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HOW TO SUPPORT “ENDOGENOUS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT” – EXAMPLES FROM AUSTRIA

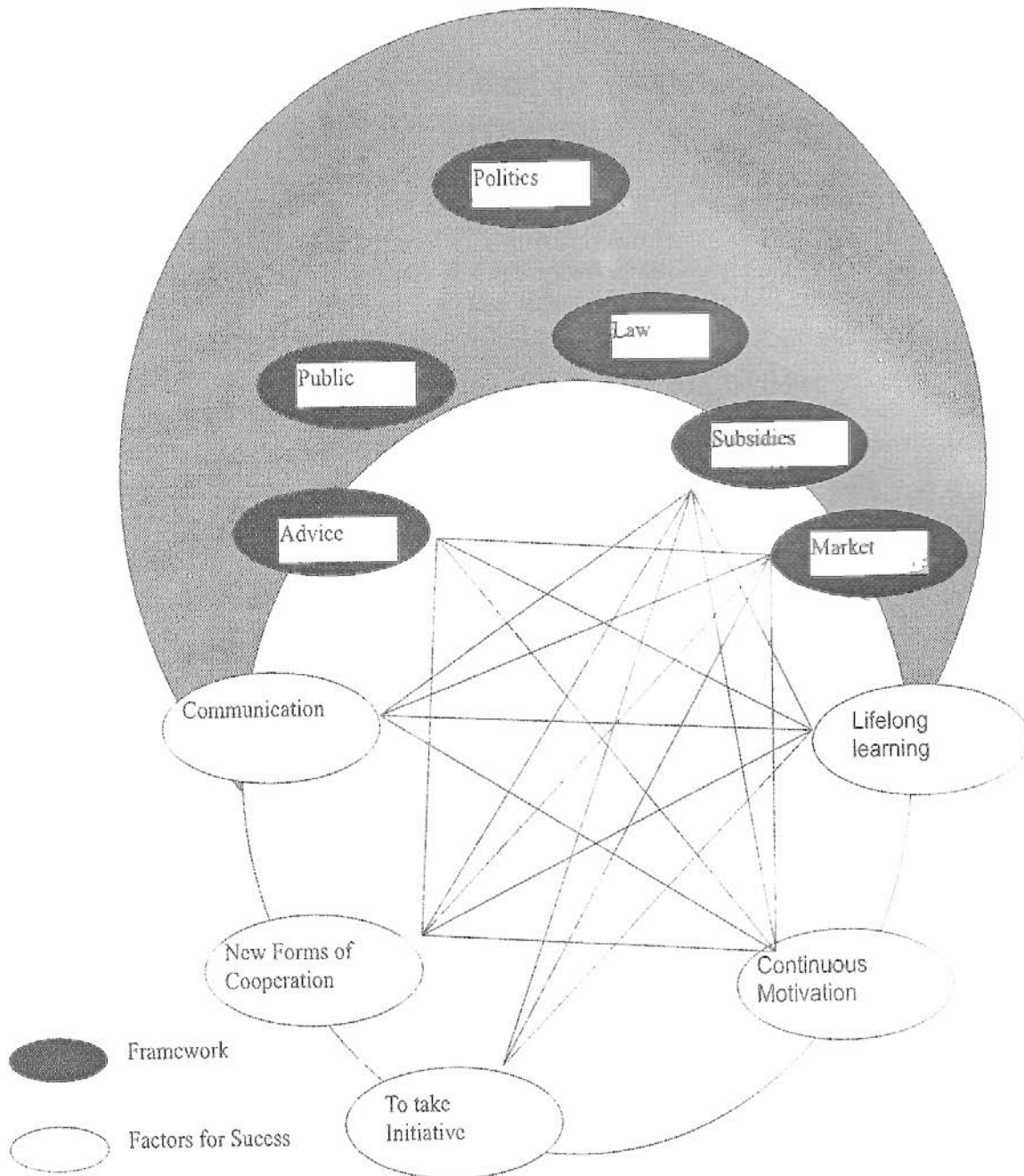
Abstract. Endogenous regional development – a concept which has been developed successfully in Austria in order to support marginal regions in its development. This “bottom up” approach supports rural initiatives searching for new income possibilities by using and building on local resources. This should bring about improvement of life quality and social stability in rural areas. How the concept “Endogenous regional development” is being implemented is dealing about this article.

Albeit almost one third of its population is living in the surroundings of Vienna, Austria is still a country of small villages. Half of the Austrians live in communities with less than 10.000 inhabitants. Especially in rural and remote regions these communities have to cope with enormous problems because more and more people – especially the young and well educated leave the countryside to work and live in the urban centres. The problems of these less regions are the following (this pattern could be applied also in Poland):

1. Small-scaled farms with difficult natural conditions are not able to produce food to market prices
2. Industrial enterprises offer few, badly paid jobs with a low qualification profile. In case of economic recession these jobs are the first to be dismissed
3. Tourism is a potential source of income, but the infrastructure, comfort and qualification is not yet developed sufficiently to use this resource well
4. To feed their families people have to commute to the urban centres, especially the young and well educated leave the rural regions forever as they see no future there.

As a means of support its rural regions Austria developed the strategy of **endogenous regional development**. This “bottom up” approach tries to support local initiatives in their attempts to identify the strengths of their regions and use them as opportunities to create new sources of income for the local population. This should improve the quality of living and the social stability in the single regions by a creative mix of different projects in the field of culture, agriculture, economy and

ecology. Successful projects are however dependent on a wide range of different preconditions such as subsidies, the market, the legal framework, the public opinion or political support. But also initiative persons, continuous motivation, permanent learning or continuous communication are essential for success.



Very soon it became clear that without professional support the local initiatives were not able to produce good results. Mostly they are supported by idealists with a lot of enthusiasm – which is essential for the start of activities, but not enough when the first problems and failures arrive – but they do not have the capacity for networking, effective lobbying or the identification of financial resources. This showed the need

for somebody to organize the relations between the market, the government and the local initiatives. Thus intermediary structures such as the **regional management offices** were established.



The main goals of local development agencies are:

- to improve co-operation between actors and institutions relevant for regional innovation and development,
- to develop bottom up and top down committed strategies enhancing core competencies and strengths of localities and regions and
- to assist local actors and municipalities in defining, prioritising and implementing key projects.

Actually there are about 40 professionals working as “local development agents” within Austria primarily at NUTS III regions level. They are employed by 25 different local agencies with different ownership and structures. About two third of them are organised according to the model of “municipalities associations.”

The greater part of the local development agencies has been set up since 1995 when Austria became member of the EU. The key tasks of local development agents are:

key tasks	Activities
information	advice and short information events PR and own media media information
counselling	initial counselling process counselling expertise / broker for experts matching and resource securing
development of projects	activation / animation / matching moderation capacity building / interim entrepreneurship resource securing
improving of the network of local actors and institutions	co-ordination and valuation of strategies and key projects raising awareness for strategic controlling processes enhance quality of network permanent communication with owners, clients and partners

SOURCES

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**WIE KANN „EIGENSTÄNDIGE REGIONALENTWICKLUNG“ UNTERSTÜTZT WERDEN
– BEISPIELE AUS ÖSTERREICH****Zusammenfassung**

Eigenständige Regionalentwicklung – ein Konzept welches in Österreich entwickelt wurde, um benachteiligte Regionen in ihrer Entwicklung zu unterstützen. Dieser Ansatz „von unten“ unterstützt ländliche Initiativen dabei, lokal vorhandene Ressourcen besser zu nützen und sich neue Einkommensmöglichkeiten zu schaffen. Dies sollte zur Verbesserung der Lebensqualität und sozialen Stabilität in den ländlichen Regionen führen. Wie die „eigenständige Regionalentwicklung“ konkret umgesetzt wird, wird in diesem Artikel genauer beschrieben.

**JAK WSPOMAGAĆ NIEZALEŻNE INICJATYWY ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO –
PRZYKŁADY Z AUSTRII****Streszczenie**

Samodzielnie inicjowany rozwój terenów wiejskich jest koncepcją, której skutki okazały się bardzo korzystne w Austrii, najbardziej na szczególnie prowincjonalnych terenach. Takie oddolne i niezależne podejście nastawione jest głównie na rozwijanie nowych źródeł dochodów w oparciu o lokalne zasoby. W rezultacie podnosi się standard życia i społeczna stabilność terenów wiejskich. W artykule przedstawiono metody wdrażania samodzielnych inicjatyw rozwoju regionalnego.