

Christa Larsen / Alfons Schmid / Waldemar Mathejczyk (Eds.)

Monitoring of Regional Labour Markets in European States

Concepts – Experiences – Perspectives

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Foreword of the Editors

Regions have become increasingly important in the European context for the competitiveness of businesses and labour. In this context functional regional labour markets and efficient regional labour market policies constitute a key competitiveness factor. The basic prerequisites for these are adequate information and in-depth knowledge for regional actors in the labour market. One instrument that generates and disseminates such information and knowledge is regional labour market monitoring.

During the conference “Monitoring of Regional Labour Markets in Europe”, which took place in March 2006 in Frankfurt am Main, ideas and approaches of regional labour market monitoring from various European states are presented. Most of the presentations, supplemented by a number of further contributions, are gathered in this volume for publication. We expressly thank the authors for their contributions.

The conference and this book together represent the beginning of the discourse and activities in the European network for regional labour market monitoring, which came into existence in March 2006. In this network there are currently about 80 institutions in 18 European countries, all connected to each other in a process of “mutual learning”. The focus of this learning is on systematic exchange of experiences in the area of regional labour market monitoring as well as on further trans-national development of ideas.

We would like hereby to thank the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung (Hans-Böckler-Foundation) and the Sparkassen- und Giroverband Hessen-Thüringen (Savings and Credit Union of Hessen-Thüringen), without whose support the European conference and the book that grew out of it would not have come into being.

Last but not least we give our special thanks to Minister President of Hessen Mr. Roland Koch, under whose patronage the conference “Monitoring of Regional Labour Markets in Europe” took place.

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This book gives an idea of the diversity of European approaches to monitoring of regional labour markets. It renders different concepts and instruments representing the region in which they are used at the moment. Moreover, those concepts and instruments represent approaches which are used in other European regions in similar ways but with different stress or modified methods.

In this publication, 27 authors from 12 European countries depict various aspects of Regional Labour Market Monitoring. Realistic examples from 15 regions will be given. However, this book does not claim to touch upon each existing approach, or to give a general overview. It was our aim to offer a first glimpse and to show how many possibilities for development are contained in the discussed approaches and methods. Additionally, we want to show which problems of the labour market should be solved and in which areas Regional Labour Market Monitoring can make a contribution to this target. A European discussion about Regional Labour Market Monitoring has started right now. This book wants to intensify and speed up this discussion. It addresses to political decision-makers and scientists as well as to practitioners from employment agencies and administration. The idea for this publication dates back to a two-day-conference in March 2006 when 80 experts from 15 countries met in Frankfurt. The articles at hand were written by participants of the conference and members of the network founded on this occasion.

In *chapter 1*, the editors of the book *Alfons Schmid, Christa Larsen, and Waldemar Mathejczyk* give an introduction to the matter from a scientific point of view, in which they summarize their judgement of the status quo. On the background of conversations with numerous protagonists in this field, they found a rough division: There are complex nationwide systems, which are often connected with national labour administration, and there are particular approaches developed in certain regions. Besides, there are approaches which are set apart because they have a specific geographical context or a specific target group.

In *chapter 2*, the reader will find various examples of complex information systems for nationwide monitoring.

At first, a practical example from a Scandinavian country is presented. *Thomas Behrens* describes the current Regional Labour Market Monitoring system in Sweden, where the National Labour Market Administration has a long tradition in regularly observing statistical indicators. As he is labour market analyst at the County Labour Board, his practical perspective points out that monitoring means not only regularly conducted observation of statistical and financial indicators but also includes other types of systematic information gathering such as regular surveys and forecasting of labour market developments.

Another example for a monitoring system that is generated in the National Labour Administration can be seen in Poland. The Labour Market Monitoring in the regions of Poland is carried out by a team of scientists. *Dr. Iwona Kukulak-Dolata* from the Łódź University team works on the monitoring system in Poland and describes origins and development during the recent years. As an example she presents the structure of the monitoring regarding the shortage and surplus occupations in Poland after 2005. The Polish monitoring system seems to be a variation which is based on one hand on the different statistics of national labour administration and methodically developed by scientists on the other hand.

The Regional Labour Market Monitoring is embedded into National Labour Administration in another example from an East European country. *Mirena Stavreva*, labour market analyst of the Labour Market Authority in Sofia, describes in her report the present situation as a preliminary stage for a Regional Labour Market Monitoring. In Bulgaria,

Regional Labour Market Monitoring is still in its infancy. Starting from a general statistics of unemployed, descriptive statements are possible. More complex statements like e.g. prognosis or early detection are not yet daily business.

In France, the different labour market regions were given more competence and responsibilities since the early 1990s which shows effects on different levels. In their exposition, *Bénédicte Delneste and Guy Sapin* describe new demands to their work as an effect of decentralisation of labour market politics. Their experiences as managers of an educational institute make clear that Regional Labour Market Monitoring in Burgundy means also that nationwide political programmes are implemented into the region.

Apart from those existing approaches, *Prof. Dr. Marco Ricceri* describes the preconditions for the implementation of nationwide programmes into regions from a political point of view. He underlines that an important industrialized country as Italy has a big delay in creating an effective monitoring system and all initiatives, both national and regional, are the first steps of the process. However, the reform of the labour market in Italy has been an issue of strong political confrontation that involves the governments, the parties and the unions. Meanwhile the regions are proceeding with own specific initiatives taking the possibility of the new federalism that has been introduced in Italy recently.

In *chapter 3*, various examples for particular approaches within European Regions are presented. This chapter consists of two parts.

The three contributions at the beginning have in common that they radiate a vast orientation to action, which means the described examples from the Netherlands and Germany attach great importance to the use of acquired information.

Andreas Mertens summarizes his experience as coordinator of the Prospect approach that has been carried out almost during the last seven years in different regions of North Rhine-Westphalia. The Prospect approach is a so called dialog-oriented labour market monitoring system that has been implemented by ministry of labour of North Rhine-Westphalia several years ago.

The Prospect system was originally invented by the Dutch company Activa and modified to the demands of North Rhine-Westphalia. *Peter de Bruin*, director from Activa Research, describes current activities and perspectives of this system in the Netherlands. He explains new approaches concerning rising demands on the part of municipalities and relates to actual projects.

In the following contribution *Dr. Christa Larsen and Dr. Marco Mevius* describe an approach they developed in the region Rhine-Main that implies a dialog-oriented component, too. In the form of a new computer program, technical development helps improving Regional Labour Market Monitoring.

The second part of this chapter contains reports about Regional Labour Market Monitoring systems that are related to specific topics. Two contributions have a geographical focus. The following contributions in this chapter are related to specific target groups in the labour market. Finally the reader will find the description of a project that linked Regional Labour Market Monitoring to the vocational und educational system.

Marc Bittner and Dr. Michaela Hudler-Seitzberger present their knowledge about the regional labour market at the border zone of Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic as an example of cross border monitoring. Their research questions concern to the field of migration and commuters in the labour market. Their scientific work combines qualitative and quantitative methods.

Jonathan Schulz and Markus Weißkopf also provide an international approach. They are engaged in cross border monitoring, but their focus is mainly a statistical approach of labour market monitoring. Based on the structures of „Euregio Bodensee“ they can fall back on a close cooperation with neighbouring countries. Together with Austria and Switzerland they developed suitable advisory services among others.

Michael Gebel describes from a scientific perspective how older workers move increasingly into the focus of Regional Labour Market Monitoring. Demographic changes add new political problems to the labour market which can be solved with suitable monitoring instruments in the future.

Another problematic group in the labour market are young persons. *Dr. Yvette Grelet* relates to the situation of young persons in France and describes from the perspective of an applied science which concepts were developed in recent years and which instruments are used nowadays. As an example she mentions the School-Leavers Survey as an instrument for target-group-specific Regional Labour Market Monitoring.

Helena Úlovcová and Zorka Husová finally describe the conditions of Regional Labour Market Monitoring in another East European country. They explain approaches in the Czech Republic and link Regional Labour Market Monitoring to the key factor of vocational training system. Like in Bulgaria, Regional Labour Market Monitoring there is on a stage capable of developments.

In *chapter 4*, developments of Regional Labour Market Monitoring approaches are to be touched. In general developments are possible in various ways, but the three contributions in this chapter discuss chosen aspects of fundamental importance.

Prof. Dr. Alfons Schmid discusses aspects of the theoretical background of Regional Labour Market Monitoring. He defines information and knowledge as basic elements for a successful labour market monitoring. He argues that Regional Labour Market Monitoring can develop towards a European concept.

The contribution of *Prof. Dr. Ronald W. McQuaid* treats about processes of standardisation in Regional Labour Market Monitoring based on his Experiences in Scotland. He outlines relevant issues regarding standardisation of labour market monitoring for regional and local bodies. His contribution makes clear that in the field of standardisation still a lot can be done.

Dr. Ben Kriechel allows some access to the current state of affairs concerning quantitative methods. By means of his daily work, he describes a forecasting model as it is performed at his institution. Starting with the general use of labour market monitoring in the Netherlands, he describes the regional model, which is especially useful for the early identification of mismatches and skills-need.

Networks that are closely related to labour market affairs are presented in *chapter 5*. Special attention will be given to European network co-operations and the benefits of networks for the actors.

Dr. Monika Stricker, Antje Utecht, and Tanja Kreetz explain how inter-organisational learning processes can take place in a Europe-wide acting vocational training organisation by exchanging different approaches and cultures in a network of different actors working in complementary fields of human resources development.

Two networks, both regarding the topic “Early Identification of Qualification Needs” are presented by *Bernd Dworschak and Alena Zukersteinova*. “FreQueNz” and “Skillsnet” were set up as a response to the demand of experts, policy makers and social partners.

The objective of these networks was to bring together researchers and other stakeholders from across the world to present and discuss outcomes and methods of research and analysis.

Waldemar Mathejczyk describes the current state of activities in the European network in the field of Regional Labour Market Monitoring. This network was established in March 2006 and wants to continue in 2007 and 2008: The contribution is a “critical snap-shot”.

Chapter 6 completes the book and casts a glance into future. *Alfons Schmid, Christa Larsen, and Waldemar Mathejczyk* deal with perspectives of Regional Labour Market Monitoring in European States on one hand, on the other they describe perspectives of the European Network for the Furthering Regional Labour Market Monitoring. It becomes clear that Regional Labour Market Monitoring will gain importance as an instrument of labour market policy as well as a field of research and will advise in the close future. It is mentioned, too, that in this context the recently founded network might provide an important contribution.

Statistical Labour Market Monitoring in the International Lake Constance Area

Jonathan Schulz / Markus Weißkopf

1 Labour Market Monitoring in a Border Region

The term Labour Market Monitoring comprises a wide spectrum of approaches in order to observe the labour market.¹ In what follows we will present the approach taken in our area, the International Area of Lake Constance.

One distinctive feature of our approach certainly is its cross-border nature. In order to gain an understanding of our approach we will first give some background information about the history of our project.

1.1 History of the Project

Four countries (Switzerland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, Austria, and Germany) belong wholly or to some part to the International Area of Lake Constance. Switzerland and Liechtenstein are not part of the European Union. Nevertheless there is an ongoing integration process in the international region, which has been calling for profound statistical data.

However, regional statistical data – systematically collected and comparatively edited – as a basis for profound decision-making were not available for a long time. Due to the great demand for such data first attempts at cooperation between the statistical departments of Switzerland, Austria, the Principality of Liechtenstein, and Germany were made after. The present project was set up to fill the informational gap with respect to the labour market. The project was initiated and funded by EURES-Bodensee. EURES (European Employment Service) is a programme of the European Union with the main aim of intensifying cooperation in the European labour market.²

1.2 Basic Conditions

As a result of its cross-border nature labour market monitoring in the International Area of Lake Constance has distinctive conditions:

- In contrast to regional labour market monitoring within one country, the collection of comparable data is more difficult in an international context.
- An area situated in a border region has an informational disadvantage.
- Of special interest are data unique to a border region, like cross border commuters.

¹ For a description see LARSEN et al. (2005).

² Altogether there are 20 EURES border-regions. In those regions, unions, employers' federations, and labour administrations cooperate to bring down barriers in cross-border labour markets. EURES-Bodensee – founded in 2003 – is the youngest of these cross-border partnerships.

- The Swiss partners involved in the project have their main focus on evaluating the effects of the Bilateral Treaties with the European Union.³
- Because of financial constraints the project has to rely on secondary data.
- Cooperation of four countries can make simple things difficult. Different accounting systems or working cultures influence the project.

2 The Need for a Labour Market Monitoring in a Border Region

2.1 Informational Disadvantages in Border Regions

National borders constitute constraints not only on the free flow of goods, services, and labour but also on information. This is true in particular for information about the labour market: National statistics often give a blurred picture of border regions. One example is that quite frequently cross-border commuters are neglected in statistics about employed persons measured at residence, due to data limitations. In our region, with more than 30.000 employees commuting, the impact can be substantial. If, for example, these commuters are neglected, an employment rate at residence will be too small. The workforce is underestimated.

Information existing in the foreign country often simply is not used. One reason is that more effort has to be exerted in collecting the necessary information. A simple example: In order to find data on one single topic many more statistical offices have to be contacted.⁴ Another important reason is that national labour market institutions providing and using information about the labour market have a different focus: A job seeker approaching the labour market institution in the German part of the Lake Constance Area will be sent to jobs far away in Germany, if no jobs are available within the German part of the Lake Constance area. The opportunities the Swiss labour market offers are not in their prime focus.

The primary objective of the project therefore is to provide information in order to raise awareness of the common labour market and to increase cross boarder flexibility.

2.2 The Need for Data Unique to a Border Region

A border region has not only an informational disadvantage but also a demand for distinct data. With regard to *European integration* and the *Bilateral Treaties*, data on cross-border commuting are highly relevant.

Their relevance stems also from the fact that in some parts of our region they make up a large part of employment: In Liechtenstein 45% of employees are cross-border commuters, in some Swiss parts up to 10%. In sharp contrast is the Austrian region: More than 14.000 people commute to their workplace across the border. About every tenth employee living in the Austrian part commutes. Monitoring the development of cross-border commuting is therefore an important part of our project. Again, data does exist, but in order

³ Although Switzerland is a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) the Swiss people decided in 1992 not to join the European Economic Area (EEA). However, Switzerland went into negotiations with the EU over special relations. The *Bilateral Treaties I* include agreements on people's mobility, air traffic, agriculture, technical mobility obstacles, research, and public procurement functions. These agreements came into force on 1st June 2002. The *Bilateral Treaties II* include Switzerland's entry to the Schengen and Dublin Agreements (e.g. ZIMMERMANN 2000)

⁴ Fortunately, in all four countries of the Lake Constance Area the same language, German, is spoken.

to get an overview of commuting we have to collect data from eight different sources. These include existing commuting statistics, census data, and administrative data of migration offices and fiscal authorities. Further, we included own estimations. Figure 1 gives an overview of commuting in our area.

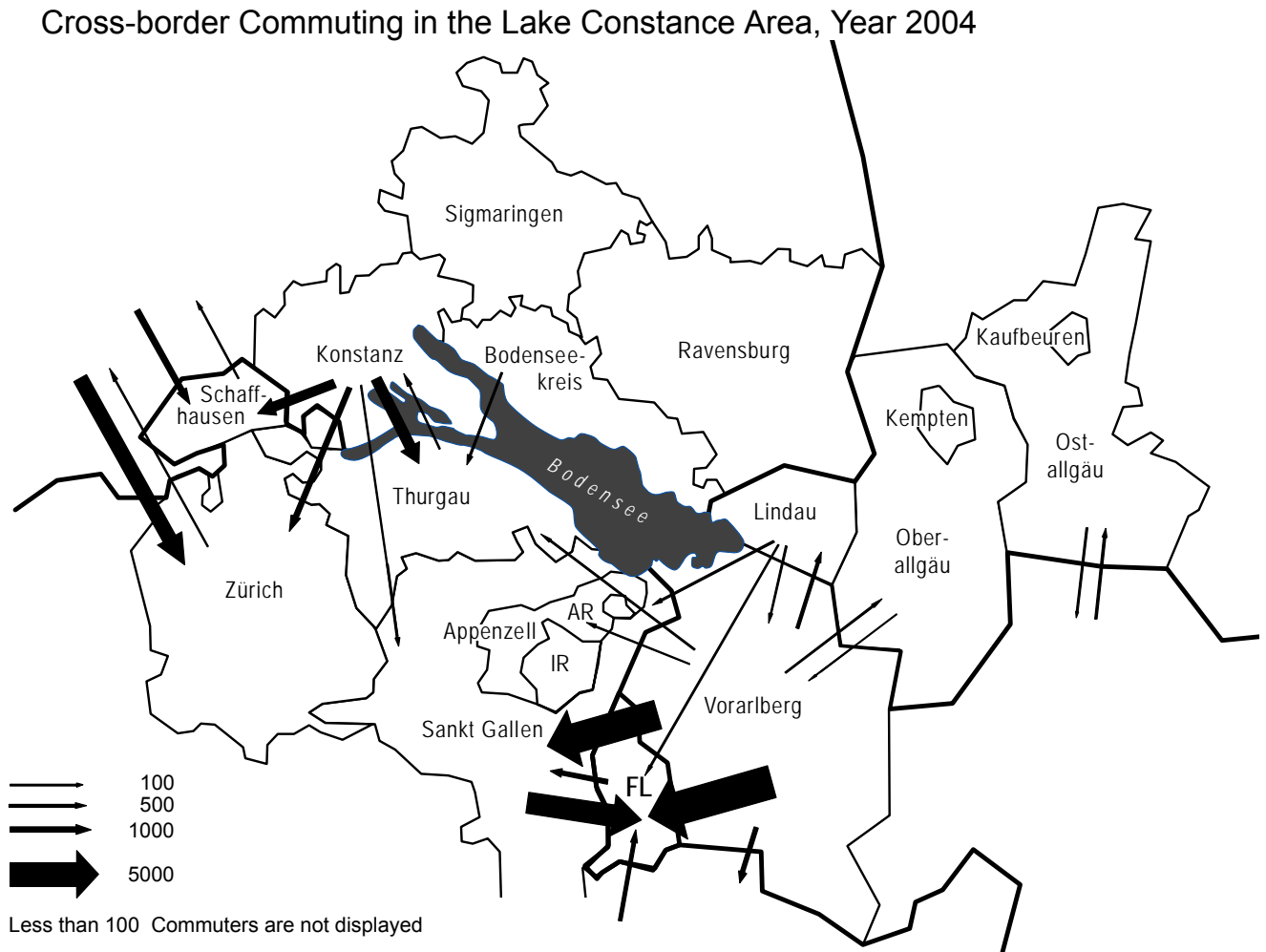


Figure 1: Results of the Monitoring Approach in the Lake Constance (Bodensee) Area

2.3 Evaluation of Cross-Border Programmes?

A further objective is to provide reliable data as a basis for political decision making and evaluation of cross-border programmes. Thereby the main focus is on projects of the EURES-Bodensee network. One such programme “Winter im Schnee, Sommer am See” is aimed at raising flexibility in the labour market for jobs in tourism: Job seekers get an incentive to work in the Austrian Alps in winter and at the German lake shores in summer, when demands are high. With the data it is possible to show the impacts of the programme.

3 Features of the Monitoring Approach in the Lake Constance Area

3.1 Dissemination of Information

Central to our approach is the provision and dissemination of relevant information about the labour market to a wide audience in an easily accessible way. This is done primarily through our website. At the heart of the website is a geographic information system (GIS). With GIS you can link information to the different regions. Indicators of the labour market are visualized in a very good way. Without having to study tables with data, users get an impression quickly. For a deeper or broader analysis the users also find tables with data and articles or are invited to contact us for further information. The data on the website is updated once a month.

Other media include printed publication of articles, brochures and flyers.⁵ The link between those publications is that we always try to keep things short and simple as well as we try to visualize our results.

3.2 Harmonization of Existing Data

In our labour market monitoring approach we almost exclusively rely on secondary data.⁶ It is mostly due to financial restrictions. This raises the issue of comparability. Between the four countries exist wide discrepancies in definitions and data collection practices. Even though all four countries take part in the European Labour Force Survey we cannot use this data.⁷ Our region is too small and data stemming from the survey are only updated once a year. Furthermore, being a border region we need data on specific topics like commuting.

Therefore we attach much importance to these methodological issues. These are constantly discussed with a board of experts. For harmonizing the data we undertake several approaches:

- documentation of the differences / choosing the most appropriate statistics,
- qualitative description of the direction of the bias,
- time series analysis, and
- estimations based on survey data.

The first step was to develop a raster containing different criteria to describe the underlying data generating processes (DGPs) of the statistics. This allows us to get a good overview of the differences in the statistics and to choose the most appropriate national statistics with regard to comparability. The systematic selection is an important part of the harmonization process: We found out that in publications in the cross-border context often not the most appropriate statistics with regard to comparability are used. The most important criteria in the raster are certainly "*population of the statistic*" and "*definition of attributes*", but even when the statistics have the same definition of the population or attributes they can vary substantially due to differences in the data collection process (administrative data / difference in surveys). Therefore we included criteria like "*type of*

⁵ Further information can be found at the web site "<http://www.statistik.euregiobodensee.org>".

⁶ We use all available data. Mainly they stem from the labour market offices and statistical bureaus.

⁷ For issues concerning comparability of the European Labour Force Survey see HETHEY (2006).

data collection".⁸ Further criteria focus on accessibility (referring to topics like responsible institution or updating).

As a second step we created a documentation for the user. This documentation contains the definitions of the indicators, data sources, and two further topics "comparability" and "harmonisation". These topics explain in which respect comparisons are possible and what steps for harmonization have been undertaken. Even though the data is never fully comparable the user gets information about the direction of possible biases and the steps we undertook for harmonization.

For harmonization purposes we only rarely use own estimation. If necessary we created our own classifications. This was the case for example with unemployment and job vacancies according to job categories.⁹ A further way to harmonize is to focus on the development of different indicators over time, since this mitigates the problems of comparability.

To sum up our work regarding the comparability mostly consists of creating a documentation, informing the user and in publishing the most appropriate statistics in the most appropriate way.

3.3 Participation of a Board of Experts

For the realization of the project a board of experts has been implemented. Altogether eleven experts are part of the board. Those experts descend from the different statistic offices, labour bureaus of the boarding regions, and one scientific institute. The board of experts meets three to four times a year. The treated topics are:

- clarification of methodological questions,
- the conceptual approach,
- change over specific topics in national statistical data, and
- analyzing and interpreting the data.

Moreover the experts are at the disposal the whole year for the realization of the project as qualified counterparts.

All the alterations in the national statistical systems as well as the actual data enter the project through the board of experts. Additional to that, there is the possibility to integrate special analysis in the project.

⁸ A further criterion is "changes in the DGPs over time". This is especially important and may cause considerable problems, since most data on unemployment depend on the design of the unemployment insurance. This insurance is subject to frequent changes.

⁹ Even though there are international classifications, national labour market institutions use at a regional level their own classification, which are not comparable.

4 Conclusions and Perspectives

Two factors influence the labour market monitoring in the international area of Lake Constance, the first being the internationality of the project and the second being the reliance on secondary data. Taken together this means that much effort has to be put in work concerning methodological questions about the comparability of the existing statistics. Further the internationality raises demand for distinct data, such as on cross border commuters.

In each country different labour market policies are in place. One advantage is therefore that one can learn from an evaluation and a comparison of these different policies. This is one area the project will deepen on. More insides on the effect of the different policies are to be gained.

Further work will be on specific topics. Knowledge about commuting will be deepened. Another topic is the labour market for academics.

Relying on secondary data imposes a constraint on the questions to be answered. Further the project is mainly concerned with the present developments. Desirable are predictions of the future evolutions. Therefore the perspective is to implement an international survey to overcome the data restrictions and to predict future labour demand.

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