and value of clean and healthy living environment.</li> <li>■ Excellent highway connections with neighbouring urban centres, good accessibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Communities, the region and the country, paying more attention and undertaking activities to promote gender equality and women engagement in economy.</li> <li>■ Promotion and progress towards equal pay for women in comparable job positions.</li> <li>■ Growing tourism sector in the region with potential for more employment.</li> <li>■ Better communication and collaboration among all parties from political, business and social spheres.</li> <li>■ Additional support for companies in isolated parts of the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Development of local production based on domestic raw materials coupled with strong support of the SME sector from the national and international EU funds.</li> <li>■ Opening the regional economy to international cooperation, incl. development of cross-border cooperation.</li> <li>■ Better transition processes from school to professional work through training and internships; promotion of lifelong learning.</li> <li>■ Close cooperation of universities and companies for the launch of new relevant courses of studies adapted to current conditions in the labour market.</li> <li>■ Development of entrepreneurship culture.</li> <li>■ Increased demand for organic and high-quality regional foods, increased attention to quality living, ecotourism, rehabilitation, geriatrics, nutrition, and development of silver economy, coupled with a better image of the region as an ecological and healthy place for living.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ability to use European funds and other sources of external financing.</li> <li>■ The growing importance of key competencies (language, IT, mathematic, cultural and social as well as entrepreneurial) in education.</li> <li>■ Changing patterns of participation in social life By favouring participation and co-operation in particular among young people.</li> <li>■ Upholding the existing positive standards of family functioning and promotion of the family.</li> <li>■ Elaboration and implementation of programmes supporting families with many children.</li> <li>■ New forms of social and vocational stimulation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Development of the social economy. Creation of social cooperatives as a tool of development of local employment.</li> <li>■ Creation of sustainable, integrative and mobilising village corporations.</li> <li>■ Employment opportunities related to enlargement of the Paks Nuclear Power Plant.</li> <li>■ Adequate allocation and more efficient use of resources available for the regional employment.</li> <li>■ Reorganisation of existing employment pacts.</li> <li>■ Restructuring of existing industrial parks, inclusion of economic entities from outside the region.</li> <li>■ Extension of the main transport corridor (Motorway M6) which may promote employment.</li> <li>■ Better use of thermal waters and tourism endowments.</li> <li>■ Promotion of flexible, atypical employment.</li> <li>■ Support of dual-career education and training.</li> <li>■ Support of career development.</li> <li>■ Gender equality promotion.</li> </ul>

	Saxony-Anhalt(Germany)	Pomurje (Slovenia)	Styria (Austria)	Podlaskie (Poland)	Podkarpackie (Poland)	South-Transdanubia (Hungary)
Main Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing working age population.</li> <li>Lack of young qualified professionals.</li> <li>Factory closures.</li> <li>Risk of school closure/ centralisation.</li> <li>Risk to universities: reform of inter-state financial equalization and expiry of funding to the former East by 2018.</li> <li>Reactionary trends, traditional gender roles arising from lack of career prospects, children as a replacement for career prospects.</li> <li>Negative image reinforced</li> <li>Pull factors for less qualified individuals, impoverishment.</li> <li>Dismantling of social/cultural infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centralisation and relocation of high education and high skills working places.</li> <li>Poor economic climate, prolonged period of stagnation impacting regional economic structures.</li> <li>Financial exploitation of the region – profits transferred outside, limited reinvestments locally.</li> <li>Reduction of EU funding support, expected reduction of development investments.</li> <li>Restructuring of bank loans and related restrictive loan policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differences in the region between growing areas and shrinking areas – increasing intraregional disparities and weaker cohesion in economic and social terms.</li> <li>Potential losses of agricultural areas in comparison to more industrialised areas.</li> <li>Insufficient progress in terms of equal pay practises.</li> <li>Lack of intense collaboration between political, business and social organizations.</li> <li>Better communication and collaboration among all parties from political, business and social spheres.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low economic growth without the jobs creation effects.</li> <li>Unstable economy of eastern countries, including restrictions on trade.</li> <li>Marginalization of the region in the national development plans, with further delays the implementation of key regional investments.</li> <li>Continued brain drain of young educated population.</li> <li>Increasing number of students with decreasing quality of education, leading to very limited chances of employment after graduation.</li> <li>Negative demographic and social trends(e.g. aging population, migration of young people out of the region, the emigration of highly educated people).</li> <li>Impoverishment of certain social groups and the growing differences in the level of quality living.</li> <li>Underdeveloped civil society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepening economic and social distances with reference to UE and national averages.</li> <li>Adverse demographical tendencies – low population growth, outflow of active people (young and educated) from rural areas and from the region; ageing society.</li> <li>Lack of an efficient system to activate the youth from secondary schools in career planning.</li> <li>Advancing demise of traditional cultural landscapes, cultural diversity including ethnographical and architectural.</li> <li>Lack of sufficient tools to support young families with the children and families with many children.</li> <li>Deterioration of support aimed at BEI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of jobs and emigration induced by low wages, will continue, and especially from the most disadvantaged areas.</li> <li>Shallow primary labour market and public employment as a dominant alternative will discourage more people.</li> <li>More popular part-time employment may further undermine regular employment.</li> <li>The number of places offering dual trainings is low, so half of the youth participating in vocational training do not get adequate skills. Selection and discrimination may intensify.</li> </ul>

