

Seminar „Making Lifelong Learning a reality“

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Networking the Learning Region Schwandorf

The district of Schwandorf, situated in the South-East of Germany, at the Czech border, belongs to the poorest regions in Bavaria, due to its problems of restructuring a declining industrial pattern (coal mining and steel production) by new concepts of modern service industry, competitive agriculture and tourism.

The networking concept of the Learning Region Schwandorf tries to implement the rather complex dimensions of a new regional development pattern:

- Fostering bottom-up creativity;
- fostering “network-learning”;
- fostering “innovativeness”;
- provide openness for everybody;
- provide practical solutions and results (effectivity) and
- provide sustainability of the development momentum.

In order to organise these elements of Learning Regions, the L.R. Schwandorf has created a characteristic network pattern which is based on an association (e.V.) created for that end.

The complex network-structure represents an interwoven pattern of managerial tasks (network-moderation), operational tasks (projects) and interfaces with stakeholders (transfer and mainstreaming) and with the general public (new ideas and new challenges).

After nearly two years of practical experience with the Schwandorf Learning Region network a few provisional reflections can be presented in terms of a L.R.-network based on an open association (eingetragener Verein).

This organisation pattern

- provides a maximum of transparency of processes;
- provides openness for everybody to join;
- avoids (reduces) mistrust amongst competing partners;
- provides a good platform for public-private partnerships.

On the other hand it is

- extremely depending on specific actors;
- it needs a strong and lively management (networking-) unit;
- it is rather weak in terms of (financial) resources (cofunding).