

Fusing Regions?  
Sustainable Regional Action in the Context of European Integration



# Fusing Regions? Sustainable Regional Action in the Context of European Integration

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Stockholm, Sweden  
2009

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# Preface

The research programme, *‘Internationalisation of regional development policies – Needs and demands in the Nordic countries’* was commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers in the spring of 2005.

The aim of this programme is to undertake research on key issues, where it has been identified that new knowledge is needed, and where such knowledge could be seen to benefit the development and implementation of regional development policy in the Nordic countries.

The basis for the research programme is its Nordic character. Research should lead to new knowledge both for the academic world and for the world of policy and practice. Projects should add ‘Nordic value’, i.e. they should produce knowledge of relevance for several regions and countries across Norden. The research should moreover be comparative and collaborative across at least three Nordic countries or self-governed areas.

Three themes of high priority for the research programme have been identified; *‘regional governance’*, *‘innovation and regional growth’*, and *‘demography and labour migration’*.

In addition to these priorities two additional crosscutting themes were also defined; ‘the enlargement of the EU and the challenges for Nordic regional development policies’ and the broad topic of ‘the three dimensions of sustainable regional development’; i.e. social, economic and environmental sustainability.

The research programme has been launched in two rounds. In the first round during the spring of 2005 it was decided to fund five projects. These were reported during 2007. In the second round during the spring of 2007 it was decided that a further five projects should be funded. These will be reported in 2008 and 2009. All project reports are published in this publication series dedicated to this programme. At the end of the programme, a synthesising report will also be produced where the most important findings are discussed. This report is planned to be published in the winter 2009/2010.

*Nordregio* wishes to thank the Nordic Senior Official Committee for Regional Policy and the Nordic Council of Ministers for providing this unique opportunity to develop new research-based knowledge and for encouraging cooperation and the exchange of ideas between Nordic researchers.

*Nordregio* would furthermore like to thank all of the involved research teams and the programme’s Steering Committee for their continuing contributions to the Nordic discourse on regional development.

Ole Damsgaard  
Director

Margareta Dahlström  
Coordinator of the research programme



# Authors' Preface

This *Fusing Regions?* Report is the culmination of research that was commissioned and funded as part of a successful bid to the second round of the prestigious research programme entitled '*Internationalisation of Regional Development Policies – Needs and Demands in the Nordic Countries*' from 2007-2009. The fundamental basis and strength of this programme, is in our view, its Nordic character especially if this is taken alongside its ambitions to foster a more detailed understanding of how internationalisation is affecting regions in these distinctive European countries. Sincere thanks is extended to the Nordic Council of Ministers for financially supporting this project and thereby enabling this rather distinctive 'micro-study' of three Nordic regions utilising the somewhat distinctive concepts of Regional Action and Fusion Approaches to be completed. Moreover, when undertaking this research, early investigations raised some interesting questions worthy of further enquiry as regards gender issues.

A sister project examining Regional Action and Gender Issues was launched in 2008 as part of a more general *Regional Action in the European Union* research programme now based at Karlstad University in Sweden. This report also draws upon aspects – most notably in Chapter 8 – from this complementary research in order to provide as detailed a picture of Regional Action in the three regions under scrutiny as possible. It is appropriate to also acknowledge the financial support of the Faculty of Social and Life Sciences and the Centre for Research on Regional Development (CERUT) at Karlstad University as well as of Region Värmland – that facilitated the undertaking of this accompanying research. It is also important to note that this all this research is now being disseminated and increasingly developed as part of a Jean Monnet Multinational Research Group that brings together universities from all over Europe to further examine the utility of Fusion approaches for the study of European integration and funded by the Jean Monnet programme of the European Commission.

In many ways, this Report represents an endeavour that also strongly reflects the fundamental premise and ambitions of the broader Nordic international research programme since this Report represents the investigative efforts of an integrated team of interdisciplinary Nordic-based researchers drawn from three respective Nordic countries utilising a variety of quantitative and qualitative research techniques and supported by feedback at a series of bench-learning and review workshops with regional actors and practitioners. Our hope is that this Report will be one early step in the ongoing development of the applications of the concepts of Regional Action and a Fusion Approach to interdisciplinary studies of regions and European integration more broadly.

This Report therefore represents a collective effort. Alongside and supporting the core research team based at the Department of Political and Historical Studies, Karlstad University of Magnus Lindh, Hans Löden, Lee Miles, Curt Räftegård and Malin Stegmann McCallion, special thanks is extended to Björn Pernrud in the Department of Social Studies for writing Chapter Eight of this Report. Special thanks is also given to Linnéa Henriksson, Department of Public Administration, Åbo Akademi University, Finland and Hans Christian Høyer, Hedmark University College, Norway, for their guidance and help when completing the fieldwork, surveys and deep interviews incorporated in this research. Appreciation is also offered to Karolina Berg for her assistance with the distribution of the questionnaire in Southwest Finland.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the Reference Group of the *Fusing Regions?* Project for their useful feedback at various points during the project. In particular, we note the insights proffered by influential scholars, such as, Tor Selstad (University College of Lillehammer, Norway), Siv Sandberg (Åbo Akademi University, Finland) and Baldur Thorhalsson (University of Iceland, Iceland) as well as those of important policy-makers like Bengt Dahlgren (Director of Planning, County Administration in Värmland, Sweden) and Eira Varis (Regional Development Manager, Regional Council of North Karelia, Finland) that helped to refine the research.

Last but not least, we are also especially grateful to all those regional actors who participated, be it directly or indirectly, in this project and gave so much of their time and provided information on the EU-related work undertaken in their respective region. Such a detailed micro-study of three regions could not have been completed without ultimately their direct and indirect involvement. Our hope is that this Report can give something back in helping them to further understand how they can 'get the best out of the European Union'.

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

*The Fusing Regions?* Research Project represents a detailed 'bottom-up micro-study' of three Nordic regions. It investigates the types and forms of activity – denoted here as Regional Action – presently undertaken by regional actors in order to assess the present extent of collaboration and co-ordination among them when handling and seeking to influence European Union (EU) questions. The Project also closely examines the attitudes of regional actors as regards their future ambitions in this regard and aims to help them to understand more clearly what they now do, and reflect upon how they might like to improve in the future. The research reveals notable variations in activity among our three regions, combined with evidence in all three cases of a strong desire among regional actors to continue to further harness the benefits of European integration partly as a means to 'bypass' the nation state and to develop closer relations between their respective region and the European Union.

## Argumentation

The *Fusing Regions?* Research Project argues that there is a pressing need for further fresh research on the behaviour and activities of regional actors that could have potential policy implications for those wanting to 'get the best out of the European Union (EU)'. In particular, the authors of *Fusing Regions?* argue:

- That, in order to investigate how regions can 'get the best out of the European Union', it is appropriate, alongside existing research on the configurations and identities of regions in Europe, to take a functional 'bottom up' approach and focus more fully on the behaviour and attitudes of regional actors in the context of European integration. Hence, the focus of this study is on developing fresh understandings of Regional Action since, at least in the European Union context, it is often the case that action by regional policy-makers is done by a specialist cohort that have expertise in handling EU questions and act on behalf of the region irrespective of their institutional affiliations.
- That, alongside the need to focus on Regional Action, any potent investigation of regional actors must undertake joined-up thinking and recognise the integral link between the behaviour of regional actors and bodies and the respective attitudes of those regional actors towards the overall development of the European Union. In simple terms, a 'bottom-up' evaluation of regional actors must not be divorced from understanding of how experts perceive the trajectory of European integration, and on this basis, the utilisation of Fusion conceptual approaches complements understandings of Regional Action.
- That, in order to further evaluate how regional actors seek to 'get the best out of the EU', it is necessary to understand their behaviour and attitudes in terms of differing stages and forms of activity in terms of vertical (between the region and the national (nation state) and supranational EU domains) and horizontal (within the region and between sub-national regions) dimensions. For conceptual clarity, this is divided into download, horizontal and upload activities.

## Structure

In order to support our core argumentation, this Report incorporates the following approach. It is argued in Chapter 1 that regions have historically maintained functional importance as overlapping authorities and they have been an integral and functional part of the evolution of the nation state in Europe and thus we may be seeking to better understand quite a deep-seated phenomenon.

Nevertheless, it is also clearly the case that regional actors, spurred on by the demands of handling internationalisation, and especially European integration issues, are increasingly doing more for themselves and on this basis, a functional-oriented study is of considerable merit in terms of research design and implementation.

This opens the way for an assessment of contemporary theoretical and conceptual approaches to the study of regions and the general conclusions are that contemporary thinking on regions and European integration suggests that there is a large body of work confirming that regional responses to European integration are differentiated and operating within a flexible EU multi-level governance system that raises challenges for Nordic regions irrespective of whether their respective country is a full EU member or not. Moreover, it is asserted that this survey of existing research supports our argumentation that it is highly appropriate to further consider horizontal aspects of regional mobilisation among regional actors and vertical dimensions of paradiplomacy where regional actors are increasingly conducting international relations for themselves and by themselves. In order to do this more fully, this Report introduces two fresh aspects of conceptual thinking into its research design.

The first aspect, as outlined in Chapter 3, is to study regions utilising a fusion approach that recognises that regional actors operate within, and largely perceive, the evolving European Union as a fused compound polity in which competencies between the subnational (regional), national (nation-state) and supranational (EU) are increasingly blurred. The utility of fusion, we assert in this Report, is that it conceptualises how most regional policy-makers in the Nordic regions understand the European Union in practice; namely as a largely elite-driven, performance and output orientated, pro-supranational, yet mostly federo-sceptic, arrangement that enables political and economic elites to use instruments and harness benefits that are no longer effective using subnational and/or national mechanisms and instruments alone, and offer the potential for regional actors to 'bypass' the nation state. Thus, it is better to understand the behaviour and attitudes of regional actors utilising fusion techniques and more specifically, via a Micro-Fusion Framework (MFF) that examines the attention, action, adaptation and attitudes of regional actors when handling EU-related questions. On this basis, the concepts of Institutional Fusion (attentive action and institutional oriented action) and Fusion Perspective (performance, political and compound fusion) are introduced as conceptual tools for consideration by policy-makers.

The second aspect, as outlined in Chapter 4, is to examine the activities of regional actors, from a functional perspective, through the additional rubric of Regional Action. Here, the authors of this Report argue that it is absolutely essential in the context of European integration, to shift the focus of investigation a little to the study of the 'action' in Regional Action, defined as the consciously, rationally-taken political measures taken by regional actors that seek to transmit and promote regional interests in an EU-related framework. In particular, the authors argue that such Regional Action needs also be understood in terms of vertical and horizontal dimensions if regional actors are to ever get the best out of the European Union. In particular, it is wise to categorise Regional Action in terms of download activities (where regional actors are responding to EU issues and business), horizontal activities (whereby regional actors seek to organise themselves and co-ordinate subnational preferences and interests within and across regions) and upload activities (where regional actors seek to transmit those preferences and interests to the national and supranational levels).

After presenting the methodological approach and the challenges to undertaking research on Regional Action in the EU in Chapter 5, the Report then embarks on a detailed investigation of three Nordic regions from Norway, Sweden and Finland respectively (in Chapters 6 and 7). These chapters identify the types, similarities and variations in Regional Action in the three regions, and explore the attitudes of the respective regional policy-makers. It was decided that, in order to fully validate our argumentation, it would be necessary to delve very deeply into behaviour and attitudes of regional actors since this would allow us to explore the robustness of Regional Action and fusion concepts among regional policy-makers themselves. On this basis, it was deemed essential that the

first studies of this kind utilising Regional Action and fusion approaches would need to be very thorough since the intention was also to demonstrate applicability for regional actors to use these some of these ideas for themselves in terms of policy recommendations.

The latter parts of the Report focus upon two items. Chapter 8 comments briefly on the mixed results reported from our empirical findings as regards the relationship between Regional Action and gender equality. It is argued that owing to the differing experiences and especially skills of male and female regional actors, the results can be interpreted as arguing that both genders are successful in delivering Regional Action since they bring differing skills to the pursuit of this activity.

This paves the way for the final chapter of this Report that provides the reader with an understanding of how Regional Action and fusion approaches can be used to inform regional actors and in order to aid this, a series of operational tools are proposed that regional actors might want to utilise when reviewing their own operations and the sustainability of their Regional Action over time and space. These operational tools – introduced as the Leadership, Institution-building and reform, Resources and Policy/Project formulation and management (LIRP) can be regarded as guidelines that regional actors can look at themselves when re-evaluating their own arrangements for ‘getting the best out of the European Union’. In addition, and as an example for others, these operational tools are used to structure policy-recommendations pertaining to our three Nordic regions. By taking this approach, the policy-oriented utility of Regional Action concepts and Fusion approaches should be demonstrated and further reinforce the propensity for further research using these conceptual techniques.



# 1. Introducing the Regional Context in Europe

## The Research Challenge: Aims of the Study

The main aims of the project are three-fold. First, the project seeks to explore and categorise existing Regional Action among Nordic regional policy-makers towards the EU by investigating empirically the activities of regional actors in three Nordic regions from three different Nordic countries in order to assess the present extent of vertical and horizontal collaboration on selected EU questions. The focus will be on evaluating the level of participation of Nordic regional actors in EU-related frameworks at the regional, national and supranational level in order to assess whether the Nordic countries is a region of 'clustered Europeanisation' where there is strong intra-regional convergence in terms of the participation of Nordic regional actors in the EU (Goetz, 2006).

Second, to evaluate the conceptions of regional actors towards the European Union and towards existing and future levels of participation of regional actors in EU-related frameworks. What makes this project distinctive, and also enhancing its relevance to Nordic regional policy-makers, is that the project aims to be innovative in drawing upon fusion approaches to theoretically inform the investigations of Regional Action and the preconceptions and conceptions among regional policy-makers. Third, alongside enhancing empirical knowledge and theoretical innovation, the aim is to develop theoretically informed and empirically tested concepts usable for the further analysis of Nordic regional actors, as well as those in other European regions, and their relations with the European Union.

In order to achieve these aims, and also to make the results of the project accessible to interested parties, and especially policy practitioners, this Report is organised in the following way. Put simply, the Report is divided into two parts. The first part addresses the conceptual and research design of the project; the second part presents empirical findings and makes policy-orientated recommendations. The first five chapters of the Report introduce the reader to the conceptual and research design of the project. In this first chapter, readers are introduced to the functional importance of regions as overlapping authorities from an historical perspective as well as being provided with a brief discussion of how regions are often categorised. This forms the basis for Chapter 2 which provides the reader with a brief and targeted introduction to the primary, if rather general, discussions and concepts now used relating to regions and European integration and the state of play on existing research. The Report argues that, alongside this valuable work, there is a pressing need to understand how regional policy-makers are functionally operating in the EU and thus to concentrate on notions of 'Regional Action' and not just on regions. In Chapters 3 and 4, the Report argues that in order to understand how regional policy-makers are seeking 'to get the best out of the EU', it is essential that analysts recognise that regional policy-makers link their regional activities towards the EU to general attitudes as to how they perceive European integration is developing in both strategic and policy senses; and therefore introduces fresh conceptual thinking in the form of the twin concepts of Regional Action and a fusion approach. Chapter 5 then addresses the methodology used to investigate regional action in the three regions under evaluation.

The second part of the Report presents the empirical findings. Chapter 6 discusses the particular profiles of the three regions under investigation from a comparative perspective and places this micro-study in context. Chapter 7 presents the empirical findings, Chapter 8 considers the gender question, and Chapter 9 draws on these results to present a scheme in which policy-orientated recommendations can then be presented in the final part of this Report. With this in mind, we now turn to putting this micro study of three regions in an historical context.

## From overlapping authorities to ... overlapping authorities

Today, it is widely recognised that European regions are undertaking activities that were traditionally associated with, and connected to, the realms of nation states, and more specifically central government. Indeed, many regions have gone on to open regional offices abroad in order to represent their respective region and its interests, and regional representatives are commonplace nowadays at major international conferences. There are several possible explanations for these activities and forms of Regional Action. An obvious one is that European integration, and the very existence of the ever evolving European Union (EU) creates new possibilities – be they, amongst others, political or purely financial – for regions and regional representatives and policy-makers to undertake different kinds of activities and ‘action’. Regardless of their motives, the simple fact is that *regions* are acting and often doing more for themselves. There is therefore an imperative to fully understand this growing phenomena.

Yet, this should, albeit to a limited extent, not imply that political and economic roles for regions are something new; indeed the vibrant activities and actions of regions are, for many, a reminder of Europe’s historical past. For some, European history can be seen as a history of regions (Karlsson 2006; Jönsson *et al.* 2007) and certainly, Europe has, to some extent, been built around, and by the actions of regions. Indeed, this gives us a clue to why regions are again attracting attention and are deemed by many to be becoming more important in Europe. Namely the observation that the growing significance of European regions has always been related to, and integrally intertwined with, fluxes in the development of a framework of nation states in Europe. Put simply, European development has always been influenced not by the fate of regions or nation states, but rather by the integral relationship between regions and the (continued importance) of the nation state.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that regions were there before the creation of European empires and/or its nation states. They emerged out of, and are often still delineated by geographical conditions, such as, mountains, rivers, lakes and/or seas, as well as cultural dynamics, like language and/or religion; and alongside economic factors, for example, natural resources that facilitated production and trade, and distinct political interests, for instance, for the purposes of tax enforcement and the execution of law and order. Way back, the rulers of the Roman Empire, during its close to 800 years of existence, created and organised different regions within one imperial entity so that although the Empire was ruled by one set of law, regional and local differences, such as, language and religion, were largely respected (Jönsson *et al.* 2007:48f). The fall and disintegration of the Empire, led to a multiplicity of organisational forms, with territorial states existing alongside independent city states and principalities. A fundamental aspect of this was that no ruler had supreme authority over a particular territory or population; a situation characterised by ‘overlapping authorities’ (Gamble 2007:30).

The Westphalian process – formalised with the peace treaties following the Thirty Years War in 1648 – changed all this. It transformed the basis of European territory from organisational multiplicity to organisational uniformity. As part of this process, regions all over Europe became the building blocks of a totally dominant territorial-organisational form, the nation state.<sup>1</sup> Territorial sovereignty – with a sovereign exercising power over a given and distinctly limited territory and population – was the central principle institutionalised in the process. The system and its component parts became role models for the rest of the world. An international system of nation states was thus gradually created.

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<sup>1</sup> With this concept, two underlying principles are adopted; one is essentially political and territorial, and the other, more historical and cultural-based, and both are often made into an ideal type. Empirically a minority of states, in Europe – such as perhaps Iceland and Portugal - give full expression to a single nation possessing a single territory. In this report the concept is used as a generic term, covering also, for instance, actual state-nations.

For us, it is important to note that regions and the exercise of Regional Action by its representative was an integral part of even the Westphalian nation state. Within the nation state, regions became units for the exercise of power (initially above all tax enforcement) but also, and later, for organising democracy and to spread welfare. At the risk of some generalisation, the activities and action of regions were crucial parts of the organisation of even the classical Westphalian nation state. Of course, the organisation of such regions may vary. Historically, regions have acquired a multiplicity of traits and tasks. Some can be described as historical regions with strong cultural and linguistic identities, not seldom with collective memories of an independent past. Others, and on the other end of the scale, could be described as functional regions, constantly changing due to ebbs and flows in the economy and labour markets. Finally, there were administrative regions based upon the primary rationale of providing an entity within a political system of decision-making; although there were notable variations in forms and content with some European regions having legislative powers, and others being more strictly subordinated with their duties assigned 'from above'.

Furthermore, when we turn to more contemporary developments in Europe, then aspects on the regional level may be interpreted as part of a European political and institutional environment dominated by what some call, 'new medievalism' (Ruggie 1993) that focuses upon aspects of great importance in contemporary European developments. The 'medieval' part of the expression alludes to a complex situation of shared and overlapping authorities, that some have argued resembles a pre-Westphalian Europe. What is 'new' can be identified by the help of five major trends (Gamble 2007:31f). As nearly always, European integration is identified as the first of these since the complex relationships between the EU and its member states (and regions) are examples of shared sovereignties, that often produce uncertainty about where sovereignty is actually located. Among the others, the (relative) disintegration of existing states is the second trend; something that can be prompted by, and will certainly have, implications for regions and forms of Regional Action.

Secessionist and separatist movements, for instance, across European nation states have contributed to creating an 'intermediate stage' where existing, state-based sovereignty is questioned, while a new form of sovereignty is not fully asserted. Other trends, like the revival of private international violence (read international terrorism and crime), the growth of transnational organisations (such as non-governmental organisations) and technological innovation (like the Internet) have all helped challenge the traditional notions of sovereignty and the monopoly of power by the nation state. Accordingly, even within this so called 'new medieval' European multi-level system of overlapping authorities, there is a clearly identified role for regions that creates new challenges and possibilities for Regional Action. Regional actors can see this as opportunity or obligation, yet regardless of their motives, they are enhancing and changing the way they act in order to meet these challenges.

This brief introduction that highlights the residual importance of regions in Europe provides us with a number of key assumptions of which this report is based. First, that a key starting point for any study of European regions must be to acknowledge that any statement recognising the growing influence of European regions should not infer an acceptance of the thesis of the withering away – inevitable or not – of the nation state. Today we cannot see a Europe of regions but we can, definitely, see a Europe *with* regions. It may therefore be wise, as argued in this Report, *to focus on what regions do in Europe and how they seek to get the best out of it rather than undertake superficial debates on who has sovereignty*. Second, that although Europe has seen many changes to the organisation of regions, it is clear that, and to return to our starting point, regions now consider doing things externally to an extent unknown just a few decades ago and have mobilised internally and sought to act across their borders. Hence, it is important not just to take a conventional view that seeks to understand the composition and categorisation of what regions are in Europe, but, and complementing this, *it is essential to have a detailed way of understanding the activities of regional actors and more specifically the types of Regional Action that they undertake*. In other words, alongside any appreciation of what is a region in Europe, must come detailed evaluation of the Regional Action that their representatives seek to and actually undertake.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> These phenomena represent forms of what we identify in this report as types of regional action – and have been labelled elsewhere as regional mobilisation and paradiplomacy – are now deliberated further in the coming sections.

# Surveying Regions in Europe

There are close to 1,400 regions in Europe, with an average of 536,000 inhabitants (see Lidström 2008). Many have tried to categorise them and to identify both what is a region and how it can be classified into differing types. Indeed, since the main focus of this study, and as elaborated in further detail in future chapters, is on the functional activities of regional actors and policy-makers, the intention here is not to get drawn too much into debates on what constitutes a region. Rather, the authors of this Report are content to acknowledge the sterling work of others in using workable definitions that, in the context of this report, have workable resonance for studies of Regional Action.

First, a common denominator for all these entities being regarded as regions is outlined by the Assembly of European Regions (AER), as demonstrating the existence of a directly elected body, thus securing its legitimacy. The obvious heterogeneity they represent can be described by comparing them as regards type of regional system and which tasks they perform.

Second, regional systems on the national level can be, and have been, differentiated according to number of regional levels and to the extent they are symmetric or asymmetric. Most European nation states have a regional one-level system. Among these are Norway and Sweden. Some of the larger ones, for example, France, Italy, Poland and Germany, have a two-level system while a few – Finland and some post-Communist states – have no regional level at all. As will be shown in the Finnish case, the ‘no level’ statement is problematic when compared with facts on the ground (see Chapter 6).

Symmetric systems have the same structure over the states’ entire territory and, often, they perform the same tasks everywhere. Norway is an example of a symmetric regional system. Asymmetric regional systems are characterised by considerable differences in structure as regards different parts of the national territory. Finland, with its regional autonomy for Åland within the unitary state, is an example of this. Another is Sweden where a, historically speaking, uniform regional system has been gradually transformed, *inter alia*, by the establishment in Västra Götaland and Skåne of regional bodies with more extended tasks than the traditional county councils. Swedish asymmetries will be further reinforced by the government decisions of January 2009 allowing the comparatively small entities of Gotland and Halland to become so called *regionkommuner* (Sandberg 2009:200).

Third, regions can be assessed according to the primary tasks that they perform and undertake as an entity. As regards the tasks performed by regions, this can be divided into four categories, namely:

- Regions with legislative powers are the first among these. Here we usually find regions in federal or quasi-federal systems, such as, the German *Länder*, Spain’s autonomous regions, Italy’s regions and Scotland. Their powers include the right to make laws and to transform EU directives into law. Since 2001, these regions constitute *The Group of Regions with Legislative Powers (RegLeg)* within the EU (see next chapter).
- Regions co-ordinating public sector activities on the regional level. Often the co-ordinating task is performed by very different bodies in different countries. They can be autonomous regions or state organs on the regional level, most commonly with the latter as the body in charge. And:
- Regions with responsibility for planning and regional development. All over Europe this has become increasingly important since responsibility for regional development has moved from the state to the regional level. Regional responsibility for, as in Sweden, the regional development plan, is an expression of this. The movement has been supported by the European Union’s policies of allocating the structural funds at the regional level. The Norwegian *fylkeskommune* is a Nordic example of a regional body with responsibility for regional development.

- Regions responsible for public welfare and education. Health and medical services above primary care and upper secondary education are tasks often performed by regions in this category. The Swedish *landsting* is an example of regional responsibility for health and medical care.

This brief survey of Nordic regions indicates that they are both similar and different. While in historical terms, similarity might have been predominant, differences are becoming more obvious in recent years. Yet, if a functional disposition is adopted, and as Sandberg (2009: 207) argues, differentiation is most visible in the political steering and financing of the tasks, and less so as regards in the actual tasks themselves (Sandberg 2009:207). The tasks – health and medical care, regional planning, parts of cultural and educational matters – may be increasingly executed in new and changing environments, but in functional terms, the identification of elite regional actors who drive and implement these policy areas often show a remarkable degree of consistency. Hence, whilst in no way seeking to state that questions of regional identity are not important, the authors of this Report are content to acknowledge more functionally-derived categorisations of regions in Europe as the most useful since this helps us to understand how we can move forward in evaluating the Regional Action of policy-makers and regional elites. Above all, although formal and informal similarities and differences can be accounted for through studies identifying what is a region in Norway, Sweden and Finland, it should not be forgotten that their regional elites occupy ‘an intermediate territorial level, between the state and the locality’ (Keating 1998:9) which has the potential to function as a space for common action towards, for example, the European Union.

## Summary (Chapter 1)

Overall, Chapter 1 demonstrates that:

- Today, regions are acting and often doing more for themselves. There is therefore an imperative to fully understand this growing phenomena.
- This should not imply that political and economic roles for regions are something new; indeed the vibrant activity and action of regions is, for many, a reminder of Europe’s historical past.
- Regions and the exercise of Regional Action by its representative has always been an integral part of the functioning of the nation state in Europe.
- Today we cannot see a Europe *of* regions but we can, definitely, see a Europe *with* regions. It is appropriate *to focus on what regions do in Europe and how they seek to get the best out of it rather than undertake superficial debates on who has sovereignty.*
- Alongside any appreciation of what is a region in Europe must come detailed evaluation of the Regional Action that their representatives seek to and actually undertake.
- Whilst not seeking to underestimate questions of regional identity, it is argued more functionally derived categorisations of regions in Europe are the most useful as a means to understand how we can move forward in evaluating the Regional Action of policy-makers and regional elites.



# 2. Overview: Research on Regions and European Integration

## Indicative Research and Background Debates

### Europeanisation

Before this Report can go on to investigate the particular dimensions and dynamics of Regional Action in the European Union, it is appropriate to place our study in the context of existing research pertaining to regions in the European Union. For the most part, existing research on the relationship between the European Union and regions focuses on the Europeanisation of regions, namely the possible effects of European integration upon the subnational level, and subnational units, within member states, and consequently, how these regions adapt to it. It is important to note that the literature on Europeanisation is comparatively large, and represents something of a broad church with varying levels of conceptualisation and differences over how to define and what constitutes Europeanisation.

Nevertheless, a common standpoint taken in this literature is that the effects of Europeanisation are not uniform and are mediated through domestic contexts, with different outcomes across countries (Kettunen & Kungla 2005; Bursens & Deforche 2008; Olsen 2002, Harmsen & Wilson 2000, Buller & Gamble 2002). A study of a federal case (Flanders), for instance, suggested that important domestic factors shaping this impact are formal institutions and the resources they control and, together with these, the existence of norm entrepreneurs and issue salience (Bursens & Deforche 2008:16). Another case study, of subnational governance in the unitary states of Finland and Estonia, categorise important factors into national, bureaucratic and professional forces (Kettunen & Kungla 2005:375). These studies, as examples of the Europeanisation literature at large, give essential insights into the context in which European regions operate.

But, perhaps more important for this study, is Kettunen and Kungla's questioning of '... the empowerment of regions or localities as a result of Europeanisation in unitary countries' (Kettunen & Kungla 2005:375). Kettunen and Kungla expect different implications of the Europeanisation processes on unitary, regionalised and federal states. These distinctions are useful as a starting point for understanding the different opportunities that regions have when acting towards the EU. Alongside a broad notion of Europeanisation, there seems to be broad agreement that the impact of European integration on regions is not uniform, and the responses and adaptation of regions can be differentiated. Hence, if this is the case, it can be argued that there needs to be more detailed studies of what does seem common – namely the need for regional actors to respond to and act towards European integration.

### Regionalisation

Many see Europeanisation as a top-down process or as policy isomorphism that takes place within the nation state (Börzel & Risse 2003, Olsen 2002, Harmsen & Wilson 2000, Buller & Gamble 2002, Radaelli 1997). Although this has some merit, regional dynamics needs to be factored in if it is to have added value to investigations of regions in the European Union.<sup>3</sup> Research on how regions have developed as institutional units and entities – usually referred to as regionalisation –

3 The Europeanisation literature that concerns the subnational level also engages with the literature on regionalisation literature as well as on multi-level governance literature (see, for example, Bache 2008 on the relationship between Europeanisation and multi-level governance, Stegmann McCallion 2007 on the relationship between multi-level governance and regionalisation, and Stegmann McCallion 2008 on the relationship between regionalisation and Europeanisation). It can be argued that these three concepts and strands of literature reinforce each other.

have explored the changes that have taken place at the regional level in Europe since the 1980s. Most of these regionalisation studies also show that, for the most part, changes to the structure of regions are normally the result of both internal (domestic) and external pressures for change and/or challenges. Examples of this are the decentralisation in France (Loughlin 2001b:23; Loughlin 2007), and the devolution in the UK - both processes were part of a reform programme (Loughlin 2001b:23). It would seem then that existing research on regional organisation also indicates a growing susceptibility of regions to outside pressures as a general trend - of which European integration is one that needs to be understood, but also that such pressures also run alongside the normal demands for internal re-organisation coming from the 'bottom-up', that is to say from inside the region. If this is the case, then it can be argued that any detailed understanding of regions needs to incorporate a healthy mix of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' perspectives.

One important dimension of this existing research seeks to encompass this and refers to 'EU-peanisation' (Gren, 1999). Such 'EU'ropean regionalisation research is largely concerned with and observes a move of decision-making from national to subnational levels (Gren 1999:37); a shift in discussion to a so-called new regionalism. When 'old' and 'new' are referred to in any manner, it conveys, according to Gren (1999:29), the significance of a particular break with the old and in this case the regionalisation processes of the 1960s and 1970s. Processes that were based previously, and for the most part, on domestic politico-social issues. Those advocating new regionalism, in contrast to old regionalism, suggest that the central issue today is more a question of a logical shift in decision-making that is regarded as better exercised at a regional level than at the national level (Gren 1999:37). Most importantly, for this study, new regionalism differs from old regionalism through the importance attached to two main aspects. First, new regionalism highlights, and indeed regions in Europe today are pre-occupied with, the existence of fully functioning supranational (EU) regional policy, that has been specifically designed to develop links and relations between the supranational and subnational levels in Europe. In particular, when EU regional policy underwent a major reform in 1988, the member state governments agreed to a new set of governing principles (Bache 2008).

The most important of these principles was the partnership principle. The partnership principle in EU regional policy has meant that, for the first time, this policy would be a policy not just *for* the regions, but also *by* the regions (Nanetti 1996:64). Second, within new regionalism, importance is attached to a bottom-up movement which takes its strength from the region's internal dynamics. Hence, new regionalism concerns multi-level governance, programming, and partnerships between the region, the nation state and the EU, and in addition factors such as regional networks over national borders and direct lobbying in Brussels by regional offices (Gren 2002:7). This Report then, as can be seen in the next chapter, takes on some of these observations as background assumptions in that the role of regions has been enhanced principally due to the catalytic effect of EU policy initiatives such as those emanating from the EU structural funds. Regionalisation research, with its emphasis on the overall development of a new kind of regional politics and policy-making also highlights that space becomes imperative as the context in which public tasks are performed. This is important for our later discussions of sustainable Regional Action (see Chapter 4). Regionalisation can and does prompt the introduction of new procedures as well as administrative structures where the regional level becomes the forum for mobilisation, co-operation, participation, and democratic self-determination (Benz *et al.* 2000:7). For this Report, and as discussed later, the concept of Regional Action (as undertaken by regional actors) represents a functional form of a broader regionalisation process.

Corollary to new regionalism, the notion of a *Europe of the Regions* re-emerged in the 1990s, both as an official EU-inspired policy agenda, and as concept that originally referred to a federal Europe where it would be the region and not the nation state which would be the constituent part of the European Union. Although a federal Europe is unlikely today, it is important to recognise the usage of the notion as an indicator of the increased importance of the regional level from this time (Loughlin 2001a). In simple terms, existing research suggests that, and as discussed later in

the context of the fusion approach in the next chapter, regional debates on the EU, and indeed, on a region's role in European integration, have been increasingly undertaken against the prevailing background of debates on a potential future Federal Europe. Overall then, one can see the EU's role in the regionalisation processes taking place – as a direct or indirect result of EU membership, or through engagement with EU – as a process of facilitation when examining the greater role that regional authorities play today. This can be seen both within the domestic arena as well as on the EU/supranational arena.

## Multi-Level Governance (MLG)

It is also important to acknowledge, here and now, that most research on regions in Europe assumes to some extent, that European integration, or more accurately the European Union, has helped to create a system of multi-level governance (MLG) in Europe. In terms of the literature at least, the concept of multi-level governance was first formally introduced by the early 1990s (see Marks 1993) in relation to the conceptualisation of EU structural policy developments following major reforms in the late 1980s. Subsequently, the concept has been developed so that it can be applied more broadly to cover the decision-making process within the European Union (Bache & Flinders 2004:2) and within member states.

Once again, the MLG concept addresses how 'politics is done' and how politics has been transformed into forms of shared power between actors and groups which are both in and around the central state and its institutions. According to MLG, power in this situation is shared, at least to some extent, between state actors and actors from the private sector, civil society, and non-state institutions and/or agencies. However, the central tenet within MLG is that national governments are losing power both upwards to the supranational level (EU institutions) and downwards to the subnational level (regional/local authorities). Crucially though, it is important to note that MLG does not conceive that the national level is no longer important (Marks *et al.* 1996: 346). Instead, MLG scholars argue that the loci of power can no longer solely be found at the national level (Stegmann McCallion 2007:337). As Hooghe and Marks (2001:27) argue, 'states in the European Union are being melded into a multilevel policy by their leaders and the actions of numerous subnational and supranational actors'. This melding process, as Warleigh (2006:79) argues, is a process of deliberate choices made by national political elites in order to delegate power to the EU and to subnational actors in order to (better) achieve the policy objectives set out by central state. Here, the MLG concept is important in the context of this report since we also assume that as a starting point, the EU is a multi-level system of governance, that there are differing strata of activity and that, most importantly, competencies and powers are rather fluid and dispersed across the echelons of the EU system.

On this basis, this Report's discussion of Regional Action largely assumes that the EU's MLG system provides new rationales and opportunities for regional parties to undertake regional action. Hence, it is not the case of MLG or Regional Action, but rather of *Regional Action within the EU's multi-level system of governance*. Interestingly, part of the MLG literature also explores, and confirms the mobilisation of regional actors in Brussels: 'One of the most important consequences of European integration is the multiplication of extra-national channels for subnational political activity' (Hooghe and Marks 1996:73). This has meant that political channels – both formal and informal – for subnational actors have 'multiplied beyond recognition' (Hooghe and Marks 1996:73). Hooghe and Marks (1996) have put forward five principal channels for regions to engage with (lobby) the EU. These are the Committee of the Regions, the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, the regions' own regional offices, and transnational associations. The first regional offices were opened in 1985 and since then there has been an explosion in the number of regional offices in Brussels. The role that these offices play are to lobby the institutions, gather information, and to network with actors which have (similar) regional interests (Hooghe and Marks 1996:82-83; Marks, Haesly and Mbaye 2002).

Overall then, it is important to recognise that this Report's discussion of Regional Action does not take place in an intellectual or policy-based vacuum and specifically acknowledges that this selective and highly concentrated study of Regional Action draws upon assumptions of wider research: namely that regions have already been recognised as becoming increasingly Europeanised, that this also forms part of wider regionalisation processes in which the form and function of regions are changing and that regions themselves form part of an evolving, rather fluid European Union (EU) as a multi-level system of governance. Some of these introductory concepts will be returned to later in a more specific discussion of Regional Action.

Indeed, central to later discussions of Regional Action are the introduction of horizontal and vertical dimensions of regional activity. Once again, it seems pertinent to elaborate on what can be drawn from existing research on regions and European integration.

## Background Dimensional Concepts

### Horizontal Dimension - Regional Mobilisation

Although our previous surveys of Europeanisation, Regionalisation and MLG research suggest that the political activities at the regional level have increased generally in Europe during the last two decades, it is important to remind ourselves that regions themselves have increasingly sought to organise themselves in particular ways to accommodate this. Thus, the intention here is to draw attention to existing research that can be categorised as identifying both horizontal and vertical dimensions of regional activity which we seek to further refine in later parts of this report. As Jeffery (2000:2) observes, a process of, what he calls, ongoing subnational mobilisation has been identified. In particular, Jeffery highlights several trends developing; namely: (a) the establishment within some member states of formal mechanisms for involving subnational governments in EU policy-making; (b) the wider focusing of policy activity and strategy of subnational authorities throughout the Union on to an EU related agenda; (c) the post-1988 reforms of the structural funds encouraged greater subnational involvement in EU regional development policies, and; (d): there has been the establishment and activity of organisations of inter-regional co-operation and the location of an ever-growing number of regional information and liaison offices in Brussels.

In the context of this Report, subnational mobilisation at the regional level can be seen as a process of region building. Within this process, local and regional actors strive to create new, or strengthen existing, often weak, regions. Region building activities are pursued by a multitude of actors, often with regional development policy as its defining trait (Neubauer *et al.* 2007) and often in the form of networks and governance structures.

Hence, at the core of such regional mobilisation of policy-makers and actors is a focus on network building within the region and between regions across borders. In terms of this Report, this represents a horizontal form of regional mobilisation since the main focus here is on the interaction between regional actors within and across the subnational level which will then lay the basis for further vertical downloading and uploading of regional interests and preferences to the national and supranational levels.

Network building is usually characterised by informal relationships between essentially equal actors. Regional networks often include representatives of three types of actors, namely public policy and administration, private enterprise, institutions of higher education and research and, sometimes, a fourth type, NGOs. These networks can play the role of policy networks; for instance, they are important in formulating regional policies. The growing importance of networks is one reason why the co-ordination of social life increasingly is described as 'governance' rather than 'government'. Other such reasons are the development of new forms of public management, the growth of public/private partnerships and the emergence of multi-level governance systems. Formulation and implementation of regional development policy is, perhaps, the policy area where

regional networks working within governance structures are most important.

Action along the horizontal dimension represents co-operation and co-ordination among different regional actors that aims to encourage the articulation and implementation of what they presume to be in the regional interest. Horizontal activities may not necessarily be exclusively within the (internal) confines of a specific region; regional actors might also seek contact with other regions within (for instance inter-regional action) the respective member-state or outside (such as trans-border regional action) the state border, in order to strengthen common Regional Action towards the European Union. These are the particular activities that we later categorise as horizontal Regional Action (see Chapter 4). However, sizeable sections of existing research, and indeed the authors of this Report, do not regard regional activities towards the region's own government at the state level as horizontal. Horizontal regional mobilisation (or what we later refine and call horizontal Regional Action) consists of all those activities in the horizontal dimension that is intended to strengthen the ability to promote regional interests in an EU-related framework. The actual promoting of these regional interests is made possible through the upload dimension – or paradiplomacy – which deals with the process in which regional positions are transferred to the EU. Paradiplomatic activity, thus, is part of an environment of multi-level governance.

### Vertical Dimension – Paradiplomacy

Given that regions have recognised the demands of Europeanisation, regionalisation and operating in a EU as a multi-level governance system, that have enabled regions to amass an extensive array of competencies and roles, researchers have sought to identify how regions undertake relations with the EU and EU institutions directly, and thus for subnational actors to engage vertically with national (member states) and supranational (EU). Several researchers have sought to explain vertical activities between subnational actors and the EU through discussions of 'paradiplomacy' which has been described as the *foreign policy of non-central actors* (Aldecoa & Keating 1999). Keating (1999:14) argues that paradiplomacy 'represents an important new dimension both to regionalism and to international relations, [and provide] further evidence of the breakdown of the distinction between national and regional matters'.

Until quite recently, it was asserted that paradiplomacy has been mainly a prerogative for large regions or regions with a strong identity, inside and outside EU, with constitutionally defined powers. Obviously, paradiplomacy – an abbreviation of 'parallel diplomacy' (Soldatos 1990) – is highly relevant when applied to subnational entities such as Catalonia, Scotland or Québec with substantial degrees of autonomous power or within regionalisation processes where the expectation is that region has substantial legitimacy and seeks to enhance region-building. It is also relevant, for example, when discussing cases where the nation state is itself under challenge, as in the case of Belgium and Belgian regions. In the constitutional reform of 1993, for instance, Belgian regions were awarded international competencies. According to the principle *in foro interno, in foro externo*, Belgian regions were granted the rights to conclude treaties with third parties and to send their own representatives to bilateral posts, to other regions and to international organisations (as, for example, the EU) (Criekemans 2006:5). Moreover, paradiplomacy exists with the implicit consent of the EU institutions and supranational parties who are willing to engage in relations directly with subnational regions. Apart, for example, from the creation and institutionalisation of the Committee of the Regions, the Treaty of Maastricht, an amendment to EC Article 146, provided an opportunity for regional ministers to participate in the Council of Ministers as members of the national delegation. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are among regions using this right. Equally, it has been suggested that paradiplomacy is best explained by the existence of a strong nationalist movement, seeking opportunities for identity/nation-building, promotion of regional interests and political-territorial mobilisation (Lecours 2002).

However, in the context of this Report, the term is also regarded as useful for understanding the relevance of small regions in unitary states, like Norway, Sweden and Finland, that are developing

their international relations. Today small regions, without constitutionally defined external powers or nationalist movements of any importance are, to a considerable and larger extent than before, creating relationships with regions in other countries, with international non-state actors, other nation states and last, but not least, with the European Union. At the same time, several, probably a majority, of these regions are deeply integrated into federal or unitary states' structures. In these regions, there are neither visions nor movements aiming at independence from or autonomy within the state. This need for small regions to go abroad has been explained by a general decline of the state's capacity to protect its regions from global market pressures or to buy loyalty or support by generous spending (Keating 1999). Regions, including small ones, have been more exposed to the global economy, forcing them to find new ways of acting.

What ways of acting are there for European regions? Keating (1999) identifies three opportunity structures: promoting different concepts of the role and place of regions in the European system; working within the inter-state system, and using links and partnerships among subnational governments. Three main concepts, with different levels of ambition, have been offered to promote the position of European regions. 'A Europe of the Regions', as the first one, suggests a setting where units below the existing states were the principal actors. A more limited concept sees the regions as a third level, below EU and nation state but part of the latter. An even more limited concept tells about 'Europe with the Regions' with an increasingly recognised regional level. The Treaty of Maastricht (see above) 'represented the high-water mark of regional ambitions in the EU' (Keating 1999:7f). Less has been added since Maastricht and certainly before the Lisbon Treaty. Implementation of the latter would further strengthen the role of the regions. Working within the inter-state system represents the second opportunity structure, available for regions. Yet, creating linkages to national governments has not been easy for regional actors and the reason is obvious; national governments are generally not interested in undermining their own position by strengthening those of the regions. Thus, the most used opportunity structure for regions is links and partnerships with and among subnational governments in different states; which is in essence a central part of this study of Regional Action. Such links and partnerships are organised both as multi-purpose or general associations of regions – such as the Assembly of European Regions (AER) – or as alliances between specific regions – for instance the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). While the former type of organisation is important for establishing regions as institutional actors, the latter's importance lies mainly in its ability to formulate proposals specific to a certain type of region. Hence, within paradiplomacy, we would adopt a strong sense of purpose aimed at identifying and using strongly functional versions of Regional Action – something that we will return to later in this Report.

Indeed, the most frequent type of inter-regional co-operation is the cross-border initiative. Interreg and other such initiatives, often have a functional basis, in areas as economic development, infrastructure or environment. They are, for the authors of this report at least, practical examples of where paradiplomacy and additionally what we later call horizontal Regional Action are taking place. According to Keating, cross-border initiatives 'are most successful where there are complementary assets and resources on either side of the border, and common interests in realizing them' (Keating 1999:9). This is most likely to happen in environmental and infrastructural projects, less likely in economic development matters where inter-regional competition is evident.

If paradiplomacy seems, to a certain extent functionally driven, politics is by no means ruled out. Political configurations (for example, constitutional frameworks) and political considerations on strategy and initiatives frame and make paradiplomacy possible. Constitutional prerequisites are decisive for the regions' choice of opportunity structure. While regions within federal frameworks can act inside all available structures, regions in unitary states will have to focus on the third, links and partnerships with other subnational governments. Political considerations, then, are important in deciding *what* links and partnerships should be given priority and *how* and with what means they should be developed.

In many respects, paradiplomacy is still a field of trial and error (Keating 1999:13). Regions are experimenting and trying out what really works, especially in relation to vertical downloading and uploading of business to and from the supranational EU institutions. Their activities are varied and we are not talking about one or a small number of types of paradiplomacy. However, for this study, it is assumed that, as part of the vertical dimension, that the issue is that the traditional inter-state diplomacy is now equipped for the introduction of regions as unconventional international actors (Vos *et al.* 2002:205). Hence, actual results and output of paradiplomacy are difficult to anticipate, and for us, provides further incentives for exploring concepts and forms of Regional Action. Except for constitutional arrangements, there are a number of other factors that are important to understand the extent and substance of paradiplomacy. Among these are attitudes and priorities of national policy-makers towards regional cross-border activities, the composition of national discourses on the EU, general characteristics of national-regional relations and, on the individual level, perceptions of language skills.

This is where the concept of fusion comes in (see Chapter 3). In describing and explaining the results of paradiplomacy, the fusion perspective and its aspects of performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion focus our attention on important traits in the processes studied. The performance fusion aspect concentrates on whether there is a performance-related mentality among regional policy-makers that links their support for European integration with the evolution of a subnational acting capacity. Political fusion highlights the path regional policy-makers would prefer the EU to take in its future evolution. With the help of compound fusion it will be possible to investigate how regional policy-makers understand and value the messy compound which is the EU system.

The trend of regions establishing international contacts on their own thus can be seen as the first steps of a new external relations system. In a European Union context, three external relations systems currently co-exist (Telò 2007b:303). The highly centralised EC, with its trade policy, is the first. A second system is the external relations connected to the second and third intergovernmental pillars. The member states' foreign policies constitute the third. The paradiplomacy of the subnational level might be an emerging, fourth possible external relations system among EU member states. Taken together, these steps form part of what can be understood as multi-level governance.

A central assertion in a MLG perspective is that national governments are losing power and control to subnational and supra-national levels (Marks *et al.* 1996:346). This does not mean that the national level is of no importance, but that power is no longer solely located at this level. Regions today are, as we have seen, doing things traditionally connected with nation states and this includes diplomacy. Control of one of the most traditional areas of nation state policy-making thus has partly slipped to another level. Christopher Hill's establishment regarding the relationship between state and European levels – '[t]his has produced a pattern of multi-level diplomacy in which the various elements sometimes, compete, sometimes reinforce each other, and sometimes merely coexist' (Hill 1998:48f) – seems even more appropriate when the regional level is included.

## Background Structures and Institutional Frameworks

At this point, it is also wise to acknowledge that the later discussion of Regional Action takes place against an existing architecture of European institutions. This next section simply means to introduce the reader to the most important and those that serve as institutional vehicles and forums in which regional interests can be transmitted to the EU level. In short, they may form an integral part of how regions seek to 'get the best out of the European Union' and thus have importance as background forums in which Regional Action can be identified and discussed.

### *Committee of the Regions*

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the institution within the EU structure that formally provides both the local and regional level with a voice in the EU policy process. The Treaties require that the Commission and the Council of Ministers consult the Committee of the Regions whenever new legislative or policy proposals are made in areas that affect the local or regional level. All member states are allocated a certain number of seats; of the 344 members, there are twelve Swedish and nine Finnish delegates. New policy proposals are handled by one of the six Commissions, such as Commission on Territorial Cohesion and Commission for External Relations and Decentralised Co-operation, and is one way of CoR to disseminate their opinion on issues which are of importance and relevant to regions. The Committee of the Regions co-operate not only with formal institutions of the European Union but also with networks like RegLeg. CoR also co-operate with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

### *RegLeg*

RegLeg is the short name for Conference of European regions with legislative power and is a political network which currently has 73 member regions in eight of the EU member states. RegLeg argues that as '[i]n many cases regions with legislative power are responsible for transposing and implementing EU legislation in their regions. RegLeg believes that legislative regions should be directly involved in the legislative process and should be directly consulted by the Commission on new proposals' (RegLeg nd.). A symbolic measure of the position of some RegLeg regions is the fact that the German *Länder* offices in Brussels increasingly call themselves *Vertretung* instead of, as earlier, *Büro* (Kettunen & Kull 2009). One argument for the formation of RegLeg is that the Committee of the Regions is not an adequate representative for regions with legislative powers due to its diverse membership of subnational levels in the member states. Although RegLeg believes in furthering the powers of the Committee of the Regions and the two are working closely together in the interest of the regions. One area in which the two are working closely together is that of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is important because of the implementation responsibility that the RegLeg regions have.

### *Assembly of European Regions*

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) was established in 1985 and is the largest independent network of Regions in Europe. The AER brings together over 270 regions from 33 countries and 13 inter-regional organisations. The aim of the Assembly is to enhance the voice and position of European regions. In its strategic plan, agreed in 2006, the AER outlined six key priorities for the period 2007-2012. These are: Promoting Modernisation and Internationalisation of Regional Governance, Promoting Innovation, Growth and Employment in Europe's Regions, Addressing the Challenges of Demographic Change, Migration, Health and Social Exclusion, Ensuring Sustainable Development and Combating Environmental Degradation, Delivering Democracy through Diversity, and Promoting Diversity through Culture, Media and Education, and Creating a Secure Environment for Citizens (Assembly of European Regions 2006). These key priorities highlight the changed political role of regions in today's societies in all spheres of politics.

### *Association of European Border Regions and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions*

Two other regional networks/associations that are of importance to our case study regions are the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). The Association of European Border Regions was established formally in 1971 and has today around 100 border and cross-border regions as members and representing over 200 regions both within and outside of the European Union (CoR n.d.). The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions is a network consisting of around 160 member regions from 28 countries. The role of these networks is to promote and voice the needs of regions with certain characteristics,

which sometimes are specific to border, cross-border and/or regions that has a shoreline, and to ensure that policies developed include and enhance the opportunities for these (sometimes) peripheral regions.

## Background Research on Nordic Regions and the European Union

It is now appropriate also to establish the importance of existing research on the role of Nordic regions in the European Union. Of course, the amount of research specifically covering the actions of Nordic regions towards the European Union is limited, and this section does not seek to be truly comprehensive. Nor is the application of previous research uniform, with empirical research and investigations being undertaken to same degree in and on all the Nordic countries. The picture then is somewhat fragmented. Nevertheless, our primary objective is to merely tease out the most notable conclusions from prior research and stipulate how this informs our later discussions of Regional Action in the European Union.

To some extent, existing research shows us that Nordic regions have been affected by the pressures of European integration in the same way as other regions generally across the European Union. After all, the attractions of EU regional discourses and financial resources accompanying the Union's growing attachment to interactions with the regions focused the minds of Nordic regional policy-makers and actors as elsewhere in the European Union. Research by Baldersheim *et al.* (2001:254ff) indicates, for instance, that new patterns emerged regarding the interaction of Nordic regions with others. Earlier contacts, often of a symbolic character, were replaced by international contacts for strategic development purposes (Baldersheim *et al.* 2001:254ff). Even if contact activities were relatively few, contact areas were rather broad, representing a potential to be further activated and improved upon.

Increased international activity also developed at the Nordic municipal level at this time. In a summary of two studies in Nordic comparative settings, executed in 1991 and 1994 and making a longitudinal dimension possible, Bergmann-Winberg (2001) concludes that especially Finnish municipalities showed a considerable increase of international contact activities. The size of Finnish activity was more than twice that of Swedish and Norwegian municipalities. International activities were most prominent among the biggest cities and municipalities along the Finnish coast with earlier foreign trade traditions (Bergmann-Winberg 2001:97f). In the case of Sweden, later studies show considerably increased activity towards the EU since the end of the 1990s. This includes both municipalities and regional authorities (Berg & Lindahl 2007).

Moreover, most existing research on Nordic regions also shows that the Nordic regions still rely heavily on the nation state to fulfil important political roles in transmitting regional interests upwards to 'Europe'. Starting around 1990 and confirming Keating's earlier cited remark, a new pattern emerged regarding Nordic regions' interactions with other regions. Symbolic contacts, such as twin cities arrangements, were replaced by international contacts for strategic development purposes (Baldersheim *et al.* 2001:254ff). Even if contact activities were relatively few, contact areas were rather broad, representing a potential to be activated. The extent of regional interactions made it relevant to speak of situations of network-building and multi-level governance in the Nordic context (Baldersheim *et al.* 2001; Baldersheim 2000). Through engagement with the supranational level, one has seen an extension and blurring of domestic politics into an engagement with external actors, especially in a multi-level governance policy environment that we have identified earlier.

Nevertheless, even if many of the contacts by Nordic regions with the EU are still pursued via the nation state and its organisations, prior investigations suggest that there is scarce evidence that this is the most important way for enhancing the regional interest at the EU level (Berg & Lindahl 2007:66). Existing research on Nordic regions suggest that, like elsewhere, other ways and means

have gained in importance. Nordic regions then have also been involved in expressing regional upload activity through, for example, the establishment of Brussels offices, regional membership in international organisations and extended networking activities. Indeed, several Brussels offices were established by Nordic regions or cities during the 1990s. The tasks performed by the offices are the same irrespective of country: reporting home, lobbying and intervention. Personal networks are important, especially for pursuing the third task. The building of these, often in informal spheres of policy-making, takes time and make immediate results hard to accomplish.

Today, all Norwegian regions (*fylkeskommuner*) are members of a Brussels office. Hedmark is part of the Oslo office. The offices of West Sweden and Sydsam are Swedish examples. West Sweden, with Värmland as one of its members, represents municipalities and county councils in western Sweden, while Sydsam represents a similar set of actors in southern Sweden. Finnish regional offices in Brussels are maintained by city, regional councils and universities together, some only by regional councils. The office representing Southwest Finland is owned by the City of Turku with the regional council and the universities as important participants.

The long term effects of these regional lobbying activities are difficult to evaluate, according to a study of Jerneck and Gidlund (2001:153f). This is especially so if fast and very material returns are expected. Yet, Jerneck and Gidlund emphasise, at least for Nordic regions, there is evidence that a Brussels office with skilled and competent personnel can be instrumental in positioning the region in processes of information (both giving and taking) and policy-making. Indeed, this is largely assumed in the context of this study. Even from the point of view of the non-EU member, Norway, learning seems to be the most important result of regional co-operation with Brussels. Concrete results are hard to measure, according to a study of Norwegian regions as international actors, but learning how the EU works and how to influence processes of policy making, is expected to yield important results in the future (Råd *et al.* 2006). In a study of regional influence on the EU via Brussels offices, Kettunen and Kull stress that it is important to actually be present in Brussels in order to make influence possible (Kettunen & Kull 2009). For all three studied countries – Finland, Estonia, Germany – the main object of the activity of regional offices was the Commission. Next in line for the Finnish offices were the Parliament and the Committee of the Regions. A result of potential significance, as reported by Kettunen and Kull, was that, contrary to general belief, the size of the region is not as important a factor in deciding the region's influence as the region's place in federal or non-federal structures; for example, what power position the region has in its member state.

In the Nordic context at least, the importance of the 'home level' is corroborated by the earlier cited report by Berg and Lindahl. Conclusive for success at the Brussels level is how work is done at home (such as, on the horizontal level according to our terminology – see later). Three factors are identified in previous research as crucial: namely: the political will, the resources put into this work and the institutional structure within which it is performed. Regions with directly elected assemblies are best suited for the purpose, according to Berg and Lindahl (2007). Since elections give legitimacy and facilitates a regional perspective in EU related efforts. Least suited for doing this is the traditional regional state organisation (as the Swedish County Administration Boards, *Länsstyrelser*) constitutionally restricted concerning regional lobbying. Regions with Regional Development Councils (*regionförbund*) fall somewhere in between. Regardless of institutional structure, a general conclusion concerning EU related activities in Swedish regions is that these activities over time are becoming integral parts of the daily work of the region and not handled by specific EU strategies (Berg & Lindahl 2007:62). Hence, this Report recognises that the political composition of the region, and the configuration of its political institutions may account for aspects of how Regional Action takes place presently (see Chapters 6 and 7). Differentiation needs to be assumed and embraced here. Nevertheless, this Report asserts that this cannot be the whole story. There is a need to investigate further how regional policy-makers act towards the European Union and thus the functional dimensions of their activity that help determine what is 'seen as good for the region' acting as a guiding principle.

Furthermore, existing research on Nordic regions suggests that membership of international organisations and network building are already recognised by Nordic regions as ways of collecting information and gaining influence in the EU, and this counts for both regions in member states as well as in non-member states. In Norway, for example, the Foreign Ministry has supported regions to work within, inter alia, the AER and the CPMR in order to access European Union policies (Råd *et al.* 2006). Co-operation within Interreg is another important way of doing this. The AER and the CPMR are prominent also among Swedish regions when working through international EU organisations (Berg & Lindahl 2007). Other channels for access and influence that are of raising importance for both Swedish and Finnish actors in Brussels are networks, formal and informal, organised around specific issues (Berg & Lindahl 2007; Kettunen & Kull 2009).

## Summary (Chapter 2)

Overall, this brief overview of previous research helps to confirm a number of observations central to this study of Regional Action in the European Union: namely:

- Existing research on Europeanisation, whilst piecemeal, gives essential insights into the context in which European regions operate. There is broad agreement that *the impact of European integration on regions is not uniform, and the responses and adaptation of regions can be differentiated*. Hence, if this is the case, there is a need for more detailed studies of what does seem common – how regional actors respond to and act towards European integration.
- *Regionalisation research also indicates a growing susceptibility of regions to outside pressures as a general trend* – of which European integration is one that needs to be understood, but also that such pressures also run alongside the normal demands for internal re-organisation coming from the ‘bottom-up’ inside the region.
- That existing studies portray the EU as a system of multi-level governance (MLG), and on this basis, the EU’s MLG system provides new rationales and opportunities for regional parties to undertake Regional Action. It is not the case of MLG or Regional Action, but rather of *Regional Action within the EU’s MLG system of governance*.
- There is a need to recognise the importance of a horizontal dimension within and across European regions. Studies of regional mobilisation have identified a horizontal process of region-building that European integration impacts upon and can in certain cases accelerate.
- There is a similar requirement to acknowledge the importance of a vertical dimension to regional activity. Existing research on paradiplomacy suggests that subnational actors engage vertically with national (member states) and supranational (EU), and regional policy-makers are undertaking ‘paradiplomacy’ which has been described as the *foreign policy of non-central actors* (Aldecoa & Keating 1999).
- In the Nordic context, existing research shows us that Nordic regions have been affected by the pressures of European integration in the same way as other regions generally across the European Union.
- Nordic regions engage in international activities, although most existing research on Nordic regions also shows that the Nordic regions still rely heavily on the nation state to fulfil important political roles in transmitting regional interests upwards to ‘Europe’.
- Membership of international organisations and network building are recognised by Nordic regions as ways of collecting information and gaining influence in the EU, irrespective of the question of EU membership.



# 3. Analytical Concepts I: Fusion

## Introduction

As argued in the previous chapters, three important introductory observations need to be made before the introduction of key concepts underpinning the analytical approach to this Report can be discussed. First, it should be evident that the regional dimension has clearly gained more importance as a feature of European politics since the mid-1980s and has opened up, among other things, for the development of a supranational regional policy, and for new and extended transborder regional co-operation and networks (Gren 2002:17, 37). Second, that the regional dynamics that are of importance in our project are, on balance, best understood as a 'bottom-up' movement rather than as a EU or national government inspired 'top-down' policy process. In essence, this implies that regional actors during the last decades have changed focus from implementing governmental regional policies to formulating and implementing their own specific policies on regional development. Third, that regional policy-makers have, largely in combination with the other two explanations, seen greater opportunities and propensities for developing their own contacts with EU institutions as a means to 'bypass the nation state' and central government. Hence all of these explanations can be taken as being the consequences of European integration.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce some analytical concepts that will help us to understand what regional actors do and how they act (hence the usage of the term Regional Action), as well as the forms of Regional Action that they undertake in order to respond to, and influence, EU-related structures and policies. In particular, the development of our analysis will be informed by the theoretical context offered by fusion approaches (Wessels 1997; Rometsch & Wessels 1996; Wessels *et al.* 2003; Miles 2005, 2008, 2009) that should facilitate an evaluation and comparison of regional policy-makers and Regional Action in our three specific regions in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

## Theoretical Context:

### Using Fusion in Studying Regional Action

Following on from the discussions of previous chapters, what is also clear is that there is a great variety in the level of commitment of regional policy-makers to act politically (that is to say be involved in bottom-up activities) in EU-related policies and frameworks. The picture is asymmetrical and this implies that in order to study successfully and understand Regional Action in the European Union, we need to refine analytical concepts that specifically acknowledge more general elements of European integration and, at the same time, will be sensitive enough to accommodate the nuances of the more contextual aspects. For this reason, we argue that fusion approaches represent a good point of departure.

As noted in greater detail in the work by Miles,<sup>4</sup> there are three different elements, or concepts, in the fusion approach, that are also of interest for this Report focusing on Regional Action in the EU (see Figure 1). First, there is Macro Fusion Thesis (MFT), which is an overall explanation, at the macro level, of the European integration process (Wessels 1997; Miles 2008, 2009). Second, there is the concept of Institutional Fusion (IF), developed most systematically by Wessels *et al.* (2003), with the ambition to explain institutional reactions and adaptations to the challenge of the European integration. As a final element in our understanding of the fusion approach, we will also acknowledge and utilise the concept of Fusion Perspectives (FP),<sup>5</sup> developed by Miles (2005), that refers to the perceptions of the national policy-makers in relation to the European Union. In these works on fusion, each element has some relevance for studying Regional Action, and this chapter

<sup>4</sup> Readers are recommended to consult Miles (2007b) on 'The Nordic States and the European Union: The Conceptual Utility of Fusion' that provides a more detailed account of the general fusion literature.

<sup>5</sup> In Miles (2005), the author uses the term 'Micro Fusion Perspective' in order to thematically conceptualise the attitudes and behaviour of national policy-makers, in contrast to Wessels' focus on the European (macro) level. In this study that focuses on regional actors, it seems logical to leave the level of analysis out of the concept; hence we continue to use the term Fusion Perspective to express the concept even when applied to the regional context.

will now briefly outline their specific utility for the study of Regional Action. Let us consider each of these in turn.

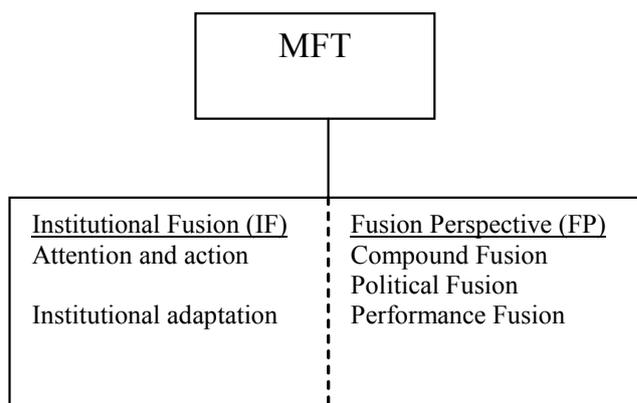


Figure 3.1 Basic Conceptual Order of Fusion Approaches

## The Macro Fusion Thesis (MFT) and the Regional Context

According to Wessels (1996:35f), the MFT offers a hypothetical three step-model of the *dynamics* of the evolving European polity. The first step is *Europeanisation* understood as a shift in the numbers involved in the policy cycle and a shift of attention of national policy-makers on the benefits of supranational European integration. The second step is the *Fusion* of national and EU public instruments in the EU policy-cycle, where national actors increasingly have to share responsibilities and competencies with others, horizontally as well as vertically. The third step, as identified by Wessels (1997:271-275), represents the continuation of an ongoing ratcheting process of European integration with an open *finalité politique*.

Moreover, fusion offers a means of understanding the path that European integration is taking that represents a supranational, if somewhat ‘sub-optimal’ (Miles 2007a:37) third way between the ‘federal path’ of a United States of Europe that is too politically sensitive and constitutionally unacceptable for many European countries, and the ‘confederal path’ that is deemed as largely ineffective in delivering outcomes that are desired by national policy-makers in an interdependent world, fusion represents a sub-optimal alternative (Miles 2007a:37). The actors are, within fusion approaches, viewed as rational, basically pragmatic and utility seeking. The result of European integration is that national political structures and actors incrementally merge with the supranational political level, both vertically and horizontally. Our study of Regional Action then, when drawing on fusion approaches, assumes that the EU is still integrating on a pro-supranational, but not necessarily federal pathway and has prompted differentiated *institutional adaptation* across the participating states that do not represent a structural revolution of the national *or even subnational* political systems.

More specifically, the MFT informs directly our discussions of Regional Action in the following ways. First, given that the MFT conceptualises that the supranational development of the EU is being pushed forward by the transformation of the nation state that has been largely affected by growing interdependence and the accompanying logics of EU institutions, we acknowledge that the implications of such *transformations does impact on regional actors*. Put simply, just as fusion dictates that European integration will spur on a blurring of competencies among the national and supranational levels, then regional actors will also seek greater involvement in European integration since, as fusion proposes, this may be a reflection of the growing inabilities of regional actors to deliver the welfare needs of citizens in their respective region. On this basis, the competencies of regional actors and structures are becoming blurred with that of the EU in order to access new

means to deliver the welfare demands of citizens.

Second, the MFT incorporates five indicators of EU supranational development (Wessels 1997:275-284) that have specific connotations for the regional level: (a) *the growing extent of binding decisions taken by the EU* means that regional actors are responding to a growing array of EU legislation affecting them and their constituencies; (b) EU supranational policy-making is developing a state-like agenda that complicates relations between the national and subnational levels of government; (c) the EU's evolving mixed system of competencies has limited sectoral impact on the regional level and thus EU awareness will be differentiated and 'sectorally constrained' across subnational government and policy remits; (d) *the growth and differentiation of EU institutions and procedures* opens up new opportunities for regional actors to develop new relationships directly with the EU institutions and supranational level, independent of national government structures, leading to a more intensive and differentiated incorporation of (in this case) regional actors into the whole EU process and; (e) EU supranational policy-making provides *widening and deepening channels of access and influence for intermediary groups* and regional actors will increasingly want to maintain a presence in Brussels in order to facilitate effective lobbying, although this will be dependent upon the policy field in question (Wessels 1997:283). Thus, subnational actors want to, and maintain, a presence in the 'diversified, atomized and complex political space' of Brussels (Wessels 1997:284; see also Bartolini 2005).

Third, our notions of Regional Action acknowledge not just the participation of regional actors in the formulation of EU development policies, but also extend to implementation aspects such as, the participation in, and perceptions of regional actors towards involvement, in 'comitology'. It is recognised that EU working groups and implementation committees involving national and EU officials represents 'a specific form of administrative interaction at a crucial intersection between the national and EC administrations' (Wessels 1998:210).

Finally and returning to our discussions of the Union as a multi-level governance system (see Chapter 2), it is important to note for interested readers that fusion approaches as outlined in this chapter, are in no way regarded as being incompatible with notions of multi-level governance (MLG). Put simply, it is not a question of MLG or fusion since it is implicit that notions of power competencies are functionally moving, as the nation state is transformed by European integration (as assumed by the MFT), upwards to the EU and downwards to sub-national actors. MLG is rather to be viewed implicitly as a part of fusion. However, fusion is, at least as viewed in this Report, as being somewhat deeper and (more) dynamic in that fusion assumes that the transfer of competencies is functionally leading to a blurring of the levels based on a desire by political elites for performance outcomes and as a by-product of the functional preferences and actions of policy-makers. A fusion approach assumes a form of blurred multi level governance in which bypassing is one characteristic (see later).

## Institutional Fusion (IF) and the Regional Context

This study of regional actors and action does not take place in an intellectual vacuum and the previous work by Wessels *et al.* (2003) on Institutional Fusion, that principally focused on national adaptation, also included some rather brief considerations of fusion activity operating at the regional level with some evidence of a 'process of pooling and merging policy instruments' (Wessels *et al.* 2003:446). Hence, the 2003 study provides a foundation for our evaluations since they detected that there were growing demands from regional actors to participate in EU policy processes directly. First, national and regional actors in Finland and Sweden generally were categorised towards the lower end in terms of regional activity (Wessels *et al.* 2003:435) and partly the reason for this was that the regions earmarked in EU terms were not identical to the formal state districts. Hence, our study evaluating Regional Action takes place in the context of rising awareness and demands from

regional actors across the European Union, but using the assumption that regional actors in the Nordic states are starting from a generally low base of activity.

Second, that regional responses to European integration across the EU have been diverse, with greater, conscious development of formalised rules and structures to assure participation rights for regions in federal and semi-federal systems, and much weaker and informal adaptation in unitary ones. *Overall, it can be assumed as a starting point that there will be lower levels of adaptation among regional actors to the EU in unitary states and thus placed in the context of a slower paced trend of adaptation at the regional level.* Third, there is a sizeable interest among regional actors in maintaining a representative presence in Brussels close to the EU institutions that usually translates into having offices in Brussels in order to monitor the EU policy process, and ensure opportunities to lobby directly and have their own representatives there. Although activity remains low, the European Union has 'become an important point of reference for regions and municipalities and has, to a certain extent, brought a process of regionalisation in the member states' (Wessels *et al.* 2003:435). In the context of this study, it is therefore assumed as a starting point that *even where the general trend has been towards limited adaptation, there has been a growing awareness among regional actors of the 'importance of Europe' that continues to prompt further Europeanisation of the attention of regional actors and the institutional adaptation of regional bodies.* Nevertheless, one of the deficiencies of Wessels *et al.* (2003) is that they remain vague on how this translates into specific forms of Regional Action – something that this Report seeks to consider in greater detail.

## Relationship between Europeanisation and Fusion in the Regional Context

To unpack what constitutes Institutional Fusion, it is perhaps appropriate to comment on the relationship between Europeanisation discourse and fusion approaches with specific reference to the regional context. As we know from the discussions in the previous chapter, Europeanisation remains a contested concept (Graziano & Vink 2007), precisely because Europeanisation has been used to analyse a wide range of phenomena. Olsen (2002:923), for example, identifies as many as five different ways<sup>6</sup> of how to make use of the term. In this context, and in line with Graziano & Vink (2007:4), our interpretation of Europeanisation is closer to the 'classical strand' of the Europeanisation literature that focuses particularly on the domestic implementation of EU policies (2007:4; see also Bulmer 2007:47) that also has strong theoretical connections with the fusion approach utilised here.

If we accept the contention of Radaelli & Pasquier (2007:36) that Europeanisation can be distinguished as a background concept (that includes all sorts of things) and as a systematic concept that, in contrast, necessitates the explicit formulation and definition of the core notions, then, in the context of fusion, Europeanisation, is seen principally as a facilitating systematic concept 'dedicated to the effects of European integration on domestic polity, politics and policy' (Radaelli & Pasquier 2007:36) and where pressures of European integration can be seen as a function of institutional and policy 'fit' or 'misfit' (congruence or incongruence) between the member states and the EU (Caporaso 2007:29).<sup>7</sup> It is according to this understanding of Europeanisation that fusion approaches are related. Similarly, we acknowledge that Europeanisation is not a theory, *per se*, with the ambition to explain, but is better seen as a phenomenon which a range of theoretical approaches have sought to explain (Bulmer 2007:47). Therefore Europeanisation is better understood as a generic term; a conceptual apparatus, which is valuable as an 'attention-directive

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<sup>6</sup> First, it has been used in connection with 'changes in external boundaries', which refers to a territorial extension of European policies, rules and institutional set-ups, to new member states in EU. Secondly, Europeanisation has been used to study the evolution of 'institutions at the European level'. Thirdly, is the 'central penetration of national systems of governance', which covers adjustment processes in respect of institutional structure, policy, patterns of political behaviour etc. A fourth usage is to analyse how Europe 'exporting forms of political organization', which may contain values and institutional set-ups to countries even beyond Europe itself. The fifth usage is Europeanisation as 'a political unification project', which, similar to the second definition, refers to the capacity at the EU-level (Olsen 2002:923f).

<sup>7</sup> Europeanisation is presented in fusion approaches in a form close to Olsen's type three: central penetration of national systems of governance (Olsen 2002:923).

device' (Olsen 2002:943). The fusion approach is to be understood as a concept connected to the Europeanisation discourse. In this study of fusion, Europeanisation, as a process of adaptation, is a necessary condition to understand how to analyse Regional Action, using fusion approaches.

In the works on fusion (Rometsch & Wessels 1996; Wessels *et al.* 2003; Miles 2005) and as discussed by Miles (2007b) on a *Micro-Fusion Framework* (MFF), Europeanisation is given a very specific meaning as three types of phenomenon. Briefly, this can be summarised as follows;

- Attention and action: outlined explicitly by Miles in his MFF as referring primarily to the Europeanisation of the attention of policy-makers (principally in reaction to 'downloading') and the corresponding action of policy-makers (as they seek to mobilise and upload interest formulation, aggregation and representation and give regional 'voice' at the EU level; (the politics of Europeanisation)
- Adaptation of institutions and procedures: outlined by the fusion literature and Miles implicitly in his MFF framework as corresponding to procedural alterations, changes in political institutions, judicial structures, administration, economic structures, divisions of powers among domestic institutions; (the polity of Europeanisation)
- Attitudes, outlined by Miles (2005) and in his MFF, as the Europeanisation of policy-makers' attitudes towards European integration that refers to their evolving perspectives and 'values set' which they use to conceptualise the benefits of European integration and can be, for instance, 'positive' or 'negative' towards the EU.

## Using Fusion Approaches in this Study of Regional Action

For conceptual clarity, it is argued by Miles in his MFF framework, that it is reasonable, at least in terms of terminology, to demarcate away the usage of the term 'Europeanisation' within fusion frameworks so that Europeanisation is explicitly and strictly referred to as the attention of policy-makers (Europeanisation of politics) and thus, something *distinct* from institutional adaptation (polity). Although it is recognised that they are in fact twin processes, and as Wessels *et al.* (2003:14) contend, the fusion process is described as '... a "fusion" of public instruments from several state levels linked with the respective 'Europeanisation' of national actors and institutions', it is useful to differentiate as operational concepts so that the fusion of public instruments is conceptually separated from Europeanisation of actors and institutions. The analysis thus seeks to be about two things that are here held apart; that is to say about institutional adaptation and the Europeanisation (as attention) of actors. Consequently, this study on Regional Action will also adopt this same line of thinking.

However, since this study is focused on Regional Action, there is also a need to conceptualise 'action' as a separate analytical element within fusion approaches. Action in fusion approaches refers to acts related to *attention* and *institutional change*. In other words, this project makes use of Institutional Fusion (IF) in the following way.

The IF has two main foci: first, the existence and extent of attention of regional actors towards EU-business and, second, the existence and extent of institutional adaptation of regional bodies. The notion of institutional adaptation is also relatively restricted. Adaptation refers in two senses to – (a) the existence and extent of *horizontal procedural adaptation* among regional institutions in order to enhance the ability of regional actors, organs and machinery within the respective region to develop coherent and common approaches and to speak with one voice on EU questions as well as, (b) the existence and extent of *vertical procedural adaptation* that enables regional actors and organs to participate and transmit regional perspectives into the EU policy-making environment.

Second, the concept of attitudes is also reserved for our latter discussion of the fusion perspectives (FP) and not for the IF side (see below).

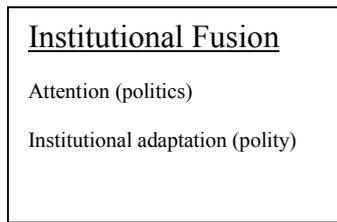


Figure 3.2 Institutional Fusion Conceptualised

## Fusion Perspectives (FP) and the Regional Context

While IF alludes to ‘change in behaviour and/or organisation of ... institutions’ (Miles 2005:54), FP alludes to attitudes (motives, values set) of policy-makers. FP and the IF are then two different approaches to the understanding of, as in our case, the Regional Action towards the EU. One is about ‘behaviour’ and one is about ‘attitudes’. However, the two are, of course, also interlinked; they should be seen as ‘twin approaches’. If we find FP among actors, we can expect to find consequences on the IF side of the study, and vice versa. Miles (2005:53) makes, for instance, use of the three forms of FP to derive propositions on what he expects to find among Swedish institutions.

Drawing upon the assumptions of fusion I, II and III of the MFT (Wessels 1997:285-289), Miles (2005) in turn develops these hypothetical motives. He labels them more substantially and utilises them to categorise policy actors ‘attitudes’ towards the EU that influence their policy priorities in the formulation and implementation of national positions and policies towards the EU (national EU policy) as well as to produce arguments (expectations) on how this will influence policy positions towards the EU. Miles, more or less, thereby argues in favour of the usefulness of the MFT in explaining the general direction of European integration.

Moreover, the FP is seen as a useful complement to IF approaches, since although the latter may have adequate tools in order to provide insights into the adaptation of regional institutions, the first indicator of IF, namely on Europeanisation, as defined as the changing attention of regional policy-makers, may not be in itself sufficient to explain the nuances in the *attitudes* of national policy-makers towards specific aspects of the EU policy portfolio, and *to understand the attitudes and priorities of regional policy-makers in terms of policy analysis*. The FP therefore seeks to add additional conceptualisations clarifying the policy positions of regional policy-makers and thus the nuances between, in this context, the attitudes of Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish regional policy-makers towards EU issues.

More specifically, and complementing the comparatively strict definition of Europeanisation in terms of the *attention* of policy-makers as outlined earlier, the FP incorporates a central tenet of the Europeanisation literature and seeks to, as Börzel (2005:62) argues, bring ‘the bottom-up perspective back in’. The FP acknowledges that, accompanying this ‘top-down’ driven, changing focus of attention on the part of policy-makers, regional policy-makers are also acknowledging (informally if not formally) the existence of a ‘bottom up’ dimension in that Europeanisation prompts, facilitates and accelerates changes in the *attitudes* of the regional policy-makers who then will seek to put these attitudes in practice in seeking to influence EU policies.

Greater evidence should be detectable, through their greater awareness of EU business, that policy-makers also promote greater involvement in EU levels in order to pursue the enhancement of regional preferences and priorities at the supranational level. The FP contains three ‘different, yet complementary forms’ (Miles 2005:30). In particular, whether regional policy-makers have developed

a permissive, balanced or negative 'value set' towards European integration as conceptualised as 'performance fusion', 'political fusion' and 'compound fusion', that then informs whether regional policy-makers seek the further integration of regional institutions and policies into EU policy-making. Although the term 'fusion perspective' is used, it could be argued that this represents a collective term for a value set that constitutes three component fusion perspectives – namely performance, political and compound fusion. The term 'fusion perspective' (FP) is preferred largely as a collective term to signify the complete value set of national policy-makers that incorporates all three forms of fusion-inspired perspectives.

## Performance Fusion: An Output-Related Attitude to European Integration

The FP envisages that regional policy-makers advocate participation in the EU as they recognise that domestic instruments used at the regional level are no longer able to exclusively provide welfare and service provisions for citizens in an interdependent world. Hence, regional policy-makers explicitly acknowledge that EU participation is preferential, precisely because they recognise ongoing alterations in the style and emphasis of governance occurring within their nation state that also has implications for the regional level. Yet, regional policy-makers adopt a pragmatic performance-related mentality that links their conditional support for European integration processes to the effectiveness of the EU's decision-making apparatus to deliver discernible political and economic results that they can no longer manage to produce using traditional strategies and policies. They are willing to fuse with the Union provided it delivers good and discernible performance outputs: a form of *performance fusion*.

In addition, as part of regional policy-makers being attracted to and accepting the institutional logic of supranational EU bodies to deliver their welfare and service needs, these policy-makers are also aware that, through supranational participation, regional apparatus and competencies may themselves be further transformed and even require further changes in the attention and action of regional actors and procedural and institutional adaptation of regional bodies in order to gain greater performance outputs for regions from the EU. Regional policy-makers identify themselves as fused into EU decision-making, and have a stake in political terms in ensuring that the European Union succeeds in order to satisfy domestic policy outcomes even if this affects and complicates daily regional politics.

## Political Fusion: A Third Way Attitude

Fusion also makes assumptions on the kind of the path that policy-makers would like to see the European Union take in its future evolution. Briefly, the FP assumes that policy-makers advocate, and are attempting to chart a path between the two disliked alternatives of: (1) the deficiencies of intergovernmental co-operation and: (2) federal solutions that may have increased effectiveness but also are perceived by regional policy-makers to threaten the existing constitutional and character of the respective region as well as the nation state. For them, European integration should represent a third way between intergovernmentalism and federalism that is pro-integration and supranational – rejecting the limited effectiveness of intergovernmentalism and the negative, and largely politically symbolic, implications of constitutional federalism. The attitude of policy-makers, to that of political fusion, is one that is largely pro-supranational integration, yet federo-sceptic. Such a preference for a supranational third way enables them to pursue greater European integration, while enabling them to largely avoid public deliberations about the effects of Europeanisation on regional democracy.

One caveat worth emphasising here is that it would be expected, in the regional context, that the influence of political fusion dynamics may be of less relevance and importance compared to the context of national policy-makers that specifically address questions directly related to the constitutional design of the evolving EU. Nevertheless, it can be argued that regional policy-makers will pursue the development of the European Union in which the role of regions is regarded as important, but would not prompt major constitutional revision of the status of the respective

region under investigation. Above all, regional policy-makers may favour fusing with the EU level in order to bypass complicated relations with their respective national government that may be viewed at the regional level as inhibiting the delivery of particular regional preferences.

## Compound Fusion: Attitudinal Preference for the Union as a Compound Polity

According to the FP, regional policy-makers adopt two attitudinal perspectives that can be labelled as *compound fusion*. First, regional policy-makers interpret the existing status of the European Union, up to and including the 2000 Nice Treaty operations, as representing a compound polity. The Union is interpreted as representing a complex, fused organisation of (mostly) supranational and intergovernmental features that can, in line with and linking to performance fusion, deliver policy outcomes even though its compound nature will imply that its overall structure may remain messy and sub-optimal. Compound fusion stresses that there is a shared responsibility between EU, national and regional officials over the combined use of policy instruments and a clear division of competencies is neither possible nor entirely necessary.

Second, national policy-makers *advocate* the continuation of a compound polity since they accept the fusing of competencies in such a flexible compound structure. Also according to the FP, the vast majority of (Nordic) regional policy-makers recognise the importance of pooling sovereignty in a compound structure for regions, and that the European Union's evolving compound polity structure enables an expanding array of regional actors to participate in EU decision-making (involving many elite practitioners but also lower level agencies and elite specialists) so that there is a greater propensity for intermediary regional groups to influence EU policies. This is something that is also actively preferred by regional policy-makers since they like the inclusive nature of compound fusion. Above all, a compound polity serves as a useful device to stress the benefits of a fused Europe, without requiring acceptance of a federal Europe that would be unpopular with the mass populations, particularly in the Nordic states.

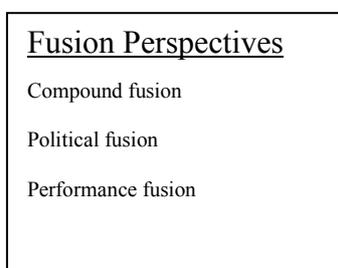


Figure 3.3: Fusion Perspectives Conceptualised

Overall, fusion approaches offer a useful conceptual background in which to interpret regional dynamics. First, the MFT provides a means to understand the general evolution of European integration as a sub-optimal process of fusion in which there will be incentives and opportunities for regional actors and institutions to fuse competencies with the EU level. Second, the IF and FP frameworks facilitate understanding of how and why regional actors and institutions respond to the pressures of a fusing Europe. Fusion approaches provide clearer conceptualisations of the changing attention of regional actors, the adaptation of regional institutions and procedures (taken from IF) as well as the evolving attitudes and value sets of regional actors that shape regional policies and positions towards the EU (from FP).<sup>8</sup> The next step is to deliberate on the implications for Regional Action and how these attention, adaptation and attitudinal factors influence regional action towards the EU.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of this, see Miles (2006).

## Summary (Chapter 3)

- Three observations serve as background for the project. First, the regional dimension has become more important in European politics during the last decades; second, regional dynamics is best understood as 'bottom-up' dynamics, third, regional policy-makers see greater opportunities for developing contacts with the EU and are, thus, ready to 'by-pass' the nation-state.
- These developments look different in various regions; thus this asymmetry calls for theoretical concepts sensitive enough to register both general tendencies and contextual nuances. Fusion approaches are used for these purposes.
- Three concepts are of particular importance in Fusion approaches: *The Macro Fusion Thesis* (MFT), *Institutional Fusion* (IF), and *Fusion Perspective(s)* (FP).
- The MFT offers a hypothetical three step-model of the dynamics of the evolving European polity: the first, Europeanisation, is understood as shifts in numbers and attention of policy-makers regarding participation in EU policies and on benefits of European integration; the second step is the Fusion of national and EU instruments in the EU policy-cycle and, accordingly, increased sharing of responsibilities and competencies between the two; the third step represents the continuation of European integration with an open *finalité politique*.
- In this study, it is assumed that regional actors will seek greater involvement in European integration since, as Fusion proposes, there are growing inabilities on the part of regional actors to be able to deliver the welfare needs of citizens in their regions.
- *The IF* and *the FP* are two different approaches to the understanding of the regional action towards the EU.
- The IF focuses on the *attention* of policy-makers towards European integration and on the *adaptation* of the polity taking place, due to this integration. 'Attention' refers to the attention of policy-makers in reaction to EU 'downloading' as well as to the policy-makers' efforts to mobilise and upload interest formulation, aggregation and representation and give regional 'voice' at the EU level. 'Adaptation' refers to procedural alterations, changes in political institutions, judicial structures, administration, economic structures and divisions of powers among domestic institutions.
- The FP alludes to *attitudes* (motives, values set) of policy-makers. It seeks to clarify the policy positions of regional policy-makers and, thus, the nuances between attitudes of regional policy-makers in Hedmark, Värmland and Southwest Finland towards EU issues.
- The FP contains three complementary forms: performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion. Performance fusion is an output related attitude to European integration; policy-makers are willing to fuse with the Union provided it delivers goods and performance outputs. Political fusion is a Third Way attitude indicating that policy-makers advocate a path between the two disliked alternatives of intergovernmental co-operation and federal solutions; this leads to a regional preference for 'bypassing' the nation state. Compound fusion expresses a preference for the Union as a compound polity, that is a polity of shared responsibilities between EU, national and regional officials over the combined use of policy instruments and where a clear division of competencies is neither possible nor necessary.



# 4. Analytical Concepts II: Regional Action

This chapter aims to further introduce the reader to the analytical concepts being used to define and evaluate Regional Action towards EU-related frameworks utilising a fusion approach. In particular, what do we then mean by ‘regional action’? What type of phenomenon are we looking for? Three concepts need to be specified: *region*, *regional actors* and *action*.

## Introduction

As noted previously, the Europeanisation literature has often concentrated on the central penetration of national systems of governance, for example a top-down policy process where the EU policy cycle puts pressure on national political systems. Yet, this rather ‘narrow’ way of studying Europeanisation has been criticised since ‘... increasingly intertwined [that is to say fused, our remark] political systems make it difficult to detect what causes what’ (Graziano & Vink 2007:9). Börzel, for example, argues that it is necessary to start any analysis of Europeanisation at the national level, and see how policies and institutions are developed at the EU supranational level (Börzel 2002:93); and then, subsequently, go on to study how domestic institutions are affected in a diffusion process that is similar to a dialectic relationship between national and the supranational levels.

So, according to Börzel we need more of a ‘bottom-up-down’ design to study Europeanisation. In contrast to Börzel, and as highlighted in Chapter 3, a fusion approach, and a regional perspective, gives us a basis for our argument to design this study more as ‘top-down-up’.<sup>9</sup> It is this certain amount of ‘up’ that interests this enquiry and contains what we define as ‘Regional Action’; namely, the ‘bottom up’ actions of regional actors and institutions towards the European Union that take account of the central penetration of state systems of governance by European integration and seek to ‘upload’ regional preferences and priorities to the EU level.

Some theories label this ‘bottom-up’ behaviour as ‘new regionalism’ (as opposed to what is called ‘old regionalism’ – see Chapter 2) and in general, ‘new regionalism’ is regarded as a bottom-up movement, in contrast to a governmental top-down policy process (Börzel 2002:16), that also acknowledges the growth of ‘subnational mobilisation’ in the EU (Hooghe, 1996; Jeffery, 1997 and 2000; Keating 1998; Le Gales & Lequesne 1998). By using a fusion approach to underpin this study of regional action, it is also argued, in line with MFT assumptions, that national actors increasingly share responsibilities and mix competencies with others, horizontally as well as vertically, and consequently, this will also have a profound impact at the regional level and on regional actors. We are thus focused on evaluating Regional Action through the prism of fusion, that is to say we are interested in Regional Action as part of deeper regional involvement in European integration, rather than a comparison between ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of regional behaviour. Hence, it is important to highlight that the emphases in this Report is on concentrating on the study of action by regional actors, that, in accordance with Institutional Fusion (IF) also reflects changes in the *attention of regional policy-makers as well as the adaptation of institutional bodies*.

## Regions

At first glance, ‘region’ seems a rather easy concept to understand, especially if, as recommended in Chapter 1, we take Keating’s (1998:9) minimal definition of a region as ‘... an intermediate territorial level, between the state and the locality’. Yet, a closer look shows that a ‘region’ can be defined in many ways and is notoriously problematic to define at an advanced level. For one thing,

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Top’ refers then to demands from EU policy-cycle and ‘down’ is how the national level is affected by, and adapt to, these demands. ‘Up’ refers in this sense to regional action as a consequence of this Europeanisation process.

rather simplistic definitions of a region usually refer to the notion of a politically governed unit located at the subnational level. Others have taken us a little further. Lidström (2008), for instance, has defined a 'region', utilising that emanating from the Assembly of European Regions (AER) definition of 'region', as 'a *subnational, territorially based self-government* that is located *between the state* and the direct locally oriented self-government in the *municipalities*' (*our translation and emphasis*), and qualifies this further by stating that the definition usually includes that the ruling body should be directly elected by its citizens (Lidström 2008). However, given that this study focuses on *Regional Action*, we are not primarily interested in conceptual discussions of what constitutes a region. For the most part, this study highlights the functional aspects of subnational mobilisation and/or regional action, and therefore the intention is to adopt a similar, rather functional and pragmatic way of dealing with the concept of a 'region'.

A common way to conceptualise regions has been, for example, to distinguish between three different forms of region (see for instance Gren 2002:15, or Jönsson *et al.* 2007:106f); namely as a *functional, administrative* and/or *cultural/historical/identity region*. The functional region is determined by the contacts, transport, travel and related relations of dependencies that interconnect people and establishments. In this case, this implies that the region in which 'Regional Action' takes place is somewhat determined by the actual interaction between EU and the bodies in the nation state and the locality. The concept of a functional region makes it problematic to distinguish an explicit geographic border that demarcates out the regional territory. It is somewhat obvious that the borders of a functional region adapt and change constantly as a consequence of general transformations of societies, for example, the development of new transport and communication opportunities. The *administrative region* is also often determined as part of a broader process of decentralisation, and as an instrument for the nation state to divide up the state-territory, such as, into provinces, *län, cantons* or *départements*.

An administrative region can also be classified as a territory for political-administrative decisions. There is no distinct dividing line between a functional and an administrative region; sometimes an administrative region might be the same as a functional region (as in our three empirical cases – see below). Yet, it is also possible that other regional constellations other than administrative regions may 'act' towards the EU. This could, for instance, be the case with those that might be classified as *cultural/historical/identity regions*, (as a third definitional type of region). This type of region refers to an area with deeper historical roots and where the inhabitants have developed a stronger regional identity that may be built upon language, history, religion or cultural and ethnical similarities. Much of the variation in the 'mosaic of Europe' can be attributed to having different cultural regions. A cultural/historical/identity region might coincide with the borders of an administrative and/or functional region, but could also be a more or less distinct level *within or across* an administrative region. Yet, since this specific project is concerned with studying Regional Action in three different Nordic regions; one from Norway (Hedmark County) one from Sweden (Värmland County), and one from Finland (Regional Council of Southwest Finland), as will be discussed further in Chapter 6, each of the three cases can be identified as broadly equivalent to *administrative regions*.

Since studying Regional Action towards the EU means that this project is fundamentally interested in regions in a *functional context*, which implies, for instance, that relevant actors, as well as their actions, are not necessarily always traced back to and located within the administrative borders of these regions, what is perhaps important to stipulate is that regions can be defined according to the functions they perform. As noted in Chapter 1, the region, located between the central state and the municipality, is usually responsible for several different policy areas. Yet, even here, these tasks are also, often, shared with actors at local level and thus, what actually falls under the remit of the regional level may simply be responsibility for forms of control and co-ordination over rather specific policy remits, such as, welfare issues, especially within health and medical care as well as social welfare, education, culture, and also regional development in a broader context. As discussed later in Chapter 7, it became readily apparent during the first round of fieldwork that explored and identified those regional actors that interacted with EU, these assumptions were largely confirmed:

namely that regional EU actors were foremost concerned with tasks around regional development and regional economic growth. Hence, it is these kinds of policy issues that, at least for this study, become the major parameter for defining the importance of a region. Alongside this, regions are often found in networks and partnerships with actors from different levels as well as parts in society relating to these performance functions and hence this is also what we mean when we are discussing governance. When we are talking regional development the understanding of what constitutes a region should be a functional understanding to that specific policy area. Thus, the concept of a region becomes broader than what is customary within the political debate. It can also be broader in relation to geography, tasks, actors, and for example the division of power between these.

As a consequence, our broad, functional understanding of region in the context of Regional Action thus refers to, in this study:

Different types of units, with various mandates and principals, that also have a clear presence at a subnational level, and undertake and/or are assigned tasks that obviously are or have been made common. This includes contributing to development, economic growth and providing added-value to a subnational, functional territory that is normally above the local level.

Another aspect of regions within the European Union similarly highlights that they differ in other respects. In several of EU member states, active regions are not a new phenomenon. In those states with a long history of strong regions (such as, the federal and semi-federal states of Germany, Spain and Austria), there is a longer tradition of independent political action at the regional level. Yet, in unitary states, like the Nordic countries, the regional tradition is much weaker (Jönsson *et al.* 2007:113), which renders consequences when it comes to understanding Regional Action in the European Union.

Our three respective regions possess not just similar Nordic credentials (see Chapter 6); they also have further similarities that distinguish them from others. They are not just regions in three unitary states; they also share common characteristics in having strong municipalities. All three regions are governed by both governmental regional administrations (top-down) and elected councils with regional representatives (bottom-up). None of the regions have any legislative powers; nor possess separatist movements demanding greater regional autonomy from their national authorities. The numbers of inhabitants in each region are rather small, with Hedmark County as the smallest (190,000), Värmland in the middle (275,000) and Southwest Finland Region as the biggest (460,000).

To summarise this discussion; in the context of this study, it would be unwise to determine exactly at this point what type of definition that should guide the forthcoming evaluations. Yet, it seems logical to adopt a largely functional definition of regions. Regions are a dynamic concept and cannot (and should not) be explicitly limited. Nevertheless, since our understanding of Regional Action is a consequence of, and directed and transmitted towards, developments at the European level, it is also important to be sensitive when conceptualising administrative regions. The ongoing processes of regionalisation in Europe emanate in part from the challenges and pressures from the EU policy-cycle. And at least in unitary states with no, or weak, regional traditions, EU membership, more or less, results in debates on how to create the most efficient administrative regional structures.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> These debates have been very strong in the Nordic countries. It is not only the challenges from the EU that bring about this discussion. It is possibly more accurate to argue that the discussions emanates from the challenges to the welfare state or the 'threats' from globalisation. However, we will argue that what is perceived as 'EU challenges' are most important in order to understand these debates.

## Regional Actors

Who are the *regional actors* that are the objects of this study? One approach to this question is to relate to the three different forms of regionalisation processes identified by Jönsson *et al.* (2007:109). First, there is the process of *decentralisation (or devolution)*, which refers to how the state apparatus transfers powers and competencies down to a regional level. This process is very similar to a top-down process. The second process can be classified as *separatism*, which refers to a process where there may exist an apparent opposition to the arrangements between the state and the region and where there are regional intentions aimed at gaining political autonomy. The third regionalisation process can be denominated as *region building*, and refers to processes where local and regional actors consciously strive to create new, or strengthen existing, often weak, regions. Regional Action as conceptualised in this study refers to this third process of regionalisation; namely region building, and consequently, we largely exclude 'Regional Action' as representing forms of traditional governmental regional policy-making or separatist regionalist movements. In this study, regional action is more closely understood as a complement to state policy.

Consequently, we define 'regional action' as a phenomenon that takes place within the existing framework of the nation state, yet, at the same time, also represents a phenomenon that is *not* in opposition to the existing state or its constitutional arrangements. The actions that underpin these processes of region building are essentially those of regional actors and for this study, this is largely taken to mean both local and regional actors. The construction of a region, from below or from the 'bottom-up', is viewed as an integral part of the blurred grey area between public and private law; an area that contains both public and private actors including, companies, universities, chambers of commerce, trade unions, political parties and cultural and social movements (Jönsson *et al.* 2007:112). Hence the term of 'Regional Actors' is understood broadly in a functional sense, and includes both local and regional actors that are not in opposition to the existing state or its constitutional arrangements, and contains both public and private actors, including public authorities and agencies, companies, universities, chambers of commerce, trade unions, political parties and cultural and social movements. Moreover, the focus in this study is, again on functional lines, on those regional actors that are interested in, and/or undertake functions and activities related to the formulation and implementation of EU-related tasks and/or in relation to EU-related frameworks. This includes not just regional actors with official EU roles in their respective organisations, but also actors that undertake Regional Action towards the EU more broadly.

## Action

How shall we define and understand the notion of *action*? To put it simply, the action that this study is interested in can be defined as those consciously, rationally-taken political measures that seek to transmit and promote regional interests in an EU-related framework.

## Vertical and Horizontal Action

Institutional Fusion argues that there exists an ongoing adaptation both vertically and horizontally. This distinction is again fruitful to use when it comes to Regional Action. There is an important linkage between horizontal and vertical action since as Schmidt (2006) argues Europeanisation processes contains three dimensions. First, there is a downloading process by the EU, which basically explains the top-down adaptation of domestic (in our case regional) structures and processes, as a consequence of increasing demands from EU-policymaking. Secondly, there is a horizontal 'sideways' process where we can see co-operation among domestic (in our case regional) actors and institutions on the formulation of ideas, preferences and models that shape the notion of the national (in our case also regional) interest in relation to supranational governance. And thirdly, there is an uploading process in which the national (in our case also regional) positions on EU questions are transferred to the supranational level.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It can also be argued that there is a fourth dimension, which might be of interest in further studies of regional action. As Vong (2007:325) argues, there is also a dimension of 'socialisation of interests and identities, or 'identity reconstruction'. He categorises this process as 'cross-loading'.

This model of how the process of European integration and Europeanisation evolves is fruitful in order to understand regional action. In essence, to understand acts of vertical 'uploading', there is also a need to relate this to and take account of equivalent action at the horizontal level. Regional actors are acting in a complex environment where they to interact and relate to many differing aspects if regional action towards EU is to be effective. So vertical action requires some form of horizontal action. So what do we mean with horizontal and vertical action?

Horizontal action represents co-operation and co-ordination among different regional actors that aims to encourage the articulation and implementation of what they presume to be in the regional interest. Horizontal activities include action among and between them within a specific region that seems to enhance co-ordination and collaboration, and usually intends to influence the propensities for more coherent downloading and uploading (see later). However, horizontal action may not necessarily be exclusively within the (internal) confines of a specific region; regional actors might also seek contact with other regions within (as in inter-regional action) the respective member-state or outside (as in trans-border regional action) the state border, in order to strengthen common regional action towards the European Union. Hence, in the language of 'paradiplomacy', regional policy-makers, alongside horizontal links between them within the respective region, may be engaging in forms of regional action and interaction that represents a kind of functional 'horizontal diplomacy' (horizontal-diplomacy) in which unofficial and official links and strategic co-operation is being developed with similar regions beyond the borders of the respective nation state, and that may or may not involve the permission or activities of national authorities. These are the particular form of action that we categorise as horizontal regional action. However, we do not regard regional activities towards the region's own government at the state level as horizontal. Horizontal action consists of all those activities in the horizontal dimension that is intended to strengthen the ability to promote regional interests in an EU-related framework.

*Vertical action* refers to the activities of regional actors and institutions upwards in terms of political levels, (as from the regional to the national and supranational levels) that are intended to strengthen the ability to articulate and promote regional interests in an EU-related framework. It could be argued that it could be reasonable to analytically lift in the local level, and that regional activities that are further downward and undertaken by even more local actors should be incorporated into notions of vertical activities. However, since we argue that Regional Action is also accompanied by some aspirations and conceptualisations of 'region building' (see above), it seems logical to regard local and regional actors as the 'owners' of the Regional Action process. Thus, the activities among local and regional levels, while still remaining highly important, are to be seen as basically horizontal, at least in a functional understanding of Nordic regions today.

Regional actors can choose strategically two ways to act vertically towards the European Union (see Figure 4.1). First, regional actors may use more immediate contacts with the European Union. This could be done more *directly* through general lobbying activities, for example personal contacts between the Commission and regional actors. Or Regional Actors may be involved in the comitology or the working groups that is an important feature in European Union policymaking process. In addition, regional actors can choose a strategy of indirect action towards EU, such as, developing activities through agents like regional offices in Brussels, or being active in multilateral regional bodies, such as, the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and make use of these bodies to influence the EU policy-cycle. These forms of vertical regional action represent forms of vertical 'paradiplomacy' whereby regional actors are engaging and developing their own distinctive strategic and diplomatic profiles directly and indirectly with European Union institutions. Second, regional actors and bodies may utilise other national transmission channels, such as, pushing regional interests by lobbying and using national governmental representatives that may, for example, be responsible for negotiations within the Council of Ministers (see Figure 4.1).

## Understanding Variation in Regional Action

There is, as stated above, not a single coherent response from the domestic arenas on European integration. In fact, variation is commonplace and extensive. To understand variation in Regional Action, we acknowledge the existence of a number of structural and contextual variables, which are influential at the national level. It is not argued that these variables completely determine Regional Action, but they help to understand variations. Furthermore, we will not claim that these are the only structural variables that regional actors have to account for, and there may be other structural demands, such as, globalisation, that are important for and influential upon regional actors. Yet, we presume that contextual and structural factors on the state level are, on balance, the most important when it comes to shaping political action by Nordic regional actors towards the supranational level. What factors are most prominent since it must be recognised that 'nearly every domestic structural condition that affects the impact of European integration could be conceptualised as a mediating factor' (Caporaso 2007:30).

Drawing upon previous empirical work on fusion (Wessels *et al.* 2003), a number of factors is important for understanding variations in regional action. There is no order of precedence between these factors.

First, drawing upon previous empirical work on fusion, we need to assess the degree of IF within national government structures. This should be done in two ways: an assessment of the extent of evidence suggesting a broad Europeanisation (in terms of a changing and increased focus of attention by actors towards the EU policy-making, specifically politics), of actors within the respective state. Then there should be an assessment of the degree of institutional adaptation, that is to say the polity, of national procedures and mechanisms to handle EU business. The latter should be understood in two senses – (a) the extent of horizontal adaptation or co-ordination among government actors and organs within the member state in order to enhance the ability for government machinery to speak with one voice on EU questions as well as: (b) the degree of vertical adaptation that enables national actors and organs to participate and transmit national perspectives into the EU policy-making. Both of these aspects also need to accommodate awareness of the domestication of the EU level that enables traditionally domestic-orientated actors, such as, finance, social and regional policy actors to develop direct relations with the EU institutions.

This will then enable us to make a decision as to what extent national structures are strong or weak adaptors to the EU system and to whether they are essentially national performers or multi-level players as identified by Wessels *et al.* (2003). It will be important here to recognise that this project draws upon previous work on fusion that identified that there was a vertical asymmetry between Brussels and the member states with no general trend of structural revolution in the member states. Growing EU obligations have been dealt with through limited constitutional revisions, minor institutional re-arrangements and much procedural and administrative adaptation. Also there has also been non-convergence among the member states with no ideal model of adaptation of state structures to the Brussels policy-cycle and each member state pursuing a differentiated 'own' way in the Brussels space. In addition it should be recognised as a starting point that there is also a clear horizontal asymmetry among groups of actors in terms of adaptation in the member state context. Adaptation has been differentiated across actors in the member states and not equally distributed among actors in the member states. Differentiation is the key.

Second, drawing upon previous research on a fusion perspective, it is important, where possible, to do a brief assessment of the existence of, and extent of, views compatible with FP among the attitudes and policy priorities of *national policy-makers* responsible for the formulation and implementation of National EU Policy. Drawing on the work of Miles (2005) on a FP, the extent to which national policy-makers have developed a permissive, balanced or negative 'values set' towards European integration as conceptualised as 'performance fusion', 'political fusion' and 'compound fusion'. This will then inform to what extent national policy-makers desire, or are seeking, further

integration of national institutions and policies into EU policy-making.

Third, we have to take account of existing constitutional arrangements within the state. This can be influential in a number of ways: (a) it can be important whether the state is a unitary or federal state and thus has differing responsibilities allocated to national structures in respect of EU policy portfolio and; (b) the extent of constitutional 'fit' and 'misfit' between member states and, (c) the tasks and capacities given to regional bodies and the constitutional conditions they work under.

Fourth, we have to address the composition of national discourses on the EU, and in particular, the role and characteristics of identity debates. It is assumed here that national discourses may shape and/or constrain the perspectives (specifically FP) and policy options of regional actors (and hence the composition of the fusion perspective) as well as their participation in EU policy-making (specifically IF).

Fifth, we have to take account of more general characteristics of national-regional relations. In particular, this includes political representation issues; namely to what extent, national actors regard it as being part of their portfolios to speak and act as representatives of regional actors in EU policy-making. This also needs to take account of political power relationships existing between the state and regional level; namely to what degree relations between national and regional actors remain cordial and are not affected by complex political party constellations or differentiations. These indicators may help to determine the extent to which regional relations with the EU are perceived as means of facilitating or bypassing national-regional political relationships.

Sixth, we need to assess the degree of institutional learning between the national and regional levels. As regards the regional context, it is recognised that the fusion process 'has been asymmetrical' (Wessels *et al.* 2003:447). Change has been largely restricted to governmental machinery, interest groups and to some degree, courts among the (then) 'Fifteen'. The fusion process 'has been extended to some regions' (Wessels *et al.* 2003:447). It is thus important to differentiate to what extent national actors and organs are willing to, and have, passed on their experiences to regional partners and also allow them access to EU structures via national structures.

Seventh, one possible constraint for regional actors to be involved with more immediate contacts with EU policy-making might be perceptions of language barriers. Acting means communication, and to do that often requires a common language, or at the very least effective interpretation. If regional policy-makers perceive that their language competencies are insufficient, it might restrict the degree of Regional Action towards the EU.

With all this in mind, it is now possible to conceptualise regional action as containing several elements as modelled in Figure 4.1.

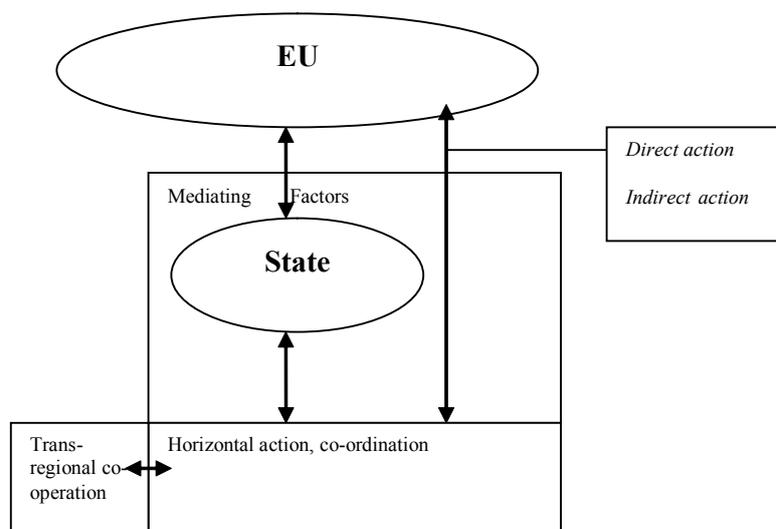


Figure 4.1 Regional Action conceptualised

As we can see in the Figure 4.1, Regional Action can take place on a horizontal level both within the specific region and in interaction with other regions, as well as on the vertical level, towards the EU via the state and/or towards the EU without the state as an intermediate level.

## Gender and Regional Action

It has been suggested that Swedish notions of gender equality sometimes are perceived by other nationalities as a bit quaint, and a source of amusement (Thedvall 2007). The Swedish position can, in turn be seen as part of a larger, Nordic, one. Thus, gender might be a dimension of interest when studying Nordic regions' contacts with the EU.

Basically, when women and men have similar skills, these skills receive higher recognition when possessed by men than by women. Hence, rather than a difference in capabilities between women and men, there is, according to this perspective, a difference in how abilities are recognised and respected depending on if they are encountered in women or men (Weyer 2007).

According to Ridgeway (2001), people subscribe to cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes that make them view men more favourably, while women are met with doubt and are put in positions where they are required to prove themselves to a higher degree. However, drawing on material from a quantitative study of gender in elite settings, Vianello (2004) claims that there are indications that women manage these conditions rather well. Here, it is reported that 'no relevant difference in terms of the perception of their exercise of power appear to exist between women and men who hold top positions in public life' (Vianello 2004:516).

Even if earlier research point in somewhat different directions there are reasons to believe that women in elite settings are more exposed than men. They are more likely to be questioned, to be criticised and to have their actions and decisions scrutinized. Thus, it would appear that contacts with the EU, especially when performed by women actors from a Nordic setting, would be ridden with difficulties of a gendered nature. This is the reason why questions on gender were included in the interviews of this study. Results and conclusions regarding this are presented in Chapter 8.

## Questions of Sustainability

This chapter also addresses how Regional Action should be interpreted in terms of sustainability. It is important to emphasise that when notions of *sustainable Regional Action* are referred in the Report, that, in keeping with the logic of the research design of this project, that this is also interpreted through the prism of functionality. 'Sustainable' or 'sustainability' does not refer primarily, at least in this project, to specific policy fields, such as, 'sustainable development' or indeed, to the context of 'regional development policy'. Nor really is the primary focus placed on the concepts and context of 'sustainable governance' or 'democratic accountability' where the stress is on ensuring that governance is sustainable in terms of democratic credentials and lines of accountability to citizens. Nor, indeed, is there any attempt to investigate the possibilities of causal links between forms of Regional Action and lines of democratic accountability since this Report largely represents an investigation of the actions and activities of regional elites, and, on this basis, attempts to be an early, yet innovative elite-focused study introducing fresh conceptualisations of Regional Action.

Rather, notions of 'sustainable' or 'sustainability' are linked directly and very strongly to the concept of 'action' in Regional Action, and can be best interpreted in terms of how sustainable are the specific actions of regional policy-makers and actors, be they in response to downloading, attempts at horizontal co-ordination, and towards uploading regional preferences, over time and space. Consequently, the stress within 'sustainable Regional Action' is on twin aspects of time and space.

First, 'sustainability' is addressed here, in primarily functional terms, *through the temporal dimension - in seeking to analyse whether the Regional Action can be sustained by policy-makers and actors over a reasonable period of time*. Such sustainability may be affected by levels and variations in the attention and awareness of regional actors to EU issues, their ability and willingness to act, and of course, their attitudinal dispositions as to how beneficial they perceive the EU (performance fusion) and how they see the EU developing in the future (political and compound fusion). Hence, we can refer to 'sustainable Regional Action' in terms of its durability over time, and something that will have implications for leadership, institutional organisation, resource allocation and policy/project management (see Chapter 9). The time period is usually expected to be of at least one year for it to be regarded as 'sustainable Regional Action'.

Second, 'sustainability' is considered here largely *in a performance orientated, and spatial, context that stresses functional effectiveness*. Here, we seek to highlight whether and where Regional Action can be sustained by policy-makers on the basis of (perceived) effectiveness criteria and effectiveness of impact. Once more, the sustainable effectiveness of Regional Action will be influenced by the levels and variations in the attention and awareness of regional actors to (evolving and changing) EU business, their willingness and ability to act (adaptation), and, here again, their attitudinal dispositions towards European integration. Of course, it is also important to highlight that the actions of regional actors may be sustained, and are sustainable, on the basis of elite perceptions of effectiveness, rather than necessary real effectiveness, and to some extent, its status in this regard is not that significant. Given this line of reasoning, 'sustainable Regional Action' is denoted in terms of its (perceived and/or real) effectiveness and, more specifically, in enabling regional actors to 'get the best out of the EU' since this will facilitate and drive forward the activities of regional actors. It will also therefore have implications for leadership, institutional organisation, resource allocation and policy/project management (see Chapter 9).

At this point, one further caveat is made as regards questions of sustainability and its relationship to the 'action' in Regional Action. It is noted that there are, of course, differing types of action as respects to their primary motives and aims. Briefly, these types of action are worthy of mention primarily in terms of uploading and thereby vertical Regional Action activities. These are *funding action, learning action and political action*. In simple terms, funding action refers to the actions of regional actors whose primary objectives is related to often time-limited and project and

programme-based EU funding issues and thus principally perceives Regional Action in a rather narrow sense which may have implications in terms of motives for sustainable Regional Action over time and space. *Learning action* denotes those activities undertaken by regional actors that seek to develop competencies, knowledge and expertise usually at the technical level on how the European Union does business (usually broader than simple funding issue in this regard). This can be project based and thus comparatively short-term and/or policy-based and have more medium to long-term consequences in terms of sustainable Regional Action, and can involve all forms of regional actors. In contrast, *Political action* denotes more higher-level strategic engagement with EU questions and issues, usually at the political level, and involves longer-term interaction with the EU on policy and strategic issues affecting the evolution of the Union that has regional consequences. In terms of sustainable Regional Action, it would be expected that political action would require a deeper, and more politically and financially expensive level of commitment on the part of regional actors, yet would ensure longer-term sustainable presence in the EU and thereby *sustainable Regional Action*. These aspects will be returned to in Chapter 7 of this Report.

## Regional Action using a Fusion Approach

In this chapter, we now aim to combine the two concepts of a fusion approach and Regional Action. In particular, this regional study takes on board the assumptions of the MFT as a background interpretation of European integration. It also acknowledges the MFF distinction (Miles 2006), that the fusion approach can utilise IF (the behavioural variable) and FP (the attitudinal variable) as guiding analytical concepts. This is combined in this paper with a clear view of Regional Action, that stresses functionality and differentiates between vertical and horizontal forms of action see Figure 4.2).

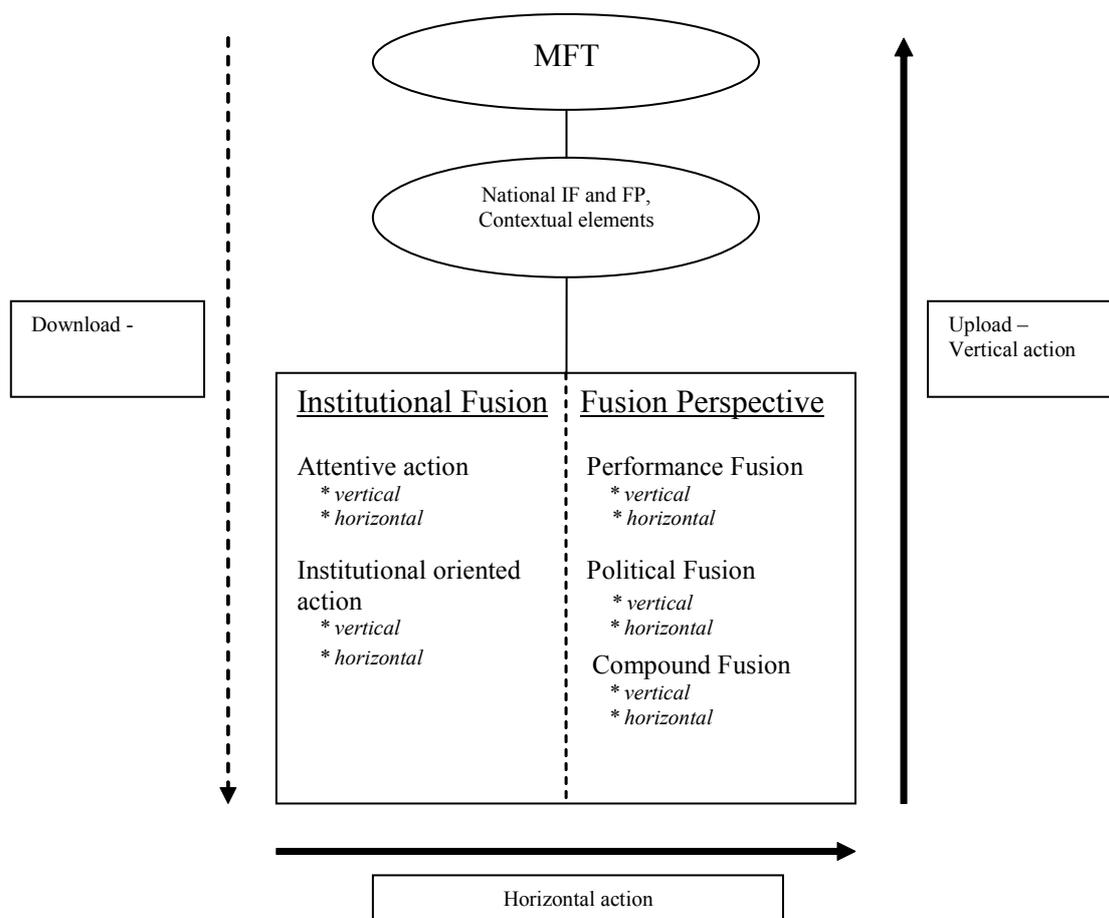


Figure 4.2 Regional Action and the Fusion Approach

Figure 4.2 illustrates how Regional Action, horizontally and vertically, towards the European Union could be analysed by using the concepts of IF and FP. The horizontal and upload arrow are emphasised which illustrates what we primarily are interested in. But we need to interpret the download dimension to understand horizontal and upload activities.

## Research questions

The central aim has been then to introduce the analytical concepts that help us to understand our basic question; *how can we understand 'regional action' towards the European Union, using fusion approaches?* We are interested to get a picture of 'regional action' towards the EU.

*What forms of Regional Action are we interested in to study?* A fusion approach helps us to assume, or hypothesize, what actions we would expect. Our basic ontological understanding is that Regional Action is a result and a consequence of the dialectic process between 'behaviours' and 'attitudes'. That means that we have two tasks to fulfil. First, we have to *investigate existing levels of institutional fusion (behaviour) in terms of vertical and horizontal action – namely – exploring existing 'regional action'*. Second, we have to *evaluate the conceptions (attitudes) of regional actors towards the European Union and towards existing and future levels of participation of regional actors in EU-related frameworks*. This can be categorised as *determining existing regional pre-conceptions and conceptions in both vertical and horizontal co-operation*. This gives us the following research questions:

- To what extent is the existing region acting in an institutionally and behaviourally fused EU-related framework? How is this action performed horizontally, and vertically?
- To what extent do regional actors value existing and future levels of participation in EU-related frameworks? How do regional actors value horizontal and vertical co-operation in EU-related frameworks?

### Applying a Fusion Approach to Regional Action

Given the discussions in previous sections that have duly defined notions of Regional Action largely in functional terms and highlighted the importance of differentiating Regional Action in terms of behaviour and attitudes and at the horizontal and vertical dimensions, then we can now move on to tentatively outlining an approach to apply fusion to actions towards the European Union at the regional level. The intention here is thus to map a series of analytical indicators/tools that might be useful in detecting the level and defining the forms of regional action in the three regions under scrutiny. These can be broadly defined as Institutional Fusion (IF) indicators/tools and Fusion Perspective (FP) indicators/tools.

#### *IF indicators*

It is important then to unpack our outlined indicators of Institutional Fusion – taken to be the attention of regional policy-makers to date, and ensuing action to enhance forms of procedural and institutional adaptation.

In particular, we are looking for evidence of the changing *Attentive Action* of regional policy-makers in both vertical and horizontal forms; in other words, the growing or declining awareness among regional policy-makers of: (a): the size and impact of EU business and legislation being 'downloaded' by the EU into the regional domain and: (b) that then requires the attention of regional-policy-makers in terms of getting regional policy-makers (within the respective region and with other interested regions) to co-operate together in order to be able to formulate and 'upload' their preferences to the EU level.

In addition, we are also looking for evidence of *Institutional Oriented Action* in both vertical and

horizontal forms (such as, procedural adaptation, changes in political institutions and division of powers). Here, we will be evaluating: (a) any organisational adaptation to regional institutions aimed at enhancing the handling of EU business 'downloaded' vertically from the EU level and also the uploading of regional preferences 'vertically' to the EU institutions, (for example lobbying activities or participation in EU comitology) as well as (b): changes to regional institutions designed to, for instance, enhance horizontal co-operation among different regional institutions on EU issues.

#### *FP indicators*

Turning our focus upon the attitudinal perceptions of regional policy-makers that influence their policy priorities towards the EU, then three aspects can be examined.

We may be searching for evidence of regional policy-makers' attitudes towards *compound fusion*. This is taken to mean their attitudes towards participation in EU-related frameworks and the promotion of merged competencies between the EU and regional level as part of compound polity. Again, we will be looking for vertical and horizontal dimensions of this. Namely: (a) whether there are positive attitudes among regional policy-makers on active promotion of and participation in key vertical access channels that link the regional and EU levels and: (b): whether there are positive attitudes among regional policy-makers across the region/regions towards developing common viewpoints on sharing competencies in the region and with the EU.

Turning to *political fusion* aspects, we will be examining evidence as to what extent to which regional policy-makers are duly adopting attitudes towards promoting supranationalism and the extension of EU competencies in, and with, the region as a means of bypassing the state level and central government. This could include, for example, whether there are attitudes among regional policy-makers stressing the active promotion vertically of regional voices supporting the supranational extension of EU powers (for example, on the role and function of the Committee of Regions or on increased structural funds).

We will be searching for *performance fusion* aspects, whereby regional policy-makers display attitudes where their support for the closer involvement of regions in European integration is conditional upon the Union delivering performance outcomes that are easily discernible at the regional level (what can the EU do for the region?). Again, this could be construed in terms of vertical and horizontal dimensions, and could include, for example: (a) where regional policy-makers seek to assess vertical 'downloaded' EU business that have relevance to the regional level, (for example the Lisbon strategy, or the structural funds); as well as: (b) where regional policy-makers have common viewpoints among regional institutions on the perceived benefits of key EU policies for the region (horizontal) and: (c): attempts to transmit these assessments upwards vertically to the EU level.

In conclusion, these analytical concepts should enable us to move forward and complete three objectives in relation to the study of Nordic regions. First, to make an informed judgement of the existing degree of *horizontal* co-ordination and fusion among regional actors and institutions in terms of EU-related activity as well as the strengths and weaknesses of existing arrangements and provision. Second, to also attempt an informed judgement about the existing degree of vertical co-ordination and fusion between regional actors and institutions, and national and EU actors and institutions in terms of EU-related activity, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of existing arrangements and provision. Third, to use these preliminary conceptual tools to help inform possible *recommendations for improving horizontal and vertical co-ordination* and fusion that will facilitate the region getting the best out of the European Union.

## Summary (Chapter 4)

- The study is designed within a theoretical framework of understanding European integration in the terms of 'top-down-up'. In the study is used the terminology of 'download, horizontal and upload' dimensions. Of particular interest are the 'bottom up' actions of regional actors towards the EU, seeking to 'upload' regional preferences and priorities.
- Three concepts are central to the investigation; 'Regions', 'Regional Actors' and 'Action'.
- 'Regions' are understood in a functional context, referring to different types of units, with various mandates and principals, however with a clear presence at a subnational level and assigned with tasks of contributing to development, economic growth and adding value to a functional territory, above the local level.
- 'Regional Actors' are understood as both local and regional actors that are not in opposition to the existing state or its constitutional arrangements, but act as integral parts of an area between public and private law, containing both public and private actors, including companies, universities, chambers of commerce, trade unions, political parties and cultural and social movements.
- 'Action' is understood as those consciously, rationally-taken political measures that seek to transmit and promote regional interests in an EU-related framework. This action can take the form of horizontal action, that is co-operation and co-ordination among different regional actors that aims at articulation of regional interest, or vertical action, that is activities of regional actors upwards in terms of political levels.
- Regional actors can choose to act vertically towards the EU directly (lobbying, personal contacts, comitology, working groups etc) or indirectly (regional Brussels offices, multilateral regional bodies as AER etc).
- Variation in regional action can be, at least partly, understood by a number of contextual and structural factors on the state level. Seven such factors need to be mentioned. These are (1) the degree of institutional fusion within government structures; (2) attitudes and policy priorities regarding the EU among national policy-makers in charge of formulation and implementation of national EU policies; (3) existing constitutional arrangements; (4) the composition of national discourses on the EU; (5) general characteristics of national-regional relations; (6) the degree of institutional learning between the national and regional levels and (7) regional actors' perceptions of language barriers in contacts with the EU.
- Gender aspects have been included in the study since there are reasons to believe that women in elite settings are more exposed than men. Thus it would appear that in contacts with the EU, especially when performed by women from a Nordic setting often seen as relatively gender equal, would present specific challenges.
- 'Sustainability' is here understood functionally and linked to the concept of 'action' in Regional Action. It is interpreted in terms of how sustainable are the specific actions of regional policy-makers, in response to downloading, attempts at horizontal co-ordination or towards uploading regional preferences, on the aspects of time and space.
- The time aspect of sustainability is addressed in functional terms as seeking to analyse whether Regional Action can be sustained by policy-makers over a reasonable period of time.
- The space aspect of sustainability is considered in a performance orientated and spatial context, stressing functional effectiveness.



# 5. Methods

## Data collection

Data for the study have been collected by three different means, interviews, questionnaires and documentary study. Interviews have been conducted in all three regions and in Brussels. The regional interviews were done in two rounds. The first round took place in 2007. In this round we used 'snow-balling', searching for persons with some sort of importance in EU-related activities in the respective region. Obvious prominent actors were asked for other prominent actors in the regions, we continued asking for 'other' prominent actors until these key persons started to be repeated to us and we deemed the list of key actors in each region to be definitive.

The simple opening question for those interviews read: 'Who in this region is prominent as a regional actor on EU-related activities?' These interviews served the double purposes of data gathering and as a means for selecting informants for the questionnaires. The second round of interviews in Hedmark and Värmland took place during 2008 and the beginning of 2009, in Southwest Finland during April 2009.<sup>12</sup> (For detailed information, see References). In Hedmark six persons were interviewed, in Värmland ten persons and in Southwest Finland five persons. Interviews have, as a rule, been conducted by one or several of the authors. In Hedmark and Southwest Finland the interviews have been conducted by the authors in co-operation with Norwegian or Finnish colleagues or, in a few cases, by this colleague alone. In Brussels two interviews were conducted in April 2009 with representatives for the Oslo Region European office and for The West Sweden office.

Web-based questionnaires have been sent to policy-makers in Hedmark, Värmland and Southwest Finland. The questionnaires were formulated in the relevant mother tongue language, in the Finnish case in both Finnish and Swedish. In Hedmark, 20 policy-makers were approached with a response rate of 85 per cent. In Värmland, 44 respondents out of 47 answered the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 94 per cent. The Southwest Finland response rate of 77 per cent falls between that of the other two regions; 34 out of 44 approached policy-makers answered the questionnaire. In the latter case, very few persons answered the questionnaire in a first round. This led to a second round where potential respondents were called by telephone and asked to answer. Differences in the number of policy-makers approached in each region reflect two things, the relative size of the region (Hedmark being the smallest of the three) and the way the sample was conducted (see Chapter 6).

Internal dropout rates on single questions are generally on a negligible level, with one exception. Question no 8 shows considerable dropout rates for Hedmark and, especially, Värmland. For Hedmark the dropout rates are 18 per cent for questions 8b and 8e, for Värmland dropout rates are 30 per cent (Q. 8b), 25 per cent (Q. 8c) and 23 per cent (Q. 8d). Southwest Finland, at the same time, shows only 6 per cent drop out each for questions 8b and 8c. A possible explanation for the relatively high dropout rates for Hedmark and Värmland are that respondents do not identify their tasks with the examples, such as profiling and marketing of the region, asked for. The difference between Hedmark and Värmland, on the one hand and Southwest Finland on the other can, at least partly, be explained by the fact that the Finnish policy-makers were approached by telephone and, thus, actively asked to produce an answer to each of the questions.

Documents relevant for understanding regional development processes and contents have been used for extracting both background information prior to questionnaires and interviews as well as for additional information after these. Our ambition has been to collect documents that are also, to some extent, comparable across regions. Such documents include regional development plans. For Hedmark the following documents have been used: *Regional Development Plan for Hedmark 2008-*

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<sup>12</sup> In Värmland a round of fourteen pilot interviews were conducted in 2006. Of these interviewees five were later included in the in-depth interviews.

2011' (Regionalt utviklingsprogram for Hedmark 2008-2011), 'Regional Plan for Hedmark 2009-2012' (*Fylkesplan for Hedmark 2009-2012*), both from the County Council, 'Arena the Inland. Common Leadership Meeting for the County Councils of Hedmark and Oppland 2005' (*Arena Innlandet. Felles ledermøte 2005*) also from the County Council and, from Innovation Norway, 'Guide for Readjustment and Creative Work' (*Veiledningshefte i omstillings- og nyskapsarbeid*). 'The Annual Reports from the Unitary County Council' for 2007 and 2008 (*Årsrapport 2007, Årsrapport 2008, Fylkesmannen i Hedmark & Hedmark Fylkeskommune*) have also been used.

For Värmland, the documentary study include 'Sustainable Growth in Värmland', 'The Regional Growth Programme for Värmland 2004-2007' jointly produced by Region Värmland and the County Administrative Board (*Hållbar värmländsk växtkraft, Tillväxtprogram för Värmland 2004-2007*), 'The Regional Development Plan' (*Värmland 2020. Orientering-Omvärld-Riktning-Vision*) and 'The International Strategy 2008-2011' (*Internationell strategi 2008-2011*) from Region Värmland.

Corresponding documents from Southwest Finland, all from the Regional Council, include 'Southwest Finland Regional Overview 2025' (*Egentliga Finlands landskapsöversikt 2025*), 'Southwest Finland Regional Programme 2005-2008' (*Egentliga Finlands Landskapsprogram för 2005-2008*), 'Southwest Finland Regional Plan, Draft 19.11.2007' (*Landskapsplan för Egentliga Finland. Utkast 19.11.2007*) and 'The Region's Development Funding and the Realisation of EU-projects' (*Landskapets utvecklingspengar och genomförandet av EU-projekt*).

## Validity and reliability

Given the focus of the study on regional policy-makers' actions and attitudes, validity is foremost a question on whether relevant persons in enough numbers have been selected. As is described in the section on the sample of the study (see Chapter 6), we have managed to target strategically placed persons in all three regions. Thus, in each of the regions the informants taken together should be able to give an accurate picture of what actions are planned and actually taken in the region, related to the European Union. Further, the data gathered regarding the informants attitudes towards the EU should, broadly, be possible to see as a snapshot of the current state of EU-related attitudes among regional policy-makers. Relevant documents have been selected with the help of both researchers and policy-makers in the three regions.

Is the data collected reliable? The question is especially important since the project collects data in three different countries with different major languages. Thus the precautions taken to secure reliability as far as possible include the following steps. Regarding the questionnaire a first step has been to carefully check with our Norwegian and Finnish colleagues both the formulation of questions as well as our understanding – linguistically and contextually – of the answers given. The interviews have, as a rule, been conducted on the spot by two interviewers. In cases of uncertainty regarding the information given interviewers have returned to the informants and checked. Regarding our understanding of the documents consultations with Norwegian and Finnish colleagues have been conducted.

For all means of data collection another step of securing reliability has been taken. Findings have been presented and scrutinised at four workshops and one smaller meeting. Two workshops were held in Karlstad in February and November 2008, one in Liverpool in December 2008 and one in Turku in April 2009. A small meeting was held in Hamar in March 2008. At the Karlstad workshops, members of the project's Reference Group – both policy-makers and researchers – participated together with additional policy-makers from the region. The Turku and the Liverpool workshops both included policy-makers, the latter making it possible to validate data with the help of regional policy-makers outside the Nordic setting.

According to the original plan policy-makers from all three regions should meet together but

this proved impossible. Nevertheless, the workshops and the meeting have been very important for validating and placing data in relevant contexts and for supplementing missing data.

The theoretical framework of the project has also been presented at three research conferences, at *The Nordic International Studies Associations (NISA)* conference in Odense, Denmark, in May 2007 at *The Performing Regions/Regional Performance conference*, Lancaster University, UK in September 2007 and at *The Sustainable Cities and Regions: Enabling Vision or Empty Talk?* conference at Örebro University, Sweden, in March 2009. In September 2009 the project, its framework and results, will be presented at a special panel at the *UACES (University Association of Contemporary European Studies)* conference, at Angers, France.

## Generalisations

What kind of generalisations is possible to draw from the findings and the analysis presented in the study? We think that the results are applicable to, at least, other regions in Nordic states. The three studied regions, share important traits. They have populations ranging between 190,000 (Hedmark) and 460,000 (Southwest Finland). All are border regions of mixed rural and urban character with no metropolitan cities in the region or in its immediate neighbourhood. But, at the same time, each region has a distinct and within the region generally recognised political and administrative centre; Hamar in Hedmark, Karlstad in Värmland and Turku in Southwest Finland.

The three regions are Nordic which not only simply means that they are situated within unitary states; they are parts of long historical traditions of central and centralised government. Besides constitutional restrictions on their possible external actions there are, thus, probable mental restrictions among policy-makers regarding what actions, and to what extent, are allowed and appropriate. At the same time, the three studied regions share historical experiences of rather extended local self-government. As is well-known, the political systems of Nordic countries are also generally seen as comparatively consensual, a fact which might have implications on the regional level.

While several similarities between the three regions are obvious so is even more one difference; Hedmark is part of the non-EU member state Norway, Värmland and Southwest Finland of member states. This, of course, affects possible ways of action towards the European Union and produces different outcomes across regions in this regard.

## Summary (Chapter 5)

- Data has been collected by three means: interviews, questionnaires and document study.
- Response rates for the questionnaires were 77 per cent as the lowest (Southwest Finland) and 94 per cent as the highest (Värmland).
- Validity and reliability regarding the data has been confirmed at workshops with the help of policy-makers from the three studied regions and with researchers outside the project.
- It is suggested that the three studied regions can be seen as typical cases of small Nordic regions.



# 6. Our Three Regions

## Introduction

Each of the three cases – Hedmark County, Värmland County and Southwest Finland – can be, at least at the outset of this project, identified as and equivalent to *administrative regions*. Yet, studying Regional Action towards the EU means that this project is fundamentally interested in regions in a functional context, which implies, for instance, that relevant actors, as well as their actions, are not necessarily traced back to and located within the administrative borders of these regions. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to place our investigations of Regional Action in an institutional setting since the composition of the region still remains an important variable that may influence the types, forms and substance of Regional Action that we are seeking to investigate. Hence, this chapter seeks to introduce the reader to each of our three respective regions and to compare the institutional settings of each of the three regions.

At this point, it is worthwhile reminding the reader of our discussion of the term of ‘region’ in this study, and that we are taking a broad and rather functional approach to this. Narrower definitions, such as, those proposed by Lidström and discussed in Chapter 4 (Regions), if applied strictly in this study, would present a misleading picture. Finland, for example, has no regional bodies elected by direct vote. The Swedish County Councils meet the criteria of being directly elected and are, in this respect, qualified as ‘regions’. However, at the same time there is a debate in Sweden on whether ‘regions’ ought to be established. And there are other regional units, apparently with relevance for EU matters, which do not meet the definition and thus would be invisible in a study of this kind. The territorial bases for such units do not even have to be similar. The entire discussion could easily be very messy and confusing. It is therefore important to remind the reader of the notion of a region, in the context of Regional Action, as discussed in Chapter 4:

Different types of units, with various mandates and principals, that also have a clear presence at a subnational level, and undertake and/or are assigned tasks that obviously are or have been made common. This includes contributing to development, economic growth and providing added-value to a subnational, functional territory that is normally above the local level.

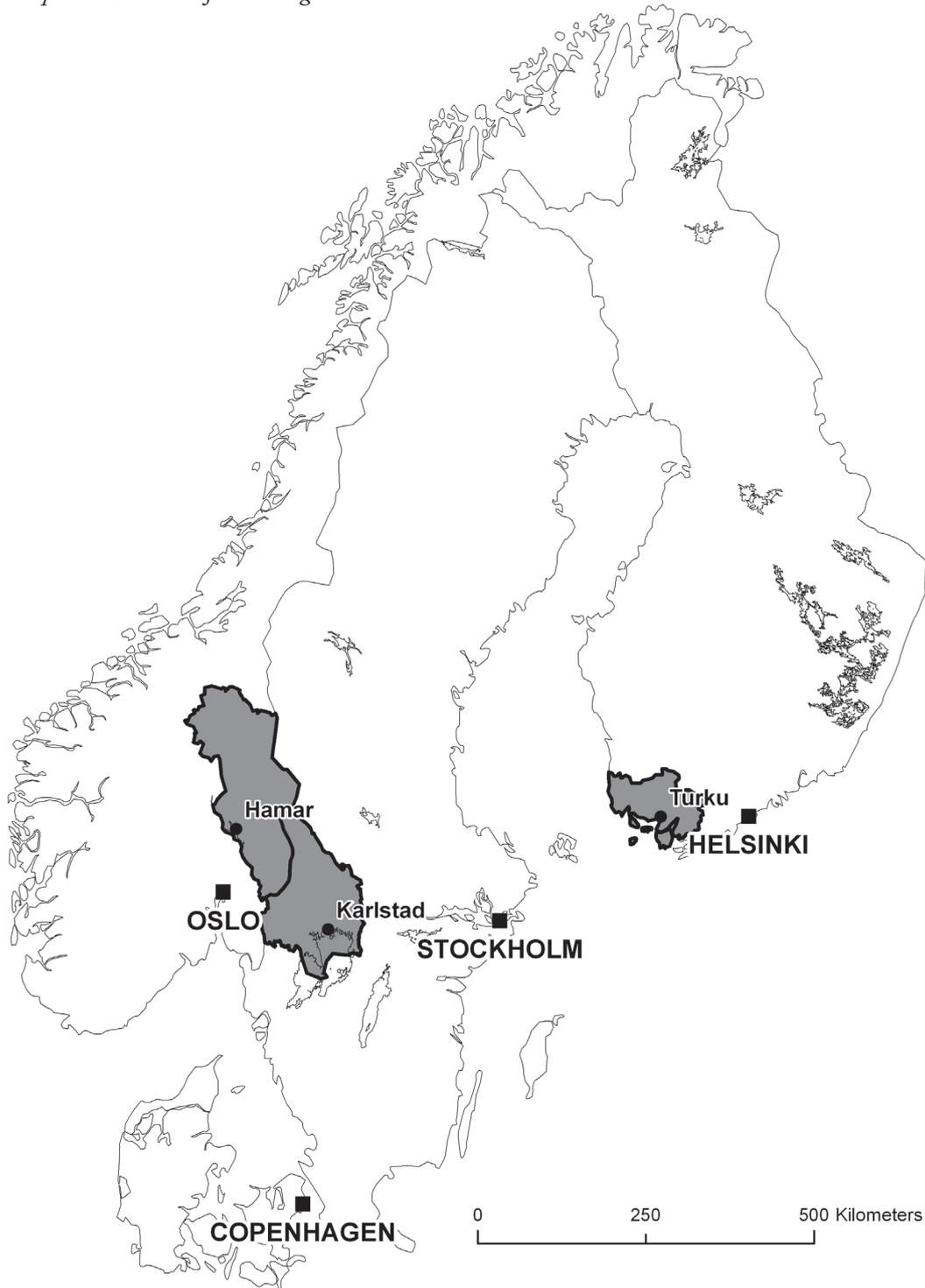
A consequence of this way of defining regions is that it also becomes more relevant to talk about, and identify the actors that are policy-makers, that is to say not just politicians. The actors are often directly elected politicians; however, there are also more or less independent civil servants as well as proactive representatives of industry and business. Within this policy area we can call this regional building, that is to say especially growth and development, where the idea about governance becomes especially relevant, and where co-operation is key and there is little hierarchical steering.

Hence, it should not be forgotten that regions is a dynamic concept and cannot (and should not) be explicitly limited. Nevertheless, since our understanding of Regional Action is a consequence of, and directed and transmitted towards, developments at the European level, it is also important to be sensitive when conceptualising administrative regions and applying these notions to the three regions under scrutiny in this Report. Moreover, the ongoing processes of regionalisation in Europe emanate, in part, from the challenges and pressures from the EU policy-cycle. And at least in unitary states with no, or weak, regional traditions, EU membership, more or less, results in debates on how to create the most efficient administrative regional structures.<sup>13</sup> The regional characteristics and structures of our three regions will now be examined in detail, and it is to these aspects that this chapter will now turn.

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<sup>13</sup> These debates have been very strong in the Nordic countries. It is not only the challenges from the EU that bring about this discussion. It is possibly more accurate to argue that the discussions emanate from the challenges to the welfare state or the ‘threats’ from globalisation. However, we will argue that what is perceived as ‘EU challenges’ are most important in order to understand these debates.

Map 6.1: Location of Three Regions



### Nordic regions and our cases

From a European perspective – what are the common features of regions in Norway, Sweden and Finland? Given that we here focus on administrative regions and given the somewhat broad definition of regions discussed in Chapter 4 and in previous section, then the following can be asserted:

- The most appropriate way to describe the vertical administrative system in our three Nordic countries is that they all have regional one-tier systems. However, it is also important to recognise that there are, in the practice of regional governance, functionally organised sub-regions as well

as intra-regions that are established beside the more constitutionally recognised 'main' region.

- Regions in all three countries are governed by both governmental regional administrations (top-down) and directly or indirectly elected councils with regional representatives (bottom-up)
- The regional systems are more symmetric than asymmetric. None of the countries has perfect symmetry; however, Norway is close. Finland has two main exceptions in terms of symmetry (the aforementioned Åland and an experiment with self-government in the Kainuu region). Sweden has, at the moment, slightly more of an asymmetric track-record with two experimental regions just made permanent, fourteen regional development councils that have organised their development tasks in special bodies for fixed co-operation between municipalities, and still five organised 'the ordinary' way.
- A multitude of tasks is carried out on the regional level in all three countries. The development and growth issues are among these.
- Political traditions have usually prescribed a preference for being decentralised and unitary within the nation-states, including demands for rather strong local autonomy, and a consensual political style governing regional decision-making.
- In relative terms, the experiences of regional mobilisation and extent of past Regional Action are rather low.
- If European regions are divided into two halves with respect to their populations, the Nordic regions are definitely in the half with the smaller regions.

There are certainly also differences between the Nordic regional administrative systems. Directly elected regional councils exist, for instance, only in Norway and Sweden, the corresponding councils in Finland are indirectly elected. The right to levy taxes exists in Sweden and Norway, though very limited in the latter. There is no such right in Finland. Bodies with a mandate from below have instead to rely on subsidies from municipalities. At the same time, such upward subsidies *de facto* exist for regional bodies in Sweden and Norway as well.

Normally, the regional level in all three countries is also financed 'downwards' from the central government and state level. Regarding the aforementioned common consensual political style, a rather frequent suggested difference worthy of mention is the further emphases placed on the participatory input-side by and within the democratic apparatus in Norway; this contrasts with the Finnish and, to some extent, even the Swedish stress on having an essentially 'output democratic' mentality; the latter putting greater emphasis on result and 'deliverance' (Veggeland 2003:13, Aalbu *et al.* 2008:13)

Altogether the regional organisation is a rather messy tier in all three countries. Partly this is due to unfinished reform processes. Political discussions on organisation and tasks for the regional bodies have lasted for years, not to say decades in all three countries. Common is that the discussion is about if, how and why the bottom-up regional level ought to be strengthened. The arguments in favour of such strengthening are mainly about democracy ('closer is better'), efficiency ('economies of scale'), and economic growth (Aalbu *et al.* 2008:39-56). So are the arguments against as well, telling, for instance, that an alternatively strengthening of the municipal level could lead to stronger democracy, that efficiency at an extended regional apparatus will tap from raising administrative costs and that a regional administration anyhow cannot create economic growth by itself (Aalbu *et al.* 2008:39-56). However, common aims for the proposed and ongoing reforms are to '... make a clearer division between political priorities and administrative implementation, to separate more clearly service provisions from legal control [and] to strengthen the regional level at the expense of the central state administration' (Aalbu *et al.* 2008:25). None of the countries has reached a final

outcome but there are steps taken, though with differences.

Norway seems to have expressed the biggest ambitions but has reformed the least. Reforms for to strengthen the regional level, for example the elected regional councils, were announced in 1975 and 2006. But the outcome seems meagre so far (Selstad 2003, Sandberg 2008). In the meantime, the chiefdom of hospital care has even moved from the regions to the state, and County Governors have used opportunities to re-strengthen their capabilities at the expense of the Regional Councils.

Swedish plans aiming at upgrading the regional level have been repeatedly introduced since 1965. Experiments with more self-governing regions with extended tasks have been carried out since 1990s. As noted above, two of these experiments have just been declared as permanent 'full' Regions (*Regionkommuner*), and it has been opened for more regions to enter the same track. In quite a few of these the municipalities have previously organised their development activities in Regional Federations, so called Regional Development Councils (*regionförbund*) and thereby also got the governments permission to drain the state's county administration of its financial resources and responsibilities regarding regional development.

Finland, on the other hand, seems to have experienced a much more diffuse and/or vague debate (Aalbu *et al.* 2008, Sandberg 2008), and yet, at the same time, during the last decade, made considerable reforms on sub-regional as well as regional levels. Amongst other things, the state's regional representation has been re-organised and is now entering a phase of new reforms, the regional level is being strengthened at the expense of the state level, and municipalities are in processes of voluntary merging, though with pressure from central government.

Nordic regions are, as this brief survey already indicates, similar and different. While similarity might historically have been predominant, differences are becoming more obvious in recent years. This differentiation is most visible in terms of the political steering and financing of the tasks, and less so as regards within the actual tasks themselves (Sandberg 2009:207). The tasks – health and medical care, regional planning, economic growth and development, parts of cultural and educational matters – are to be executed in new and changing environments.

## Norwegian Regions and Hedmark<sup>14</sup>

As noticed above, and taken all together, 'our' regional European Union actors are above all engaged in regional issues regarding development and economic growth, and, to a lesser extent, in issues dealing with the ordinary day-to-day administration. The latter could anyhow include engagement in organisational reforms, in providing welfare services, capacity building, commercial and industrial life, and, for instance, communications. With respect to this and still with the formal organisation within administrative regions in focus, the aim of the following sections is to introduce the 2008 organisational charts and some facts for respective region.

Hedmark County (*Hedmark fylke*) is located in the midlands of south-east Norway. The area is 27,000 km<sup>2</sup> and the number of inhabitants 190,000 (slowly rising). The number of municipalities are just over 20. The average size of the municipalities is thereby close to 9,000 inhabitants. The City of Hamar, co-organiser of the Olympic Winter Games in 1994, has 28,000 inhabitants and is the regional centre.

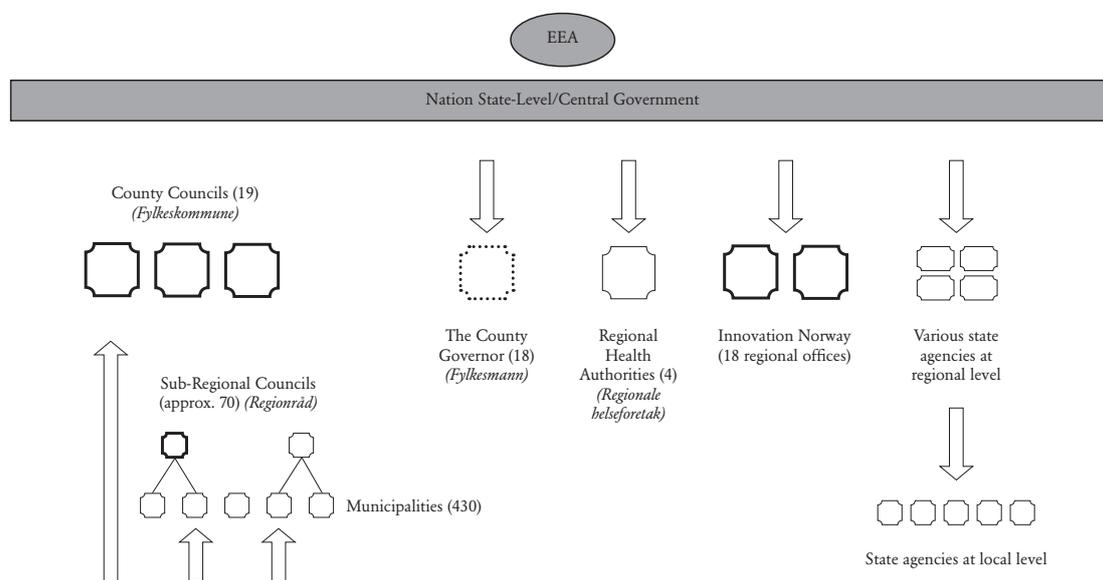
Close to 50 per cent of Hedmark's area is forest land. Business and industry in Hedmark is consequently dominated by wood processing industry, such as furniture and wooden house construction. Two thirds of the employees work in the growing service sector, where close to half can be found in private companies.

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<sup>14</sup> Facts and figures refer mainly to the situations in 2008. Various sources have been used. Neubauer *et al.* (2007) and Aalbu *et al.* (2008) have been of special value, as has websites of various regional and national authorities in Norway.

Hedmark University College has about 4,200 students. The number of faculties are four, as are the campuses. Important study programmes are, for example, Education, Biotechnology, Health and Social Sciences. The university college co-operates intensely with two equivalents in the neighbouring County of Oppland with the aim to merge in a common, full university, recognised by the Norwegian Government.

The county's international activities and collaborations are foremost directed towards Sweden. Hedmark is a border region with Värmland County as a neighbour. In an official investigation into public international co-operation from 2005, a list of 22 'milestones' were introduced. Of these the oldest one a joint project with municipalities in Värmland, established in 1967. In total, 9 of the 22 milestones are strongly connected to Värmland (Alfstad 2005). The international office at Hedmark County Council is the biggest among Norwegian county councils (eight persons). This is reported to be a consequence of the EEA and the access to Interreg programmes (see next paragraph). Surveys and interviews from Eastern Norway Research Institute (Østlandsforskningen, n.d.) indicates a growing interest in international co-operation in the county at large, but a small amount of 'know-how'. The exception is a few bigger companies, already established on the international market. Hedmark County Council is a member of AER<sup>15</sup> as well as AEBR.<sup>16</sup> It has access to the activities in Brussels via The Oslo Region European Office.



**Notes:** Units highlighted by bold lines indicate region building such as regional development and economic growth as central tasks. Units highlighted by dotted lines indicate such issues as important tasks but with lesser centrality. Non-highlighted units indicate service provision and/or legal control as central tasks. In brackets: National names or abbreviations and numbers. Figures from January 1, 2008.

figure 6.1 Norwegian regional organisation with a focus on region building tasks (2008)

The fundamental units at the Norwegian regional level are shown in figure 6.1. Basically and formally, there are three administrative levels; the state, the counties and the municipalities. Attention should be paid to the fact that Norway is not a member of the European Union, but associated due to its affiliation to the EEA agreement from 1992. This provides Norway with access to EU's common market however it also entails demands on Norway to respect, and follow, EU competition policy etc. It is through the European Economic Area (EEA, EØS) Agreement that Norway gains access to the EU Objective on European Territorial Co-operation. Through this arrangement, Norwegian border regions – like Hedmark – have access to the Interreg programmes, in Hedmark's case through the Interreg programme between Sweden and Norway, in which Värmland County is also a member.

15 Assembly of European Regions  
16 Association of European Border Regions

Arrows in Figure 6.1 indicate where from the immediate mandate is given to the different units. The arrows pointing from the bottom in the left part of Figure 6.1 thus indicates the location of the bottom-up units, directly elected by the citizens. Norwegian municipalities are generally small. The average number of population is 11,000 (and median under 5,000). In development and growth issues most municipalities co-operate with municipalities bordering the 'home' municipality in formalised sub-regional units, here labelled Sub-Regional Councils (*Regionråd*). There are approximately 70 of these whereof four in Hedmark County. Their main activity is to establish co-operation in development and economic growth issues. An important task is also to give advices to the County Council.

The County Councils (*Fylkeskommune*), are directly elected, and officially have three main tasks (cf. Hansen *et al.* 2007, chp. 7). The first is to function as the democratic regional unit, the second to produce welfare services, and the third to deal with regional planning and development. The last one is obviously not the least important and is growing. The council has a limited taxation right.

The County Governor (*Fylkesmannen*) and his/hers county administration is a representative of the state. As the co-ordinator for all governmental activities and agencies at the county-level the position is fairly strong. The basic mission is a more reactive one, namely to ensure that law and national rules are upheld in decisions by subnational units. On the other hand, the Governor is given tasks related to pre-emptive issues in the field of environment policy, as well as development issues related to the agricultural sector. This indicates tasks with strong relations to EU policies.

Specifically for Hedmark, as one of two counties, a common co-council has been established between the County Council and the County Governor (*Enhetsfylke* not illustrated in Figure 6.1). With special permission from the government this co-council was from the outset meant as a more or less advanced and a time limited experiment with extended bottom-up rule of the county. However, the two regional parties choose to organise the experiment as a co-ordinating unit with veto for each part. This means that co-operation builds on consensus and also that the co-council can continue its efforts despite the now transcended time limit.

Hospital care was until 2002 an important task for the County Councils, however it has since then been nationalised and is today organised into four national companies. The broader and mobilising work on public health although remains at the county level.

Innovation Norway is important here as it represents financing opportunities for regional development. The company has governmental owners, and aims at supporting innovations in order to strengthen the competitiveness of Norwegian business and industry, globally and locally. One specific task is to support restructuring at regional levels and to organise its regional work in formal and informal networks, with business, industry and public regional bodies. One of the 18 regional offices is located to Hedmark County.

In addition to the mentioned regional units, there are, of course, some various and specialised state agencies working at regional as well as local levels with service provision and control issues, as for instance social security offices and police departments.

## Swedish Regions and Värmland<sup>17</sup>

Värmland County (*Värmlands län*) is located in the midlands of southern, western Sweden, halfway between the Norwegian capital of Oslo and the Swedish capital of Stockholm. The area is 17,500 km<sup>2</sup>. The number of inhabitants is 275,000 (slowly declining). There are 16 municipalities with an average size of 17,000 inhabitants. The City of Karlstad, located on the shores of Lake Vänern, is the regional centre. The city has some 84,000 inhabitants.

<sup>17</sup> Facts and figures refer mainly to the situations in 2008. Various sources have been used. Neubauer *et al.* (2007) and Aalbu *et al.* (2008) have been of special value, as has websites of various regional and national authorities in Sweden. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions ([www.skl.se](http://www.skl.se)) should be explicitly mentioned.

Commercial and industrial life in Värmland has historically a strong belonging in steel and engineering (rich access to waterpower), and pulp and paper (80 per cent of the area is forest land). Both branches are dominated by big companies with worldwide markets. Of later and growing importance are ICT, trade and commerce and for instance tourism. Some 20 per cent of all employees work in manufacturing production, and close to 75 per cent in services whereof about 40 percentage points in private enterprises.

There are two university institutions in the county. Of smaller size is the Department of Leadership and Management at The National Defence College. More important is the University of Karlstad with its some 10,000 students and five faculties. Research and training are carried out in fields such as natural sciences, engineering and technology, health care, teacher training, humanities and social and economic sciences.

The international activities of ‘the official Värmland’ are growing. The three big actors (the County Council, the Regional Federation and the County Administration; see more below) partly work with their respective programmes and activities. However, there are as well an intensive interaction and co-operation between them resulting in a sort of ‘Värmlandish’ field of international – foremost EU-connected – relations. The county can thus be said to participate in numbers of interregional and transnational networks, programmes and projects, on issues regarding for instance ICT, clusters, climate, the North Sea and the Baltic, and not to be forgotten the neighbouring Hedmark County in Norway. In the same fashion the county can be said to participate in for instance the AER,<sup>18</sup> AEBR<sup>19</sup> and CoR.<sup>20</sup> The County Administration has formalised co-operation with partner regions in Hungary, Romania and Poland. In addition the Värmland Chamber of Commerce has its own international activities, as have the big companies with their world-wide markets. The municipalities in Värmland and the County Council have together with other equivalents in south west Sweden access to the West Sweden office in Brussels.

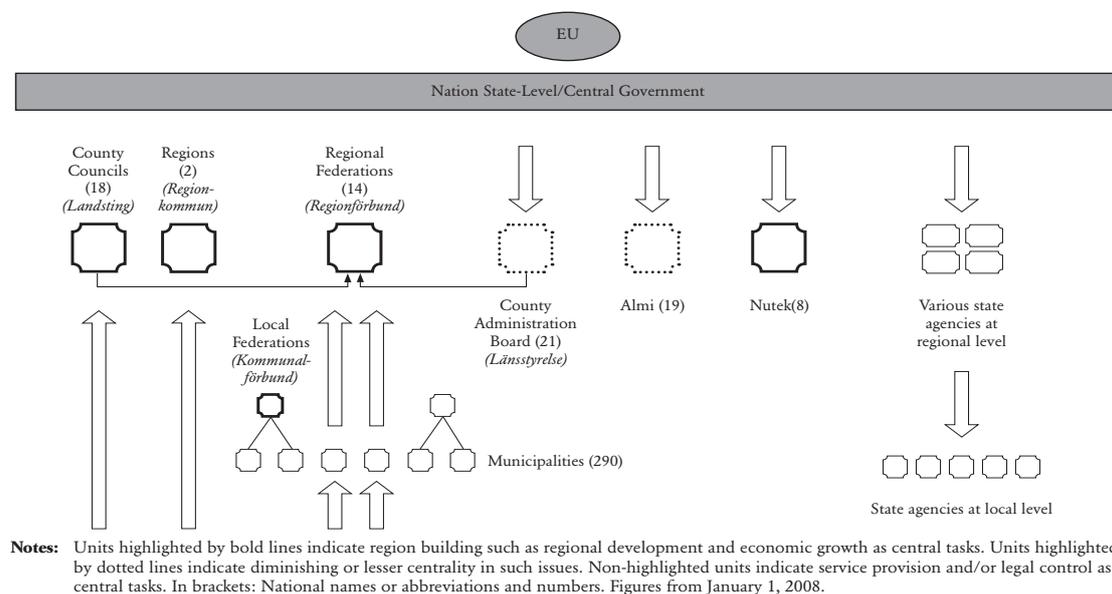


figure 6.2 Swedish regional organisation with a focus on region building tasks (2008)

Taking region-building issues into special account, the Swedish regional organisation (2008) is mapped in Figure 6.2. Disregarding the disputable factual status of the European Union level, Sweden has three administrative levels, the national, the regional and the local. White arrows in figure indicate immediate mandate from below (citizens or intermediate units) or from top.

18 Assembly of European Regions  
 19 Association of European Border Regions  
 20 Committee of Regions

Compared to Norway and Finland, the Swedish municipalities are relatively big in size with an average population of 32,000 (median 15,500). Formalised inter-municipal co-operation in Local Federations (*Kommunalförbund*) is nevertheless extensive on various issues. Among these are, for instance, emergency services as well as growth and development related issues, such as, profiling supply of education.

At the moment, the regional level in Sweden is in a phase of flux and transformation. The County Councils (*Landsting*) have, since the 19th century, been the single regional unit with a mandate from below (that is to say that they were and are directly elected). The County Councils has the right to levy taxes. Besides their highly significant tasks, namely health care, the County Councils also deal with/have also dealt with regional planning and development issues which make them a part of the divided regional leadership.

Another major player/actor at the regional level can be found in the leadership of the County Administration Board (*Länsstyrelsen*) with a history dating from the 17th century. Led usually by a strong County Governor, this unit is the central governments representative in the counties. As such, it has explicitly been given missions partly of legal control character, partly also of development and growth character. The County Administration is responsible for, for instance, land use planning and regional development, for development funding, and it has a central role in the allocation of EU funding at regional levels.

A third and new player/actor on the regional stage is the voluntary Regional Federations, sometimes labelled Regional Development Councils (*Regionförbund*). If every single municipality in a county, and the County Council agrees upon it, a federation for development and growth issues can be established. Its board is elected by the municipal assemblies and the County Council. The Federation also gets its funding mainly from these, and from the central Government, thereby draining the County Administration Board of its funding for development issues. The thin black arrows in Figure 6.2 illustrates this draining of funding and moreover of development and growth issues from the County Administration, and also the transformation of tasks in the same area from the County Council.

It should be noted that in 2008 Värmland County was in the middle of a transformation process in which the Regional Development Council (Region Värmland) successively was establishing itself as the possible leading regional actor in development and growth issues. This includes the successive control also of the central government's funding for regional development as well as EU-funding. To highlight and in order of preventing misinterpretation the situation it must also be emphasised, as indicated in the text on 'the official Värmland' (above), that the three units interact and co-operate in extensive partnerships and working groups on development issues. This co-operation also includes other public and private actors, such as, the Chamber of Commerce, trade unions, the university and, for instance, cluster organisations.

The two Regions (*Regionkommuner*) mentioned in Figure 6.2 seem to illustrate the path to the future. These Regions exists in Skåne and in Västra Götaland only. One way to understand these units is to describe them as a full merger of County Councils and Regional Federations, with rights to levy taxes and which are directly elected by the inhabitants in the regions.

Almi and Nutek represented in Figure 6.2 is the regional presence of expertise and governmental funding. Almi is a national state owned company with 21 regionally based subsidiaries in which regional actors as county councils and municipal co-operative bodies are co-owners. Its task is to promote growth and innovation of SME's. Nutek,<sup>21</sup> the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth was in 2008 a governmental department with missions to promote business and industry, regional development and the central administration of the Structural funds. Its activities were

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<sup>21</sup> From April 2009 replaced by Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket).

organised in eight regional offices.

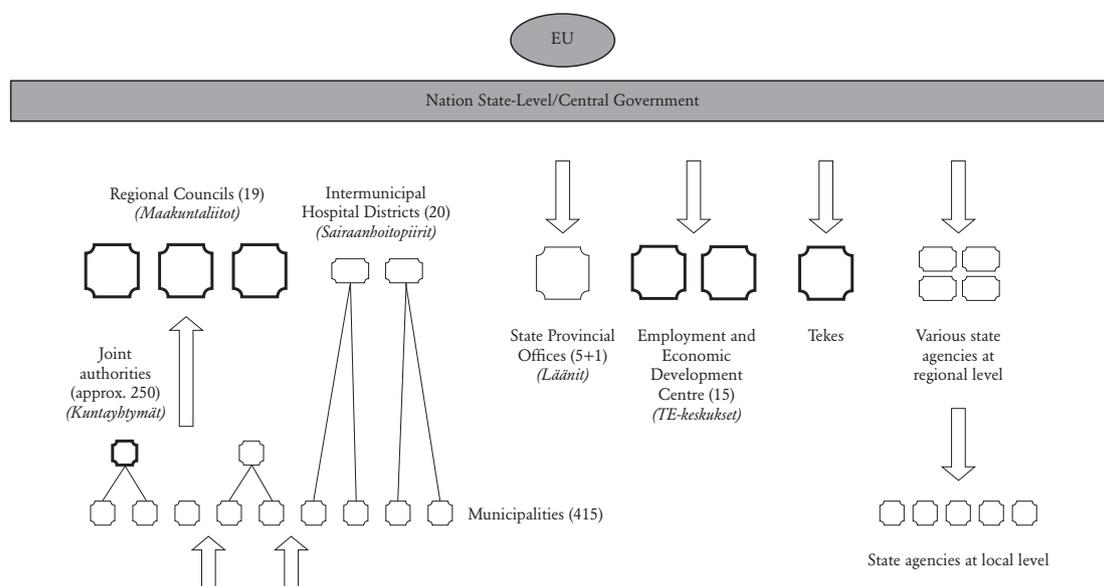
As is the usual case, there are also other various state agencies at regional as well as local levels, dealing with service provisions and legal control.

## Finnish Regions and Southwest Finland<sup>22</sup>

Southwest Finland (*Varsinais-Suomen Maakunta; Landskapet Egentliga Finland*) is the biggest of our three regions. It is to a high degree a coastal land region by the Baltic Sea. The archipelago is wide. The area is 10,600 km<sup>2</sup>, the number of inhabitants 460,000 (rising) and the number of municipalities was in 2008 just over 50. The average size of the municipalities is close to 8,600. The City of Turku is, with its 175,000 inhabitants, the regional centre.

Services, private and public, dominates the labour market (more than 60 per cent of all employees) followed by a slowly declining branch of industry (20 per cent). In terms of the latter, electrical-engineering, chemistry, shipbuilding, food-processing and for instance automotive industry are of importance. Tourism is expansive.

There are three universities in the region with a total of some 27,000 students. All three are situated in Turku. The University of Turku is the biggest with its 18,000 student and six faculties, ranging from humanities over social sciences to natural sciences or for instance medicine. Åbo Akademi University has some 7,000 students, including students at two minor campuses in the Ostrobothnian region. This is the only Swedish-speaking university in Finland (Swedish is a minority language). Also this university has a broad range of faculties, as for instance theology, humanities, social sciences and bioscience. The more specialised Turku School of Economics has in turn 2,300 students. There are also colleges for higher vocational studies, with more than 8,000 students. Besides these, Turku Science Park brings together academics and business experts in its focal areas of biotechnology and ICT.



**Notes:** Units highlighted by bold lines indicate region building such as regional development and economic growth as central tasks. Non-highlighted units indicate service provision and/or legal control as central tasks. In brackets: National names or abbreviations and numbers. Figures from January 1, 2008.

figure 6.3 Finnish regional organisation with a focus on region building tasks (2008)

<sup>22</sup> Facts and figures refer mainly to the situations in 2008. Various sources have been used. Neubauer *et al.* (2007) and Aalbu *et al.* (2008) have been of special value, as has websites of various regional and national authorities in Finland. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities ([www.kunnat.net](http://www.kunnat.net)) should be explicitly mentioned.

With its central and coastal location in the Baltic Sea area and its three harbours, the region has a firm tradition of international contacts. Historically it has long lasting and cultural links to Sweden and long lasting co-operative relations around the Baltic Sea. Co-operation agreements exist with regions in, for instance, Russia, Estonia, Northern Germany, France and Sweden. The Regional Council of Southwest Finland participates in CPMR,<sup>23</sup> BSSSC,<sup>24</sup> CoR,<sup>25</sup> Centre Baltikum and Eurohouse (in Estonia). The City of Turku, the three aforementioned universities and The Regional Council of Southwest Finland have all parts in a common lobbying office in Brussels.

With the focus on regional development issues and the regional organisation, the Finnish case from 2008 is mapped in Figure 6.3. As in the descriptions of our other regions the arrows indicate mandates given from bottom-up and top-down respectively.

Formally and in contrast to Norway and Sweden, the Finnish political organisation is used to be labelled as a two level-system with no regional level at all. However, as discussed above and in relation to our specific definition of regions (repeated in the introduction to this chapter), we can certainly identify a regional level in Finland as well. What differs from the other two is in principle just the fact that there is no regional assembly elected by direct vote in Finland.

The huge numbers of Finnish municipalities are being continuously reduced via mergers. Their average size was in 2008 some 12,500 inhabitants (with a median size below 5,000). Common is as well their extensive, formalised co-operation in local federations of different types. The Joint Authorities (*Kuntayhtymät; samkommuner*) numbers about 250. Some of them deal explicitly with growth and development issues, and which are not seldom linked to EU-business, in so called sub-regions. In Southwest Finland, there are five of these, as for example The Turku Region Development Centre.

Other local federations deal with, for instance, education or cultural issues. Some federations are mandatory. The Intermunicipal Hospital Districts (*Sairaanhoitopiirit; Sjukvårdsdistrikt*) is one, dealing with hospital and specialised medical care.

Of more importance in this specific context is The Regional Councils (*Maakuntaliitot; Landskapsförbund*). These were established in 1993 when the top-down organised responsibility for regional development to some degree was transferred from the states' Provincial Offices and re-organised in a partly bottom-up fashion. The Regional Councils are elected by indirect vote by the municipal assemblies. Regional development, land use plans and financing projects are important tasks, as are lobbying.

The Councils are also responsible for administering the EU programmes within their respective territories. Large partnerships are of importance in this matter. According to national law, the Regional Councils are obliged to organise a special co-operative assembly with the task to co-ordinate the use of the EU Structural funds with regional plans and actions for regional development. These partnerships (*Maakunnan yhteistyoryhmä, MYR; Landskapets samarbetsgrupp*, not in Figure 6.3) has broad representations with members from the municipalities, the Regional Councils, regional state units, labour market organisations, universities, commercial and industrial life and other associations such as the church, environmental organisations etc. In Southwest Finland the partnership has 41 members.

Turning to the national state-levels presence in the Finnish regions the State Provincial Offices (*Läänit; Län*) has its prominent role in the area of legal control, as well as in providing leadership for some of the 'various', regional and local state agencies (to the right in Figure. 6.3). The work is led by a board and a governor. The numbers are five plus one, where the 'plus one' alludes to the autonomous region of Åland.

<sup>23</sup> Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions

<sup>24</sup> Baltic Sea States Sub-Regional Co-operation

<sup>25</sup> Committee of Regions

The Employment and Economic Development Centres (*TE-keskukset, Arbets- och näringscentraler*), are regionalised central state units for development and service tasks. The 15 centres, whereof one in Southwest Finland, are co-ordinating policies from three ministries; Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The Centres take active part in the above mentioned partnerships. Their mission is, among others, to support business development, the creation of innovative environments, regional workforce policies and also supply the regional councils with statistical data and prognostication.

Tekes, The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation represents here foremost the presence of national funding in the regions. The agency has personnel located at the Employment and Economic Development Centres, takes part in the regional networking activities regarding innovation matters, and gives support to commercial enterprises and for instance universities.

## Main Actors in our Cases (Findings)

As described in Chapter 5, the data collection in this study began by asking obviously prominent persons in respective region for other prominent regional actors in EU-related activities. We continued asking for 'other' prominent actors until these key persons started to be repeated to us and no new names were mentioned. Thus we ended up with a list of the main EU-related actors in respective region. By this technique, we secured a list of 20 persons from Hedmark, 47 from Värmland and 44 from Southwest Finland. Who are they?

In introducing our findings in this respect we will make use of the so called Triple Helix model of innovation. This model, strongly associated with Henry Etzkowitz, suggests co-operation between three parts in order to create commercial and industrial development; the government, the industry and the university (see for example Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000).

In our adaptation of the model, three adjustments were made, all suggestible as meaningful for a discussion of regional leadership in EU-related interactions. First, we renamed the three parts to the broader 'public', 'private' and 'academia'. The 'private' then included representatives of companies as well as their organised interests, as in for instance Chambers of Commerce or cluster organisations. By 'academia', we incorporated not only higher education institutions but also research and advanced development units, such as science parks. Second, we added civic associations as a part in itself, including, for instance, trade unions and other social movements. And third, in order to get a hold on bottom-up and top-down driving forces, we also divided the 'public' into two parts; one with actors who derived their mandate from 'below', for example, from other actors in the region itself (directly from the citizens for instance), the other with those how secured their immediate mandate from 'above', that is to say from the state level.

So what did we find? Where do the most prominent regional EU-related actors belong in our three regions? Table 6.1 provide these results.

*Table 6.1 Characteristics of regional EU actors*

	Hedmark	Värmland	Southwest Finland
<b>Public</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>
with mandate from the region	7	28	16
with mandate from the state	4	6	17
<b>Private</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Academia</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Civic Association</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>44</b>

As one could expect, the actors from the public sector strongly dominates the group of prominent actors in all three regions. In total, we could also see that the ‘bottom-up actors’ are the most common. Interesting to note is though the relatively heavy presence by actors ‘mandated from above’ in Southwest Finland. Data from our other sources confirm that the vertical co-operation is strongest in that region. It is, for instance, only in Southwest Finland that we find MPs on the list of prominent regional EU-actors. (See also on Finnish partnerships above).

It is also worth mentioning from Table 6.1 that private interests are rather well engaged in all three regions, and that academia participates with some sort of prominence. Representatives for civic associations were found only in Värmland.

The total numbers of indicated actors are fewest in Hedmark. As a suggestion, this is a result of the fact that Norway is not a member of the union and is not due to the fact that Hedmark is the smallest of our regions. The difference in size is lesser between Hedmark and Värmland, than between Värmland and Southwest Finland. ‘EU’ is in a way a sort of ‘untouchable’ issue in Norway. From interviews in Hedmark, we accordingly learned that showing interest in the EU is not always well-seen and visible.

## Summary (Chapter 6)

The aim of this chapter was to ‘map’ the organisational structures in the three countries with focus on issues regarding development and growth regional, and to introduce some facts about our case regions. The point of departure was the administrative regions, but with an eye kept also on their functional contexts. As a summary the following is worth highlighting:

- Functionally, all three countries have a regional one-tier system; however there are in all three cases, in practice, also functionally organised sub-regions as well as intra-regions.
- The regional systems are more symmetrical than asymmetrical – yet messy as a consequence of intensive interaction between regional units, and as a consequence of ongoing transformations.
- Re-organisation and transformation of tasks at the regional level is most in progress and further in Sweden and Finland.
- Our case regions are relatively small, relatively inexperienced in terms of regional mobilisation and action.
- All three regions are, on the other hand, engaged in international co-operative activities and all three has memberships in European regional organisations; that is to say that they are engaged in paradiplomacy and multi-level governance.
- Strong top-down organised state units as well as strong bottom-up organised units is present at the regional level in each region.
- Most identified actors (prominent persons) dealing with EU-related issues have their mandates from below, indicating a functionally engaged bottom-up movement as regards these issues – though not necessarily in conflict with the top-down interests. Co-operation, as in, for instance, partnerships, might on the contrary indicate common goals.

Overall, this chapter reveals that there are – at least so far – more of commonalities than differences between the three regions. Yet as will be shown in following chapters, there are also many variations.

# 7. Results: Regional Action in Three Nordic Regions

## Introduction

In this chapter, the results and empirical findings from the detailed investigations and studies of our three regions (as outlined in Chapter 6) are presented. The presentation of the results is structured in accordance with the three dimensions of Regional Action presented in earlier chapters; namely in terms of download, horizontal and upload dimensions. Furthermore, with reference to the presentation of the results pertaining to each of the three dimensions, particular emphasis is given to our three variables: attention, adaptation and attitudes (see also Chapter 4). However, in order to make the presentation of the results more accessible to the reader, it has been decided to not present the empirical findings on attitudes in separate sections, but within and alongside the investigations on attention and adaptation. The chapter also examines each of the three regions separately, before concluding with comparative remarks. The first region under scrutiny is Hedmark, then Värmland and, finally, Southwest Finland respectively.

## Hedmark

### Download Dimension

There are a sizeable number of single policy issues that respondents from Hedmark refer to as important for the region. Moreover, with many of the respective issues being viewed as requiring some response from the actors and policy-makers in this region in order to promote a more coherent regional view and transmit these preferences to the EU. The policy-issues that are of interest for Hedmark are identified in the EEA-agreement (IP19). In the interviews, different issues were highlighted by various policy-makers, such as: gene manipulation and quality of food (GMO:s, IP1), climate issues (IP2), territorial cohesion (IP19), the service directive (IP1), the water framework directive (IP1, IP3 & IP19), the flooding directive, research & development (IP3), the prohibition of the use of mobile slaughterhouses (which would threaten the reindeer breeding in the north of Hedmark, IP1), policies related to border issues (Hedmark has a 350 kilometre-long EU-border, IP3), EU rules on competition (IP4), bio-technology (IP5), tourism (IP5), TEN-T and transport networks (IP19), as well as a rather special issue for Norway, namely that of *escheat (hjemfallsrettigheter)* which is a common law doctrine in Norway with the purpose to ensure that property is not left ownerless. This has been an important issue for Eidsiva, an energy company involved in hydroelectric power production.

According to the respondents, these issues tend to 'pop up' on the agenda from time to time, with only limited evidence of systematic awareness (or Attentive Action – see Chapter 3 and 4) on the part of the regional policy-makers. Indeed, the regional policymakers in Hedmark primarily attend to them when and as they appear, with the focus of the respective regional policymakers being on trying 'to stop EU from interfering' in regional business (IP5).

The other type of attention and awareness is related to financing different projects via EU funding, and especially the Interreg-programmes (IP6, IP3 & IP19). To deal with EU-demands and in order to aid the development of EU projects, Hedmark County Council opened an international office in 2005 with specific designated task of co-ordinating international co-operation and enhancing international activities involving the region ([www.hedmark.org](http://www.hedmark.org)). The International Office of Hedmark County Council is one of the biggest in Norway, even larger than the Oslo international office (IP19). Hedmark is relatively strong in terms of international activities (at least in the Norwegian context), and has gained a special award from Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) for its international work (IP19). The relatively

big international office in Hedmark County Council is partly explained by the fact that Hedmark is involved in Interreg-projects (IP19). Hedmark County Council is a secretariat for the Norwegian parts (*delområdesekretariat*) belonging to the area called 'Inner Scandinavia' (Inre Skandinavien). One of the tasks of the international office in Hedmark County Council is to assist in the creation and development of EU funded projects, for instance, Interreg projects. Even though Hedmark County Council is a member of the Oslo Region European Office in Brussels, it is only mentioned by our respondents as an important actor in terms of keeping Hedmark County Council (IP1) and the County Governor of Hedmark (IP3) updated on 'what's going on in Brussels'. Although for some this is an important task in itself, the office is not, however, regarded as an important actor initiating and developing projects, since it is not involved in the Interreg programme. However, the Oslo Region European Office could play a greater part in 'fund-raising', and Hedmark's regional policy-makers could show greater awareness of, and place greater Attentive Action upon, the existence and role of other sectoral programmes as potential funders of projects that are already being implemented in the region (IP19). The overall picture is that there is an awareness among regional policy-makers in Hedmark on the EU download dimension and attention is focused upon it. There is therefore, evidence to suggest some, if rather constrained, forms of Attentive Action (see Chapter 3 and 4) on the part of Hedmark's regional actors.

However, there is somewhat limited attention placed upon, and there seems to be relatively low awareness among regional policymakers in Hedmark of what those in the Brussel office are doing. As two informants claimed, 'They know that it exists, however not what they do' (IP2 & IP4). The Brussels office seems somewhat 'under-utilised' at least as regards for download activities. Thus, the extent of the Europeanisation of Hedmark's policy-makers is very limited and thus forms of Attentive Action are constrained (see Chapter 4).

There have been institutional changes in Hedmark in relation to EU-activities. According to the results of our survey, 65 per cent of the respondents identified institutional changes within their offices (see table 7.1). There is then clear evidence of Institutional Orientated Action on the part of Hedmark's regional actors and bodies (see Chapter 4).

*Table 7.1 Institutional Adaptation (Hedmark)*

*Question 15: Has there been any institutional change in your work place, due to EU-related questions, the last years (e.g. change in tasks, establishment of new departments etc.)?*

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Yes	11	64.7
2	No	4	23.5
3	Don't know	2	11.8
	Total:	17	100.0
No. Of missing replies: 0			

Table 7.2 Motives for Institutional Change (Hedmark)

Question 16: Which were the main motives for these institutional changes?

	Response options	Number of Responses	Distribution %
1	The organisation wanted to adapt to EU demands	6	35.3
2	Strengthening regional voice in EU	3	17.6
3	Part of concentration on regional growth	8	47.1
4	Part of concentration on regional profiling	4	23.5
5	If else, specify	1	5.9

- Strengthening international co-operation

Attitudes towards EU download activities can be seen as reluctantly positive (Table 7.3). In many respects, this can be equated with very limited evidence of the beginnings of the Europeanisation of Hedmark's policy-makers and thus, of limited institutional fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4). Indeed, a positive side of this, or at least a more positive tone in terms of the answers of the respondents, can also be detected when the future expectations of the respondents are considered (Table 7.4). Regional policy-makers in Hedmark tend, for the most part, to see the EU as having an increasingly positive effect on the region. Hence, from an attitudinal perspective, this may also be taken as evidence of (if rather limited) performance fusion characteristics being displayed by regional actors since Hedmark's policy-makers increasingly have a positive estimation regarding the impact of the EU (see Chapter 3 and 4).

Table 7.3 Attitudes toward EU Download (Hedmark)

Question 19i: "EUs' policies create more harm than good for the region".

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Totally disagree	8	50.0
2	Partly disagree	4	25.0
3	Partly agree	1	6.3
4	Totally agree	1	6.3
5	Don't know	2	12.5
	Total:	16	100.0
No. of missing replies: 1			

## Horizontal Dimension

There is rather poor evidence in the case of Hedmark to suggest that regional actors engage in horizontal activities in order to establish the regional interest in relation to an EU-related framework (IP4, IP5 & IP2). There have been some attempts though to co-ordinate the presentation and positioning of the regional preferences of Hedmark. From the data, at least four proto-institutional attempts at introducing and/or enhancing horizontal activities can be identified. First, in 2005, Hedmark County Council arranged regional meetings among regional actors in order to establish a regional view on its preferences towards, and relation with, the EU. For the most part, these meetings focused on discussing which potential projects could be developed with the aid of EU-funding (IP2). However, contacts between regional actors on EU related questions are rather limited and few today (IP2). Second, the international office of Hedmark County Council was established in 2005, and is perceived by most respondents as having a potential role as a centre for horizontal activities. Nevertheless, the data also suggests that, at least so far, there have been comparatively limited concrete results - according to at least two informants (IP4 & IP1). Furthermore, the

international office is organised as a separate entity from the office responsible for trade, industry and development, which, according to certain respondents, creates co-ordination problems. Hence, often, the international office is perceived as acting in isolation (IP4). A third potential institution for facilitating horizontal activities that, at least one of our informants claims, is the Regional Partnership that was established in order to develop the foundation for the Hedmark Regional Development Plan. Within this partnership, different actors enjoyed the possibility to have a say; although, the data also suggests that, up to now, next to nothing really happens (IP4). Finally, a fourth institutional innovation is the co-council established between the County Governor and the County Council (*Enhetsfylket*). However, in the interviews the co-council was never mentioned, which indicates its negligible importance in region building.

*Table 7.4 Attitudes toward Future EU Download (Hedmark)*

*Question 19j: "The region's benefits of the EU will increase in the future".*

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Totally disagree	0	0.0
2	Partly disagree	1	6.7
3	Partly agree	5	33.3
4	Totally agree	7	46.7
5	Don't know	2	13.3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>
No. of missing replies: 2			

In the questionnaire, it was asked to what extent regional policy-makers are aware of what other regional actors do as regards EU-related questions. From the responses, it is obvious that regional policy-makers know what the County Council does, since they are responsible for conducting the political international affairs of the region (Table 7.5); in other words, the Council is responsible for paradiplomacy (see Chapter 2). However, the region's leading higher education institution, Hedmark University College, scores relatively high in our survey in this respect also. In contrast, and at the other end of the scale, there is evidence of relatively poor awareness among regional policy-makers in Hedmark as regards what other regions and regional actors are doing in the EU context, and this also applies, for the most part, in terms of the attention placed by regional actors on being aware of what trade and industry also do as regards EU-related question. In simple terms, there seems to be very little evidence of horizontal regional mobilisation or horizontal Regional Action, and where it exists it is piecemeal, fragmented and asymmetrical.

Table 7.5 Horizontal Awareness (Hedmark)

Question 10: To what extent do you know what other actors do, concerning the region's relationship to EU:	
<b>Regional policymakers know what the following actors do:</b>	<b>Hedmark</b>
> 50% answer know fairly well or know very well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ County Council (Fylkeskommune)</li> <li>▶ University College</li> </ul>
< 25% answer know fairly well or know very well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regional trade/industry</li> <li>▶ Regions in other Countries</li> </ul>

**Notes:** Eligible actors in the survey in Norway are: Local authorities, County Governor (Fylkesmann), Countuncil (Fylkeskommune), state-agencies at regional level, regional trade & industry, interest groups, University College, othgions in Norway, regions in other countries and international associations of regions.

Overall, regional horizontal activities (and horizontal Regional Action) in relation to an EU-related framework are relatively low in Hedmark. One reason for this, as some of the respondents argue, is that the EU-related issues are viewed as national questions rather than regional ones (IP2 & IP6) and thus do not require Regional Action.

Nevertheless, even if Norway is not a full member of the EU – which excludes Norway from several of the bigger EU programmes and funds offered within the EU – Hedmark has, nonetheless, access to EU funding through key EU programmes, such as, the EU-programme Interreg Sweden-Norway which is a part of the new EU objective: ‘Territorial cohesion’. Within this programme, Hedmark has developed its trans-regional activities across the border with Sweden’s Dalarna and Värmland. The Interreg programme, which has been accepted by the Norwegian government, has become one of the most important means to carry through the Hedmark Regional Development Plan (IP1). Within the Interreg-programme, Hedmark and Värmland have developed joint strategies and plans (IP1). Värmland has become an important partner for Hedmark as regards issues related to EU frameworks since, as discussed later, Värmland is perceived as having, and actually has, more developed tranmission channels into the EU. Hedmark County Council and Region Värmland have come to a mutual agreement, and there exist contacts, discussions and co-operation among regional policy-makers in both counties. The effectiveness of this co-operation is, however, difficult to evaluate (IP1) and its sustainability is hard to judge (see Chapter 4).

Co-operation between Hedmark and Värmland is also expressed in terms of the work that is done within the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and Assembly of European Border regions (AEBR) (IP1). The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) organises joint meetings for Swedish representatives in the AER in order to develop common positions pertaining to issues that are on the AER agenda. Hedmark County Council is a member of the AER, and has, for instance, invited the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) to host a similar initiative; however, the KS has so far been reluctant to pursue such meetings (IP1). Instead, Hedmark has secured access to the respective Swedish meetings, which offers the possibility for their regional actors to develop joint positions with those from the Swedish regions (IP1). A remark made by one of the interviewees should be quoted. Talking about the links between Hedmark and Värmland the interviewee said: ‘When Karlstad became a university it was the most important thing happening for Hedmark in ten years’ (IP1). At least in this respect, there is some evidence then of horizontal Regional Attentive Action (see Chapter 3 and 4). There may also be some evidence of

Institutional Fusion here since Hedmark's policy-makers are using institutional frameworks where competencies are blurred.

Turning to the attitudes of regional policy-makers in Hedmark, horizontal co-operation, should, according to some of our respondents, be strengthened in order to promote the county's regional interests in the EU. This attitude is clearly shown among Hedmark's policy-makers when answering question 19f (Regions need more co-ordination among actors). A vast majority also believe that this will happen in the future (Question 19g: Regional co-operation among different actors will increase). There is strong evidence then, that in the case of Hedmark, regional actors show a strong desire to engage in better horizontal Regional Action in the future. On both questions, the answers from respondents pertaining to Hedmark are almost identical to those of respondents from the other two regions.

### Upload Dimension

According to the results of this investigation, Hedmark has, in relative terms, very poor direct contacts with the EU (IP1, IP3 & IP4). Hedmark County Council, for example, has no constitutional right to have direct contacts with the EU (IP1), which explains why Hedmark has to concentrate on developing indirect contacts. Yet even here, they remain at a rather poor level. Nevertheless, this is not to say that there are not any contacts at all. Even though Hedmark may experience some sort of constitutional constraints, there have been some direct contacts, especially between the International Office in Hedmark County Council and DG Regio on matters concerning Interreg matters (IP19). And, as a matter of fact, regional policy-makers, at least according to our respondents, often prefer to go more directly than indirectly (IP19). Rather surprisingly, our respondents suggest that many regional actors in Hedmark are not aware of, and make comparatively little use of, the Oslo Region European Office (IP2, IP4 & IP1). Again this, and as illustrated in previous sections, may reflect the limitations in levels of Attentive Action being displayed by regional actors in Hedmark when it comes to downloading and horizontal dimensions. It also suggests that, for most part, regional actors in Hedmark are primarily undertaking project-based funding actions (see Chapter 4) in terms of uploading activity where they exist.

In our questionnaire, it was asked as to what extent did regional policy-makers co-operate with other actors, both horizontally and upwards, in EU-related activities. Co-operation in Hedmark on EU-related issues are primarily horizontal. There seems to be some evidence then of Horizontal Attentive Action. Indeed, the three central players, as suggested by our data, are Hedmark County Council, the County Governor and Hedmark University College (Table 7.6). On the other hand, our data also shows rather little co-operation among several actors in the three political levels that we identify in our study (region-state-EU): Political parties, comitology in the EU, other regional state agencies, national association of regions, state agencies at national level and regional trade & industry. On this basis, forms of vertical Attentive Action seem rather limited.

Table 7.6 Horizontal and Upload Awareness (Hedmark)

Question 11: To what extent do you co-operate concerning EU-related activities with:	
Regional policymakers co-operate with the following actors:	<b>Hedmark</b>
>50% answer to a large extent or a very large extent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ County Council (Fylkeskommune)</li> <li>▶ County Governor (Fylkesmann)</li> <li>▶ University College</li> </ul>
<25% answer to a large extent or a very large extent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Political parties</li> <li>▶ Comitology in EU</li> <li>▶ Other regional State agencies</li> <li>▶ National ass. of regions</li> <li>▶ State agencies at national level</li> <li>▶ Regional trade/industry</li> </ul>

**Notes:** Eligible actors in the survey in Norway are: Local authorities, County Governor (Fylkesmann), County Council (Fylkeskommune), state-agencies at regional level, regional trade & industry, interest groups, University College, other regions in Norway, regions in other countries, international associations of regions, national associations of regions, state authorities at national level, political parties and the comitology in the EU.

Hedmark County Council is the strongest regional actor in Hedmark and has the greatest number of organised contacts (IP3 & IP19). Among the indirect contacts, three channels of particular importance can be identified. First, *Regional offices in Brussels* are used as agents for Hedmark. The Oslo Region European Office is an important organisation for Hedmark County Council (IP3 & IP1), however not frequently used for upload activities. So far, the Oslo Region European Office describes itself mostly as important for, what can be labelled as, competence dissemination (IP19); the Office represents a kind of educational office that is in charge of study-visits for regional actors to go to Brussels. On this basis, it can be argued that there is some evidence of, if somewhat limited, vertical Regional Action in this regard, and in fusion terminology, of specific forms of Institutional Orientated Action (see Chapter 4).

However, there is a potential in the office for more upload-activities (IP19). For now, the Office lacks a political mandate to act and also lack contacts with regional citizens (IP19). Thus, its ability to undertake *political action* (see Chapter 4) is somewhat limited. To be able to upload the regional interest, the Office perhaps needs a greater political mandate, and above all, the regional actors must act unanimously; for instance, regional actors need to find ways to create a mutual understanding. Today sometimes regions and municipalities compete rather than co-operate (IP19). In addition, since Norway remains outside the EU, the Oslo Region European Office does not have the same lobbying functions that other regional offices, based in member states, have developed (IP19). An alternative office for regional actors to go through in order to conduct vertical Regional Action (see Chapter 3 and 4) is the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (Kommunenenes Sentralforbund, KS), which has also established a Brussels office. However, according to our respondents, the regional KS-office in Hedmark is perceived as too weak (IP1). For the municipalities though, the KS national office in Oslo is regarded as useful and important (IP2). Non-governmental actors, as representatives for trade and industry and the unions (LO) are more willing to use their own regional offices to the EU, and they are not aware of, and do not make use of, the Oslo Region European Office (IP2, IP4 & IP1). There is therefore rather limited, and highly selective and piecemeal vertical Regional Action taking place.

Another channel for Hedmark County Council is via *multiregional bodies*, such as the AER,

which are much stronger politically and have more power than the Oslo Region European Office (IP1 & IP19). The Norwegian government allows Hedmark County Council to be an international actor in the AER; although the government is not keen to allocate more resources for these activities (IP1). Other multi-regional bodies of interest for Hedmark are the AEBR and Euromontana (IP19).

A third channel to upload Hedmark's regional interest is via *Värmland* (IP1, IP2 & IP3). There are resources available in the Interreg programme that are helpful, and provide regional actors in Hedmark with opportunities: as one respondent noted: 'We understand that Värmland has an influence ... Värmland has invited us to co-operate on border issues' (IP1). There is then some existing evidence, and even greater potential, for regional actors to explore more intensive, trans-border horizontal Regional Action that will then further enhance possibilities for more effective and sustainable vertical Regional Action (see Chapter 4).

Table 7.7 Attempts to Exert Direct Influence on EU (Hedmark)

Question 12: Have you ever tried to exert direct influence on an EU decision?

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Yes	3	17.6
2	No	12	70.6
3	Don't know	2	11.8
	Total:	17	100.0
No. of missing replies: 0			

According to the concept of Regional Action (see Chapter 4), regional actors can choose two ways 'to Brussels'; first, more immediate contacts (direct or indirect), thereby 'bypassing the state' or second, via the state. The state-level authorities remain important channels for influence in an EU-related framework. According to our respondents, the most common way for the County Governor (*fylkesmannen*) in Hedmark to upload regional preferences and interests is through the national level: 'We usually follow the normal procedures, by the book, (*tjenstevegen*) and lift the issue to the national level' (IP3). According to our results, the most important ministry is regarded to be the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (*Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet*) that is in charge of municipal and regional issues. One reason for that seems to be that this ministry is relatively small and, consequently, recognises the need for sustaining close contacts with, and networks in, the regions (IP19).

Hence, it seems that, in order to be effective in upload activities, and thereby undertake sustainable Regional Action (see Chapter 4), it is strategically important for regional actors to use a multiple set of channels, and regional policy-makers need to be aware of them (IP19). However, there remains an awareness deficit, according to one of our informants, on the potential of the European Parliament, even for Norway. The European Parliament (EP) is, according to this view, more open to convincing arguments put forward by Norwegian regional actors, than possibly even the Norwegian Storting, especially since the EP has special co-ordinators focused on dealing with the EFTA countries (IP19). It is perceived that sometimes, and according to some of our data, it may even be easier for regional actors in countries associated with EU, via the EEA-agreement, than traditional state actors (IP19) to influence the EU institutions.

On the question of whether or not the region has been successful in trying to influence an EU-decision (Question 13), very few policy-makers seemed to know. Only four out of seventeen respondents said they know, with the rest saying 'No' or 'Don't know'. Successful cases mentioned by the respondents do not seem to form a specific pattern, yet they include, for example, 'energy', 'roads' and 'subsidiarity'.

In accordance with the positive attitudes towards increased horizontal co-operation regarding the regional EU-interest, Hedmark's policy-makers also express very positive attitudes towards the importance of uploading. There is then a general estimation that vertical Regional Action is a good thing to do in the future, and on this basis, signs from respondents of views akin to, if somewhat limited, performance fusion. The attitudes expressed by respondents also showed a preference for supporting the possibility of the region by-passing the state level. 81 per cent agree on question 19m, that it is important that the region carry on its priorities in the EU. The specific questions on by-passing activities also get high 'agree' scores in terms of our data. On question 19n (Sometimes the region by-passes the state and aims directly at the EU in order to enhance its interest) 62 per cent agree, while 75 per cent agree that this will increase in the future (Question 19o). Perhaps most interesting is that 54 per cent agree that the region by-passing the state is a positive development (Question 19p). This response in terms of attitudes suggest then that in Hedmark, regional policy-makers often express views compatible with political fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4). It can also be noted that in all three regions policy makers express attitudes in this direction.

In summary as regards our finding for Hedmark, it should be highlighted that the extent and substance of Regional Action is, to some degree, influenced by Norway's position as a non-EU member-state and also by the fact that Norway is also duly a member of the European Economic Area (EEA, EØS) agreement.<sup>28</sup> This fact creates special conditions for the case of Hedmark. Policy-makers in Norway do not have full access to the EU institutions in the same way as full member states. Nevertheless, the Hedmark data shows that the EU does play a role in the region, although on a rather small scale. There are broadly two types of Attentive Action (see Chapter 3 and 4) at least as regards awareness on EU download. One type is related to *ad hoc* policy issues that 'suddenly' appear on the agendas of regional actors, and thereby are perceived by them to require some kind of reaction (IP5, IP6 & IP3). The other type of attentive action stems from awareness among regional actors that is related to EU-funded projects (IP6 & IP3). Hedmark's access to funding through the structural funds is limited, but Hedmark is entitled to apply for Interreg funded projects, especially cross-border projects with bordering regions in Sweden. Ultimately, this helps shape, and to some extent constrain, the level and scope of Regional Action being undertaken by regional actors in Hedmark.

## Värmland

### Download Dimension

The Värmland data show a relatively strong awareness among regional actors towards EU download activities, at least when it comes to issues concerning financing and project funding. We may then be able to talk about evidence of the Europeanisation of regional actors and of them displaying characteristics equivalent to somewhat selective Attention Action (see Chapter 3 and 4). Clearly, the attention of regional policy-makers in the region is highly focused on 'how to get more money out of the EU' (IP7, IP8 & IP9). In this respect, the data from the respondents show that EU cohesion policy and the structural funds are deemed to be the most important EU-related frameworks (IP10 & IP20), and the attentive action of regional actors here is targeted mostly, indeed almost exclusively, towards specific programmes and policy remits of the EU that have overwhelming salience for the region. This could be construed as evidence of attitudes also akin to selective commitments to performance fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4). In more general terms, the awareness and attention of regional policy-makers towards EU policy-making (or policy-shaping) seems to be considerably poorer and, on this basis, the overall picture, is asymmetrical and rather weak. Indeed, one respondent went further arguing that it was 'non-existent' (IP7); and claimed that the majority of the regional policy-makers in Värmland are 'EU-blind' (IP11).

Nevertheless, several of the respondents claimed that there is a growing awareness among regional policy-makers in this region of the need to show greater interest in specific policy issues that affect regional policy-making (IP10, IP9 & IP12). This could be taken as evidence of an

attitudinal commitment to greater attentive action and Regional Action. Clearly, the EU related policy issues that were particularly specified by respondents as the most important for the region were 'performance-related' issues connected to the directive on patients' right and mobility in cross-border health-care (IP12), the working time directive (IP12), the water framework directive (IP13), infrastructure (IP8, IP10 & IP20), environmental issues (IP10) and research & education (IP8). Swedish regional actors thus continue to display a strong performance-related mentality in terms of defining where they should engage with the EU (performance fusion – see Chapter 3 and 4). All of the informants also agreed that Regional Action and 'attention' in Värmland were mostly related to, and driven by individual performance rather than that of organisations. Questions of leadership of thus very important in the Värmland case.

There is evidence that the strong awareness (i. e. Attentive Action – see Chapters 3 and 4) of regional actors in Värmland – as regards issues of EU downloading – have led to adaptations of regional institutions in order to better respond to EU business and downloading. According to the survey data, 60 per cent of respondents claimed that institutional adaptation in the region had taken place as a result of EU membership (Table 7.8). Of the 60 per cent, 30 percentage points of respondents explained this using download motives as a rationale for adapting to EU demands. There is then clear evidence of Institutional Fusion and more specifically, of the Europeanisation of regional policy-makers (Attentive Action) and of institutional adaptation (Institutional Orientated Action – See Chapter 3 and 4) on the basis of downloading imperatives. However, on balance, it still seems that, at least in the Värmland case, EU activities are perhaps to be better understood as activities undertaken largely by certain individuals with special interests, knowledge and contacts, rather than being spearheaded by institutional activities (IP11, IP10, IP8, IP7 & IP9).

The Värmland County Council, and all of the 16 municipalities in Värmland, are members of West Sweden, a regional office in Brussels representing 3 regions and 68 municipalities in the western parts of Sweden. According to the data supplied by our respondents, West Sweden seemed to be especially good at formulating projects and supporting regional actors in getting funding for them (IP9 & IP11). The West Sweden office can, of course, be regarded as a channel for both downloading and uploading; yet, at least according to our data, West Sweden has so far mostly been used by regional actors for downloading activities.

Moreover, institutional changes have also taken place within existing regional bodies as a result of downloading demands. The establishment of Region Värmland as a Regional Federation (*regionalt samverkansorgan*) can partly be explained as a consequence of EU demands (IP10). This can be interpreted, albeit to a limited extent, as evidence of regional actors undertaking Institutional Orientated Action and thus engaging in selective Institutional Fusion (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4).

Table 7.8 Institutional Adaptation (Värmland)

Question 15: Has there been any institutional change in your work place, due to EU-related questions, the last years (e.g. change in tasks, establishment of new departments etc.)?

	Response option	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Yes	26	60.5
2	No	12	27.9
3	Don't know	5	11.6
	Total:	43	100.0
No. of missing replies: 1			

The strong awareness of the institutional effects of downloading, as expressed in the interviews, is also supported by data from the questionnaire. 61 per cent of respondents say that institutional change due to EU-related activities has taken place within the last year (Question 15). Different main motives for the changes are given, with promoting regional growth as the most important (Table 7.9). The two directly EU-related motives (Adaptation to EU demands and Strengthening the regional voice in EU) together score close to 60 per cent. Here again, there therefore seems to be evidence suggesting some Europeanisation of regional actors in this region and of institutional adaptation and thus suggest some signs of Institutional Fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4).

Table 7.9 Motives for Institutional Change (Värmland)

Question 16: Which were the main motives for the changes?

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	The organisation wanted to adapt to EU demands	12	27.3
2	Strengthening regional voice in EU	13	29.5
3	Part of concentration on regional growth	23	52.3
4	Part of concentration on regional profiling	6	13.6
5	If else, specify	4	9.1

- Improve project development
- To bring the persons that work with international issues together with directorate of the county administration board
- Information and support on financial matters
- EU projects need a more advanced administration

Turning to the attitudes of Värmland policy-makers, their attitudes towards any respective EU downloading are remarkably positive. As can be seen in Table 7.10 almost all of them, 96 per cent, disagree that EU's policy creates more harm than good to the region. Even if there are majorities for the same view among policy-makers in all three regions, the results suggest that Värmland is exceptional. The positive attitude is evident also in Table 7.11, where an overwhelming majority of 84 per cent of respondents agreed that the region would benefit even more from the EU in the future. This would also suggest that, from an attitudinal perspective, there is a very strong propensity for regional actors in Värmland to display attitudes compatible with performance fusion since they seem to almost universally agree on the performance benefits of European integration.

Table 7.10 Attitudes toward EU Download (Värmland)

Question 19i - "EUs' policies create more harm than good for the region".

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Totally disagree	32	72.7
2	Partly disagree	10	22.7
3	Partly agree	0	0.0
4	Totally agree	1	2.3
5	Don't know	1	2.3
	Total:	44	100.0
No. of missing replies: 0			

Table 7.11 Attitudes toward Future EU Download (Värmland)

Question 19j - "The region's benefits of the EU will increase in the future".

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Totally disagree	0	0.0
2	Partly disagree	3	6.8
3	Partly agree	14	31.8
4	Totally agree	23	52.3
5	Don't know	4	9.1
	Total:	44	100.0
No. of missing replies: 0			

## Horizontal Dimension

All informants claim that the horizontal activities of regional actors in Värmland are, for the most part, poorly developed. Present levels of horizontal Regional Action (see Chapters 3 and 4) seem to be consequently rather limited and selective. However, they also perceive an increasing need for regional actors in Värmland to find ways to establish common positions and identify issues that could be defined as regional, and they all claim that the regional actors in Värmland are in a process of developing horizontal activities. The potential for the further enhancement of horizontal Regional Action in Värmland seems to be stronger. The challenge for regional actors is to identify and find suitable strategic EU policy areas relevant to and for Värmland. As one informant claimed: 'if we (Värmland) shall try to affect the EU, what shall we talk with the EU about? ... it is difficult to find suitable questions' (IP7). It is also allegedly hard for regional policy-makers in Värmland to act as united even towards the Swedish government (IP9), let alone the supranational EU. One argument that several informants utilised was that party politics in the region tended to split the region. If one party, to the right or the left, takes an initiative, it was claimed that the parties on the other side would duly act reluctantly (IP7 & IP9). As one respondent put it: 'Värmland never acts as Värmland' (IP12).

One informant argued that Värmland lacks a 'regional agenda'. If a stronger regional agenda could be agreed, then regional policy-makers in Värmland should be able to act with greater legitimacy (IP8). A consequence of such a missing regional agenda is that it, at least according to the data, is greater opportunities for consultant-based activities that create new projects and apply for EU-funding, yet this also includes a risk to establish a 'project chaos' (IP8). The two most active regional authorities in Värmland dealing with EU-related frameworks (Region Värmland and the Värmland County Council, according to our informants), do not co-operate to a substantial degree. Region Värmland and the Värmland County Council also do not co-operate at all according

to one informant (IP12). On the whole, it was alleged that regional policy-makers in Värmland lack forums and places where they could meet and discuss joint issues (comment made at KAU workshop). Several informants argue that Region Värmland could also be more pro-active in this sense. They have the mandate from the municipalities and the Värmland County Council, yet have so far been rather quiet in this regard (IP7 & IP11). One reason for this might be that Region Värmland is, at the time of writing, in the midst of a process that seeks to define what policy issues that Region Värmland should pursue in the future (comment made at KAU workshop).

The highest score as regards the horizontal awareness of what other actors in the region actually do in relation to the EU issues was for Region Värmland (Table 7:12), which indicates the central and pivotal position of Region Värmland in this respect. Two other actors score relatively high in our results; one is the County Administration Board, which had a more central role in regional development issues prior to the ongoing process of transferring both financial resources and personnel to Region Värmland (for further details on Värmland, see Chapter 6). Other actor(s) that score highly are the local authorities. However, the international dimension seems rather poor, with low awareness being registered among regional actors regarding the status of regions in other countries and of international associations of regions. In addition, interest groups are poorly involved in horizontal awareness on EU issues.

Table 7.12 Horizontal Awareness (Värmland)

<i>Question 10: To what extent do you know what other actors do, concerning the region's Relationship to EU:</i>			
<i>Regional policymakers know what the following actors do:</i>	<b>Hedmark</b>	<b>Värmland</b>	
>50% answer know fairly Well or know very well	▶ County Council (Fylkeskommune)	▶ Regional federation (Region Värmland)	
	▶ University College	▶ County Adm. Board (Länsstyrelsen)	
		▶ Local Authorities	
<25% answer know fairly Well or know very well	▶ Regional trade/industry	▶ Regions in other countries	
	▶ Regions in other countries	▶ International ass. Of regions	
		▶ Interest groups	

**Notes:** Eligible actors in the survey in Värmland are: Local authorities, County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelse), County Council (Landsting), the regional federation (Region Värmland), regional trade & industry, interest groups, University, other regions in Sweden, regions in other countries, and international associations of regions.

As mentioned above, even though the informants point out the lack of co-operation among regional organisations, they also emphasise that there are changes going on. A specific project, in terms of this discussion of the horizontal dimension, worthy of mentioning is the development of The Regional Development Plan (*Regionala utvecklingsplanen*). Approximately 2000 citizens from different areas in Värmland have been involved in developing this plan (IP10).

In order to strengthen the regional competitiveness and further raise the level of professional skills in specific sectors, regional actors in Värmland have developed several networks, so called clusters. Thus, it is important to highlight that, despite the generally low levels of horizontal Regional Action that seems apparent, there are instances of selective horizontal Regional Action. These cluster initiatives are notable for the influential role of business and enterprise in shaping the horizontal co-ordination that exists. Albeit to a limited extent, it is these private entities that are

comparatively at least as, and probably more, pro-active in a horizontal sense in wishing to form horizontal alliances in the region than are the respective public authorities. The cluster initiatives frequently involve horizontal co-ordination between business and higher education and in this region the clusters work in close co-operation with Karlstad University. Their dialogue often extends to EU-related questions given the importance of EU market and EU legislation on the activities of these clusters. Indeed, four clusters have grown particularly strong: Compare (ICT), The Paper Province, The Packaging Arena and Steel and Engineering (IP7 & IP8). There is then evidence of selective horizontal Regional Action among regional actors in this regard. These observations are also confirmed by the documentary study aspect of our investigations. A recent documentary survey of the clusters highlights both the degree of horizontal co-operation between business entities and higher education institutions in the region, leading to some success of the clusters in attracting EU funding; for example, regional actors in the region succeeded in attracting European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding for a joint co-operation project that support learning in cluster organisations in three Swedish regions (including Värmland – see Region Värmland, 2009).

More generally, the need to strengthen horizontal co-operation regarding EU is clearly emphasised in the questionnaire. As can be seen in Table 7.13, 91 per cent of respondents agree that regional actors should co-operate more in order to develop the region's position towards the EU. The figure is almost as high regarding if such co-operation actually will develop in the future (Table 7.14). The positive orientations of these responses may also suggest a clear commitment to greater Attentive Action and Institutional Oriented Action (see Chapter 3 and 4). As was noted in the Hedmark section the pattern discernable in the last two tables is more or less the same in all three regions.

In summary, our results would seem to suggest that attempts at horizontal Regional Action seem to be more prevalent in relation to the download dimension, and are certainly greater than those pertaining to existing horizontal activities aimed at enhancing upload activities.

*Table 7.13 Attitudes toward More Horizontal Activities on EU Issues (Värmland)*

*Question 19f: "Regional actors should co-operate more in order to develop common viewpoints concerning the region's benefits of the EU".*

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Totally disagree	1	2.3
2	Partly disagree	0	0.0
3	Partly agree	11	25.0
4	Totally agree	29	65.9
5	Don't know	3	6.8
	Total:	44	100.0
No. of missing replies: 0			

## Upload Dimension

Upload activities, in order to promote and transmit the regional interest, are poorly developed in Värmland. Contacts with the EU exist, both directly and indirectly, however they are neither systematic, institutionalised nor coherent. In general, the data suggest that regional actors in the Värmland region, at least in the EU uploading context, react rather *ad hoc* to specific EU questions and issues and usually at the last minute (IP9 & IP7). Planning by regional actors focusing on questions of uploading therefore do not seem to be very systematic and certainly not focused very much on the long term. Regional Action, in terms of types of uploading, and where it exists seems to mostly take the form of *funding action* (see Chapter 4). Hence, there are questions arising from

the data as to whether this lack of systematic planning (akin and required as forms of political action) may undermine the sustainability of the selective vertical Regional Action (see Chapter 3 and 4) that is being undertaken by regional actors in this region.

*Table 7.14 Attitudes toward More Horizontal Activities on EU Issues in the Future (Värmland)*

*Question 19g: "Regional co-operation between actors will increase when it comes to developing common viewpoints concerning the region's benefits of the EU".*

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Totally disagree	1	2.3
2	Partly disagree	0	0.0
3	Partly agree	12	27.3
4	Totally agree	26	59.1
5	Don't know	5	11.4
	Total:	44	100.0
No. of missing replies: 0			

The data also suggests that most of the contacts that the Värmland region has with the EU are connected to specific projects (IP7 & IP11). Put rather simply, vertical Regional Action in this respect seems to be somewhat selective and essentially project-based (funding action – see Chapter 4). One of these, for instance, is the Growth Corridor project, which aims to promote co-operation between Värmland and the Norwegian regions Hedmark, Akershus and Östfold in order to co-ordinate and boost regional growth. The project is partly financed by the EU's Interreg III Internal Scandinavia ([www.regionvarmland.se](http://www.regionvarmland.se)). In terms of the upload dimension, this project has had direct contacts with the EU (IP9 & IP20). The project leaders have arranged, together with West Sweden, seminars in Brussels and carry through meetings with important European policymakers within the Commission. The project, in itself, has worked as an 'alarm bell' for local and regional policy-makers to become increasingly aware of the importance of the EU for the region and subsequently, for regional actors to focus more on becoming better at uploading its interests to the EU (IP21). In terms of our fusion analysis, this data suggests that regional actors in Värmland have increasingly developed attitudes akin to those described by performance fusion and political fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4).

However, when it comes to the question as to what extent regional policy-makers co-operate with other actors, horizontally and upwards, in EU-related activities, the picture is rather similar to Hedmark. Co-operation in Värmland on EU-related issues seem primarily to be activities related to the horizontal dimension. The three central players are the regional federation, (Region Värmland), local authorities and the County Administration Board (Table 7.15). In comparison with Hedmark, and according to the interviews the university does not seem to play such a central role – although the documentary studies from 2009 suggest that this may be changing over time. Similar to Hedmark, present data suggests that there seems to be rather limited co-operation among the several most important actors featuring on all three political levels (region-state-EU): namely comitology in the EU, international associations of regions, other regions in Sweden, political parties, regions in other countries, interest groups and state agencies at national level.

Table 7.15 Horizontal and Upload Awareness (Värmland)

Question 11: To what extent do you co-operate concerning EU-related activities with:			
Regional policymakers	Hedmark		Värmland
Co-operate with the following actors:			
>50% answer to a large extent or a very large extent	▶ County Council (Fylkeskommune)	▶ County Governor (Fylkesmann)	▶ University College
			▶ Regional federation (Region Värmland)
			▶ Local Authorities
			▶ County Adm. Board (Länsstyrelsen)
<25% answer to a large extent or a very large extent	▶ Political parties	▶ Comitology in EU	▶ International ass. of regions
	▶ Comitology in EU	▶ Other regional State agencies	▶ Other regions in Sweden
	▶ Other regional State agencies	▶ National ass. of regions	▶ Political parties
	▶ National ass. of regions	▶ State agencies at national level	▶ Regions in other countries
	▶ State agencies at national level	▶ Regional trade/industry	▶ Interest groups
	▶ Regional trade/industry		▶ State agencies at national level

**Notes:** Eligible actors in the survey in Värmland are: Local authorities, County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelse), County Council (Landsting), the regional federation (Region Värmland), regional trade & industry, interest groups, University, other regions in Sweden, regions in other countries, international associations of regions, national associations of regions, state authorities at national level, political parties and the comitology in the EU.

Most of Värmland's uploading activities are connected to the specific funding and financing of different projects (IP7, IP8 & IP9) and thus project-specific. The data suggests that regional actors have so far been rather poor, and thus less successful, when it comes to transmitting general, policy-wide regional preferences and in promoting its more general regional interest upwards and into EU policy-making (such as, in terms of policy-shaping, rules and regulations) (IP7). Several of the informants, with experience in regional policy-making as well as EU policy-making, claim that this is a big problem for the region (IP7, IP9 & IP12), since the rules and directives that emanate from the EU often have direct effects on the region and the region's capacity to promote welfare needs to their citizens. Moreover, since the uploading activities are often project-driven and project-specific, this raises questions as to the sustainability of coherent vertical Regional Action over time (see Chapter 4). One example is the working time directive, which will have implications for and on the health care system, and increase pressure on an already financially constrained public sector (IP12).

Another notable example, expressed in our results, is the need for Värmland to be aware of the policy-activities related to Trans-European transport issues. As a key element in the re-launched Lisbon strategy, the EU is developing Trans-European transport policies and networks (TEN-T) to ensure efficient and sustainable transport networks in the future. Hence, since infrastructural issues are regarded as important for Värmland by our respondents, and indeed, require more systematic vertical Regional Action on the part of regional actors, it is recognised that regional policy-makers are, if rather slowly, becoming increasingly aware of the need to be a part of this process (IP9). Indeed, these observations seem to be rather important since they confirm prior observations that regional actors in Värmland are gradually displaying more and more attitudes compatible with those outlined in the Report as performance fusion and political fusion.

Table 7.16 Attempts to Exert Direct Influence on EU (Värmland)

Question 12: Have you ever tried to exert direct influence on an EU decision?

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution %
1	Yes	21	47.7
2	No	21	47.7
3	Don't know	2	4.5
	Total:	44	100.0
No. of missing replies: 0			

According to the concept of Regional Action (see Chapter 3 and 4), regional actors can choose two ways 'to Brussels'; namely, more immediate contacts (direct or indirect), aimed at 'bypassing the state' or otherwise via the state. Regional actors in Värmland are, according to our results, using different channels to engage the EU. As noted earlier, systematic and institutionalised thinking on how to promote regional preferences and the regional interest does not presently exist in Värmland. Actors choose, independently and on a rather *ad hoc* basis, the most appropriate channels for uploading their preferences to the EU and this is usually project specific (IP12). The most obvious and logical channel for Värmland to upload its interest would be the utilisation of West Sweden, the regional office in Brussels. However, West Sweden represents, as has been noted before, three regions and 68 municipalities in the western parts of Sweden. West Sweden has two offices, one in Brussels and one in Gothenburg.

For Region Värmland that plays something of a central role in the regional handling of EU issues. West Sweden appears to be the most important channel (IP10), and this applied especially when representatives from Region Värmland visit Brussels. West Sweden always plays an important part in this regard. However, our results also suggest that West Sweden could be utilised much more frequently, strategically (IP7 & IP8). Significantly, most of West Sweden's activities are related to projects and are viewed as not particularly involved in policy-making (IP10 & IP11). (The Brussels office of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) seems on the other hand more and more important according to one interviewee (IP10)). There may therefore be a need for both regional actors in the region and the West Sweden office to think more strategically and more on a longer-term strategic policy basis, alongside its project-orientated activities.

When Karlstad University acts toward EU it is done through EUA (European University Association).

For the Chamber of Commerce, the natural channel is through Eurochambers (the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry) or Kreab (The first Swedish lobby office in Brussels, that specialised in strategic communication at the intersection between public affairs, corporate and financial communication).

For the Värmland County Council, the membership in the AER (Assembly of European Regions) gives a logical channel to engage towards the EU. However, the responses of our informants present a divergent picture. The functions of the AER are divided into three policy-areas, each of them represented by an appointed Committee (Economic and Regional Development, Social Policy and Public Health and Culture, Education and Youth). To be a full member of the AER the 'region' must represent a local authority immediately below the central government, with political power in terms of representation equivalent to that of a regional Assembly (Statute of the Assembly of European Regions, chapter 2, article 2 paragraph 1a). This condition means that Värmland County Council is entitled to become a member of the AER; however, Värmland County Council only

deals with one (Social Policy and Public Health) of the three policy areas that the AER focuses upon. The other two policy areas fall under the activities of Region Värmland.

If then Värmland shall be able to utilise the full potential of the AER, our assessments suggests there is a need to establish closer and better organised co-operation between Region Värmland and the County Council of Värmland in order to enhance the co-ordination of any uploading activities as part of vertical Regional Action. This type of organised co-operation does not really exist today (IP9 & IP12). However, the AER is a well functioning lobby organisation in the EU, which makes it well regarded as an effective channel to use for uploading (IP11 & IP12). In this context it is worth mentioning the offer from the Värmland Chamber of Commerce of establishing a separate office in Brussels open to all Värmland Actors (IP7).

There are two regional policy makers in Värmland that are appointed to the Committee of Regions (CoR). Once again, and consistent with our other results, our data on this regard suggests that Värmland use their expertise, experience and contacts rather poorly (IP11).

The Värmland County Administration Board is also member of the AEBR (Assembly of European Border Regions). The AEBR is one important channel for The County Administration Board to engage towards the EU since one of its tasks is to 'inform European political bodies and the public about cross-border issues'.

A second option for the region is to promote its interest towards the EU via the state. However, regional actors in Värmland seem, at least according to our results, not to be using the state as an intermediary actor towards EU in an especially strong sense. Of course, it is important to separate policy issues that only concern the state and issues that concern the state as well as the European level. Municipalities and the Värmland County Council are sending delegations to the government on different EU issues almost by habit now; indeed, they are very used to doing this (IP10 & IP12). Yet, the delegations of regional actors are often focused and premised upon, and related to policy-issues where the government is regarded to have sovereign decision making power.

For instance, when there is a crisis in local or regional industry or growing pressures and needs for infrastructural investment in the region. Region Värmland has important contacts with, for example, the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communication (and generally organise meetings at least four times per year with them) as well as with NUTEK (the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth), especially in relation to the issues of regional development and thereby the Lisbon Agenda (IP7 & IP10). In general, state governmental actors are not viewed by regional actors to be especially effective and competent in international activities (IP8). There would therefore seem to be great potential for regional actors in this region to be more assertive from a political fusion standpoint, in developing their own regional relations with the EU in order to 'by-pass the state'.

However, our data suggest that regional actors in Värmland are not, for the most part, using representatives from elected bodies for upload activities; they are certainly not commonly utilising regional representatives (MPs) in the Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen) nor Swedish representatives in the European Parliament (MEPs). If anything, our data suggest that regional actors in Värmland perceive the elected representatives of the Swedish Riskdag as rather weak and ineffective performers. Our respondents suggest that they are rarely used, if at all, in the pursuit of regional international activities (IP9 & IP11). Swedish members of the European Parliament also have very little regular contact with Värmland. Contacts have of course existed; yet, our data suggest that the activities centre more on and about information and happen very infrequently. There seems to be a great distance, psychologically and physically, between regional actors in Värmland and the MEPs (IP7, IP8, IP9, IP12 & IP11). There seem to be many avenues for vertical Regional Action and in particular, forms of Attentive Action and Institutional Orientated Action (See Chapter 3 and 4) that can be better identified and utilised.

The Värmland figures as to whether or not the region has been successful in trying to influence an EU-decision (Question 13), are very similar to the ones for Hedmark. 26 per cent say they know of such instances (24 per cent in Hedmark) while 43 per cent say 'No' (48 per cent in Hedmark). Around 30 per cent in both regions say they don't know. Among the factors relating to the successful cases as noted by respondents, it is hard to discern a pattern. Two issue areas are mentioned more than one time. They are 'clusters' (three times) and 'infrastructure' (twice) and perhaps reflect the more selective forms of Regional Action in existence in these two particular areas of regional activity.

The earlier recorded positive attitude towards horizontal co-operation is obvious also when it comes to attitudes towards uploading. 91 per cent of Värmland policy-makers agree that it is important for the region to carry on its priorities in the EU (Question 19m). Again this can be construed as strong indicators of performance fusion attitudes among regional actors in Värmland. They also, to a considerable extent, recognise an increase in by-passing the state activities; with 76 per cent saying that an increase will come about (Question 19o), and 66 per cent thinking it is a favourable and rather good development (Question 19p). Once again, this is consistent with political fusion and compound fusion attitudes among Värmland's regional policy-makers. As noted in the Hedmark section, there is a similarity in attitudes concerning these issues among policy makers in the three regions.

## Southwest Finland

### Download Dimension

The informants in Southwest Finland convey a very strong awareness as regards the EU downloading dimension. As early as 1994, even before Finland became a full EU member in 1995, regional policy-makers in this region had developed a strategy on the priorities of Southwest Finland with reference to funding from the EU structural funds (IP14).

The biggest impact from EU funding on Southwest Finland is the common agricultural policy (CAP), since South-West Finland is an important agricultural region in Finland (IP14 & IP15). Two thirds of the agricultural subsidies come from the state the rest from EU (IP14). However, since the CAP is strongly regulated and supervised by the EU and its institutions, this means that it is rather difficult for regional policy-makers to exert influence over agricultural questions (IP14). The Finnish farmers interest organisation, MTK-Varsinais-Suomi, is perceived, according to our respondents, to have some influence, since farmers are viewed as well organised and have strong ties to the Finnish government (IP14). Hence, on CAP questions, central rather than regional actors usually have precedence.

Another policy area deemed to have a notable impact on Finland relates to those dealing with employment policies, and, in the EU context, funding from the European Social Fund (ESF). This policy area remains primarily regulated by the state, and the government agencies for ESF funding are the regional development centres (TE-Keskus). ESF-projects in Finland are implemented within the context of EU programmes and in relation to national policy (IP14). However, since Southwest Finland is a relatively wealthy and prosperous region, and given that the criteria and limits for securing ESF funding have become stricter, Southwest Finland does not receive much support from the ESF funds (IP14).

The third area where the EU has an impact in Southwest Finland relates to funding for regional growth and development within the context of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The regulation and funding derives from EU, which also affects national policies in the area. EU resources within the ERDF are declining for Finland in general, and the co-financing commitments, supported by and from the state, are increasing (IP14). In essence then it is now more challenging for this Finnish region to secure even ERDF funding. On this basis, our data indicate, that there

is, albeit to limited extent, a growing criticism within the region and among regional actors in this region towards the value of seeking EU funded projects. Certainly, among regional trade and industry groups in this region, there are growing doubts given that seeking and implementing EU funding is regarded as being highly bureaucratic (IP16), and EU-projects are viewed as having problems with continuity (IP16 & IP17).

It is also possible to identify downward impacts from broader defined economic growth policies, as the Lisbon Agenda, that aim to make the EU the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. (IP14). The Lisbon Agenda has had influence over the Regional Development Plan, and the framing of different programmes (such as Central Baltic Programme, see below) (IP14).

Southwest Finland is a region where prestigious universities with long-established academic traditions are located. For the academic sector, EU financed research is crucial. As much as 30 per cent of the research at the University of Turku is externally financed, and 50 percentage points of that amount of external funding derives from non-Finnish sources. Research based in Southwest Finland on regional development also relies heavily on EU-funding. However, even such academic projects suffer from problems with continuity since EU financing is largely project-based. EU financing is thus often linked to the time-period of specific projects and this places great emphasis on regional actors to constantly seek new sources of project-based EU finance. Although this remains a challenge for regional actors in this Finnish region, it has in this particular case led to a concerted effort on the part of Finnish regional actors to watch EU policies and programmes in Brussels planning (IP17). Hence, in the context of the analytical concepts applied in this project, there is quite clear evidence of the Europeanisation of Finnish regional actors and of them paying notable Attentive Action to downloading originating from the EU.

*Table 7.17 Institutional Adaptation (Southwest Finland)*

*Question 15: Has there been any institutional change in your work place, due to EU-related questions, the last years (e.g. change in tasks, establishment of new departments etc.)?*

Response options	Number of responses	Distribution(%)
1 Yes	21	65.6
2 No	11	34.4
3 Don't know	0	0.0
Total:	32	100.0
No. of missing replies: 2		

In terms of our results, then the level of recorded institutional change among regional bodies in Southwest Finland, as expressed in the questionnaire, is similar to those in Hedmark and Värmland. 66 per cent say that such change has taken place within the last year, due to EU-related activities. But, while the directly EU-related motives (Adaptation to EU demands and Strengthening the regional voice in the EU) for Hedmark and Värmland score a total of around 55 per cent, in Southwest Finland the score is close to 70 per cent for these two alternatives. This suggests that there is very strong evidence of Institutional Fusion as a result of downloading, and more specifically, there has been clear evidence of Institutional Oriented Action on the part of regional bodies in order to handle the demands of EU downloading in this particular Finnish region. The figure for the Regional Growth alternative as an explanation for institutional change was, thus, considerably lower in Southwest Finland than in the other two regions.

Table 7.18 Motives for Institutional Change (Southwest Finland)

Question 16: Which were the main motives for the changes?

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution(%)
1	The organisation wanted to adapt to EU demands	10	29.4
2	Strengthening regional voice in EU	13	38.2
3	Part of concentration on regional growth	15	44.1
4	Part of concentration on regional profiling	14	41.2
5	If else, specify	4	11.8

- Support the organisation's work on EU issues
- Financial agency's role in EU programme
- More effective management of EU business
- Fundraising

Regarding the benefits of EU download for the region, the results indicated that there is, in Southwest Finland, a considerable minority of 24 per cent among policy makers that are not convinced of these benefits (Table 7.19). Put simply, that whilst Finnish policy-makers clearly adopt attitudes compatible to performance fusion in having an output-related mentality towards the benefits of European integration, our results show a significant amount of scepticism about how good the EU's performance has been in delivering benefits for this Finnish region in recent years. In this regard, the two regions within EU member states differ the most, with the non-member region in between. In Värmland only 2 per cent of policy makers held this view, in Hedmark 13 per cent. A more negative attitude is recorded also when it comes to possible growing future benefits of EU for the region; only 50 per cent agreed on this in Southwest Finland as compared to 80 per cent in Hedmark and 84 per cent in Värmland (Table 7.20).

Table 7.19 Attitudes toward EU Download (Southwest Finland)

Question 19i: "EU's policies create more harm than good for the region".

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution(%)
1	Totally disagree	11	32.4
2	Partly disagree	12	35.3
3	Partly agree	6	17.6
4	Totally agree	2	5.9
5	Don't know	3	8.8
	Total:	34	100.0
No. of missing replies: 0			

## Horizontal Dimension

According to our perceptions of the interviews undertaken in Southwest Finland, it seems that the regional policy-makers in Southwest Finland show a 'united' picture on the nature of Southwest Finland's regional interest and regional preferences. In other words, regional policy-makers in Southwest Finland are aware of, and have largely reached some commonality on their regional preferences and their regional interest; hence, they often act rather pragmatically and are often 'apolitical' in this regard (IP17 & IP16). However, in a region with over 50 municipalities and

460,000 inhabitants, it is not so easy to find unanimity on regional issues (IP15). This does not mean that regional policy-makers in Southwest Finland are inactive.

*Table 7.20 Attitudes toward Future EU Download (Southwest Finland)*

*Question 19j: "The region's benefits of the EU will increase in the future".*

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution(%)
1	Totally disagree	0	0.0
2	Partly disagree	12	35.3
3	Partly agree	12	35.3
4	Totally agree	5	14.7
5	Don't know	5	14.7
	Total:	34	100.0
No. of missing replies: 0			

Rather it is the contrary since our data show a strong emphasis by regional actors in trying to find arrangements to facilitate more comprehensive policy, as opposed to project based discussions and thus make horizontal co-ordination more sustainable over time and more comprehensive in terms of policy coverage. The 1994 regional strategy on EU structural funds are clear examples of a more determined and distinct form of horizontal Regional Action, whereby concerted horizontal activities aim to create broader regional positions in EU-related frameworks. Of course, this is not always uniform. Attention in our results was, for instance, drawn to the role of an important co-ordinator, MYR (Maakunnan Yhteistyöryhmä), the regional management committee (IP14), who, nevertheless, has not been so active in terms of handling horizontal co-operation on regional issues.

The informants in Southwest Finland claim that there has not been any special re-organisation or new institutions in order to handle EU business (IP14 & IP15). However, the limited evidence of institutional change is off-set by the fact that the Europeanisation of Finnish regional actors (Attentive Action – see Chapter 3 and 4) is so deep-seated. Put simply, everybody has taken on responsibilities to incorporate and be aware of EU in their ordinary work (IP14). The collective outcome is that regional actors, and indeed the region itself, has become very aware of EU (IP17), and EU issues are becoming a part of the everyday life of regional actors and the region (IP15). In terms of our fusion terminology then, it can be argued that there has been a quite deep-seated Europeanisation of regional actors with many displaying behaviour akin to Institutional Fusion and attitudes similar to those described by performance, political and compound fusion. As a result, our data suggest that there is no longer a strong demand for study tours to Brussels since there is a more universal awareness among regional actors (IP15). As a consequence, the number of regional actors has increased and they have become more active (IP15) in EU structures.

The informants often described the Finnish political system and culture as transparent, pragmatic and rather easy to take part in (IP14) and this also contributed to the more extensive forms of horizontal co-ordination on EU questions among regional actors in Southwest Finland.

Furthermore, in the questionnaire data on Southwest Finland, there are four cited actors that regional policy-makers rate highly in terms of them showing a stronger awareness of what these actors do in relation to EU (see table 7.21): namely, The Regional Council of Southwest Finland, which has overall responsibility, The Regional Development Centre (TE-Keskus), the Universities and the local authorities. Yet, probably as a result of the extent of their horizontal co-operation within the region, and even more distinctively than our other cases, the data for Southwest Finland show poor trans-border international horizontal awareness, with comparatively lower scores for the degree of trans-border horizontal co-ordinations with regions in other countries, other regions in Finland and international associations of regions. In simple terms, it would seem that regional actors, on balance, believe that they co-operate sufficiently within the region, and this may reduce incentives for trans-

border horizontal activity with often less successfully co-ordinated regional actors and regions.

Table 7.21 Horizontal Awareness (Southwest Finland)

Question 10: To what extent do you know what other actors do, concerning the region's relationship to EU:			
Regional policymakers know what the following actors do:	Hedmark	Värmland	Southwest Finland
>50% answer know fairly well or know very well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ County Council (Fylkeskommune)</li> <li>▶ University College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regional federation (Region Värmland)</li> <li>▶ County Adm. Board (Länsstyrelsen)</li> <li>▶ Local Authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regional Council (Varsinais-Suomen liitto)</li> <li>▶ Regional Dev. Centre (TE-Keskus)</li> <li>▶ Universities</li> <li>▶ Local Authorities</li> </ul>
<25% answer know fairly well or know very well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regional trade/industry</li> <li>▶ Regions in other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regions in other countries</li> <li>▶ International ass. of regions</li> <li>▶ Interest groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regions in other countries</li> <li>▶ Other regions in Finland</li> <li>▶ International association of regions</li> </ul>

Notes: Eligible actors in the survey in Southwest Finland are: Local authorities, State Provincial Offices (Läänit), Regional Council (Varsinais-Suomen liitto), Regional Development Center (TE-Keskus), regional trade and industry, interest groups, Universities, other regions in Finland, regions in other countries and international associations of regions.

Regarding the need for extended horizontal co-operation, the expressed attitudes of Southwest Finnish policy-makers are very positive and almost identical to those of their counterparts in Hedmark and Värmland. 91 per cent of Southwest Finland expresses such attitudes, as compared to 87 per cent in Hedmark and 91 per cent in Värmland (Question 19f). The three regions share this almost identical pattern also as to whether such co-operation, regarding the development of a common regional position towards the EU, will increase in the future (compound fusion). In Southwest Finland 88 per cent express this attitude, in Hedmark 82 per cent and in Värmland 87 per cent. Thus, even if the other data may suggest some scepticism on whether the region will benefit so much in the future from EU funding and programmes, regional actors seem to be strongly committed to horizontal Regional Action, and also display strongly held views compatible with those described by fusion approaches – namely performance, political and compound fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4).

### Upload Dimension

Our investigations suggest that upload activities in Southwest Finland are frequent and often well planned. They can be divided into two types of activities, *ad hoc* activities and activities incorporating a longer-term regional *strategic* thinking. In addition, the respective Finnish regional policy-makers utilise the central national level both as a channel to transmit their regional interests on the behalf of regional actors, as well as at one and the same time, also developing their own measures at the EU level in order to allow them to try and influence the EU more directly, and thereby 'bypassing' the state. Clearly, both ways are important (IP14) and this was stated clearly by our respondents from Southwest Finland. Indeed, there is notable evidence to suggest that regional actors in Southwest Finland are involved in all three types of actions – funding, learning and political (see Chapter 4) that are essential to have sustainable Regional Action over the medium-long term.

However, in the Finnish case, the direct contacts developed by regional actors with the EU are becoming more and more important (IP14). Regional actors in Southwest Finland display, in relative terms, a very strong awareness of the upload dimension. In the context of our conceptual terms, they are clearly involved in concrete vertical Regional Action and in vertical forms of Institutional Fusion

(vertical Attentive Action and vertical Institutional Orientated Action (see Chapter 3 and 4) in terms of uploading. Regional policy-makers in Southwest Finland co-operate with all political levels in order to promote their regional preferences and interests upwards. As regarding the horizontal dimension, the most often cited core players in terms of Regional Action are: the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, the Universities, the Regional Development Centre (TE-Keskus), regional trade and industry, state agencies operating at the local level, local authorities and finally the comitology in the EU. The results of our investigations into Regional Action in Southwest Finland indicate that that regional actors interact with all political levels, and all political levels are involved (Table 7.22). However, the data concerning Southwest Finland still suggests that trans-border, international horizontal co-operation (that facilitates some types of uploading) by regional actors is still poorly developed, with low scores on Finnish regional interactions with regions in other countries and international associations of regions.

Table 7.22 Horizontal and Upload Awareness (Southwest Finland)

<i>Question 11: To what extent do you co-operate concerning EU-related activities with:</i>			
<i>Regional policymakers co-operate with the following actors:</i>	<b>Hedmark</b>	<b>Värmland</b>	<b>Southwest Finland</b>
>50% answer to a large extent or a very large extent	▶ County Council (Fylkeskommune)	▶ Regional federation (Region Värmland)	▶ Regional Council (Maakunta)
	▶ County Governor (Fylkesmann)	▶ Local Authorities	▶ Universities
	▶ University College	▶ County Adm. Board (Länsstyrelsen)	▶ Regional Dev. Centre (TE-Keskus)
			▶ Regional trade/industry
			▶ State agencies at national level
			▶ Local Authorities
			▶ Comitology in EU
<25% answer to a large extent or a very large extent	▶ Political parties	▶ Comitology in EU	▶ Regions in other countries
	▶ Comitology in EU	▶ International ass. of regions	▶ International association of regions
	▶ Other regional state agencies	▶ Other regions in Sweden	
	▶ National ass. of regions	▶ Political parties	
	▶ State agencies at national level	▶ Regions in other countries	
	▶ Regional trade/industry	▶ Interest groups	
		▶ State agencies at national level	

**Notes:** Eligible actors in the survey in Southwest Finland are: Local authorities, State Provincial Offices (Läänit), Regional Council (Varsinais-Suomen liitto), Regional Development Center (TE-Keskus), regional trade & industry, interest groups, Universities, other regions in Finland, regions in other countries, international associations of regions, national associations of regions, state authorities at national level, political parties and the comitology in the EU.

New and changed EU policies may have regional impacts that, in the context of this study, function as rationales and motives for upload activities. For instance, attention was drawn in our investigations by some respondents to the recent changes in the Common Agricultural Policy that had the effect that a sugar refinery in Southwest Finland was forced to close down, as a consequence of reduced EU subsidies. This particular issue, for example, became a notable regional policy issue with debates and resulted in regional delegations becoming very active in trying to influence EU policy, mainly, of course, in the CAP area, through the state and nation state apparatus (IP15).

In particular, the University of Turku maintains direct contacts with the Commission concerning research applications, research programmes and issues of higher education (such as, the ERASMUS student exchange programme). First, they contact the respective EU programme officer, and if it is necessary, they often will go on to raise the question further up the decision-making hierarchy inside the European Commission (IP17). The University also maintains some contact with individual MEP's in order to provide new routes for information dissemination and intelligence gathering on EU decisions and future planning that may have implications for region and university (IP17).

In 2011, the city of Turku will become a European Capital of Culture. The campaign to gain this accolade was started in 2004 after extensive consultations among regional actors. Moreover, the successful outcome in securing this designation is largely assumed by regional actors in Southwest Finland to have positive regional 'spin-off' implications for a considerably long time after 2011 (IP17). The campaign has involved several direct contacts with the European Commissioner Ján Figel, who is responsible for education, training, culture and youth matters. Hence, it seems likely that this designation and planning up to 2011 should act as a concrete rationale and platform for rather consistent and extensive uploading activity and types of vertical Regional Action.

Without doubt, the most strategically significant policy area involving the EU that prompts regional actors' interest in undertaking uploading activities, and indeed, leads them to actually do uploading and thus substantial vertical Regional Action, concerns the Baltic Sea. Issues relating to the Baltic Sea are given the highest priority, by regional actors from Southwest Finland according to our respondents. In many ways, the Baltic Sea could even be seen as a superior overarching policy framework in which other EU-related policy areas refer to in one way or another (IP17). For example, the attention of regional policy actors to, say, environmental issues, infrastructure and/or energy policy are often related to Baltic Sea considerations and seen through the prism of regional actors' general preferences towards the Baltic Sea.

Hence, it is difficult to discuss these other individual EU policies without a reference to Baltic Sea policies and priorities of our respective regional actors. Furthermore, the large number of organisations and programs relating to the Baltic Sea issue cited by regional actors in our interviews and surveys reflects in some way the pertinence of this policy area for the region (IP15): in particular, regular reference was made by Finnish respondents to, for example, The Baltic Sea Chamber Association (IP15), the Central Baltic Programme (IP14) and the Baltic Sea Motorway (IP15) as key platforms for uploading activity and thus vertical Regional Action.

Moreover, our results also suggest that regional actors in Southwest Finland place value on their representatives in EU institutions and are in regular contact with them. Finland, for example, has nine members of the Committee of Regions (CoR). Two of these come from Southwest Finland. Our informants, for the most part, perceive them as active, and especially useful to regional actors on issues concerning Baltic Sea co-operation (IP14).

Indeed, the importance attached by regional actors to the representations in Brussels is notable and represents a discernible point of variance. In particular, Turku-Southwest Finland European Office stands out here in offering a comprehensive array of services to regional actors covering both specific programme and policy issues, but also, and here there is a difference compared to our data for our Norwegian and Swedish regions, the Brussels Office is extensively involved in broader policy coverage. Hence, in addition to offering an extensive array of services to regional actors that includes arranging seminars every year for regional actors and even organising internships for regional actors in Brussels, the Turku-Southwest European Office also produces annual action plans that identify the key issues to be discussed in Brussels, a strategic set of action to be undertaken by the region to keep abreast of these and strategic planning of lobbying and outputs. In 2008, for example, the organisation of seminars by the Brussels office specifically related to the Union's evolving Baltic Sea strategy, and in which regional actors from Southwest Finland were active (IP14). Hence, a notable feature is the comprehensive nature of the services provided by the Finnish Brussels Office and that,

our data suggest that it plays a significant role in offering strategically important new information on what is going on, not the least from the Baltic Strategy Group (IP14).

Furthermore, a point can be highlighted as regards the Turku-Southwest Finland European Office. Interestingly, in terms of its staffing, a large proportion of staff is drawn directly from Turku and the Turku universities' European liaison staff, and thus there is a notable pooling of expertise across the subnational and supranational levels of uploading activity. From the perspective of fusion, it can be argued that the Turku-Southwest European Office is a concrete example of institutional fusion in practice since the expertise and competencies of staff are blurred across institutions and levels of governance. Indeed, the fact that Turku, and its University, are so central to the role of the Brussels Office may explain why regional actors from this region are so aware of it. In the Swedish and Norwegian cases, regional actors from Värmland and Hedmark are not so central to the functioning of the respective Brussels office covering their regional interests.

The Council of Southwest Finland is also a member of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). CPMR brings together around 160 regions located along Europe's shoreline and peripheral areas. One of its tasks is to ensure that EU institutions as well as national governments take account of these regional interests, and thus is another example of an uploading opportunity for regional actors from Southwest Finland. CPMR is divided into six different geographical areas, of which the Baltic Sea Commission represents one (<http://www.crpm.org/index.php>). Since the organisation involves around 160 regions, it is however, rather difficult to be coherent enough to exert effective influence in spite of being active and strategic. Nevertheless, our data suggest that respondents do perceive that the Council of Southwest Finland have had some impact on the position of CPMR (IP14) in practice.

The Regional Council of Southwest Finland and the City of Turku, which contribute with 40 per cent of the annual budget of the Council of Southwest Finland are, according to our investigations, the most important international actors in the region. The mayor of Turku Pekka Ruola, and the chairman of the Council of Southwest Finland, Ilkka Kanerva (former foreign minister in Finland), are very close friends and are obviously the logical channel for uploading regional issues. The City of Turku plays an important part in formulating EU programmes. The City of Turku is also the region's biggest employer, with 14,000 permanently employed, and has access to sizeable financial resources. Turku has also contributed one expert when the region prepared for the formulation of the Central Baltic Programme (IP14).

Public actors in Southwest Finland have established an independent policy-oriented think-tank known as Centrum Balticum, that is assumed to play an important part in identifying and articulating policy issues concerning the Baltic Sea Region. Centrum Balticum is a foundation owned by the City of Turku, Nystad, Rauma, Björneborg and the three universities in Turku and the Council of Southwest Finland (IP14, <http://www.centrumbalticum.org/en/>). It is too early to evaluate the impact of Centrum Balticum on regional upload activities, however the establishment of this think-tank, dedicated to upload activities, shows a strong awareness among regional policy-makers in Southwest Finland of international and EU dimensions. All these examples can be taken as evidence of regional actors in Southwest Finland also demonstrating substantial amounts of vertical Regional Action, and, more specifically, Attentive Action and Institutional Oriented Action in terms of Institutional Fusion.

Our data also confirm that regional actors from Southwest Finland also conducted dialogue and had several important contacts with the Commission on issues related to the Baltic Sea. Such contacts have also occurred on all administrative levels, with even direct contacts with the European Commissioner, Joe Borg, who is responsible for fisheries and maritime affairs, as well as John Richardsson, Head of Maritime Policy Task Force. Before the meetings with them our investigations suggest that the regional policy-makers were well prepared. The meetings usually take place in Brussels, but they can also take place in Finland when a Commissioner is visiting Finland, and can

last for 30 to 60 minutes.

There exists then an organised process on how to secure and maintain effective contact with senior Commission officials, such as a Commissioner. This is worth noting since it again demonstrates that regional actors in this region have moved beyond simply project based vertical Regional Action and activity, and are demonstrating strategic vertical Regional Action that covers broader policy remits. First, for example, they prepare a memorandum. After that, the TURKU-Southwest Finland European Office will handle the contacts. Then they send a letter with a proposition where they suggest a meeting. The whole process is based upon the assumption that it is essential to be well prepared, in order for regional actors to meet with a positive response from the respective Commission official. It is also common to bring an expert, often from the university, to these meetings (IP14) and here again, is demonstrated an instance of Attentive Action and Institutional Fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4) whereby the competencies of staff are being utilised across the levels of governance and in effect, deliver performance goals even if competencies remain blurred.

*Table 7.23 Attempts to Exert Direct Influence on EU (Southwest Finland)*

*Question 12: Have you ever tried to exert direct influence on an EU decision?*

	Response options	Number of responses	Distribution(%)
1	Yes	22	66.7
2	No	7	21.2
3	Don't know	4	12.1
	Total:	33	100.0
No. of missing replies: 1			

As mentioned earlier, our investigations suggest that, at least in the Finnish case, the role of the state and the central government are declining as a transmission channel for regional actors to transmit interests and preferences into the EU. There may be different reasons for this. One explanation that the respondents gave in our investigations was that, since the chairman of the Council of Southwest Finland, Ilkka Kanerva, was also a former foreign minister, the region had a direct entrance into the inner realms of central government, which thereby reduced the incentives for other regional actors to be active in relation to the government (IP14).

Another explanation given by the informants relates to the nature of Finnish political culture. Namely that a pronounced hierarchical thinking does not really exist for the most part in Finland, and in its place there is a more pragmatic and instrumental attitude that makes it possible to more accurately describe the relationship between the region – state – EU as more of a ‘mess’ (IP17). A possible third explanation might emphasise the well established institutions in existence at the regional level in Southwest Finland that means that they are sufficiently advanced, coherent and confident to handle their business direct with the supranational EU. Indeed, Members of Parliament from the Southwest Finland electorate, as well as members of the European Parliament, have regular meetings with regional representatives (IP15). These contacts contribute to mutual understanding and cordial relations between the political levels.

It is, thus, not surprising that policy-makers in Southwest Finland, at least according to our data, seem to know, to a considerably higher degree than their Nordic counterparts, about successful cases of regional influence upon EU decisions (Question 13). 39 per cent state they have such knowledge, as compared to 24 per cent in Hedmark and 26 per cent in Värmland. This helps to contribute to a position of best practice and where ‘success is seen to breed further success’ with more regional actors, on seeing others succeed in Europe, willing to give it a go themselves. Furthermore, examples provided in the questionnaire results indicate another dimension of influence that is more discernible than in

the Hedmark and Värmland cases. Three informants directly refer to influences on EU programmes; one even mentions influencing the very start of a specific programme. In addition to this focus upon EU programmes one answer alludes to being involved in 'programme administration'. Our results clearly offer evidence that regional actors from this Finnish region are engaged in forms of vertical Regional Action and Institutional Fusion, where expertise across the subnational and supranational levels of governance are being fused in order to deliver effective EU programmes.

Furthermore, policy-makers in Southwest Finland express very positive attitudes regarding the importance for the region to carry on its priorities in the EU (Question 19m). 94 per cent see this as important. There is evidence that regional actors in Southwest Finland are demonstrating attitudes comparable to those of performance fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4). A similar positive attitude is commonly recorded when it comes to the region by-passing the state (political fusion). 71 per cent agree that this is sometimes the case today (Question 19n) and 67 per cent that by-passing will increase in the future (Question 19o). It is also acknowledged by a majority of 62 per cent that such an increase would be a good thing (Question 19p) and thus are willing to continue to be involved further in the compound polity of the European Union: this again can be taken of common attitudinal dispositions compatible with compound fusion (see Chapter 3 and 4). On these four questions policy-makers in all three regions express very similar attitudes.

## Comparative Remarks: Regional Action and Fusion

In this section, the most important of the results referring to the three different regions are compared. Further these results are related to the central concepts of the Fusion approach. The presentation and comparison follow the logic from the former chapters, that is, first results related to download are compared, then the horizontally relevant results and, finally, upload-related results are compared.

### Download

Policy-makers in all three regions are aware of the EU download dimension, especially EU funding. In all three regions, there is clear evidence of the adaptation of regional institutions in order to respond better to EU business and 'downloading'; for example the creation of international offices in regional authorities (*adaptation to downloading*). Adaptation also includes, in all three regions, institutional change in the actual work place of the policy maker; two thirds of the informants in the questionnaire state such change due to EU-related activities.

There are different motives for the institutional adaptation among, and in, the regions. The strongest motive has been regional growth and development (Hedmark 47 per cent, Värmland 52 per cent, Southwest Finland 44 per cent). Other identifiable motives for institutional adaptation are the download motive 'adaptation to EU obligations' (Hedmark 35 per cent, Värmland 27 per cent, Southwest Finland 29 per cent) and the upload motive of 'strengthening the regional voice in the EU' (Hedmark 18 per cent, Värmland 30 per cent, Southwest Finland 38 per cent).

The attitudes of regional policy-makers to the 'benefits of the EU to the region' are overall positive, with Värmland as an extreme example; 96 per cent of those answering the questionnaire agree that EU's policies towards the region do more good than harm. Also in the 'non-member region' of Hedmark a solid majority of 75 per cent agree on this point. However, in Southwest Finland, there is a considerable minority of policy-makers that are less convinced of, and even reluctant, to the possible benefits of the EU for their region.

## Horizontal

In all three regions, regional policy-makers perceive that they know what regional public authorities do in EU-related frameworks. However, there is a poor awareness of, and co-operation with, regional trade/industry as well as interest groups (organisations) in EU-related frameworks (*explaining low levels of horizontal Regional Action*).

Hedmark and South West Finland recorded higher awareness levels than Värmland among policy-makers on what higher education actors do in EU-related frameworks. In Southwest Finland this awareness also extends into actual co-operation to a considerably higher degree than in the two other regions. 79 per cent of policy makers in Southwest Finland co-operate to some or to a great extent with university/university college in EU-related issues, with Hedmark scoring 59 per cent and Värmland 40 per cent on the same question.

Regional policy-makers' awareness of 'regions in other countries' and 'international associations of regions' is low in all three regions (*poor international horizontal attention/attentive action*). Comparatively, greater horizontal co-operation among regional institutions is observed in Värmland (*partnerskapsamarbeten*) in response to EU demands and obligations (*horizontal adaptation/institutional oriented action*). In Värmland and Southwest Finland, there have also been notable new entrants and actors involved in recent years (*increased horizontal adaptation*), as well as a broader range of participants in the case of Värmland.

In Southwest Finland, the number of regional actors involved in EU-related frameworks is higher than in Hedmark or Värmland. Policy-makers in all three regions agree that there will be more actors involved in regional policymaking in the future, with Värmland giving the highest score (98 per cent). In both Värmland and Southwest Finland a majority of policy makers regards this development with scepticism. But while this majority is marginal in Värmland (57 per cent) in Southwest Finland as many as 80 per cent are sceptical as regards the benefits of having more regional actors involved.

Regional policy-makers perceive that there will be greater co-operation horizontally among regional actors and institutions in the future (*increased future horizontal Regional Action/horizontal Institutional Oriented Action*). In all three regions, policy-makers perceive performance gains from Regional Action (*performance fusion*).

## Upload

Attention levels among regional policy-makers towards EU business is higher in Southwest Finland than in Hedmark and Värmland. In Southwest Finland, policy-makers are more aware of the EU and are to a comparatively higher extent predisposed to use EU for regional purposes.

Southwest Finnish policy-makers are more aware and active in promoting regional interests upwards to the EU, both to the national and EU levels. Results indicate that they pursue regional interests more directly and coherently than their colleagues in Hedmark and Värmland (*upload attention/vertical Attentive Action*). Policy-makers in Southwest Finland (71 per cent) try more frequently to influence EU policy than both the 'member-region' Värmland (48 per cent) and the 'non-member region' of Hedmark (18 per cent). They also seem to succeed to a greater extent than their Nordic counterparts, not the least in influencing EU programmes. Policy-makers in Southwest Finland are also more involved in working groups and EU comitology than are policy makers in Värmland and Hedmark.

Institutions in all three regions are involved in uploading regional interests (*uploaded Regional Action/vertical Institutional-Oriented Action*); for example, institutions in all regions have access to regional offices in Brussels. There are, not surprisingly, greater attempts to upload activities (*greater upload Regional Action*), although not especially salient, in Värmland and Southwest Finland than in Hedmark. Adaptation and activities are mainly related to regional development and growth.

Uploading regional activity is more important for prompting institutional adaptations in Southwest Finland than in Värmland and Hedmark (*upload Regional Action/vertical Institutional Oriented Action*).

Regional policy-makers in all three regions predict greater activity by regional actors and institutions in EU-related frameworks (*increased Regional Action on uploading*) in the future (compound fusion). They also, especially in Värmland and Southwest Finland, by great margins think increased co-operation among regional actors to elucidate the benefits of the EU is desirable.

Evidence suggests that increased Regional Action is rationalised by policy-makers in all regions as a means of 'by-passing' the state and national actors/institutions on regional issues (political fusion). In all three regions, it is predicted that such 'by-passing' will increase in the future, and will be advantageous to the respective region and regional actors and institutions (political fusion). It is worth noting that in the two 'member-regions', two thirds of policy-makers (Värmland 66 per cent, Southwest Finland 62 per cent) agree that by-passing the state, and going directly to the EU is a good thing. In Hedmark, the corresponding figure is 54 per cent. There are also vast majorities of respondents in all three regions that state that the region should carry its position forward in the EU to a greater extent than what is presently being done (Hedmark 63 per cent, Värmland 77 per cent, Southwest Finland 65 per cent).

## Summary (Chapter 7)

- Awareness of the EU *download* dimension, especially regarding funding, is high.
- Adaptation to *downloading* takes place both in the form of regions creating their own liaisons in Brussels and in the form of institutional change at regional work places.
- Attitudes among regional policy makers to EU downloading into the regions are overall very positive.
- Awareness among policy makers on the horizontal dimension regarding public authorities' EU-related activities is high, especially if compared to awareness of what other regional actors (trade, industry, interest organisations) do.
- Awareness on the *horizontal* dimension regarding what university/university college actors do is considerably higher in Southwest Finland than in the two other regions, especially Värmland.
- In Southwest Finland the horizontal awareness regarding universities extend to actual co-operation to a considerably higher degree than in the other two regions.
- Attitudes among policy makers in Värmland and, especially, Southwest Finland along the horizontal dimension towards the probable future scenario of more actors than currently participating in regional policy-making, is sceptical.
- Awareness of the possibility to influence EU decisions along the *upload* dimension is considerably higher in Southwest Finland than in the other two regions. In Southwest Finland this awareness is also, to large extent, turned into actual activities aimed at the EU level.
- Adaptation along the *upload* dimension is mainly related to regional development and growth.
- Attitudes regarding regional by-passing of the state in order to *upload* influence to the EU are overall positive; policy makers tend to see such by-passing as advantageous for the region.
- Altogether one can distinguish three types of Regional Action along the uploading dimension (see Chapter 4), these are 1) *funding action*, 2) *learning action*, and 3) *systemic political action*. All three of our case study regions can be seen to participate in all three uploading actions in some way, for example Värmland has a programme for Learning Action whereas Southwest Finland clearly can tick all the boxes with regards to the three types.

# 8. Gender Aspects

By Björn Pernrud<sup>29</sup>

## Introduction

Interviewer: *Does gender matter for being successful in contacts with the EU?*

Female and male interviewees of several nationalities: *No*

Male Swedish interviewee: *The establishment is dominated by men.*

Male Norwegian interviewee: *I think it is beneficial to have women in positions of contact with the EU. In Norway it is a tradition for women to work in these kinds of functions, and having that experience is something they can use in relation to the EU.*

These short excerpts represent three stories about the way gender appear significant to regional actors, in their experience of the EU administration. Most responses in this study seem, in this vein, to fall in either one of three categories. In one interpretation of the EU, gender is insignificant, while, according to another interpretation, the EU, being hostile to women, makes gender highly tangible. While the EU in this interpretation would be more accessible to male regional actors, in the third version, seemingly to the contrary, gender matters because women's interactive styles and strategies are well suited for the EU environment. Women, it could be surmised from the Norwegian interviewee above, make good regional actors, because they are accustomed to the way decision and policy making work.

Whereas these categories in an apparent sense are contradictory, the purpose of the account and analysis in the following chapter is to grant the possibility that such incompatibilities are just that: apparent as regards Regional Action. If it is assumed that the interviewees in this study are competent observers and truthful when reporting their experiences it would seem that gender matters in some ways, and is immaterial in others. It is this claim that, throughout the following chapter, will be made more substantial. The interviews will be accounted for more closely, and connections will be made to briefly present theoretical remarks and considerations.

## Contradictions

Equal opportunities for women and men are clearly on the agenda in EU policies, and although the EU administration has a history of being more open to men and men's influence than to women, gender differences slowly abate. For instance, over the last thirty years, women's representation in the European Parliament has doubled; in 1979 16 per cent of the members of parliament were women while in 2008, this number had increased to 32 per cent (European Parliament Press Service, 2008). According to press releases from the European Union (Europa 2004) similar tendencies can be discerned in, for instance, the European Commission. Clearly, gender equality is not merely a matter of numbers, and even if it were, 1/3 is not that equal. Nevertheless, changes *do* occur, and the numbers above could be indicative of a transition, fuelled by policies and efforts to mainstreaming gender, rendering gender more and more insignificant.

When asked if they believe that gender affects the extent to which regional actors are successful in their contacts with the EU government and policy-makers, most interviewees – both women and men – in this study of Regional Action, answer that they do not consider gender to be a factor. Some have even returned the question, challenging what the point is in asking it, thus implying

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that they do not think it is at all relevant to consider gender important in this sense. Indeed, efforts to transform gender relations in the EU government, and the statistics accompanying them, could give background and support to the experience, highly readable in the interviews in this study, that the gender of regional actors is insignificant in their political activities. Connected to a historical analysis, what the interviewees seem to be suggesting is that even if it once was that the EU government was a male institution, nowadays, conditions have changed and women and men have equal opportunities, and they are equally successful.

However, as has been frequently demonstrated more generally, formal conditions does not always translate into real conditions, and quantitative measures are not always suited to grasp and properly describe the intricacies of social interaction in a more full bodied sense. In a 2007 book section, to exemplify, Karin Geuijen *et al.* account for the everyday life of representatives of national interests working in EU institutions, not unlike the regional actors in this study. Here, Geuijen *et al.* suggest that policy-making work in the EU 'boils down to aligning departmental and interdepartmental policy co-ordination to the rhythms, procedures and routines of scheduled EU meetings' (Geuijen *et al.* 2007:145). Moreover, their account demonstrates that to have an impact, rather than being reducible to formal positions and conditions, comes from the ability to manoeuvre the organisation. Strictly speaking, impact is not something actors in the EU administration have, but something they *do*.

Renita Thedvall (2007) emphasises in her contribution to the same anthology as Geuijen *et al.* appear in, that the EU bureaucracy, after all, is inhabited by people made of flesh and blood, and work done in EU institutions cannot be reduced to the rules that govern it. Accordingly, the EU administration is, in a sense, constituted by the social actions of those working in it, and is as such laden with the habits, and ethnic and cultural customs of its work force. Clearly, gendered expectations and conventions are involved in shaping the day-to-day interaction. According to Thedvall (2007), to exemplify, Swedish notions of gender equality are perceived by other nationalities as a bit quaint, and a source of amusement. On the one hand, this indicates that Swedes do encounter a culture in the EU that differs from what they are accustomed to at home. On the other hand it suggests that gender works as an additional source of estrangement.

The latter has been spelled out more explicitly by others taking an interest in the gendered dimensions of the EU government. Annica Kronsell for instance, has argued that 'the EU institutions can be viewed as institutions of hegemonic masculinity...' (Kronsell 2005:1033; cf. also Woodward 1996), thus indicating that women travelling to do work in EU institutions, in addition to being in a culturally foreign context, are also gendered strangers in what still remains a masculine context.

Although the most prominent interpretation of EU decision-making among the interviewees in this study is that gender does not affect how successful regional actors are in their attempts to undertake Regional Action and have an impact on EU decision and policy making, there are those who do relate experiences that appear to be part of tendencies similar to those theorised by Thedvall (2007) and Kronsell (2005). One of the interviewees, as already indicated in the introduction to this chapter, sees the EU administration as an arena for men rather than women. He states:

The establishment is dominated by men. In the EU, a gender perspective is often lacking, and it is important to remember that in the south of Europe they see differently on gender than we do in the north.

In addition to the notion that the EU administration may be interpreted as a hegemonic masculine institution, as Kronsell (2005) would theorise it, this interviewee also makes remarks that recall Thedvall's (2007) consideration regarding geographical differences in views on gender equality. Accordingly, it seems that gender politics in the everyday interaction in EU institutions is infused with ethnicity, so that people from Northern countries are understood to view gender issues different than do people from Southern countries.

If the claim that EU institutions are dominated by men points to the notion that men are granted more authority than women, there are statements that paint an even harsher picture of gender issues. One of the female interviewees, when asked if it matters if you are a woman or a man in EU contacts, responds:

Absolutely. Women are regarded a lower class. You're patted on the head. I know of a woman in the EESC who was *literarily* spat in the face.

The interviewee describes, with a very unambiguous example, how women are met with less tolerance, and have to withstand more critical attention and less favourable evaluations of their actions than men. However, that women are more exposed and met with greater doubt than men need not, it could be suggested from the responses in this study, be exclusively an EU phenomenon, nor peculiar to studies of Regional Action. There are interviewees that agree to the notion that women and men very well may be granted different status and authority, but maintain that local or regional conditions too in this sense are quite similar. One of the female interviewees claims that 'gender matters, but not more there than it does here', and another provides a more elaborated account of gender issues at home in comparison to the EU. She states:

Already at a regional level there are mostly men making the decisions, *Region Värmland* is currently almost entirely male dominated. This to the effect that [the regional action process] already from the start is male dominated.

Here, the interviewee points to how power, also in regional settings, is in the hands of men rather than women, in simple terms, Regional Action is usually undertaken by men. This is an observation that finds support in previous research regarding gender issues in regional politics. In Christine Hudson and Malin Rönnblom's (2007) analysis of gender issues in the creation of regional partnerships in Sweden, it is observed that the formation of regional partnerships involves 'a process of negotiation over ... what is defined as important and beneficial for the development of the region' (Hudson and Rönnblom 2007:54). In this process, the differentiation between women's and men's interests and authorities correlates with status and influence.

It could be suggested from Hudson and Rönnblom's analysis that while men are given the authority to speak for the region as a whole (when undertaking Regional Action), women are understood to speak specifically for the women and children of the region. Hence, although women are granted authority, they are constructed 'as a deviant category' while men are constructed 'as the normal actor in regional policies' (Hudson and Rönnblom 2007:55). As women's authority in comparison to men's is curtailed, what is described by the interviewees, and theorized by Hudson and Rönnblom, is a difference in women's and men's conditions for exercising power. They may in fact be undertaking slightly different roles in terms of their Regional Action under slightly different conditions. This recalls an important theme emerging from the intersection of organisational and gender theory.

Cecilia Ridgeway (2001), for instance, argues that women, especially in leadership positions and power intensive settings, face greater demands to prove themselves than men: 'Studies of gender and race effects confirm that lower status groups (for example women and African Americans) are held to higher standards to prove high ability than are higher status groups (men and Whites)' (Ridgeway 2001:646-7). Previously, the notion that women are more thoroughly scrutinized than men had been explored by Rosabeth Moss Kanter in a 1977 study. Here, Kanter suggested the notion of *gender token* to theorise the conditions for women who, once they gain positions into elite settings, are in minority in relation to men. The status as token in leadership positions, according to Kanter, entails a high degree of visibility; women in power intensive setting are more harshly scrutinised, to the effect that any shortcomings and mistakes receive disproportionately great attention (cf. also McDonald *et al.* 2004). Women are more often than men reminded about what they do, and in particular, what it is that they presumably do wrong.

Against this background, it could be theorised that women who have experiences in regional politics when travelling to the EU administration bring with them experiences working in power intensive settings where their gendered positions and conditions are made highly tangible. That women regional actors are experienced in encountering scrutiny, doubt and other forms of discrimination invoking their gender is, it is proposed, important to recognise in connection to the notion, quoted in the introduction to this chapter, that 'it is beneficial to have women in positions of contact with the EU'. Moreover, it can be argued that taking regional gender issues into consideration is key for resolving apparent contradictions in the interviewees' ways of accounting for gender in the EU decision-making.

## Resolution

Drawing on theoretical notions developed by for instance Ridgeway (2001) and Hudson and Rönnblom (2007), as well as empirical findings made in the interview portion of this study, it is suggested that women, compared to men, in regional politics and policy-making settings are more likely to be questioned, to be criticised and to have their actions and decisions scrutinised. Women, it would seem, face more intricate social norms and demands, and any transgressions they may make are more carefully monitored and more likely to be pointed out and negatively sanctioned.

In contrast, one of the male interviewees in this study claims that young women from Poland and former Eastern Europe are in strong positions in EU contacts because 'they have language skills, social competence and view the EU as an opportunity'. Women then can be very skilled at Regional Action. Another male interviewee suggests that 'female forms of action in relation to a male dominated structure may yield success in specific questions'. These observations about women's skills in Regional Action capacities need not to be observations about essential properties; rather, social competence and interactive styles displayed by women could be understood as skills acquired as a result of women's experiences working in regional politics and similar power intensive settings at home.

Furthermore, it is important to recall how, as Chapter 3 and fusion approaches highlight, the EU-administration is more than a formal and socially transparent institution (see also Thedvall 2007). Hence, it is not enough to follow readymade institutional paths in order to be successful in EU contacts, but it requires the ability to identifying social and cultural codes and conventions and employing informal rules to work to one's benefit (cf. Geuijen *et al.* 2007). That is, you have to be accomplished in manoeuvring through the opaqueness of your social environment.

Already in their regional home settings, women encounter gendered differences in power, status, regard and social leeway (Hudson and Rönnblom 2007). In this vein, the social and normative fabric is made particularly tangible (Ridgeway 2001), and as a consequence of more often being reminded of the informal rules of interaction, women acquire a greater awareness of social and normative condition and become skilled in decoding and identifying how social situations are constituted (cf. Hartsock 1997). To conclude this chapter it will be suggested that women, against this background, bring to the EU administration a strategic consciousness developed in their power intensive regional home settings, making them skilled in diffusing and manoeuvring the otherwise debilitating gendered norms and gendering practices encountered in EU institutions.

Notions of strategic consciousness, or strategic awareness, have been suggested in business management theory to describe the ability to foresee the effects and consequences of different actions, thus forming a platform for evaluating what actions should be taken (cf. Berry 1996; Gibb and Scott 1985). Transposed into a notion of social action, rather than business action, the concept of strategic consciousness is here taken to describe the ability to quickly and practically (Giddens 1995) evaluate how a certain action (statement, gesture, piece of clothing and so forth) will be received, what effects it will have and what social possibilities it will yield in a given situation. To have a strategic consciousness means to be socially prepared and alert, to be aware of one's

impression on others, to be a quick study of social norms, conventions and expectations, and to be sensitive to other's hidden agendas. Persons possessing a strategic consciousness approach their environment in terms of predictions, consequences and choices, and they have a well developed understanding of the dynamics of gender, and the ability to manoeuvre them. This could then be a factor in explaining gender aspects in terms of Regional Action.

If this notion of strategic consciousness is connected to the question addressed in this chapter, regarding the significance of gender for successful EU contacts, and thereby Regional Action, it could help resolve the contradictions apparent in the interviewees' responses. Responses denying that gender matters for being successful, and responses indicating that women encounter gender related resistance in EU institutions may indeed be harmonised accordingly: women and men, in their Regional Action capacities, are equally successful (cf. Vianello 2004), not because EU institutions are particularly equal, but because women, commanding a more developed strategic consciousness than men, are skilled in dealing with a gendered social and organisational world and know how to manage attempts at discrimination and at undercutting their authority and political capabilities.

## Summary (Chapter 8)

Overall, this brief overview of gender issues relating to Regional Action highlights that:

- The empirical results of the survey and in-depth interviews contained in this study present a mixed, even contradictory, picture of the importance of gender to shaping the form and success of Regional Action towards the EU.
- However, such variations from respondents can be explained with reference to notions of strategic consciousness that help to reconcile variations in Regional Action.
- On this basis, it can be acknowledged that women and men possess different skills in terms of conducting forms of Regional Action and thus can be regarded as equally successful.



# 9. Conclusions: 'Getting the Best Out of the European Union'

## Introduction

From the empirical findings presented in Chapter 7, it can be concluded that there seem to be differing forms of Regional Action being pursued by policy-makers in the three Nordic regions under scrutiny, especially in terms of their levels of attention and adaptation, as well as variations in the attitudes towards engaging with European Union institutions and policy-making. As expected, this equates to a sizeable degree of differentiation in terms of the Regional Action that respective regional actors undertake in order to 'get the best out of the European Union'.

Certainly across the three regions, strengths and weaknesses in terms of the respective characteristics of their particular form of Regional Action can be identified and there is room for improvement in all three regions both in relation to present levels of activity and future enhancement. Yet, the common feature prevalent in all three regions is that respective regional actors think they can do more, and show a high level of ambition as regards wanting to get more out of the European Union. Regional actors in all three regions are mostly convinced that greater efforts as regards their EU activities are valuable and beneficial. If this is the case, then this Report recommends, above all, that, across our three regions, there is need to engage in further 'joined-up thinking', namely that regional actors – through a fusion approach – need to understand and be able to extrapolate the rationales for undertaking such Regional Action, and this requires an appreciate *not just of how they do it, but also that the reasons for doing it are often linked not just to the region, but to an estimation towards how the European Union itself is moving forward in the future.*

This chapter therefore attempts five things. First, it shall briefly remind the reader and examine the empirical results for the three Nordic regions under evaluation that were presented in the previous chapter through the prism of a fusion approach. The aim here is to specifically identify the traits of each of the regions using fusion techniques. Once again, attention will be placed on clarifying the Regional Action of each region in terms of download, horizontal and upload activities. Second, in order to ensure that this Report may have resonance for interested policy practitioners, the chapter then moves on to establish a set of operational tools – the Leadership, Institutions, Resources and Policies/Projects (LIRP) framework – in which to consider the dynamics of Regional Action in practice, and in the context of fusion approaches to understanding Regional Action and European integration. Third, it shall discuss the specific profiles of Regional Action apparent among regional actors in each of our three respective regions and map these in terms of LIRP indicators. Fourth, the question of sustainable Regional Action will be addressed. Finally, the Report will conclude with a series of policy-orientated recommendations that regional actors and policy-makers may consider when reviewing present and future levels of Regional Action and thus, 'how they shall get the best out of the European Union'.

## Regional Action Findings in Three Nordic Regions Using a Fusion Approach

A detailed discussion of the empirical findings for each of the three regions was discussed in detail at the end of Chapter 7. However, it also seems appropriate now to just provide a summary of those results in terms of the Micro-Fusion Framework (see Chapters 3 and 4) and to highlight the degrees of variation across the three regions as indicated in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 on Findings Interpreted Using a Fusion Approach

	<i>HEDMARK</i>	<i>VÄRMLAND</i>	<i>SOUTHWEST FINLAND</i>
<i>ATTENTION</i>  ATTENTIVE ACTION (IF 1)	<b>Download:</b> EEA Limited; Selective <b>Horizontal:</b> Fragmented within region; cross-border notable <b>Upload:</b> Limited, ad hoc, project driven	<b>Download:</b> Strong, project/finance focus <b>Horizontal:</b> Selective; Individual based; weak inside region. <b>Upload:</b> Individual motivated; project steered	<b>Download:</b> Very Strong; deep; policy-wide focus <b>Horizontal:</b> Broad role; Extensive, inclusive inside region; <b>Upload:</b> Strategic thinking firmly established
<i>ADAPTATION</i>  INSTITUTIONAL ORIENTED ACTION (IF 2)	<b>Download:</b> Identifiable; Uneven <b>Horizontal:</b> Weak inside region; Cross-border project activity notable <b>Upload:</b> Mainly competence dissemination	<b>Download:</b> Clear; project selective <b>Horizontal:</b> Poor; Influence of regional politics; trans-border modest; cluster driven <b>Upload:</b> ad hoc; not systemic; project based	<b>Download:</b> Limited, yet systemic impact <b>Horizontal:</b> Excellent use of strategic key frameworks; now part of regional policy-making <b>Upload:</b> frequent; fused roles of actors across level of governance
<i>ATTITUDES</i>  PERFORMANCE FUSION (FP)	Reluctantly Positive; Output-driven; EU seen as beneficial; Expect impact increase in future; Desire to improve	Positive; asymmetrical; Output driven; Project/finance focus; Strong awareness of EU impact; Clearly expect future impact increase	Positive, but with sizable minority that not convinced of benefits; output-driven; Confident and policy/project focus; Expect to grow more
POLITICAL FUSION (FP)	Limited 'bypassing' of state; regional-national relations dominant in thinking	Weak 'by-passing'; clear and strong desire for more representation in Brussels	Extensive commitment to 'by-passing'; Committed to use of supranational actors.
COMPOUND FUSION (FP)	Constrained; Narrow/weak use of EU-based actors; Wish to extend contacts in EU in the future	Narrow activity; Desire to move from project focus to increase upload activity; Weak use of EU-based actors	Broad activity at all levels; systemic/strategic uploading and use of EU actors; Commitment to increase in future

Turning to the three regions in question in a little more detail, then the following observations can be made.

### Hedmark

When examining the extent and forms of Regional Action, it is important to acknowledge that policy-makers here are often undertaking Regional Action under slightly different environmental conditions given that Norway is not a full EU member, yet the country also enjoys a privileged association position through an extensive network of contacts and linkages provided not the least by participation in the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement. It is therefore significant to note that a degree of variance in the types and form of Regional Action, at least when compared to the other two regions, should be perfectly normal. Hence, in terms of the institutional fusion of Hedmark (See Table 9.1), or more specifically, the Europeanisation of Hedmark's actors (as indicated by levels of Attentive Action) and the degree and forms of institutional adaptation (as noted by types of Institutional Oriented Action), then it is would be appropriate to observe sector-specific limitations and a degree of policy area selectivity as regards where and how Regional Action is undertaken by Hedmark's policy-makers and actors.

Yet, three general observations that may have salience for policy-makers themselves emerge from our investigations of the activities of regional actors in Hedmark. First, in spite of the degree of sector-specific limitations and policy-area selectivity, the attitudes of regional actors in Hedmark (as noted in terms of the existence of attitudes among them akin to performance, political and compound

fusion) suggest a reasonably strong output-related and performance-oriented commitment on the part of them both to participation in aspects of European integration and to regional mobilisation and paradiplomacy in order to reap present and future benefits for their region. Second, that, although this may indeed be the case, the limitations and selectivity of the activities – at least in terms of download, horizontal and upload activities – may be such that they still may presently be too project-orientated and reactive to allow for significant improvement in the future – especially in terms of downloading and uploading. Third, that although regional actors in Hedmark show significant expertise in undertaking trans-border horizontal activities as an effective form of Regional Action, the degree and substance of horizontal Regional Action among actors within the region could be reflected further upon.

## Värmland

Since this region is located within an existing EU country that has been a full member for almost fifteen years, then it seems appropriate to have a slightly higher degree of expectation as to the degree of Regional Action that can – at least potentially – be undertaken by regional actors in this region. Nevertheless, in terms of the application of the fusion approaches to Regional Action, then a limited, somewhat asymmetrical degree of institutional fusion is also evident in the case of this Swedish region. Our investigations do uncover evidence suggesting a degree of institutional fusion affecting Värmland. There is evidence of the Europeanisation of specific regional actors (as denoted in terms of Attentive Action) and resounding, if somewhat selective, examples of institutional adaptation (as shown in terms of Institutional Oriented Action). In particular, the development of innovation clusters among public and private regional actors has been a notable point of successful activity.

Three general observations can also be made as regards this Swedish case. First, that there are notable attitudes among regional actors in this region that both show some dissatisfaction with present levels of activity combined with ambitions to improve significantly as regards their EU activities that they regard as very important for the future prosperity of Värmland. These attitudes are clearly compatible with our conceptualisations of performance, political and compound fusion. Regional Actors are both aware of existing shortcomings in terms of Regional Action and strongly committed to improving downloading, horizontal and uploading activities. Second, similar to some extent to the case of Hedmark, Regional Action among actors in Värmland may be constrained by the fact that, at present, activities are too project-oriented and finance driven, and rely too much upon individual, as opposed to systemic and institutionalised, initiatives on the part of regional actors to enact effective downloading, horizontal measures and uploading. Third, that, in a similar vein, attention may need to be further focused upon horizontal activities – especially among regional actors within the region – and towards establishing further initiatives aimed at ‘bypassing the state’, in order to unlock the potential further gains and ‘get the best out of the European Union’.

## Southwest Finland

Again since this region is located within a EU member state with a reasonable period of membership holding such status, a slightly higher degree of expectation in relation to Regional Action seems reasonable. When fusion approaches are applied to this Finnish case, then a highly comprehensive, largely symmetrical, and systemic degree of institutional fusion seems apparent. Our research suggest evidence of a high, very broad and comprehensive degree of Europeanisation among regional actors (as defined in terms of Attentive Action) accompanied by a notable, if more selective, degree of institutional adaptation (as demonstrated in terms of Institutional Oriented Action). This region has been highly active, strategic and taken a systemic approach to ‘getting the best out of the EU’.

On these grounds, three general observations can also be made as regards the Finnish case. First, that there are strong attitudes among regional actors in Southwest Finland that have commonality with the concepts of performance, political and compound fusion, that have driven on a strategic and systemic approach to participation in regional aspects of European integration, and lay the foundations for a continuing commitment to participation in EU-related activities. Second, that in spite of the comprehensive and systemic approaches as well as obvious strategic thinking, there is an

awareness among policy-makers that greater attention, adaptation and attitudinal commitment will be necessary as greater competition among regions for scarce resources at the EU level continues to bite. In simple terms, Regional Action undertaken by actors in this region has to continue to get better if the region is to continue to try and 'get the best out of the EU'. Finally, that – on this basis – greater attention to trans-border horizontal activities on the part of regional actors in Southwest Finland might be strategically useful in the future.

## Leadership, Institutions, Resources and Policy/Projects (LIRP)

Given these general observations made in the previous section, it is highly likely that interested parties might seek to find further operational guidance on how these comments might be interpreted in terms of review of practice among regional actors. In order to further comprehend how the differing profiles in terms of the attention, adaptation and attitudes of regional actors can be further understood, it is appropriate to begin to outline a set of preliminary operational indicators/tools that may help regional actors to focus reflections and further refine what kind of 'actions' regional policy-makers can take and are involved with in relation to EU-related frameworks. Let us be clear here, the intention is not to provide highly specific, policy-oriented recommendations that actors must follow – on the pain of death – if they are 'to get the best out of the EU'. Rather, it is to provide positive guidance as to the broad aspects that regional actors should reflect upon when considering their profiles and commitments towards Regional Action in the context of European integration. Broadly, four are suggested: namely:

- The Exercise of *Leadership* (strong-neutral-weak)
- *Institution-Building* and Reform for Sustainable Governance (new-modified-unmodified)
- *Resources Allocation* (large/maximalist-medium/balanced-small/minimalist)
- *Policy and Projects* Formulation and Management (effective-neutral-ineffective)

Alongside the explanation of each of the LIRP operational tools, readers will note an attempt is made to advise how fusion approaches can be mapped in terms of the degree of suggested prioritising given by regional actors when seeking to make further reflections on Regional Action. Broadly, the relationship between fusion approaches and the salience of operational tools is shown in Table 9.2. Taking this approach towards considering the usage of operational tools to aid our reflections of Regional Action, then an assessment of the existing merits of our three regions should be possible later in relation to the general observations made towards each at the start of this chapter. Let it be made clear here, this is not an attempt by some external researchers to create a ranking exercise among our three regions.

*Rather it represents a process for external researchers to suggest ways of identifying operational tools that policy-makers themselves can utilise when assessing their own level of capacity and capability and to enable them to further formulate distinctive policy-orientated recommendations that may aid them when seeking to enhance 'how to get the best out of the European Union'. Yet, the identification of operational tools is, at least in our view, not enough. There is also a pressing need to map these operational tools against the broader analytical concepts outlined in Chapter 3 and 4 of this Report, and thus facilitate understanding of policy-makers with further, perhaps often underestimated, insights as to why the particular compositions and profile of their operations take the form that they do. On this basis, this may help us to be informed, in relation to the results from our surveys, as to where variations in, particularly, attention and attitudinal perspectives could have an influence in the shape and practice of those characteristics looked at by the operational tools.*

Put simply, it could be expected, for instance, that composition and changes in the attention

and action of regional policy-makers – referred to as attentive action – may have greater, yet not exclusive, implications and produce evidence for the first of our operational tools (leadership), having a middling impact on resource allocations and on policy/project formulation and management. Similarly, the nature of the institutional-orientated action undertaken by regional actors and institutions can be taken as evidence, first and foremost, of institution-building and reform (the second operational tool)

Furthermore, it could also be argued that attitudinal perspectives, best explained using fusion approaches, might come into play here and need factoring to review by regional actors of usage of operational tools. Accordingly, the attitudes of regional policy-makers akin to performance fusion (output related mentality), political (bypassing the state) and compound fusion (merging of competencies across tiers of governance) help us to understand differing commitments and types of leadership displayed in differing regions. Equally, compound fusion, as well as political and performance fusion to a lesser extent, perspectives will have specific resonance when discussing the salience of institutional adaptation. We would also expect performance and political fusion perspectives – towards bypassing the state – to have prominence when regional policy-makers are undertaking Regional Action involving resource allocation and policy/project management. Thus, the application of a fusion approach should provide supplementary, yet not exclusive, explanatory value – and demonstrated through the surveys and especially the in-depth interviews – when regional actors seek to focus on the following operational tools (see also Table 9.2). Each of the four LIRP operational tools for consideration by policy-makers will now be outlined in further detail.

Table 9.2: Operational tools (lirp) and fusion: what should be looked at?

	<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>INSTITUTIONS</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>POLICY/ PROJECTS</b>
<b>ATTENTION/ACTION</b>				
<b>INSTITUTIONAL FUSION 1 (IF 1)</b>				
<i>Horizontal Attentive Action</i>	**** (4 star)	** (2 star)	* (1 star)	*** (3 star)
<i>Vertical Attentive Action</i>	**** (4 star)	** (2 star)	* (1 star)	*** (3 star)
<b>ADAPTATION</b>				
<b>INSTITUTIONAL FUSION 2 (IF 2)</b>				
<i>Horizontal Institutional Oriented Action</i>	* (1 star)	**** (4 star)	*** (3 star)	** (2 star)
<i>Vertical Institutional Oriented Action</i>	* (1 star)	**** (4 star)	*** (3 star)	** (2 star)
<b>ATTITUDES</b>				
<b>FUSION PERSPECTIVE(S) (FP)</b>				
<i>Horizontal Performance Fusion</i>	**** (4 star)	* (1 star)	** (2 star)	*** (3 star)
<i>Vertical Performance Fusion</i>	**** (4 star)	* (1 star)	** (2 star)	*** (3 star)
<i>Political Fusion</i>	**** (4 star)	*** (3 star)	* (1 star)	** (2 star)
<i>Horizontal Compound Fusion</i>	**** (4 star)	*** (3 star)	* (1 star)	** (2 star)
<i>Vertical Compound Fusion</i>	**** (4 star)	*** (3 star)	* (1 star)	** (2 star)

## The Exercise of Leadership

What do we mean? The Exercise of Leadership is viewed, as taken throughout this Report, from a functional perspective, and can be translated as the quality and the degree of leadership demonstrated by regional actors and policy-makers in the respective region that is directed towards dealing with (and improving the handling) of EU issues. Once again, reflections need to be made on the ability of

regional actors to show leadership and expertise in handling downloaded EU business, the demands of horizontal co-operation and co-ordination among them and the requirements to shape and lead the uploading of regional interests to the national and EU domains. It can be argued then, that regional actors, might want to reflect upon and review the following:

- The numbers and seniority of personnel in a region that are handling EU questions and thus are involved in handling the downloaded EU business (high-medium-low);
- The degree of competence shown by staff and the forms of training provided in order to enhance the handling of downloaded business from the EU (high-medium-low);
- The degree of innovation and leadership (regional mobilisation) shown by regional actors in pushing forward horizontal co-ordination among them within the region and between regions on EU questions (high-medium-low);
- The leadership strategies and degree of interaction and commitment (paradiplomacy) demonstrated by regional actors in seeking to upload regional preferences to the national and EU levels.

In respect of the Exercise of Leadership, then it is recommended that interested parties should give most, but not exclusive, emphasis to levels of Attentive Action among regional actors and the degree of attitudinal disposition to performance (especially), political and compound fusion compatible commitments on the part of existing leadership (see Table 9.2).

### **Institution-Building and Reforms for Sustainable Governance**

What do we mean? Institution-Building and Reforms for Sustainable Governance is, once again, viewed in a functional context. The focus here is institutional bodies and structures and, more specifically, on reflecting upon the degree, forms and substance of institutional adaptation necessary in order to handle EU business and issues. This includes regional bodies that have officially specified responsibilities and portfolios towards the EU, as well as those institutions that undertake important EU-related functions as part of their overall operations. It can be argued then, that regional actors might want to reflect upon and review the following:

- The institutional support mechanisms in place to support regional leadership on EU issues;
- The types of existing institutional adaptation undertaken by regional actors in order to handle downloaded EU business (downloading);
- The degrees of institutional co-operation undertaken by regional actors in order to manage and enhance horizontal co-ordination among them within the region and between regions on EU questions (horizontal);
- The institutional provisions aimed at transmitting regional interests upwards to the national and supranational domains (uploading).

In respect of the Institution-building and Reform, then it is recommended that interested parties should give most, but not exclusive, emphasis to levels of Institutional Oriented Action among regional bodies and the degree of prevalent attitudinal and strategic thinking given by those bodies to performance, political (especially) and compound fusion compatible objectives (see Table 9.2).

### **Resource Allocation**

What do we mean? Resource Allocation, is also taken with a functional view in mind, and focuses upon determining the size and types of resources available to, and committed by, regional actors to the handling of EU-related business and issues. This includes official financial resources committed

by regional actors to the pursuit of EU-compatible objectives (dedicated budgets, investment and arrangements to support the co-financing of EU bidding) and the amount of EU funding received by regional actors to also support such activities. It can be argued then, that regional actors might want to reflect upon and review the following:

- The size and types of resources made available by regional actors to support the handling of EU-related business and issues:
- The size, type and changes in resources committed and received by regional actors in order to support the handling of downloaded EU business to regional actors (downloading),
- The size, type and changes in resources committed and received by regional actors in order to manage and enhance horizontal co-ordination among them within the region and between regions on EU questions (horizontal);
- The size, type and changes in resources committed and received by regional actors in order to support and enhance the transmission of regional interests upwards to the national and supranational domains (uploading).

In respect of the Resource Allocation, then it is recommended that interested parties should give most, but not exclusive, emphasis to levels of Institutional Oriented Action among regional bodies and the degree of prevalent attitudinal and strategic thinking given by those bodies to performance, political and compound fusion compatible objectives (see Table 9.2).

### Policy and Projects Formulation and Management

What do we mean? Once again, a functional-based perspective is applied. Policy and Projects Formulation and Management looks at, and should reflect upon, the official policy actions, strategies and activity of regional actors that are involved in the closer interaction with the EU. It can be argued then, that regional actors might want to reflect upon and review the following:

- The official EU-orientated policy strategies of regional actors and bodies and the formulation and management of major applications for EU funding and of EU funded projects in the region.
- The policy strategies of regional actors aimed at handling the impact of downloaded EU-related business and issues, such as, key policy agendas and Structural Funds, that have direct relevance for external bidding for EU funding and for project formulation and management (downloading);
- The policy strategies of regional actors aimed at handling and enhancing horizontal co-ordination among regional actors with the respective region, and across regions in order to aid the formulation and management of funding bids to the EU and to manage major EU funded projects (horizontal);
- The policy strategies of regional actors aimed at dealing with, and improving, the transmission of regional interests upwards to the national and supranational domains with regard to bidding for EU funding and the formulation and management of major EU-funded projects (uploading).

In respect of the Policy and Projects Formulation and Management, then it is recommended that interested parties should give most, but not exclusive, emphasis to levels of Attentive Action (of key actors) and the degree of prevalent attitudinal and strategic thinking given by those bodies to performance (especially), political and compound fusion compatible objectives (see Table 9.2).

## Sustainable Regional Action?

The final section of this report aims to provide further insights that may be useful to policy practitioners interested in conducting self-evaluations of their existing and future propensities for Regional Action. This is meant in two senses. First, as regards regional actors drawn from the three Nordic regions under scrutiny in the Report, the following policy recommendations themselves may be useful as 'broad guidelines' from which they may choose to draw their own conclusions. For other interested, largely political and economic elite, parties outside these three regions, then perhaps these policy recommendations can act as concrete examples of how, as part of their own self-evaluation exercises, they might seek to combine assessments of their own activities with greater awareness of the influence of their own judgments of European integration on Regional Action.

Certainly, for the authors of this particular Report, we argue that the proposed concepts of a rather practice orientated *fused model of Regional Action* that combines: (a) notions of practical activity in terms of download, horizontal and upload activities with: (b) a conceptualisation of policy-practice based on notions of Regional Action and: (c) a distinctive framework for understanding the behaviour and attitudes of regional actors in the context of European integration provides a potent mix for encapsulating for policy-makers and prominent practitioners (regional actors), the *what* (activity), the *how* (Regional Action) and the *why* (Fusion approaches) of 'getting the best out of the European Union' over time and space. The following reflections are offered, in no particular order of priority, as integrated policy recommendations:

### Hedmark

- While still remaining selective in order to take account of Norway's position as a non-EU member state, regional actors could consider measures aimed at establishing a deeper and comprehensive strategic thinking in the region that brings together more coherently existing Regional Action and further ambitions to enhance it. This would reinforce Hedmark's existing commitment to enhanced participation in selective European integration and build upon Hedmark's successful experience in, for example, Interreg projects.
- In order to do this, regional actors should move away, where appropriate, from largely project and programme orientations (a focus on *funding action*) to a more extensive policy-based approach for all activity. This may require regional actors to especially consider reflections upon all four operational tools outlined previously in this chapter.
- Such a move to a policy-orientated approach (including new forms of *learning action* and *political action* – see Chapter 4) should also help reduce the propensity for reactive Regional Action that implies that Hedmark's European strategies are largely reactive to the cyclical changes in EU structural funds and regional development policies, and ensure a more sustainable and effective long-term view where regional actors can gain consistent and longer-term access to EU funds and policies.
- In particular, regional actors in Hedmark should reflect upon how to further enhance horizontal co-ordination among them within the region and thereby enable them to balance the successful trans-border co-operation that regional actors in Hedmark are already notable players. This should perhaps take the form of greater learning and transmission of 'best practice' among regional actors in Hedmark and would probably require concerted reflections on Leadership, Institution-building and Policy Formulation/Management as part of a move to a more systemic approach.
- Regional actors in Hedmark should further revisit their arrangements that handle upload activities and 'by-passing' in order to further enhance co-ordination and profile and thereby ensure a more sustainable form of Regional Action in Brussels over time and space. This may

require regional actors to reflect further on, most importantly, yet not exclusively, the Leadership, Institution-building and Resource Allocation operation tools outlined in this chapter.

## Värmland

- It is recommended that regional actors should consider measures aimed at establishing a deeper and comprehensive strategic thinking in the region that brings together more coherently existing Regional Action and further ambitions to enhance it. This would reinforce existing commitments of regional actors in Värmland to enhanced participation in selective European integration. In particular, the practices adopted in the case of the innovative public-private clusters should be disseminated more broadly among regional actors and further reflection concerning all four outlined operational tools is advisable.
- A more extensive policy-based approach (including more *learning action* and *political action* – see Chapter 4) should become the basis for activity and thus downgrade existing pre-occupations with incremental project, programme and finance centre activity in order to reinforce the aforementioned recommendation for a greater strategic focus on the EU in Värmland. This may require regional actors to particular consider reflections upon all four operational tools outlined previously in this chapter. Again, the cluster activity could act as a focal point for strategic thinking as they are now evolving to fresh, more permanent stages of development.
- The development of a strategic policy-orientated approach should be supported by a stronger commitment to an active, rather than reactive position in terms of EU activity. In particular, re-evaluations of the need for measures aimed at enhancing horizontal co-ordination of regional actors and bodies is essential in order to further enhance the development of coherent regional preferences for the region in the EU context, and ensure a more sustainable and effective long-term view where regional actors can gain consistent and longer-term access to EU funds and policies.
- This should perhaps take the form of greater learning and transmission of ‘best practice’ as well as the creation of cross-institutional forums for dialogue among regional actors in Värmland. This would also probably require concerted reflections on Leadership, Institution-building and Policy Formulation/Management as part of a move to a more systemic approach.
- Regional actors should seriously review their existing and future arrangements for promoting upload activities and ‘by-passing’ in order to further enhance co-ordination and profile and thereby ensure a more sustainable form of Regional Action in Brussels over time and space. This may require regional actors to reflect further on, most importantly, yet not exclusively, the Leadership, Institution-building and Resource Allocation operation tools outlined in this chapter.

## Southwest Finland

- Given the changing environmental conditions and greater competition for scarcer political and economic resources available in the EU-27, it is recommended that, against the background of deep-seated and comprehensive strategic thinking (existing *political action* – see Chapter 4), regional actors in Southwest Finland may need to reflect upon the need for equivalent strategic limited targeting of resources and activities in order to maximize performance returns for the region. This may require regional actors to reflect further on, most significantly, yet not exclusively, on the Leadership, Institutional Reform and Policy Management operational tools outlined previously. This may also help to reduce the concerns of a notable minority worried about any discrepancies between regional preferences towards the EU and recouped benefits.

- Against the background of highly successful horizontal activities, limited attention may need to be focused on seeking to further harness any benefits accruing from transborder horizontal activities, especially in the Baltic Sea context in order to further enhance, if appropriate, bidding effectiveness and intelligence-gathering. This may require further self-assessment of Leadership, Institutional Reform and Policy Management operational tools.
- There may be a need to further review the changing, more competitive pressures effecting uploading, and to further highlight the need for increased bypassing. It is estimated that the region's presence in Brussels frameworks will become even more important in the future.
- Given this line of reasoning, regional actors might want to reflect upon past successes and in particular, the informal creation of flexible, fused frameworks across levels of governance, such as, those associated with the Turku-Southwest Finland European Office, that enable regional experts to use contacts and resources most effectively. On this basis, the awareness of fusion concepts that describe elite preferences for a fused EU compound system of governance where regional actors want to participate in order to gain performance outcomes, but without leading to a Federal Europe might have some value in enabling regional actors to explain to others in the region how they 'get the best out of Europe'.

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