
Between partnership and symbolism

The role of citizens in European regional policy

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By

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Preface

About one year ago a university curriculum brought me to the picturesque village of Haarzuilens, near Utrecht. The village is famous for its Gothic fairy-tale castle that is visited by a great number of gazing tourists. My job was to look beyond the scenics and discover how contemporary spatial plans for this area were developed. What I found may not come as a surprise. The shadow of the castle was a 'battlefield' for villagers, local firms, environmental organizations and authorities. At stake was the future of the area. The inhabitants of Haarzuilens and the nearby other town were prominently visible in the debates on the shaping and implementing of the plans. However, a thin line between agreement and disagreement with the responsible authorities existed. It was from this moment on my interest was sparked. Therefore I decided to dedicate my study to the relation between, space, citizens and elites. During my internship at the Dutch Government Service for Land and Water Management I first connected European regional policy and citizen participation to each other. Eventually this led to this research.

With this thesis that lies before you, I conclude my master programme Geo-Communication at the department of Human Geography and Planning. I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor Dr. Leo Paul, for giving me the space to follow my interests. Due to his scholarly remarks I was further challenged to push my research forward, also his enthusiasm gave me the feeling I was on the right track. Furthermore, I am very grateful for the input that was given to me by the experts I consulted and the respondents. Their professional insights are of essential value to this research. My thanks also go out to everyone who showed interest in the research process. I especially want to name Aart Kolle, Sabine Houwen and Ralph Plug for reading the drafts and the many fascinating conversations about my thesis and life. Next to this I want mention my mother and father for their everlasting support. Last but not least I want speak out my deep gratitude to my partner and princess, Nora Leijen. Her comments to the drafts, cares and positive mindset were indispensable.

Wander Meulemans

Utrecht, June 2011

People As Places As People

To answer a question
It'll probably take more
If you're already there
Well then you probably don't know
Well we were the people
That we wanted to know
And we're the places that we wanted to go
It's hard to get hold of
And hard to let go
Always something we look for
From the day we were born
Instead we're the people that we wanted to know
And we're the places that we wanted to go

[...]

Always asking a question
And I don't want to know
Like the wind across strings
That had finally let go
And the people you love
But you didn't quite know
They're the places that you wanted to go
Bark at the neighbors
And then bark at the dog
Sniffing the wind
Whimpering for someone to know
But we were the people that we wanted to know
And we're the places that we wanted go

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Abstract

Since the 50's Western spatial planning gradually shifted from being an expert driven process towards an interactive process in which various stakeholders from civil society contribute. In order to bring plans closer to the ground the grassroots input of citizens was therefore also considered to be desirable (Friedman, 1969, Taylor, 1999 and Smith, 2005). With *the ladder of citizen participation* by Arnstein (1969) the paradox of citizen participation was addressed. Involving citizens often was conceived to be problematic and the usefulness of the grassroots input was hard to retrieve. Nevertheless, due to essential social changes from the past twenty years, societies became more interdependent (Castels, 2000). Contemporary plan-making therefore is supposed to adapt to the 'bottom-up' and 'horizontal', governance processes that are on the rise. Social movements are usually rooted in cities and regions. Thus, citizen participation is often associated with these levels of government. This does not mean higher levels of government have to ignore this trend. They are able to give a direction to it or even implement it themselves. The level of the European Union (EU) is therefore the main focus of my research. This perspective is interesting because the EU fails to connect to its citizens for a quite some time now. Next to this the EU draws up regional policy to improve the economic and social well-being of regions. Regions can be seen as a bridge that brings the people of Europe closer to the European institutes. EU regional policy can play a role in this process. However, can citizens meaningfully contribute to this policy? This research endeavors to clear up the indistinctness regarding this topic. By means of a qualitative study an answer is given on the following main research question:

What is the position of citizen participation in European regional policy and how does the EU deal with this in relation towards its member states?

For this research citizen participation is defined with the four elements of Creighton (2005). Citizen participation (1) applies to administrative decisions; (2) is about interaction between citizen and government; (3) it is an organized process to involve citizens and (4) citizens have some level of impact on the decision that is being made. Furthermore the ideas of Pröpper and Steenbeek (1999) about interactive policy-making are also taken into account. Citizens are to be involved as early as possible. Also policy has to be developed in an open collaboration by all concerned actors. Interactive policy-making is only successful if power is devolved to the participants. With these basics in mind a literature study was carried out. This study is complemented with in-depth interviews that were held with various policy officers from the European Commission in Brussels. Also other insiders of EU regional policy were interviewed. The regional perspective was tackled by conducting two case studies. One elaborates on the Veluwe lakes in the Netherlands and the other is about the Southeast Cohesion Region in the Czech Republic. The choice for an old and new EU member state is based on the paper of Maier (2001). He argues that citizen participation is firmly rooted in West-European democracies. This sharply contrast with the new East-European democracies, where civic involvement in policy-making is lagging. During the interviews the citizen participation in EU regional policy is extensively discussed.

The research reveals various interesting different insights about citizen participation in EU regional policy. Some respondents hold a positive attitude, stating the EU needed to be more

locally active and more open to citizens. Others were more reserved and believed regional policy was to be developed by means of a dialogue between the Union and key-players. These differences show, like also is derived from theory, that the perspectives on citizen participation from a European level is an essentially contested concept. The following general answer is given to the main research question: there is hardly any space for citizens to participate in EU regional policy development. Citizens are able to contribute by means of the regular consultation process. However, it's unclear how the input contributes to the final decisions. The consultation process is also hardly used by individual citizens and is primarily a mechanism for other governments and key players to contribute. If related to the concept of Creighton (2005) and Pröpper & Steenbeek (1999) consultation is seen as a passive form or non-interactive form of involvement. Citizens are also not assumed to play a role in the designing of Operational Programmes. Various respondents don't think this is useful, due to the degree of complexity. Citizens do contribute to the implementation of the various Community Initiatives like INTERREG and URBAN. Yet, this sort of involvement is understood to be hands-on and does not really relate to policymaking. Although European legislation obliges member states to take the *partnership principle* into account when developing regional policy, the Commission can't effectively monitor the practical proceedings. Who participates and by what means is up to the member states. The Commission therefore can't force member states to involve citizens in regional policy development and implementation. Respondents from the Commission do however state they are improving the monitoring mechanisms of partnership. EU regionally policy heavily leans on communication (e.g. promoting EU symbols on project signs). Both cases studies confirm the above. Citizens hardly know the EU is involved in their region. The Dutch and Czech regional officials don't perceive this is an issue. They state that participation has to come from inside regions to be successful. On that account EU involvement is not desirable. Next to this, the cases studies also confirmed the thesis of Maier (2001). In the Dutch case the level of participation was high, while in the Czech case it was lagging. An East-West divide is assumable. However, it is important to stress some Central and Eastern countries, like Slovenia and Poland are making significant progress.

Under the current circumstances I doubt if EU regional policy contributes to the closing of the gap between the Union and its citizens. The partnership principle is too vaguely defined and fairly free of obligations to implement. EU regional policy consequently will remain to be controlled by the elites. Experts will continue to 'rule the roost'. The current talk of regional policy being 'close to the ground' or 'stimulating local involvement' seems to be merely a symbolic feature of the policy.

Chapter 1: Introduction

We know instinctively that the state is often too inhuman, monolithic and clumsy to tackle our deepest social problems. We know that the best ideas come from the ground up, not the top down. [...] We know that when you give people and communities more power over their lives, more power to come together and work together to make life better - great things happen." (The Guardian, 2010) - David Cameron (The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom) on 'the Big Society' ²

This liberal approach is a part of an everlasting fundamental political discussion about the relationship between citizens and government. Should the scope of government be limited to guarantee the personal freedoms of the common man? Or should the government actively look after society, thus making decisions in the name of the common good? Of course, no unambiguous answers to these questions exist. The dynamics between citizens and government are constantly changing and are heavily dependant on the dominant political discourse of a nation state. Nowadays, citizen participation is a growing part of governmental decision-making, mostly in Western democracies. Citizen participation can even be seen as the 'new way to go' for administrations when developing policy (see Alberts et al, 2008; Jansen-Jansen et al, 2009 and Ammås, 2010).

In broad terms it can be said that the rationale behind the turn towards citizens is to be found in the changing spatial-political context from the last decades. During the 70's the importance of Keynesianism decreased. As a result the welfare states of that time rescaled their activities to sub-national levels (Brenner, 2004). Decentralization caused civil society to be more aware of policy issues. In the course of time the social context also considerably changed. Firstly, citizens became more assertive in relation to the government. The concerns of citizens increasingly conflicted with those of the local and regional governments. Secondly, where national governments chose to fragmented their power, societies became more interdependent and interconnected. Sociologist Castells (2000) describes the latter as the 'network society'. Due to the changing circumstances traditional top-down policy development failed to connect to the concerns of various actors.³ A new balance in the interaction between citizens and government was needed. The role of government shifts from 'governing' to 'governance' in which the government must collaborate with various actors, including citizens. Citizens are to be empowered by means of devolution and transparency. Policies that draw upon the grassroots input of citizens would be more realistic, efficient and effective: because it takes into account their views, wishes, expectations, and complaints (Dreijerink, Kruize & van Kamp, 2008, pp. 5-6).

Citizen participation is not only a local and regional phenomenon. Depending on the administrative structure and culture of a country, national governments also influence or even

² The aim of the Big Society is to create a climate in the UK that empowers local people and communities. Evidently, the initiative is also heavily criticized. The government would be attempting to dignify its cuts agenda by using volunteers as a cut-price alternative.

³ Actors can be groups of people, organizations, institutions and individuals. Actors have a stake (or share) in a particular issue. The similar term 'stakeholder' is also used in this context.

implement these practices. Yet, the European Union (EU) also takes interest in involving citizens to their cause:

“Europe is facing stark choices in today's interdependent world. Either we work together to rise to the challenges. Or we condemn ourselves to irrelevance. [...] A Europe that puts people at the heart of the policy agenda and projects European values and interests in the world. A Europe that nurtures new sources of growth and drives forward smart regulation of sound markets that work for people. A Europe of freedom and solidarity.” (European Commission, 2009a) - José Manuel Barroso (EU Commission President)

Barroso's remark shows that the EU spares no effort into pushing forward the staggering process of European integration. Successful integration can only take place if citizens support this process. The Union, and indeed the member states, realized that the communication towards citizens about the future of the EU was ineffective. Furthermore, they didn't listen to citizens when policy was developed. Therefore the programmes do not have grassroots support (AER, 2006, p. 4). Or to put it in other words; the EU seemingly failed to adapt to the rising network society.

One of the most significant objectives of the European Union is to reduce regional disparities with help of an active regional policy. Large infrastructural projects, restructuring declining industrial areas and diversifying rural areas are examples of the contents of this policy. The regional policy is developed at the level of the EU and is implemented by the member states. Due to decentralization, EU regional policy is increasingly implemented by regions and localities. Today, economic, social and territorial cohesion is a significant part of the European agenda. One third of the total EU budget is spent on regional development (Pinder & Usherwood, 2007, p.90 and Addink, 2009, p.5). During a web chat the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy stressed the importance of a regional and local connection:

We believe that Cohesion Policy is one of the most visible contributions to the quality of life of citizens [...] Partnership is one of the key principles in Cohesion Policy. The role of regional and local partners is crucial to the implementation of Cohesion Policy. (European Commission, 2011c) - Johannes Hahn (EU Commissioner for Regional Policy)

European regional policy therefore could also contribute to the closing of the gap between the Union and the citizens. From a European perspective regions can be seen as a bridge that connects the institutions in Brussels to citizens. This is essentially underpinned by the argument of proximity. Regional authorities are close to citizens and are familiar to local circumstances and mentalities. They are able to carry the views of the citizens into the European arena and so empower their citizens to engage in European issues. Also they can bring European policy alive, by providing practical examples about how European policies relate to citizens in their own regions. However, citizens are understood not to be interested in European affairs. Their focus is more local. Connecting citizens to the supranational institutes is therefore seen as a very complex process (AER, 2006, pp. 4-5). Regions, and subsequently regional policy, could indeed play a role in this, but does the EU actually makes use of this

opportunity to connect to citizens? Both topics, citizen participation and European regional policy, are central to this research.

The main reason for combining these topics can be traced back to a university curriculum and an internship at the Government Service for Land and Water Management (a branch of the Dutch national government). In both situations I studied citizen participation in regional development and came into contact with various actors who were involved in this practice. Especially during my internship I noticed several spatial programmes, which also intended to include citizens, were co-financed by Structural Funds of the EU. From this point on I wondered if any relation existed between EU regional policy and citizen participation. Subsequently, several experts confirmed that little is known about 'if' or 'how' citizens are embedded in EU regional policy. An initial review of literature showed that the EU pays attention to participation, but calls this 'partnership'. Moreover, it became clear that much research has been carried out by political scientists, administration experts and communications experts on the usefulness and necessity of citizen participation. Sociologists, human geographers and planners mostly contributed to this with research about the (spatial) formation of civic groups and their influence on government policies. Yet, an encompassing study about citizen participation within EU regional policy development was not discovered. Consequently, these topics offer an interesting perspective for further investigation.

Citizen participation and regional policy independently led to lively and sometimes fierce debates among scholars and policy officials. This research attempts to bring together these fields of interest. For the main dilemma is, to reveal 'if citizens have a voice in EU regional policy', I chose to focus on the EU, or notably the perspective of the European Commission. Indeed, contemporary policy issues are not solely restricted to one administrative level anymore but are situated at different territorial levels. This is especially felt by the EU institutions, who always act in a dialogue with the member states. For instance, it's not unthinkable that national, regional or even local perspectives on citizen participation may influence the current debate on opportunities for participation in the European Union and vis-à-vis. For that reason this study also attempts to look beyond the perspective of the EU, by taking into account the perspective of member states. Firstly, policy documentation will be examined on the presence of citizen participation. Furthermore, the opinions of professionals who are actively engaged in regional policy will deepen these findings. Among other things, the professionals are asked to share their opinions on the gap between the EU and its citizens, the use of citizen participation in regional policy and how this relates to governance issues. The results are used to answer the following main research question:

What is the position of citizen participation in European regional policy and how does the EU deal with this in relation towards its member states?

This research aims to add new scientific knowledge to the field of European Regional Studies. The main research question is related to these themes: Firstly, *rescaling and governance*, the relation between national and regional policy and supranational policy. Secondly, *citizenship*, the relationship between an individual and a particular territory. And thirdly, *European regional diversity*, citizen participation as a placed based phenomenon. During this research

the views of professionals are used, to create an impression, or a ‘look behind the scenes’, on this topic from a European perspective. For one thing, an insight is to be given on the current practice and thinking on citizen participation in regional policy. For another thing, conflicts of interest can be addressed. Possible conflicts can arise within the EU institutes or can have a multi-level dimension. The answer to the main research question is derived from a qualitative data analysis. This method ensures that the theme of citizen participation is comprehensively discussed. By doing so, the reasons behind various opinions can be uncovered.

The research is structured in the following manner: In the second chapter the background, concept, and evolution of citizen participation in the spatial development are introduced. The chapter concludes with the current ideas on participation and connects this dimension of administrative scales. Scale also played a role when selecting literature for this chapter. Seen from a regional context, spatial development includes two fields of action: One is called regional policy: aid and other assistance to regions, which are less economically developed, are central to regional policy. Geographically spoken, regional policy is often characterized as a national or supranational phenomenon. The other field of action is called regional planning: this local and regional phenomenon deals with issues of planning activities. Notably it applies to urban or rural planning (e.g. restructuring city neighborhoods or the construction of infrastructure). Regional planning is generally stated to be an Anglo-Saxon definition. Although citizens involvement has the interest from policymakers on a higher scales of government, literature about it is hard to find. Therefore it is important to stress that the literature for this chapter is predominantly about participation from the field of planning. The third chapter presents the methodology which underpins the empirical research. Next to the conceptual framework, the strategy, design and methods of the research are discussed. Also the sample of respondents is justified in this chapter.

The findings of the empirical research will be elaborated in the upcoming chapters. The fourth chapter contains the findings from EU documentation. Part one is concerned with the relationship between the European Union and it citizens. It explains the search of the Union to find an audience for its policies. Part two deals with the evolution of EU regional policy. The shift to competitiveness and the role of partnership are discussed. After this an idea on the future of the policy is given. A short elaboration on the rise of territorial cohesion will conclude this chapter. The literature findings will be deepened in the fifth chapter. The results of the in-depth interviews are unveiled using various themes. These are, Europe and it citizens, citizen participation in EU regional policy and citizen participation and EU governance. Subsequently, two cases studies on the Dutch Veluwe lakes and the South-East Cohesion Region in the Czech Republic will complement the findings with practical insights. In the sixth chapter, the most imported results are highlighted. It also contains a comprehensive answer to the main research question. This is followed by proposing recommendations for a future research agenda. A reflection on the findings will conclude this research (Table 1).

Table 1: Thesis structure

Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Contextual background
Chapter 3: Methodology
Chapter 4: Findings from EU documentation
Chapter 5: Findings from in-depth interviews
Chapter 6: Conclusion and reflection

Chapter 2: The context of citizen participation

2.1 Main concepts behind citizen participation

The relationship between citizen and government has always been a much debated theme. Within social sciences this debate can be connected to two concepts. The concept of 'citizenship' is the first to be named. To put it simply this concept refers to the residents of a particular territory. Territory is usually conceived as spatial unit where certain regulations are applied (e.g. a nation state). In a legal sense, citizenship is about these residents who are obliged to hold themselves to the regulations that apply for this nation state. Residents, in this case, are called citizens. The nation states administrators' design and implement regulations. In a more modern view of the concept citizens also possess certain rights. Citizenship is also understood in terms of actively participating in society. The concept is therefore closely connected to the concept of civil society (Low, 2005, pp. 444-450, also see Mann, 1988; Smith, 1989; Marston, 1990 and Kearns, 1992). The modern views on the concept of 'civil society' can be traced back to the Enlightenment (1650-1800). It consisted of utopian ideas about how people could relate to a community. Nowadays the concept represents a distinctive way of social action by groups of citizens. It is often characterized as a social sphere that exists apart from other spheres, like the government, the market economy and the individuals' private life. However, symbiotic relations between the spheres exist. Therefore the social sphere can not be seen separately from the other spheres. These social activities are to be found in the public life of associations, social movements, networks and other sorts of civic initiatives (Kocka, 2009, also see Hall, 1998 and Keane, 2006). Both concepts are lively debated to this day. This is mainly the case among social scientists like, philosophers, jurists, sociologists, human geographers and political scientists. It is generally assumed that the citizenship and civil society are closely linked to the fundamentals of democracy (Driver & Maddrell, 1996 pp. 371-372).

2.2 Representative democracy and direct democracy

Two forms of democracy need to be explained in order to gain a better understanding of citizen participation. These forms are 'representative democracy' and 'direct democracy'. Representative democracy, also called parliamentary- or indirect democracy, is the best known form of democracy. In this form an elected government and a parliament control the nation state. The parliament monitors the use of this power. The government and parliament consists out of politicians that are periodically elected by the citizens of the nation state. During these periodic elections, government and parliament are held accountable by the electorate for their actions. This ultimately can lead to a reelection or to changes in the administration of a nation state. A direct democracy consists of more than only periodic elections. In this situation a government wants to interact with citizens, to come to consensus on policy issues. Public meetings, referendums and petitions are examples of the direct democracy practice. With these instruments citizens have more influence on public issues and are more directly involved as a counterweight of a government (Mostert, 2003, pp. 180-183).

The ideas of Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) are often cited when debating both views of democracy. Economist Schumpeter is a main representative of representative democracy. He states: "[...] *the role of the people is to produce a government*

[...]” (Schumpeter, 1942 , p. 269). In his opinion citizens should play a very limited role in the political process. Most political issues are assumed to be so remote from the daily lives of ordinary people, that people are not able to make sound judgments about these issues. Direct democracy is even seen as a danger to the basic values of democracy. Decisions should be taken by leaders that are elected by the citizens (Schumpeter, 1942, p. 269). Philosopher Rousseau is important to the foundations of direct democracy. Based on the ideas of another thinker from the Enlightenment, John Locke (1632–1704), Rousseau argues in his publication ‘*Du contrat social*’ that participation guarantees freedom for everyone and is an essential part of democracy. It is assumed that the will of citizens is acceptable to everyone. Therefore the citizens must decide, not the political leaders. Participation is intrinsically approached and it is not only about producing a government. Furthermore Rousseau stresses that the implementation of direct democracy ensures good government (Michels, 2004, pp 2-4). In the narrow sense agreements about the essentials of democracy don’t exist. Interpretations of the concept of democracy must be seen as plural. One may perceive it as a concept that stands for economic equality. Another may perceive it as a concept that should maximize personal freedoms. There is no right and no wrong. The same applies to the different views on participation that are shown in table 2. Despite the difference, both views complement also each other. However the question remains in what way participation, as an essentially contested concept, contributes to the concept of democracy? Again there is no straightforward answer. One can say this is always a choice to be made, usually by authorities. The implementation of direct democracy therefore differs from country to country (Box 1).

Table 2: Two different views on democracy and participation, 2011

Representative democracy	Direct democracy
Minimal impact of participation	Participation as an essential element of democracy
Political leaders make decisions	Citizens make decisions
Participation is instrumental	Participation is expressive
Massive participation is not desirable	Massive participation is desirable
No relation between participation and good government	Participation is a way of ensuring good government

Source: own arrangement based on Michels, 2004, p. 4

2.3 The emergence of civil rights

Historically, the possibilities for citizens to participate were limited. The Enlightenment (1650-1800) changed this. Since 1700 certain segments of society, most notably the bourgeoisie received a limited number of civil rights. They had the right to make use of the courts, the right to public security and could not be arrested without reason. The rise of capitalism significantly complicated the relationships between state, market and civil society. A so-called ‘sphere of struggle’ occurred since 1800. Citizens demanded more rights. This struggle gave civil rights a new dimension. In the nineteenth century it was largely about political rights (e.g. the freedom of speech). In the twentieth century it was more about socio-economic rights (e.g. the right to work or healthcare). Over time the rights became available to an increasing section of society. Nation states guaranteed a certain degree of socio-economic welfare of their inhabitants. The European welfare states were established during this period (more on this topic see e.g. Marshall, 1950; Urry, 1981 and Mann, 1988). From the mid-twentieth century citizens also were more involved in public affairs. For example, this also applies to the public policy area of spatial planning (Day, 1997, p. 421; Irvin & Stansbury, p. 55).

Box 1: Direct democracy in Switzerland

Switzerland is an example of a nation state where direct democracy complements representative democracy. By means of referenda, Swiss citizens are able to submit initiatives (popular referendum) and influence government policy proposals (optional referendum). The submission of a citizens' initiative may be applied after collecting 100,000 signatures. Then the electorate must vote to accept or reject the initiative. Various groups like, unions, anti-immigration groups, environmental groups and established political parties use this form of direct democracy to put issues on the political agenda (Reich, 2008, pp. 18-21). When Swiss citizens want to hold a referendum on government policy proposals 50.000 signatures are required. If this occurs, the parliament partially loses some control over the political process. Thus, political agreement can already be achieved, but the electorate may still call for a final decision. The decision of the electorate has a veto function. Like the sword of Damocles it continuously hangs above the political actions of the government. This situation ensures that political actors have a cooperative attitude towards civil society. Hence it's customary to consult all parties that might threaten a proposal in a so-called 'pre-parliamentary phase'. Bargaining to achieve consensus is therefore important within the Swiss democracy. Next to various interest groups, Swiss cantons are also able participate in this. These regional administrations enjoy a large degree of autonomy within the state of Switzerland (Trechsel & Sciarini, 1998, p. 101-102).

Referenda in Switzerland are used on a broad scope of topics. The accession to the European Union (1992), the registered partnership for same-sex couples (2005), the Schengen Agreement (2005, figure 1), the ban on minarets (2009) and a ban on gun ownership (2011) are just a few of many examples (Schweizerische Bundeskanzle, 2011). The use of direct democracy in Switzerland offers the citizens the opportunity to actively take part in political decision making. Individuals don't have the need to represent themselves by a political party for their personal beliefs to count. The opponents of direct democracy in Switzerland argue that due to the 'pre-parliamentary phase', political actors are limited in their actions. Politicians are afraid of the "tyranny of the majority". Therefore the main goal is only to prevent a referendum from taking place (Trechsel & Sciarini, 1998, p. 102 and Reich, 2008, p. 26).

Figure 1: Swiss poster against the Schengen Treaty, 2005



Source: Readmore, 2011

2.4 Participation in spatial planning: Three paradigms of planning since 1950

Since the 50's it was no longer assumed that the creation of spatial plans was a policy area that was reserved for experts only. A critical point in this thinking was the growing awareness that not all policy had to be based on rational decision making. The involvement of other actors such as citizens, gave the development of spatial plans a new perspective. Nowadays the process of planning is also seen as a communicative process in which arguments are 'politically weighted'. This paragraph will elaborate about the changes in the thinking on spatial plan development.

In the Kuhnian sense three paradigms of planning are recognized (Table 3). These changes are described from an Anglo-American context but also were influential elsewhere (Taylor, 1999, p. 327).

Spatial planning stretches back into history as far as the European Renaissance, arguably even further back than that. Spatial planning, if there was any, was a core-business of government. The government was represented by master builders and architects who developed and implemented plans (Taylor, 1999, pp.

330-331). This was the basis of the first paradigm of planning. It is characterized as a phase of 'command and control' that was vertically dominated by the government. During the reconstruction after World War II, urban planners and architects developed 'blueprints' for residential environments. This was done on behalf of the central state (Smith, 2005, p. 41). The development of a new town or a neighborhood was regarded to be a 'functional art' in which rational design was guiding (Taylor, 1999, pp. 330-331). Spatial decisions were based on rationality, as the world was seen as a static place of universal principles. It was men like Le Corbusier who determined how space was arranged. The postwar development of infrastructure and strategic location of new residential areas are examples of the first paradigm (López, 2007, p.3).

The second paradigm of planning emerged in the mid-50's. This paradigm is also called the phase of the planning of systems (Smith, 2005, pp. 41-42). Several scientists (notably the Chicago School) contested the idea that cities were spatial units that had constant relations with their surroundings. Urban space needed to be seen from the perspective of social and economic activities. Instead of a focus on an 'end-state' or 'blueprints', it implied that planning is more about ever changing 'social processes'. 'The art of planning' changed into an analytical science. Environments like regions and cities were now perceived to be empirically analyzed on possible relationships between locations and activities (Taylor, 1999, pp. 332-335). It was furthermore acknowledged that private actors also have something to say about spatial plans. Consensus between the public and private actors was seen as desirable. Yet, this was not regarded as a necessity (Smith, 2005, p.42).

Due to scholarly critiques on planning processes and the emergence of social movements', the third paradigm of planning arose in the late 60's. The main theme is consultation between the government, market and civil society (Smith, 2005, pp. 43-44). Planner and scholar John Friedmann was one of the first persons who expressed critique on the planning process. According to him the planning process is dominated by bureaucratic procedures. Plans got stuck in preparing and proposing phases. Hence, many plans were not implemented or were poorly attuned to actual social issues. Friedmann proposed to shift the focus of planning from decisions to action. Politicians and planners have to collaborate more with civil society to

Table 3: Three paradigms of planning, 2005

	<i>Nature of planning</i>	<i>Planning techniques</i>	<i>Predominance in planning</i>	<i>Division of power</i>	<i>Assumed nature of relations</i>	<i>Underlying philosophy</i>
<i>First paradigm</i>	Fixed vision of future (designed 'blueprint')	Master plans, zoning	State planners	Government dominated	Common consensus exists	Rationalism
<i>Second paradigm</i>	Flexible vision and specific action ('systems')	Structure plans, action plans, special development areas	Public-private partnerships	Government with private sector	Common consensus has to be built	Rationalism
<i>Third paradigm</i>	No fixed vision	Above techniques with participatory planning	Negotiation forums	Government, private sector and civil society	Conflict needs negotiation	Relativism

Source: Smith, 2005, p. 40

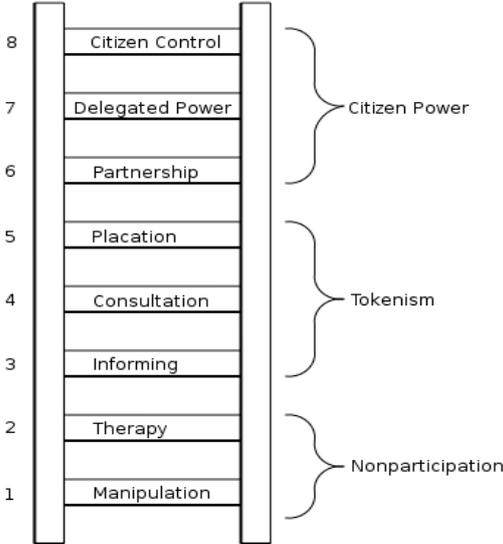
accomplish this. He calls this 'action planning' (Friedmann, 1969, p. 311-313). Simultaneously it was openly acknowledged that decisions in spatial planning were not only strictly scientific. Many decisions that were made by administrators were only politically motivated. Due to these 'value judgments' civil society increasingly questioned government policy. The involvement of citizens in spatial plan-making was therefore considered as desirable (Taylor, 1999, pp. 334). Citizens are assumed to be a source of information and collective wisdom (Burke, 1979). In addition to this, the input of citizens could lead to innovative approaches and gives planners a more accurate picture of community desires and needs. A good plan is ensured if citizen participation takes place in the early stages of the planning process. Possible delays in later stages (post hoc participation, e.g. citizen protests) are also minimized (Day, 1997, p. 425). Over time, citizens have been given an increasing role in spatial planning. This cannot simply be called a good thing. The third paradigm of planning also significantly complicated the plan-making process. Issues of consensus by negotiation and the distribution of power needed to be addressed in this dimension of planning.

2.5 Participation in spatial planning: on power and communications

Different scientific ideas contributed to the further development of citizen participation. Roughly speaking these theories are about empowerment and communication. In the following paragraph the essentials are discussed.

The substantive concept of 'the participation ladder' by Sherry Arnstein (1969) is essential to the theory on citizen participation. Central to this concept is the distribution of power. Arnstein analyzed urban development programs in the United States on citizen involvement. She did this from the perspective that a participatory process was useless if there would be no sort of 'social empowerment'. On this basis she developed a figurative ladder with eight types (or rungs) of power. Each rung represents a level of devolution of power to the people (Figure 2). The bottom rung is called 'manipulation'. Here, participation is no more than a mean to influence the public opinion. More power is granted to citizens as the ladder is climbed. The topmost rung speaks of 'citizen control'; decisions are made by the citizens themselves. However Arnstein indicates that the top rungs did not occur in her investigation. Therefore these rungs are merely a theoretical concept (Arnstein, 1969, pp. 216-217). In spite of the simplification of reality the ladder is still used today to display the paradox of citizen participation. The bottom rungs are undesirable. In a worst case scenario, citizens are then assumed to live under the rule of a manipulative government and have no means to speak freely. The topmost rungs are undesirable as well. A certain degree of government influence will always be necessary for civil society not to

Figure 2: A ladder of citizen participation, 1969



Source: Arnstein, 1969, p. 217

turn into a jungle. The paradox of citizen participation also applies when it comes to spatial planning. Participation processes should not be missed but at the same time, should not dominate the plan-making process. Citizen participation is therefore sometimes typified as the 'Achilles Heel of planning' (Day, 1997, p. 421). The three topmost rungs apply to the Swiss situation as described in box 1. Here the political elites constantly feel the pressure of civil society and the cantons.

Since the late 70's citizen participation also was picked up by communication theorists. This communicative turn in planning was called 'communicative planning theory'. Various planners and architects contributed to this theory. Among them was architect Christopher Alexander. In, 'A Pattern Language' (1977), Alexander analyzed an extensive amount of urban development programs. This led to a communication framework that could be useful to design processes. The framework consisted of a pattern with four main parts: problem, context, discussion, and solution. The input from the user is highly regarded within the pattern (Schuler, 2002). Alexander says:

[...] towns and buildings will not be able to come alive, unless they are made by all the people in society, and unless these people share a common pattern language, within which to make these buildings, and unless this common pattern language is alive itself (from: Schuler, 2002, p. 5).

The 'pattern language' represents a lively dialogue between designer and user. Spatial proposals and user's wishes and needs underpin this dialogue. Alexander did have some reservations about the involvement of citizens in plan-making. He stated citizens had to possess a certain level of technical and legal knowledge. Planners had to close this gap as an independent 'facilitator'. By mediation, facilitators had to monitor the different interests of public and private actors. Ultimately they are assumed to guide the whole process of planning (Davidoll, 1965). Citizen participation was destined to be a new and positive cornerstone for spatial planning. Achieving consensus between civil society and government was the new standard. The fundamentals of 'consensus building' lie in the work of philosopher Jürgen Habermas. In one of his most famous works, the 'theory of communicative action' (1979), Habermas states, among other things, that communication should be viewed within the perspective of a broad cultural sphere where arguments are discussed in public. Ultimately, the best arguments would prevail. Consensus can only be achieved if all involved parties commit themselves to four basic dimensions; comprehensibility, truth, rightness and truthfulness (Habermas, 1979, p.xx and Taylor, 1999, p. 335).

2.6 Participation in spatial planning: a multifaceted concept

Spatial planning is conceived as an activity where politics and technical expertise come together. Consequently, involving citizens in this context is very difficult. Unfortunately no easy solution exists. Among scholars there is little to no consensus on how citizen participation in planning should be defined and what it substantially can accomplish. On behalf of public authorities, researchers regularly conduct empirical studies on the effects of citizen participation (e.g. Day, 1997; Webler, Tuler & Krueger, 2001 and Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). These studies, often case based, usually can't be compared to each other. They therefore have a

bias to be contradicting. For example, the independent variables to measure the impact are different in each study. In addition, many studies on participation at different geographical scales are carried out. Thus, the effects of citizen participation are likely to differ when dealing with a small town or a metropolis (Day, 1997, p. 422). The way how participation is organized by governments also plays an important role. What objectives are pursued, which regulations apply and on what geographical level can decisions be made (Burke, 1979)?

General conclusions about the impact of citizen participation are therefore hard to retrieve. The theme itself can be seen as a multifaceted concept that is very complex to understand. The underlying moral debate about democracy even increases this complexity. Citizen participation is considered as an intrinsically good by some. This perspective directly leads back to the ideologies of Rousseau. Arnstein provocatively states:

“The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216).

Participation would ideologically contribute to the emancipation of the individual citizen in a civil society. By participating individuals are assumed to become more interested in general affairs and feel more connected to society (Michels, 2004, pp. 3-4). Participating citizens will see themselves as decision makers, rather than a citizen who merely tries to influence decisions. Ultimately, active citizenship should lead to a good and honorable life (e.g. Stivers, 1990, pp. 86-88). Institutionalized citizen participation would be an addition to the existing democratic system and will improve the focus of policy by aligning directly to the needs and desires of citizens. Participation will lead to bureaucratic decentralization and will strengthen the power of disadvantaged groups. Furthermore a precondition for realizing meaningful participation is geographical and social proximity between citizens and government. By doing so possible difficulties on representation can be minimized (Day, 1997, p. 425).

The ideas on public participation are also a target to criticism. How truly one wishes to give citizens a genuine role in government policy making, at the end it is simply not workable. For example, the precondition of geographical and social proximity is unfeasible. Indeed, nation states are too big and too complex to maintain face to face relationships with citizens (Stivers, 1990, p. 95). Moreover participation programs are often formulated and implemented from a government-centered perspective. Evidently, because spatial development is usually a government-led initiative. Therefore it is plausible that government officials only select groups of citizens who are already active and who want to participate. Large groups of citizens will not be involved at all (Turnhout, van Bommel & Aarts, 2008, p. 71-73). Last but not least it can also be assumed that bureaucratic decentralization will lead to democratic erosion when power is transferred to particular private parties. Hence, government policy will be open to abuse and corruption. MacNair and others (1983) even considered it as a false promise of governments. People will never have real administrative power. Legislations ensure that the influence of citizens will be limited at all times. Citizens sit in the margins between real power and powerlessness. Only governments that are struggling for survival are willing to involve

citizens.⁴ Citizens are only given a significant role if the government believes they can expand their power by means of this citizen. In this sense there is a relationship between institutional stability and the degree of citizen participation (Day, 1997, p. 426).

Communicative planning theory is also criticized. In general this can be brought down to the assumption that consensus can never be achieved. Due to citizen participation, the conflicts between citizens and government only increase (Grant, 1994). Three arguments underpin this claim. Firstly, a relatively small number of people will use the opportunity to participate. Participation requires in a certain degree of knowledge, resources, money and time that most citizens simply do not have (also see 'constraints' in Hågerstrand, 1975). The time citizens can invest is never equal to the time professionals invest. Citizens can rarely compete with experts in debates and are less able to make a meaningful contribution to a plan (Day, 1997, p. 426). Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is assumed that citizens who participate, do so from a self-centered perspective. This is the basis for NIMBY-behavior (Not In My Back Yard). Individual place own interest above the general interest (De Bruijn, Teisman, Edelson & Veeneman, 2004). From this point of view it is easier to form an opposition against changes. Proposed changes are considered to be threats by citizens, while in fact the proposition tries to challenge a broader social problem (Day, 1997, p. 426). Thirdly, in communicative theory on planning much is expected of the planners, or 'facilitators'. He or she should be able to objectively break through institutional structures, normalize possible disrupted communication between actors and have a strong sense of planning ethics. In practice many facilitators are in service of the government. Their objectivity is therefore always questioned (Huxley, 2000, p. 376).

The communicative conceptualization of planning seems to pay no attention to the theoretical and practical sides of spatial planning. The prescriptive and optimistic character of communicative planning theory, dissociates participatory processes from the political economic aspects that are involved in spatial planning. Citizen participation is seen as a 'good thing in itself'. Thus, the outcomes are irrelevant. Communicative planning theory is therefore vulnerable to the criticism that it's without any context and pays little attention to the spatial scales of a plan that can affect each other (Smith, 2005, pp. 53-54). If one is asked to define citizen participation, no straightforward answer can be given. The pro and contra arguments are continuously (re-)invented. The plural conceptualization does not only keep the debate alive; it also ensures that the concept continues to evolve.

2.7 Citizen participation today: the rise of participation society

In recent decades citizens have steadily climbed the 'ladder of participation'. The principles of consensus building were also taken in to account more often. At first, citizens were consulted on their thoughts on a proposed spatial plan. Today, the citizens are increasingly invited to even co-decide on plans (e.g. Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999). In this paragraph a contemporary

⁴ Obviously this remark can be questioned since the recent uprisings in the Middle East and the Maghreb region. Several governments were confronted with massive protest but initially did not grant more power (or influence) to civil society. Instead the uprisings were violently put down, causing the protests to intensify. In Libya this led to a civil war. The governments of Egypt (Mubarak) and Tunisia (Ben Ali) eventually stepped down. Furthermore various other Arabic countries can be currently characterized as political instable (see BBC, 2011).

definition of citizen participation will be addressed. Subsequently more is said about citizen participation in reaction to geographical scales. Citizen participation has a large number of definitions. In many of the definitions, the following four elements are recurring; citizen participation (1) applies to administrative decisions; (2) is about interaction between citizen and government; (3) it is an organized process to involve citizens and (4) citizens have some level of impact on the decision that is being made (Creighton, 2005, p.7). Citizens increasingly want to be involved with public policy. In this sense, there is sometimes spoken of the rise of 'participation society'. The term governance is hereby often named (Box 2). Once again a new dimension is added to the already rich debate on citizen participation. Citizen participation and governance seem to be complementary. However, reality is more obstinate because some governments still see vertical control as an ideal way to quickly and efficiently come to a decision. Governments who do apply the basic principles of horizontal control are confronted with the questions such as; when must the government take the lead? And when is the initiative to civil society (Van Buuren & Edelenbos, 2008, pp. 186-187)?

Box 2: from government to governance

Scholars argue that vertical control from the government has reached its limits (e.g. Buuren van & Edelenbos, 2008, pp. 185-186). The main reason behind this is the rise of neoliberalism. This caused the Rhineland Model, which is based on consensus-building and egalitarian relationships to be replaced with The Anglo-Saxon Model. Central to this model are terms like decentralization, deregulation and self-determination. Because of this, governments were becoming less active on social issues (Hajer, Sijmons & Feddes, 2006). In addition, an awareness arose that market principles should not only benefit economic processes but also could contribute to the management of public administration. Citizens were considered to be consumers of a government. Just like consumers have the power to shape markets, citizens were also assumed to shape government policy, independent from representative democracy. To accomplish this, new forms of public administration were required (The Third Way, see Smit, 2005, pp. 47-51).

The theory of the network society by sociologist Samuel Castels (2000) follows this trend. Fundamental social, political, economic and cultural changes are ascribed to the emerging information society. In the network society, a government is not the only one who determines how developments are formed. Developments will only take place if different actors collaborate on the basis of interdependency (Castells, 2000).

Recently the term government gradually is replaced by the term governance. Instead of vertical network control nowadays is spoken of horizontal network control. Many governance processes are informal and take place outside the traditional state actors. The government is often more restraint during governance processes. They are merely one of the interdependent actors. By these means more support and legitimacy for policy can be created. Involving the ideas coming from such social networks and are assumed to lead to better decision-making and subsequently to a more effective policy (Turnhout et al, 2008, pp. 69-70).

The context governance within citizen participation is addressed in the ladder of participation from Pröpper & Steenbeek (1999). This ladder is equivalent to the ladder of Arnstein and displays thoughts about communicative planning. However, Pröpper & Steenbeek also associated different management styles to different rungs of participation (Table 4). Citizen participation is understood as a part of interactive policy. The key-idea behind interactive

policy is to involve citizens, social movements, firms, etcetera, as early as possible. Policy is developed and implemented in an open collaboration by all concerned actors. Interactive policy is only successful if the government devolves power to the participants (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999). The boundary between interactive and non-interactive in the ladder catches the eye. There seems to be no difference in the outcomes of the open and closed participative style. Indeed, the ways in how these outcomes are reached differ. However this also can be considered as new proof that the debate on what participation really is and what it is not, is still in progress.

Despite the ongoing conceptual debate, citizen participation is a hot topic among politicians and government officials. The awareness has arisen that the legitimacy of government policy decreases in a horizontal orientated society (Edelenbos, 2006). Ergo, it can be argued that the classical concept of representative democracy is not the only way to legitimate government policy. Citizen participation is seen as a means to create public support. Through this the legitimacy and the quality government policy is improved. Finally it serves a higher purpose, that is, by opening up the processes of decision-making democracy itself is strengthened.

Table 4: A ladder of participation, 1999

<i>Management styles</i>	Role participant	Government expects from the participants...	Government facilitates participant with...	Interaction manifest itself in...
<u>Interactive</u>				
<i>Facilitative style</i>	Initiator	to be responsible and effective	support (time, resources, knowledge)	support that is accepted
<i>Collaborative style</i>	Partner	to give a balanced input	a balanced input	commitment to decisions
<i>Delegating style</i>	Co-decider	to make decisions and commitment to the final decision	the preconditions of the decision-making process	decisions in which all actors are honored
<i>Open participative style</i>	Advisor	to have a open opinion	a openness to solutions	the exchange of views
<u>Non-interactive</u>				
<i>Closed participative style</i>	Consulted	to have a closed opinion	proposed solutions	the exchange of views
<i>Open authoritarian style</i>	Respondent	to provide information or show an attitude	information	The fine-tuning of needs and wishes
<i>Closed authoritarian style</i>	None	nothing	nothing	nothing

Source: own arrangement based on Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999, p.293

2.8 Citizen participation: a local and regional phenomenon

Citizen participation in spatial planning is often associated with local and regional levels of government. Social movements indeed have their roots in cities and regions. Moreover, plans on these scales are usually of practical nature. Proposed physical interventions are then excellent subjects for debates between different actors. City districts and rural communities are therefore believed to be places where citizen participation is meaningful (Friedman, 1993, Taylor, 1999, p. 341 and Janssen-Jansen, Klijn & Opdam, 2009, pp. 1-8). Yet, it must be emphasized that social issues are not universal. Due to the place-based context no standard solutions exist. The specificities of place should guide the practice of citizen participation (Friedman, 1993, p. 482). The objectives to be achieved through citizen participation vary from municipality to municipality. Each municipality develops their own 'participation objectives'. These are the outcomes of local political considerations (e.g. promoting social cohesion or promoting local identity) (Van Helden et al, 2009, p. 10).

As mentioned in chapter 1, regions can be perceived to be close to citizens. However, sufficient arguments exist to claim the opposite. Firstly, direct contact between citizens and government is less obvious. This is because more public and private organizations are active on this level who speaks on behalf of a group. These organizations are often formed around specific issues and lobby for their interests. The involvement of the so-called interest groups could raise questions about representativeness. People who are no part of interest groups still have an opinion. Are these heard? How is this organized? And more important, how are opinions of individuals compared to the opinions of interest groups, NGO's and firms? In addition to this, the role of the government on a regional level is ambiguous. Because clear legislations for metropolitan areas and regions are often lacking, it is unclear which institution holds what responsibility. Or in other words who does what? Citizens and interest groups are obliged to consult the 'available institutions'. In the end this does not benefit a constructive participation process (Smith, 2005, p. 52; Larsson, 2006, p. 99).

2.9 Participation in national and supranational contexts

Participation is not only a local and regional area of interest. Local and regional developments cannot be separated from the conditions that are determined at national and transnational level. The frameworks that are created on these higher levels tend to constrain local and regional levels. Significant changes in local circumstances are usually preceded by structural changes at higher levels (Friedman, 1993, p. 483). As is the same with local and regional levels, each national level will also differ from contextual circumstances. Generally these differences are discussed from the perspectives of politics, legislation and governance structures. Regardless of these differences between nation states, there is in greater or lesser extent, an increasing interest in citizen participation. This is especially observed in the field of spatial planning (Hague & Jenkins, 2005, pp. 66 and Larsson, 2006, p. 100). Even on a transnational level this seems to be the case. One of the main conclusions of the '*Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion*' is to improve 'partnership'. The report promotes the strengthening of the role of regions, cities and local actors in developing regional policy

(European Commission, 2010, p.8). Obviously this conclusion can be typified as very broad. The *European Citizens' Panel* takes this a few steps further: ⁵

“The local dimension and the European dimension do not intersect; they combine. [...] each of us is a citizen of our own place, region, country, Europe and beyond, the whole planet. [...] Connections between the local and European levels must be developed, from the concrete concerns of the citizens to the European challenges.” (European Citizens' Panel, 2007, p.6).

When it comes to spatial planning, the connection between the European Union and the national, regional and local levels are not easy to be made. Primarily this is due to the principle of subsidiarity. In general this means that higher authorities, such as the EU, should not handle matters that can be handled more effectively by lower authorities. Spatial planning is therefore not an EU competence (Hague & Jenkins, 2005, pp. 57; Ravesteyn & Evers, 2004, p. 18; p. 23). However the EU does have an indirect influence on spatial issues by means of European regional policy. Additionally it must be stressed that Europe contains a variety of cultures and citizen participation is strongly rooted in Western democracies. ⁶ Since 2004, countries from the former Eastern Bloc joined the EU. The situation for these 'new democracies' is different. Obviously one can't just compare the 'established' West' with the 'changing' East of Europe. However, it is assumed that civil society is less emancipated because of the widespread tendency toward passive reliance on the state. Due to communism, the socio-economic situation since World War II developed within its own dynamics. This is still visible today (figures 9-12 on pages 60-63). On top of this the national contexts also differ from each other. The domestic history and administrative culture of the East-European democracies have to be taken into account (Maier, 2001, 707-708).

The interest in citizen participation seems to be on the rise from the local and regional levels to higher levels. The role of the EU is special. Due to subsidiarity one can assume that the EU should leave citizen participation to authorities within the member states. However, one can also argue the EU is more than a far away supranational institute. The regional policy of the EU is after all created to directly stimulate the development of regions in various ways. This raises the question if citizens are able to influence EU regional policy. The remainder of this research is dedicated to the exploration of citizen participation at the supranational level. In the next chapters will be shown if and how citizen participation is positioned within EU regional policy.

⁵ The European Citizens' Panel is a program that is initiated by the European Commission (see paragraph 4.1.3.)

⁶ Indeed not all Western democracies in the EU implement the same level of citizens' involvement. The quality of governance underpins this, see figure 12. More about these Western differences can be read in Larsson (2006) and Ammã (2010).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The following chapter explains the methodologies used in this research. The research strategy, research design and research methods will all be justified in association with the previously described theoretical framework. First of all the research questions are formulated. These questions will underpin the empirical part of this research. Subsequently, the research strategy and design will be presented. Hereafter the sample of respondents, the methods of data collection and the treatment of the data will be discussed. This chapter will also give an insight into the practical research proceedings and concludes with a paragraph about the possible disadvantages of the chosen methods. The work of Bryman (2008) on research methodologies will be taken into account in the further set-up of this research.

3.1 Formulating research questions

The preliminary phase of this research showed there was much established theory available on the topic of citizen participation and the topic of EU regional policy. However, there is hardly any literature available that combines both topics. As a starting point, chapter 2 shows in general what citizen participation is about. This led to the following key findings:

1. There is an ongoing discussion among scholars, politicians and government officials about citizen participation as an addition to representative democracy. An important theme in this discussion is the topic 'social empowerment'.
2. Citizen participation developed from the local level since 1950. Because of the local roots, citizen participation from a spatial point of view is often discussed within the topic of spatial planning.
3. Nowadays various institutions on a higher level are also interested in citizen participation. This is closely linked to the term 'governance'. The citizen participation debate is often problematized in this context.
4. There is no blueprint for the citizen participation practice. The implementation of citizens' participation heavily depends on place-based circumstances like sociopolitical themes and the geographical scope of a proposed measure.

These key findings will be used to formulate research questions. Before doing so, it is of major importance to define the term *citizen participation* for this research. The term, still intensively debated, is obviously of a fluid nature. For this research I chose to follow the four elements of Creighton (2005). These are; it applies to administrative decisions; it is about interaction between citizen and government; it is an organized process to involve citizens and citizens have some level of impact on the decision being made. The interaction element of Creighton is linked to the definition of Pröpper & Steenbeek (1999). Citizen participation is not only about giving information to citizens or solely a consultation mechanism; it is about involving citizens in the earliest possible stage of policy development.

Based on theory, it can be said that local and regional institutions, since the 50's, are more willing to involve citizens when it comes to spatial planning and policy issues. These institutions all seem to make their own choices regarding to citizen participation. If and how citizen participation is implemented depends on the place based context of a region. But does

this make citizen participation solely a local and regional phenomenon? The field of spatial planning is after all closely linked to the field of spatial policy. As stated by Friedman (1993), the practical local and regional conditions of planning often depend on conceptual frameworks and conditions that are developed on higher levels. The regional level plays an important part in this. As a figure of speech, the regional level is a central axis where different planning and policy issues come together. In the European situation the regional level is not only influenced by the various legislations and regulations within a nation state. The supranational institute of EU also formulates regional policy. It tries to tackle the economic and social challenges from the European perspective. The EU regional policy will sooner or later have an effect on the local level on various ways. Therefore it's not unthinkable that citizens can have an influence in the development of this policy. Different questions come into mind; what are the main thoughts from the EU level about civic involvement? To what extent does EU regional policy already incorporate the opinions of citizens and is citizen participation an EU competence at all? As previously been mentioned, it's not clear in general how citizen participation relates to EU regional policy. The main aim of this research is to give more insight on this topic. This consequently led to the following main research question:

What is the position of citizen participation in European regional policy and how does the EU deal with this in relation towards its member states?

The main research question consists of two parts. The first part is the most fundamental; *what is the position of citizen participation in European regional policy?* This question will answer if there is any form of citizen participation incorporated in the regional policy of the EU. More important are the reasons behind this answer. For example, why or why not, is citizen participation important to the Commission and how does this relate to the other goals of the regional policy? An insight on this will be given by answering this question. The second part problematizes citizen participation from the EU level to the context of the member states: *how does the EU deal with this in relation towards its member states?* The European Commission does not act on its own, if policy is agreed upon within the European Council and the European Parliament there is always the question about implementation. Questions about governance issues and the evaluation of regional policy will be tackled with the second part of the main research question. In order to decrease some of the complexity of the main research question, four 'guiding principles' are created:

1. *Uncovering the development on citizen participation in EU regional policy.*

To understand where citizen participation in EU regional policy stands today it is essential to have a more detailed view of the developments in the EU and the way they involve their citizens.

2. *Uncovering the views and opinions on citizen participation in EU regional policy from a European perspective.*

Principle 1 forms the basis of the research and must construct an insight about the topic citizen participation in EU regional policy. There are many different actors active within and around the EU. This principle will address their views.

3. *Retrieving insights on the future of EU regional policy and citizen participation*

Elaborating on the future will provide more knowledge on the main motivations behind citizen participation in regional policy. This guiding principle also addresses issues concerning the future of EU regional policy and the role of the member states.

4. *Addressing the participation practice in EU member states and uncovering their thoughts about citizen participation from the EU level.*

As is made clear in chapter 2, participation initiatives are already being carried out on the local and regional level. It can be interesting to discover which sorts of participation initiatives are implemented within the member states. Due to the time that is available it is impossible to conduct a comprehensive study in all 27 member states and their regions. Therefore I chose to draw up two cases studies. The second part of this guiding principle complements the first part. A 'regional' opinion can furthermore address issues about governance.

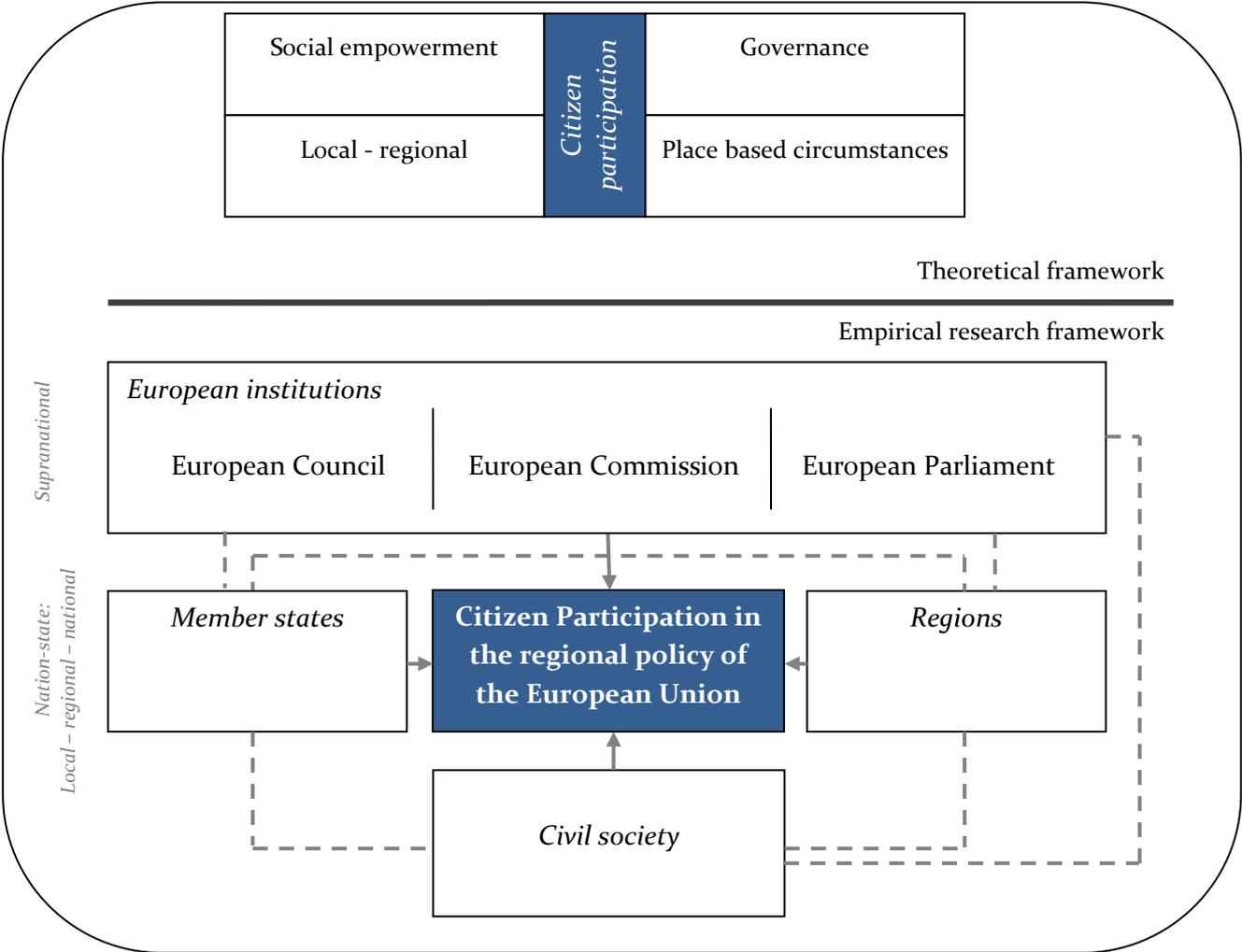
The primarily role of these guiding principles is to structure the empirical research. Ultimately, these principles will be used as a reference to sum up the findings from empirical research in the final chapter.

3.2 Conceptual model

In order to give a better insight into the ideas behind this research a conceptual model was set up (Figure 3). This visualizes the context of this research. The most important actors take place in the model.

Firstly, the theoretical findings shape the broad context of citizen participation. This, combined with the workings of EU regional policy ultimately composes the main focus of this research. The main focus has been given a central place in the empirical research framework. The arrows illustrate which main actors are assumed to influence regional policy development. Different levels of administration must be recognized. Therefore the main focus is situated in a multi-layered contextual setting. Two geographical levels are essential. On one hand, the supranational level of the European Union. On the other hand the level of the nation-states. The nation-state level can be scaled down to a national, regional and local level. It must be noted that policy development is in many cases a process of negotiation between varieties of actors. The dotted lines represent the possible interplay between the actors.

Figure 3: Conceptual model



3.3 Conceptual model: main actors

All EU policy is determined by the *European institutions*. The institutions (Council, European Commission and the European Parliament) all have a different part to play when it comes to policy development. Simultaneously the institutions are interrelated. Evidently EU policy development is, mildly speaking, a complex process (Box 3).

The Council exercises significant executive powers. The various national interests, such as economic development, social well-being and environmental issues, come together in the meetings of the Council (or *member states*). The outcomes of these meetings are converted into policy measures by the Commission, who also is responsible for the implementation. Furthermore the Parliament also plays an important role, they both address the Council and the Commission when it comes to drafting various legislations (Pinder & Usherwood, 2007, p.43).

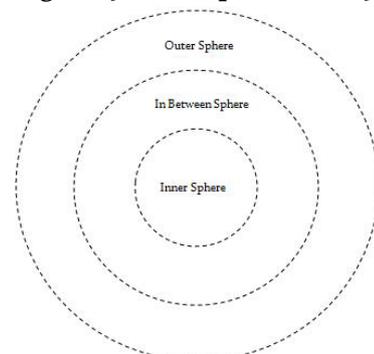
Box 3: The three spheres of the European Union

“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a *de facto* solidarity” (Schuman, 1950, p. 1). With these words of Robert Schuman, the French Minister of Foreign affairs, a new world power was born. At the beginning of the 50’s six European nations signed an economic treaty on steel and coal^{*}. This treaty actually was an anti-aggression pact between France and West Germany but also formed the foundations of European Economic Community. This Community was established with signing of the treaty of Rome in 1957. Over time, the members of the Community intensified their economic relations. Under the influence of turbulent political discussions the Community grew out to be the European Union (EU) as we know today (see Van Middelaar, 2009). New treaties stimulated the liberalization of trade between the member states and introduced the monetary union (ANNEX 3). The Unions also began to collaborate in sectors like nature and environment, fisheries, transport, regional development and agriculture (Van Ravesteyn & Evers, 2004, p. 17).

Today, the EU consists of 27 members and has about 500 million inhabitants^{**}. The EU consists of several institutions that coordinate policy that comes from the various treaties. Best known are The European Parliament (elected representatives), European Council (Formal representation of the member states) and the European Commission (EU officials). This set is sometimes called the “institutional triangle” (Van Middelaar, 2009, pp.19-20). The rules and allocation of funds that are determined on the EU level have an increasing impact on the policies of member states. This also applies to the way member states are working on spatial plans (Van Ravesteyn & Evers, 2004, p. 17). Apart from the political-philosophical questions whether the EU is a religion or a political empty concept, policy development is, mildly speaking, a special process. At each meeting within the institutional triangle, historical events, geographical boundaries, political pretensions, cultural traditions are woven into the policy debate.

Political philosopher Luuk van Middelaar distinguishes three spheres in these debates (figure 4). Firstly, the Outer Sphere. This sphere consists of all countries on the European continent and has a blurred definition of geography and history. In this sphere, states solely pursuit their own interests. Apart from the EU the states discuss range of issues with each other. Secondly, the Inner Sphere. This is the European Institute that was founded in the early 1950s. The foundations of this sphere lie in the EU treaties also known as ‘Project Europe’. The debates between the Parliament, Council and Commission are an expression of this inner sphere. The third sphere is called the In Between Sphere. This is the sphere of the member states. As in the Outer Sphere member states are pursuing their own interests. However they do so in a growing awareness of shared interests. Another objective of this sphere is to bring the Outer Sphere and the Inner Sphere closer together. The regular gatherings of the European Council can be seen as an expression of the In Between Sphere. Although these three spheres each have their own principles, they are ultimately always bound to each other (Van Middelaar, 2009 pp. 31-48). The different principles underpin the development of EU policies. Therefore policy development on EU level is a complicated process. Usually is an outcome of years of negotiations between and within these three spheres.

Figure 4: three spheres, 2009



Source: Van Middelaar, 2009

^{*} Belgium, France, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands & West-Germany (Ravesteyn & Evers, 2004)

^{**} EU-27: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden & the United Kingdom (De Pater, 2009b, p.5)

National governments traditionally devalue power in a top-down manner. Lower territorial units like *regions* therefore hold various responsibilities. A region is a fluid concept. Natural boundaries, historical boundaries and/or administrative boundaries can be the basis of a region (see Paasi, 2002). The amount of power that is exercised by regions heavily depends on the federal structure of the member state. Nevertheless it is assumed that regional authorities do influence the regional policy development process. Due to EU policy, complex regional and local governance issues increasingly arose. Three quarters of EU legislation was implemented at local or regional level. But local and regional representatives were not represented in Brussels. For this purpose the Committee of the Regions (CoR) was established in 1994. Local and regional interests within the EU were to be looked after by the CoR. Opinions vary on how big the impact of the CoR actually is. However it is clear that multi-level governance issues in the course of time became one of the top priorities of the Committee (De Pater, 2009a, pp. 297-298).

Civil society is often associated with the local level. It is where people experience everyday life. The involvement of people in policy making is central to this research. It is stressed that civil society is not only about individuals. The characterization of civil society by Kocka (2009) implies it is a social sphere that separately functions from government. Hence, organizations with social or economic interests (e.g. emancipation groups or business networks) are also considered to be a part of civil society. Civil society can influence policy with the mechanisms of representative democracy. EU regional policy is probably best influenced with the elections of the European Parliament. Direct influence of civil society on the development and implemented of EU regional policy is yet to be investigated.

3.4 The research strategy

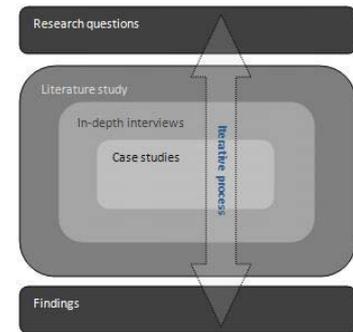
As previously mentioned, citizen participation in EU regional policy can be seen as a new theme in scholarly literature. It is assumed that there are no established theories exist that can be tested in a deductive way. Therefore I chose to conduct a non-normative research in an inductive way. Consequently this decision results into the epistemological position of understanding the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. Furthermore the ontological position is considered as constructivist (Bryman, 2008, p. 366). To retrieve an answer on the main research question, actors who are involved in EU regional policy will be asked about their perceptions on the topic of citizen participation. A quantitative analysis will not be sufficient for this research. This research strategy is limited for discovering reasons behind various social properties. Therefore I will work with qualitative data. The analysis of the qualitative data will be down by means of the 'grounded theory' strategy. This means that the research process is iterative. The collection and analysis of data can refer back to each other during the implementation of the research (Bryman, 2008, p. 541).

3.5 The research design

The research design can be characterized as a cross-sectional design with case study elements (Bryman, 2008, p. 55). The empirical research will consist of three components. These are subsequently, a literature study, in-depth interviews and case studies. These three components are complementary to each other. Combining different methods will provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding on citizen participation within EU regional policy

(figure 5). The internal validity of the research is improved by this. This can be questioned in the terms of external validity. On one hand the use of interviews and cases studies will go beyond the specific research context of the EU. On the other hand the use of these methods will not be representative for the whole of the EU. Generalization is therefore not the primarily goal. This research design fits best for a 'first look behind the scenes', uncovering an understanding of the idea's and processes within the EU.

Figure 5: The research design



3.6 Research methods

The fundamentals of the empirical research lie in a profound study of literature. A brief preliminary examination of academic and policy documents showed that there was no particular information on the topic citizen participation in EU regional policy. Because of this, I chose to focus the literature study on two topics. Citizens and regional policy, both form the EU perspective. EU policy documents and scholarly documentation are studied intensively. Furthermore, information from news sources, official websites, newsletters and working plans are added to complete the literature study. The results of this literature study are used to set up the in-depth interviews.

Because of the exploratory basis of this research it is supposed that respondents must have the opportunity to express oneself broadly. Working with structured interviews and closed questioning will not leave enough room to do so. Therefore I chose to conduct the in-depth interviews in a semi-structured form (Bryman, 2008, p.439). Semi-structured interviewing must be seen as a flexible process. From previously mentioned literature study, key topics will be formed that are accompanied by open questions. These topics will guide the interviews. Semi-structured interviews have been known for the disadvantages of social desirable response. It is possible respondents only will emphasize the more positive aspects of themselves or the organization they work for. This sort of politically correct response can be a pitfall for the interviews. To tackle this, all interviews conducted for the empirical part are done on basis of anonymity. During interviews other respondent names will not be mentioned. In addition to this, respondent names will not be included in the final draft of this research.⁷ Furthermore I can pick up on things that are said by the respondent. In this way topics can be more exhaustively discussed. The creation of this interaction will hopefully be a gateway into exploring the opinions, perceptions and attitudes. To conclude it also must be noted that the information coming from previously conducted interviews can provide new insights for upcoming interviews. Due to this it was possible for me to discuss actual matters and verify remarks I heard in previous interviews. The empirical research will conclude with cases studies. Although the core of this study is EU centered it is useful to narrow down the scope to EU regions. EU regions where regional development is taking place with a contribution of EU structural funds will serve as cases. With this, the complexity of the research field is discussed in terms of actual regional developments. By these means the field of study will have a

⁷ A list of the respondent names is only made available to the supervisor and second reader of this research on a separately enclosed CD-ROM. This CD-ROM may not be distributed in any way.

practical component and will contribute to a nuanced understanding of the processes behind citizen participation in EU regional policy. A case study will be examined by a combination literature and in-depth interviewing. This and other practical proceedings will be more elaborated in the upcoming paragraphs of this chapter.

3.7 Key actors

In order to be clear about the proceedings of the empirical research, the respondent selection must be transparent. Firstly a consistent connection between the research questions and the sample had to be made. Therefore I made three strategic choices. The first choice concerned the contested fundamentals of the term citizen participation (defined for this research in paragraph 3.1). Respondents must be able to identify themselves to what they consider to be citizen participation. The second choice concerned the eventual implementation of citizen participation in EU regional policy. Therefore respondents must have a professional link to EU regional policy. From this point of view it is expected that they can discuss EU regional policy in general terms and link this to citizen participation. The third choice is about the regional level and citizen participation practice. Respondents must be able to discuss citizen participation from a vertical and horizontal perspective. Consequently these strategic choices mean that respondents come from different geographic levels of administration.

Because there was no sampling frame available, several experts on citizen participation and European regional policy were consulted in the preliminary phase of my research (ANNEX 1). The main aim was to explore my field of research, gain more knowledge on the workings of EU regional policy and to create a snowball effect in finding respondents. The recommendations helped me to identify key actors.⁸ These are linked with two geographic levels from the conceptual model (Table 5).

Table 5: Key actors

Geographical level	European Union	Member states - Regions
Key actors	European Commission	
	European Parliament	
		National management authorities
		Regional management authorities
	Regional representatives	
	Independent regional policy experts	
	Interest groups / NGO's	

Source: expert consultations, 2011

The key actors will be briefly introduced. Because the research is centered from an EU perspective the European Commission (as a foremost institute of EU policy implementation), is of main importance. Policy officers from notably the Directorate-General Regional Policy and Directorate-General Communication are the primary actors. The development and implementation of EU regional policy is a responsibility for the Directorate-General Regional Policy and the Directorate-General Communication is concerned with citizens' policy. The

⁸ Apart from the experts, I consider economic actors and individual citizens to be key actors as well. As my research proceeded I chose to not include them. Mainly this was done for practical reasons. The scope of the empirical research needed to be set because of the time that was available to me. Furthermore economical dynamics and opinions of businesses and individuals did not fit well in the research questions which is primarily policy oriented.

members of European Parliament are also considered to be a major player. They represent EU citizens and are expected to have much inside knowledge on the workings of the EU. Besides this, parliament members who are spokesman for regional development are specialized on EU regional policy. These members of parliament are assumed to constructively discuss my research topic.

When talking about the implementation of EU policy one soon ends up with the management authorities of an EU member state. The administrative structure of the member state determines how a management authority works in terms of governance. Two key actors are identified. Firstly, national management authorities. They are assumed to draw up plans for nationwide regional development and in some countries take the lead when implementing these plans⁹. In other countries the regional management authorities play a bigger role in forming and implementing regional development plans. This depends on federal structure. Regional management authorities are therefore appropriate actors to speak with. Their local and regional perspective can open up different bottom-up views on the research topic.

Furthermore there are key actors that can speak on behalf of both levels. Regional representatives are considered to be one of those actors. These officials represent their region in Brussels and are aware of EU regional policy developments and are able to place this in the context of their home region. Independent regional policies experts, like consultants, seem suitable interview partners as well. They are professionally obliged to be very well informed in the developments on EU regional policy and could have practical experience in different EU regions. From this perspective they can elaborate in an objective way in the workings of citizen participation and eventually link this to the EU. To conclude, interest groups or non-governmental organizations (NGO's) are also considered to be a key actor. The interest groups represent a group of members in a particular field of interest, often with the objective to bring funding to their cause. Sometimes more ideological backgrounds cause interest groups to establish themselves, for example the emancipation of 'European citizens' or gender equality.

3.8 Respondent sample

Accessibility of respondents regarding the in-depth interviews provided a challenging aspect to tackle. From the level of the European Union I intended to speak with various officials of the Directorate-Generals (DG) and the European Parliament. Besides this I also had the intention to speak to at least one official of the other key actors. By doing so different perspectives on my research topic could be covered.

To gain access to the respondents I decided to make use of convenience sampling. A sample that is available to the researcher by virtue of accessibility (Bryman, 2008, p. 183). The names of the experts I consulted in the preliminary phase of the research I partly received from my supervisor and partly came from my own network. After identifying the key actors I asked the experts if they knew a suitable respondent for my research. Four respondents were contacted with this snowball method. All other possible respondents were contacted without any consult. The contact details were found online. I mainly approached them by sending an e-mail. Within the range of table 5 various people were approached. In general the strategy

⁹ The research context is only concerned with regional development plans that receive EU regional funds from the EU.

worked well. Two out of seven key actors did not reply. Unfortunately all of the interest groups and many of the members of the EU parliament I approached did not reply to my interview requests. Furthermore regional representatives were also not able to free up time or did not reply at all. In table 7 (chapter 5), an overview is given of the final sample.

Seven out of nine respondents are professionals in the field of regional policy. As for the remaining two, one is a politician who is a spokesman on the topic EU regional policy and the other is a policy official who specialized in the topic of citizenship. These professionals represent different geographical levels of administration. Furthermore all of the respondents have academic backgrounds in various fields, like Economy, Human geography, Planning and Political Science. Officials from the level of the EU, that is central to this research, are well represented. Three of them work for DG Regional Policy at different departments. This DG is a major key actor in this research. The collection of several opinions should contribute to the final results. Their insights will be mainly used to address guidelines 1, 2 and 3. The respondents from the member states and regions level are assumed to have more hands-on experience in regional development. Their knowledge is also used to discuss guideline 4.

Last but not least the case selection must be justified. As previously was mentioned this research leaves room for two case studies. I chose to investigate one regional development program from an old EU member state and one from a new EU member state. This choice is based on the paper of Maier (2001). I must emphasize that generalization between East and West is by no means the purpose to conduct these case studies. These case studies will mainly be used to give an insight in the practical proceedings of citizen participation in different social contexts. The regional program coming from the old EU member state comes from The Netherlands. The Regional Program Manager from the Dutch Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management serves as the main respondent. This program was found online, where it was listed at the website 'Kansen voor West' (Opportunities for West).¹⁰ The case from the new member state comes from the Czech Republic. A methodologist of regional development in the South-East region, acted as the main respondent.

3.9 Data collection

No significant problems were noted during the realization of the literature study. All documents that were used were highly accessible. Therefore this paragraph elaborates on the proceedings of the in-depth interviews.

The interviews with the Commission officials were all conducted in Brussels. All other interviews took place on various locations in The Netherlands. Before the start of each interview the respondent was informed about the undisclosed use of names in this research. Subsequently I requested if the interview could be taped. On one occasion a respondent objected to this. On another occasion my recording device malfunctioned. Furthermore one interview was conducted by phone. In these occasions I fell back on the notes I made during these interview sessions.¹¹ The average interview time was about 60 minutes. Five of the

¹⁰ The Dutch Regional Operational Programme for the West of the Netherlands.

¹¹ The recordings are made available to the supervisor and second reader of this research on a separately enclosed CD-ROM. This CD-ROM may not be distributed in any way (if a recording is absent, the transcripts are included).

interviews were carried out in English, the remainder in Dutch. The realization of the semi structured in-depth interviews phase went fairly well. The interviews consisted out of four main topics and a total of 35 open questions (ANNEX 2). There was no intention to put in front all of these questions one by one. The topics were guiding and the questions were a reminder for me to fall back on if necessary. These four main topics are the fundamentals of the interviews:

1. European citizenship
2. Citizen participation
3. Citizen participation in regional development policy
4. Governance and citizen participation

Topic 1, 3 and 4 are connected with the literature study which is elaborated in the following chapter. Topic 2 can be connected to the theoretical context from chapter 2. The first topic deals with the theme 'European citizenship'. It is assumed that the involvement of citizens in policy-making is a deliberate choice to be made by an administration. Legitimacy is a key issue in this discussion. Legitimacy is also debated issue within the EU institutes. Its aim is to discover what position a respondent has towards concept of 'European citizenship'. Does it exist, can it be created and what is the purpose? This sort of questions will underpin this topic. The second topic directly relates to the ongoing discussion about the fundamentals of citizen participation. This part of the interview tries to unveil the position of the respondent in this discussion. To prevent social desirable answers on of the first aims is to ask if the respondent can name any strengths and weaknesses of citizen participation in general. Especially the identified weaknesses could then be helpful to avoid the social desirable answers. Furthermore a response on the famous quote stated by Arnstein (1969, p. 216) can be requested in order to open up the conversation. Issues of citizen participation and representation also will be discussed. To conclude this topic the respondent will be asked if he or she thinks citizen participation should be an EU competence. The third topic focuses on EU regional policy and citizen participation. This is indeed the most important part of the interview. Firstly it discusses the fundamentals and implementation of the partnership principle. In addition to this, key questions about participation initiatives in EU regional policy will be addressed. Do regional funding schemes play a role in citizen participation? How does the EU measure what meaningful participation is? These factual issues are complemented with questions about the attitude of the respondent towards these practices. An overlap with the previous topic is unavoidable. This is not considered to be a problem because semi-structured interviewing leaves room for the respondent to cross-reference between topics. Lastly the future of citizen participation in EU regional policy is a part of this topic. What does the respondent state about the future of citizen participation in the policy agenda for the time after 2013? Within this topic a reference will be made to the *Barca Report* (2009). The final topic overlaps partly overlaps with questions from previous topics. It touches the subject of direct citizen involvement and the question if this is something for the EU to pick up. The main aim is to address the theme of (multi level) governance and to explore the opinion of the respondent on this. Does a supranational vision contribute to the implementing of citizen participation? And could EU regional policy contribute to this in anyway? This key question will tackle various governance issues. To conclude the relation between the EU and its member states will be discussed. Does

the EU try to influence the (new) member states to improve the relation with civil society? Naturally the interview started with an introduction and ended with a closure. The introduction mainly consists of a deepening elaboration on my research perspective and the positioning of the respondent within the organization of employment. In the closure the respondent is asked if he or she wants to add something to the interview. Some respondents used the opportunity to elaborate more about my research topic purely out of interest. Useful statements will be included in the findings chapter.

During the proceedings of an interview I made sure that all topics were discussed. Preferably in the order as I had set up because this would lead to a more efficient arrangement of the data. Due to the open nature of the interview setting I could not guarantee this order. Although all respondents were suitable interview partners they all had their own field of expertise. I tried to anticipate on this by addressing 'the topic of expertise' more exhaustively than another topic. For example, topic 3 was thoroughly discussed with a policy officer of DG Regional Policy. Topic 1 was discussed, only more briefly. For the policy officer of DG Communication it was the other way around. In many occasions I did not had to address specific questions. Respondents automatically spoke of topics or answered questions that were part of my questionnaire. Sometimes the flow of the conversation led to more specific questions. The interviews therefore cannot be compared to each other one on one.

The topics I presented sparked the interest of the respondents and were mostly topics of common interest anyway. Due to this the interviews were of informal nature. In these cases the respondents sincerely elaborated their thoughts and options also commenting on negative issues. A few interviews were more difficult to conduct. Possible reasons behind this could be that a respondent was self-centered or was bound to answer politically correct. The open questions helped me to keep the conversation going. If a respondent gave a closed answer, I asked to elaborate further. Simultaneously I tried to loosen up the atmosphere. Usually these respondents were more open to the end of the interview.

3.10 Data treatment

The recorded interviews were transcribed. Meaningful remarks were also time stamped. This transcript served as a general overview for each interview. The transcripts that were made without a recording were added to this overview. All of the transcripts were thoroughly analyzed. The main focus was to discover if the interview topics could be made more specific. Eventuality three main topics were created by me, each with various sub-topics:

1. Europe and its citizens
 - Bringing the EU closer to the citizens
 - EU policy development and citizens
 - Thoughts on citizen participation
2. Citizen participation in regional development policy
 - Partnership principle
 - Current practice of citizen participation in EU regional policy
 - Evaluating citizen participation in EU regional programs
 - The future of citizen participation in EU regional policy

3. Citizen participation and EU governance
 - Strengthening multi-level governance
 - Influencing new democracies
 - Does the EU need to promote citizen participation among its members?

In the following chapters I will present the results of the obtained information. All main topic and corresponding sub-topics are to be discussed. To give a more nuanced understanding interesting remarks of respondents will be added. Remarks made by Dutch respondents are carefully translated into English. To be clear about who says what the respondents are given a code. The coding scheme will also be presented in table 7 (chapter 5).

3.11 Possible disadvantages

As said before the main aim of this research is to clear up the indistinctness of citizen participation within EU regional policy. Due to the limited time and funds available to conduct this research it would be unrealistic to search for exhausting answers. Therefore I chose to create an impression about citizen participation from the supranational level. The possible disadvantages can be seen in this context. First and most important possible disadvantage is the limited number of respondents. Due to this it must be emphasized that the findings are by no means representative for the whole EU. Secondly the respondents all came from different professional disciplines within the field of regional development. A generalization between different disciplines could also not be made. Thirdly, the findings from the old and new member state case only apply to their specific context. One is about a specific regional program (the Netherlands), the other has a broader regional context (Czech Republic). Implementing the empirical research also led to some additional possible disadvantages. I tried to anticipate on this as much as I could. Because of the broad spectrum of my sample it is assumed that each respondent has certain interest at stake. The objectivity of a respondent could therefore be questioned. When in doubt on this, I rechecked the answers with the respondent during an interview. This could slightly reduce issues about objectivity but, more important, leave less room for any misunderstandings. Next to this, the respondents were aware some of my questions could lead to a value loaded answer. In various occasions they evaded direct answering. Persuasion from my side was not always successful. This was especially noted during interviews with officials from the European Commission. For example, when I asked about the commitment of member states to the Europe 2020 strategy one respondent explicitly said, *“I have no comment on that. I have no means to assessing my word to that”* (DGCOM). This can be seen as a disadvantage but also gives an insight in interplay within the dynamics of governance processes. Unfortunately some key actors who were approached by me did not participate. Most regrettable is the absence of the Czech consultant who is specialized in regional development and citizen participation in Czech region of Liberec. Despite the initial contact an interview never was conducted. A valuable local and independent perspective is therefore missing. Due to the limited research time this couldn't be replaced. The absence of regional representatives is also regrettable. Their broad knowledge about their region and EU regional policy could have been complementary to the findings. The CoR also was approached by me, but did not respond to my requests. Overall I didn't experience this as a major problem. The respondents who did participate are assumed to have enough specific knowledge and cover a large part of the identified key actors.

Chapter 4: Findings EU documentation

The upcoming chapters present the findings of the imperial research. This chapter contains the study of EU documentation. Chapter 5 will present the results of the in-depth interviews. Both chapters are complementary to each other.

In this chapter the focus will be placed on the two central themes of this study. Firstly the EU and the citizens will be discussed. The EU publication, *European governance, a White Paper* (2001), is central to this theme. With this and other policy documents, a general impression is composed on how the EU relates to its citizens. The second theme is EU regional policy. In order to essentially understand what regional policy is about, it is useful to elaborate on its evolution. With this, the '*partnership objective*' is also discussed. This objective is considered by me to be leading when it comes to connecting EU regional policy to different levels of government administration and civil society. The debate about the future of EU regional policy is also added. This sheds a light on the thoughts about citizen involvement in EU regional policy after 2013. Various EU publications are quoted. Among them are: the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* (2008), the *White Paper on Multilevel Governance* (2009), the *Barca Report* (2009) and the *Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion* (2010).

4.1 EU and the citizens

Binding of citizens to the territory of the EU has always been problematic (Box 4). This is due to the cultural diversity of the continent. Is 'the' European identity then no more than a utopian dream? Can a 'European Citizenship' even exist? What is the use of the Union if it can't speak on behalf of its population? These fundamental questions are repeatedly mentioned when speaking about the EU and its citizens.

Box 4: territorial identity

Citizenship is often closely tied to another much discussed term; identity. It is useful to define this term briefly, in particular the territorial concept of identity. Identity is seen as a mental characteristic. The same applies to territorial identity; this involves an awareness and sense of belonging to a social group in a given territory. The fundament of territorial identity consists of five points; (1) Territorial identity is a characteristic of people and does not apply to territories; (2) people create boundaries between groups to who they feel connected or not (*membership*); (3) territorial identity is about a connection among people and not with objects; (4) a person can have multiple territorial identities at different territorial levels and finally; (5) territorial identity has a cognitive and emotional dimension (Van der Vaart, 2009, p. 263). It is evident that there are many other notions of (territorial) identity. This is also the case for the geographical unit of regions. In a nutshell: there may be a 'thick' regional identity, based on a shared culture and community. It's more rooted in local culture and history. Also it possible 'thin' regional identity exists, which is more fluid and is based on a specific problem or topic (Terlouw, 2009, p. 455). Scientists are continually conducting research on topics relating to identity (e.g. Loth, 2002; Paasi, 2002; Van Houtum & van Nearsen, 2002; Risse, 2002 and Garton Ash, 2007).

4.1.1 The search for the European audience

Since the Treaty of Rome the word 'European' moved from the complex cultural, Outer Sphere to the institutional Inner Sphere. The term 'European' was no longer linked with the inhabitants of the continent but with the administrative officials in Brussels who stood for the 'European project'. In this process the In Between Sphere was left out. There was no trace of any shared European sense of belonging among the citizens of the member states and euroscepticism predominated. The Inner Sphere considered over time that 'Europe' had to be displayed on the world stage. For that reason 'the' European identity had to be promoted. The gap between the Outer Sphere and Inner Sphere had to be closed. Since the 70's, Brussels is trying to push the term 'European' out of the Inner Sphere. The populations of member states had to identify themselves with Europe, next to their national, regional or local identities (Van Middelaar, 2009, pp. 307-308).

The first elections of the European Parliament in 1979 and the addition of 'European Community'¹² to the national passports, as from 1981, are the first signs of this (Wiener, 2007, p.26). The search for the European audience and building the 'European identity', or at least a sense of 'Europeanness', has been going on ever since. The Union applied different strategies to obtain the public's attention. The first strategy focuses on a European cultural and historical unity. Emphasis was put on the sharing of a common cultural heritage and believing in the same values. 'Them' and 'us' are part of the same race. In the 70's the European Commission proposed a series of cultural policies to promote this common heritage. European history had to be polished to be a mirror for the present. The heritage 'of the community' had to be exhibited in museums. Furthermore the media had to broadcast items on 'the great European heroes' from the past. Various other efforts, including education, were attempted but only led to disagreement between member states. Symbolism was also part of this strategy. In 1986, with limited attention, the flag of the European Community hoisted, followed by the European Anthem; Beethovens '*Ode an die Freude*'. These forms of nineteenth-century nation building were always critically received by the member states.¹³ The national sentiments underpin this behavior. The member states were afraid that national identity was to be replaced by a European identity. The second strategy focuses on government benefits. A government, for instance, creates opportunities by providing subsidies. By emphasizing the advantages of various policy measures the EU can increase its visibility. Theoretically it can even contribute to a 'European consciousness' among the residents of the member states. EU regional policy is a notable example. One third of the total EU budget is reserved for this policy. Since the beginning of this policy the Inner Sphere and the In Between Sphere argue among each other on how the subsidies should be distributed. In the past decade the leading solidarity principle in EU regional policy is subject of a fierce debate. More on this can be read in the next paragraph. The third strategy accentuates the principles of democracy. Citizens periodically judge the government by means of elections. The main aim is that citizen experience law and decision-making as a collective affair. Since 1979, the members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of the EU. European elections take place every five years. The Parliament can amend and reject legislations, make proposals for legislation and monitors the

¹² After 1997 this is replaced by 'European Union'.

¹³ For example, the European flag could not be called 'flag' but had to be called a logo. Another example is the almost endless discussion about the pictures on notes of the Euro (Middelaar van, 2009, p. 321; pp. 330-335).

European Commission. At the same time it is responsible to make the EU more visible among the inhabitants of the member states (Van Middelaar, 2009, pp. 312-403). There have always been questions about the representativeness of the European Parliament. Primarily this is due to the poor turnout during elections. The turnout in the 2009 European elections was the lowest ever since elections started thirty years ago. Also the cultural diversity was once more addressed as reason for the lacking representativeness. Who exactly are the citizens of Europe (EUobserver, 2009 and Van der Vaart, p. 2009, pp. 270-273)? If the European citizens didn't exist, one could argue that the European Parliament also has no right to exist. The pieces on stage were set but an audience was still missing.

4.1.2 Passive and active European citizenship

The strategy that was focused on European culture and symbolism, slowly but surely was losing its popularity. The search for a 'thick European identity' proved to be an impossible mission to accomplish. Within the EU institutes the call for a formal, top-down established European citizenship, was getting louder. In the early nineties the EU answered the call and created its own audience, or so they thought. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 played an essential role in the creation of European citizenship. This event led to a renewed awareness of European unity. Simultaneously Europe faced new political and economic issues. Border politics was one of those issues; namely the question of East-West migration. The subsequent EU debate on visa and asylum policy also caused a new debate on European Citizenship, this time from legal perspective (Wiener, 2007, p. 31). In the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), European citizenship is ratified by the member states (Article 8). Citizenship of the EU complements national citizenship. It provides the following rights to EU citizens: the right of free movement and residence throughout the territory of EU; the right to vote and the right to stand in European elections; the right to protection by the diplomatic or consular authorities of other member states and the right to petition the European Parliament and the right to file a complaint to the European Ombudsman. Because European citizenship added little to national civil rights the people and EU institutions did not come closer together (Wiener, 2007, pp. 5-8).¹⁴ One can argue European Citizenship doesn't contribute to a European sense of belonging. In the legal conceptualization of European Citizenship, citizens are no more than passive beneficiaries of the rights that are granted to them. In 2001 the European Commission officially acknowledges that the citizens of the member states feel alienated with the work of the EU.

4.1.3 Promoting a European sense of belonging and beyond

The *White Paper on European Governance* (2001) states, that if the citizens don't come closer to the Union, fundamental questions about the future of the EU cannot be answered. In order to do so, the governance structures of the EU have to be reformed (European Commission, 2001, p.7-8). The European Council also supports this ambition in the Treaty of Nice (2001).

¹⁴ The relationship between European citizenship and other national citizenships is not discussed in the Maastricht Treaty. This is appointed in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997). This treaty explicitly stated that European citizenship should be complementary to national citizenship (Wiener, 2007, p.6 and Kaufmann, 2007, p. 8)

“Reforming governance addresses the question of how the EU uses the powers given by its citizens [...]. The goal is to open up policy-making to make it more inclusive and accountable. A better use of powers should connect the EU more closely to its citizens and lead to more effective policies. In order to achieve this, the Union must better combine different policy tools such as legislation, social dialogue, structural funding, and action programmes.” (European Commission, 2001, p. 8)

This statement shows that the EU wants to change her attitude. It maybe even is revolutionary in respect to the citizens. Five principles for the improvement of governance are defined: openness; participation; accountability; effectiveness and coherence. All policies should contain these principles to ultimately improve EU governance. The 'principle of participation' is further described (a complete list is to be found at page 10 of the White Paper).

“The quality, relevance and effectiveness of EU policies depend on ensuring wide participation throughout the policy chain –from conception to implementation. Improved participation is likely to create more confidence in the end result and in the Institutions which deliver policies. Participation crucially depends on central governments following an inclusive approach when developing and implementing EU policies.” (European Commission, 2001, p. 10)

It is striking that it isn't made clear what is exactly meant with the term participation. Yet, several ambitions that directly relate to participation are pronounced in the White Paper. For example, the Commission must encourage the accessibility of regional and local knowledge and promote the development of civil society in the member states. All EU institutions should periodically consult citizens, experts, firms and so on (European Commission, 2001, p. 10-12). Member states are responsible for involving citizens, especially the regional and local authorities. The cooperation of member states is therefore essential to come to a culture of consultation and dialogue. A shift in these responsibilities is not proposed. However the EU appeals member states to involve citizens, also when it comes to EU policies. At the same time, European institutions have to contribute, in particular the European Parliament who represents the citizens in Brussels (European Commission, 2001, pp. 10-12; pp. 16-17).

“Each member state should foresee adequate mechanisms for wide consultation when discussing EU decisions and implementing EU policies with a territorial dimension. The process of EU policy-making, in particular its timing, should allow member states to listen to and learn from regional and local experiences.” (European Commission 2001, p. 12)

The White Paper and the Nice Treaty were the main reasons for the European Council to start a program that promoted active European citizenship. Central to the program was the cultural interaction between citizens of the member states. The first program, 'Citizens for Europe', ran from 2004 to 2006. It had a total budget of around 96 million Euros (EUR-Lex, 2011). The Commission subsidized projects in countries that promoted active European citizenship. The

'town twinning'¹⁵ projects are best known (European Council, 2004, pp. 1-9 en European Commission, 2005a, p.2-5).

In 2005, a debate in European Parliament was held about the future of the program after 2006. During the debate the European Commissioner for Culture, Jan Figel, emphasized the following: "*Active citizenship promoted at European level should develop into "a sense of belonging to the EU and of a European identity."* Some parliamentarians found this approach too elitist but did favor it. Finnish MEP Hannu Takkula states: "*In the past, we tended to be quite elitist in the EU and support elite bodies, but this proposal highlights the possibilities for a broader group of people.*" Opponents felt that the program was mainly a waste of money: "*It is yet another example of how the EU seeks to use citizens' money for blatant propaganda*", thus was stated by British MEP Thomas Wise. The Parliament eventually agreed to a continuation of the program. As a symbolic move, MEPs changed the title of the programme from 'Citizens for Europe' to 'Europe for Citizens'. Citizens are not there for institutions, it is the people who create and shape the European Union (EUobserver, 2006).

The first action of the new Citizens Programme comes directly from the previous program: it aims to bring the citizens of Europe closer together. The emphasis again lies on 'town twinning'. The second action aims to help civil society to be more involved in developing and implementing European policies (Box 5).

With the term civil society, all non-governmental organizations are meant. Individual citizens are not mentioned. The third action seeks to boost the people's interest in Europe. High-profile events need to inspire people to identify themselves more with the European project. Finally, the fourth action; focuses on commemoration of the painful chapters from European history, such as Nazism and Stalinism (European Commission, 2010a, p.4-5). The program has a budget of 215 million Euros. This is a significant increase when compared to the previous period. However, this is 'only' 0.6 percent of the total EU budget. It is expected that each

Box 5: European Citizens' Panel initiative'

One of the projects that is financed by the Europe for Citizens Programme is the '*European Citizens' Panel Initiative*'. The idea of this project was to encourage citizens to discuss the future of rural areas from a European perspective. Randomly chosen citizens from various European regions were asked to participate in regional panel discussions. Ultimately, to form a European citizen point of view (European Commission, 2010a, p.14).

The project produced ten recommendations about rural areas; these were submitted to the Commission. The evaluation of the project is imported for this research. Various points of interest about the panel method were brought forward by the participants. They stated that the debate had to be about the concrete implications of EU policy on everyday life. Furthermore the participants could not always make a clear distinction between local and regional scale. And lastly they questioned to what extent the EU institutions would take the recommendations of the panel seriously. The later was related to other actors in de policy-making process, such as firms and NGO's. The participants were generally pleased with the panel and the accompanying decision-making mechanisms. They also recommended continuing the development of similar panels as an addition to representative democracy (European Citizens' Panel, 2007, pp.20-26; p.34-35).

¹⁵ Town twinning promotes mutual understanding and cultural exchanges across a variety of places (see European Commission, 2010b).

year approximately 1 million people participate in the projects of the program (Pinder & Usherwood, 2007, p.90 and European Commission, 2010c, p.12). Another important program that should be mentioned is *'Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate'*. The program directly followed after the rejection of the European Constitution by French and Dutch voters in 2005. Main aim of the program was to get citizens more involved in EU policy. 'Plan D' mainly had to assist the national debates about the future of Europe and had to present new initiatives that improved European citizens' involvement. The program included six different transnational participation initiatives. People from different countries were brought together to discuss European issues. One of the conclusions of the program; there was almost no dialogue between citizens and EU policy makers, due to a lack of trust. If citizens were sure their contributions had a serious chance, they sooner would be involved in a dialogue about EU policy:

[...] "experts should be on tap not on top. [...] citizens are one type of expert and the 'traditional' experts should not be allowed to 'rule the roost'." (ECAS, 2008, p.1).

After some adjustments, the program was continued in 2008 under the name, *'Debate Europe'*. Currently it finances the project *'European Citizens' Consultations'*. So far this is the largest participation project ever organized by the EU. The project will involve more than 50 NGO's. Furthermore online discussion forums and face-to-face consultation evenings with citizens are to be set up in all 27 member states. Additionally, a pan-European meeting and five regional meetings will be held to discuss a variety of European affairs (Karlsson, 2010, pp. 97-99).

Besides the initiatives concerning the active European citizenship, the EU also wanted to improve the legal European Citizenship. This became evident in the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007. The civil rights section of the Treaty points out that the activities of the EU institutions need to be more transparent to the public. According to the European Ombudsman, Nikiforos Diamandouros, a structured dialogue with civil society will improve the transparency of the Union. Citizen participation contributes to this (New Europe, 2011a). The Treaty of Lisbon also adds a right to the already existing rights, it called the *'European Citizens' Initiative'*. With this, citizens of the EU are able to bring an initiative to the Commission. The initiative must be supported by one million EU citizens from different countries. The Commission must express themselves on the initiative and, if necessary, discusses it with the European Parliament. There has been long debated on the practical implementation of this participation method. How should the distribution of one million citizens over all member states look like? Was the method accessible for citizens? Was it vulnerable to fraud? (European Commission, 2010d, pp. 2-3). Eventually the European Parliament agreed on the terms. The new regulation was formally signed on February 16th 2011 by János Martonyi and Jerzy Buzek, respectively the President of the European Council and European Parliament (Europa NU, 2011a).¹⁶ With this decision direct democracy receives a more prominent place within the EU. However, time will tell if the new given right is not once again seen as a new paper tiger of the EU.

¹⁶ Because member states still have to adapt their national laws, it is expected that the first initiatives are to be submitted by citizens in 2012 (Huis voor Democratie en Rechtstaat, 2010).

4.1.4 The European Union and interest groups

Nowadays, individual citizens are able to participate in the European process by voting, petitioning and submitting initiatives. In addition to this, member states sometimes organize national referendums to ask people for their opinion on European affairs. The previously mentioned Dutch referendum on the European constitution in 2005 is an example of this (European Commission, 2005b). In addition to these formal instruments, citizens also have other means to influence EU policy. Thousands of interest groups (lobby groups) and non-state actors are active in Brussels. Sometimes citizens are able to join these groups. The EU sees these groups as points of contact towards civil society. The various EU Directorates-Generals conduct a dialogue with interest groups of their field of expertise. Mostly interest groups take place in advisory committees and expert groups. Another example is the public consultation by means of 'Green and White Papers' (Nentwich, 1996, p. 10-11). Formally, there is no distinction between civil society organizations and other interest groups. When new policy is proposed, the Commission asks the advice of all interested parties. Every individual and every interest group is qualified to contribute. Since the beginning of the 1990's the Commission seeks for rules to be more transparent about the contact with civil society (European Commission, 1992, pp.1-10). By means of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) the EU established its own organizations to coordinate the contact with civil society. Most notably is the Liaison Group that was erected in 2004. The EESC, an advisory body of the EU, attempts to structure the contact with civil society, thus, hoping to improve it. In addition, a register was set up in 2008 by the Commission to create a better description of the active interest groups. Groups that want to contribute to policy reforms are first asked to register. At the time of this writing about 3500 groups are registered.¹⁷ The interest groups also organize themselves. Many platforms on various themes have been established; e.g. The European Network of Political Foundations, Social Economy Europe, The EU Civil Society Contact Group and so on. As a platform, they hope to increase their influence on EU policy (European Foundation Centre, 2010). It is difficult to identify whether people are able to participate through this kind of interest groups and if their possible contributions are of any relevance. To structure this, a special platform for citizens was created in 1990, called the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS). This independent NGO is specifically focuses on individual citizens and other NGO's work from a citizen's perspective. The ECAS serves as an advisory body for those who can't afford representation in Brussels (Nentwich, 1996, p. 11). The presence of an organization like the ECAS reveals the fact that the contribution of citizens in EU policy development is troublesome (more about interest groups and the EU can be read in Mazey & Richardson, 1993 and Andersen & Eliassen, 2001).

4.1.5 The search for more involvement

So far the public seems to show little interest in the EU. Usually this is measured by the turnout in the member states during the European elections. Since the first election in 1979 the turnout is in a downward spiral. From 70% (EU-9) in 1979 to 45% in 2009 (EU-27) (Van der Vaart, 2009). The European audience hesitates, however this is no reason for the EU stop the search for the European citizen. On the contrary, closing the gap between the Union and the citizens seems to be one of the foremost EU priorities.

¹⁷ See European Commission, 2011a. Register of interest representatives.

Staffan Nilsson, President of the EESC says:

“More civil society involvement at EU level through dialogue and participation, sustainability and green growth, and solidarity with the developing world are my priorities. This is most likely to happen as the new Treaty compels all EU institutions to engage in structured dialogue with civil society. Not all of the EU institutions are equipped to do it, nor are all willing to do it. [...] This would not only make the EU more democratic, but also keep the vision of a common Europe alive.” (New Europe, 2011b)

In the next part of this chapter a focus is placed on regional policy. Various documents from the European Commission, namely from Directorate-General Regional Policy, will be discussed. This Commission's department is responsible for the development and implementation of EU regional policy.

4.2 European regional policy

One of the most fundamental goals of the EU is to reduce economic and social disparities between the member states. The EU tries to facilitate this process of European integration by means of the Structural Funds (Shaw & Nadin, 2000, p.239). Structural Funds should be viewed in the context of the widening scope of EU policy development, the enlargement of the Union with new member states and the constantly changing dynamics in the relationship between the EU and these member states. In addition, the EU is also considered as 'a Europe of the regions'. Trends such as globalization, cultural homogenization and the emergence of new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe have fuelled the EU debate on regionalism (Michie & Fitzgerald, 1997, pp.14-15). The Union is perceived to have a core-periphery structure. The core of the EU has most prosperous regions, while the periphery is less developed. The gross domestic product (GDP) of Bavaria (Germany) for example, sharply contrasts with that of Alentejo (Portugal). EU regional policy aims to reducing these disparities. Peripheral regions are not to be bypassed by core regions (Michie & Fitzgerald, 1997, pp.16-18). However, the core-periphery structure cannot be clearly defined. Mildly speaking, it is characterized as a dynamic spatial concept that is heavily debated by scholars and politicians. The 'blue banana' is probably one of the most well known conceptualizations of European space. This discontinuous zone which encompasses a high population, industry and investments, stretches from Milan in the South to London in the North. Usually the zone is considered to be the center of Europe (Figure 6). The further enlargement of the EU led to the creation of other, more or less, vague concepts, like 'the blue star', 'a bundle of grapes' and 'the European Pentagon' (see Haase, 2009, pp. 17-20). In the early 90's the EU was viewed in terms of a North-South division. Prosperous regions were to be found in the North, while poorer regions were found in the South of Europe (Michie & Fitzgerald, 1997, p 15). As from 2004 various Eastern European countries entered the EU (e.g. the Czech Republic, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania). Because of this most disadvantaged regions were now located in the East (figure 9 on page 60).

Figure 6: 'Blue Banana', 1989



Source: Brunet, 1989

Ultimately, the disparities between the regions legitimize EU regional policy over the last thirty years. Solidarity between the member states is the main rationale of EU regional policy. Economically weak regions are to catch up to the rest of the EU. Between 2000 and 2006, two-third of the total budget (234 billion Euros) was allocated to the least prosperous parts of the EU, often rural and sparsely populated areas. Some scholars therefore argue that the Structural Funds have a spatially discriminating nature (Shaw & Nadin, 2000, p.239). In the past ten years the call for a competitive regional policy became louder. It stresses the ability of countries, regions and cities to generate income by applying the principles of competition (Molle, 2007, p.8). From a spatial perspective this implied that investments needed to be assigned to urban regions, where already much economic activity is concentrated. Investments in these placed are expected to generate the highest profits. Moreover, it is presumed that core zones have the potential to compete on a global scale (Brenner, 2004). To better understand the milestones of EU regional policy, more insight into the historical development of is needed.

4.2.1 Fundamentals of solidarity: the first budgetary period (1988 - 1993)

Specific regional policy was not designed until the 70's. During this period the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was created (Van Ravesteyn & Evers, 2004, p.29 and Manzella & Mendez, 2009, p. 5). ERDF became a part of the Structural Funds and was primarily intended as a financial investment for underperforming socio-economic areas of the member states. The joining of Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986) to the EU, led to a doubling of the population living in least-favoured regions. Due to these increased regional imbalances, the basics of the European regional policy had to be substantially reformed (Michie & Fitzgerald, 1997, p.18). The President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, was one of the main proponents of European solidarity. In a speech to the European Parliament in 1985 he stated that solidarity was a key theme to the future development of the EU:

“[...] It stems not only from financial problems but from a lack of understanding, from a clash of culture, which seems to be promoting certain countries to turn their backs on the solidarity pact that should be one of the cornerstones of the Community, solidarity of common-weal, contributing to the vigour of the European entity.” (from: Michie & Fitzgerald, 1997 p. 16)

The first major change since the Treaty of Rome, is the Single European Act (SEA). With the SEA, the single European market was completed in 1986. In response to the possible regional effects that the new single market would bring, the regional policy of the EU was considerably strengthened. Overall harmonious development of the EU by means of economic and social cohesion was the main aim of the SEA. Disparities between different regions had to be reduced and the most disadvantaged regions needed to be aided. Delors was strongly committed to increase the budget for the Structural Funds and aimed to stimulate regional development visibly. By doing so he hoped the process of cohesion would accelerate. According to Delors it was necessary to allocate the funds at a microeconomic level: [...] *“it is a matter of keeping structural policies ‘close to the ground’.”* (from: Manzella & Mendez, 2009, p. 14) Eurosceptical Margaret Thatcher was worthy opponent a Delors' vision. Thatcher, being a prominent neoliberal herself, was completely against the 'visible hand' that corrects market mechanisms. In 1988, after many fierce debates within the institutional triangle, the European Council and

Parliament finally agreed with the proposals of the Delors (Faludi, 2007, p.4 and European Commission, 2008a, pp. 8-13).

The so called ‘Delors Package’ doubled the budget of the Structural Funds and stated that the funds were to be periodically revised. Furthermore four principles were launched on how EU regional policy should be executed. These are *concentration*, *programming*, *additionality* and *partnership* (For a complete overview see European Commission, 2008a and Manzella & Mendez, 2009, pp. 14-15). This last principle aims to ensure a broad commitment and promotes the transparency of EU regional policy (Box 6).

Box 6: the rise of partnership
 At the end of the 80, ‘partnership’ was defined as a close collaboration between the Commission and the member states. Consultation is the main method of involvement. Each partner is perceived to pursue common goal of a group of partners. Over time the meaning of the term broadened. Nowadays it stands for collaboration between governments (including on lower levels) and representatives of civil society. Partnership is a positively charged ideology which promotes the building of consensus through collaboration. Policy proposals are less likely to be blocked if they are broadly supported. The term is wildly used in national and regional development approaches (Bauer, 2002, pp. 771-776). The functioning of representative democracy and the participation ladder (see chapter 2) underpin the development of partnership.

All member states are obliged to submit their regional development plans to the European Commission. The Commission checks if the intentions of plans correspond to the principles and objectives of the funds (Table 6). The European Council thereupon decided to create various Community Initiatives that would receive resources from the Structural Funds. These initiatives had to stimulate the cooperation between different member states (Molle, 2007). Well known initiatives were established during this funding period. Among them are LEADER+ (EAGGF fund), that was aimed at developing rural areas and INTERREG (ERDF fund), a programme that promotes the cooperation between various regional areas in neighboring countries (see Europa NU, 2011b and Europa NU, 2011c).

During the budgetary period of 1988-1993, 25 % of the total EU budget was allocated to the Structural Funds (69 billion Euros). Most of these resources (64 %) were spent on Objective 1 regions; these are lagging regions with a GDP of less than 75 % of the EU average. The Mediterranean EU countries were the main beneficiaries (European Commission, 2008a, pp. 8-13).

Table 6: Objectives of the EU Structural Funds, 1988-1993

Objective	Description	Fund (s)
Objective 1	Development of structurally-backward regions	ERDF, ESF, EAGGF
Objective 2	Converting regions in industrial decline	ERDF, ESF
Objective 3	Combating long-term employment	ESF
Objective 4	Increasing youth employment	ESF
Objective 5 (a)	Adjustment of agricultural structures	EAGGF
Objective 5 (b)	Development of rural areas	ERDF, ESF, EAGGF

Source: Michie & Fitzgerald, 1997, p.20

4.2.2 Economic and social cohesion: the second budgetary period (1994 – 1999)

Against the background of the Maastricht Treaty (1993), the Structural Funds were reformed for the second time. Many member states argued that the EU had to move to a closer political and economical unity. The establishment of European citizenship and the European Monetary Union (EMU) are examples of this. Regional policy based on solidarity was also strengthened. These reforms are also known as the, 'Delors Package II'. During this period the Cohesion Fund was established (Michie & Fitzgerald, 1997, pp.20-21).

Brussels assumed that social and economic cohesion was an important factor for the EMU to be successful. To further accelerate the cohesion process of the EU, the budgets for regional development were raised. A significant contribution had to be made by the Cohesion Fund. This fund especially had to aid the least wealthy member states, with a GDP of less than 90 % of the EU average. Under strict conditions Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland received money from this fund to finance infrastructure and environmental programmes (European Commission, 2008a, pp. 14-17). In contrast to the 'regular' Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund was not managed with the principle of partnership. Cohesion Fund programmes were primarily implemented in close cooperation between the European Commission and national governments (Molle, 2007, p. 137). The EMU was of great importance. Time consuming consultative structures with authorities from sub-national levels were therefore not desired by the EU.

INTERREG and LEADER + and other initiatives were continued in, respectively INTERREG II, IIC and LEADER II. Projects that were funded by INTERREG IIC needed to include partners from at least three different countries. Not only government institutions at regional and local scales could participate. Also non-governmental organizations such as NGO's were allowed to take part. Additionally, the EU aimed to co-finance regional programmes. INTERREG IIC projects were commonly complex to manage. Horizontal and vertical interests clashed easily with each other and consensus building could therefore be problematic (Shaw & Nadin, 2000, p.250). Partnership at the local level first gained prominent attention from the EU in the URBAN Community Initiative. With this, the EU acknowledged that socio-economic inequalities not only were to be reduced on a regional scale, but also on a local (urban) scale. URBAN had to combat the physical dereliction of specific neighborhoods by supporting and initiating local initiatives. Long-established practices in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were used as models (GHK, 2003). Urban Geographer Juliet Carpenter says:

"[...] one of the most important legacies of the URBAN programme has been this partnership working, which has paved the way for the formation of lasting relationships and the creation of networks of public- and private-sector organizations, brought round the table in many cases for the first time to focus on area-based initiatives" (Carpenter, 2006, p. 2156).

Compared with the period before, the EU robustly increased the budget of the Structural Funds. With 168 billion Euros, roughly one third of the total EU budget was allocated to regional development. Again the most money (68 % of the budget) spent on Objective 1 regions. Spain, Germany (the former DDR) and Italy were the main beneficiaries (European

Commission, 2008a, p. 18). By some the Delors Package II was characterized as a reform with few changes. The regional policy was still focused on the balanced development of the Union (Michie & Fitzgerald, 1997 p.20; Haase, 2009, p.56 en Manzella & Mendez, 2009, p. 15). However, the period can also be seen as a deepening of the transnational dimension in regional development. Especially when it comes to partnership, for the first time the local dimension was applied in the practice of EU regional policy and local and regional interests were institutionalized with the establishment of the CoR in 1994 (see paragraph 3.3).

4.2.3 Focusing regional policy: the third budgetary period (2000 – 2006)

During the third reform of regional policy, the procedures of the cohesion policy were simplified and the eastward enlargement of the EU was prepared. The enlargement, which included the countries that once belonged to the 'Eastern Bloc', was planned since the second half of the 90's. Due to this enlargement the EU was able to further increase its internal market. But what was the price that had to be paid? Could the new EU member states apply EU legislation, how much money would the new members receive (e.g. regional funding) and what impact would the free movement of labor have on the labor market in the old member states? Despite these ambiguities, ten countries joined the EU in 2004 during the so called 'big bang enlargement' (The Independent, 2001 and Paul, 2004, pp. 10-11).¹⁸ This term was not appreciated by the staff of the European Commission. They rather spoke of a 'smooth transition' (European Commission, 2004). Yet, enough reasons existed to speak of a big bang. The new member states caused the EU population to increase by 20 %, however they had little capital to contribute. Nearly the whole territory of the new member states consisted of Objective 1 regions and was eligible to the Cohesion Fund. Poverty and unemployment were top priorities for the fund to tackle (European Commission, 2008a, p. 19). An essential change was to increase the concentration of financial support. This resulted into a reduction in the number of objectives. Three objectives remained. The most fundamental aim, aiding lagging regions (Objective 1), remained virtually the same. About 70% of the budget of the funds was spent on this objective (Molle, 2007, pp. 184-185; for a description of Objective 2 and 3, see Manzella & Mendez, 2009, pp. 16-17). There was also a reduction in the number of Community Initiatives. Four were left, INTERREG, URBAN, LEADER en EQUAL (created to encourage social inclusion). Responsibility for the Initiatives was further decentralized to the member states.

Participation of the Commission in a programme would only be of an advisory nature. In addition to this, the role of regional, local actors and NGO's was to be strengthened. To do so, various bureaucratic procedures were simplified. The initial required content of programmes needed to be less detailed. Details would be developed at a later stage. However monitoring and reporting requirements were made more prescriptive. A lot of attention was paid by to comprehensive *ex-ante* evaluations, mid-term evaluations and a cyclic updates (Box 7). By doing so, the Commission became more of a supervisor of EU regional policy (Manzella & Mendez, 2009, p.17).

¹⁸ Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia joined in 2004. Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007.

Again the budget was significantly increased, this time to 213 billion Euros. However, the ratio remained the same. One third of the total EU budget was reserved for the funds. 22 billion Euros were allocated to the new member states. This was due to the fact that these countries joined the EU at the end of the budget period. Spain, Germany and Italy therefore also continued to be the main beneficiaries (European Commission, 2008a, p. 21).

Box 7: an evaluation of partnership

In the Ex-Post Evaluation of Cohesion Policy Programmes (2000-2006), the implementation of partnership principle is discussed. According to the evaluation, partnership was fairly good established in member states who already applied cooperative and consensus mechanisms in regional policy-making. (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden). Member states with a more centralized structure, the principle was relatively new (France, Greece and Italy). However, the principle had the most impact in the new member states from Eastern Europe. Institutional reforms, which were started in the 90's, were still ongoing. The first results about the implementation partnership in these countries were received with mixed feelings by the EU. On the one hand good practices were accounted for in Poland and the Czech Republic and Slovenia. These countries were experimenting with the participation of social partners, NGO's, regional and local governments during infrastructure and environmental programmes. On the other hand there was the impression that these parties were not actually able to influence the proposed policy. Thereafter the evaluation states that partnership in these countries has to be improved (European Policies Research Centre, 2009, pp. 32-34; 44).

4.2.4 The Lisbon Agenda, a shift to competitiveness

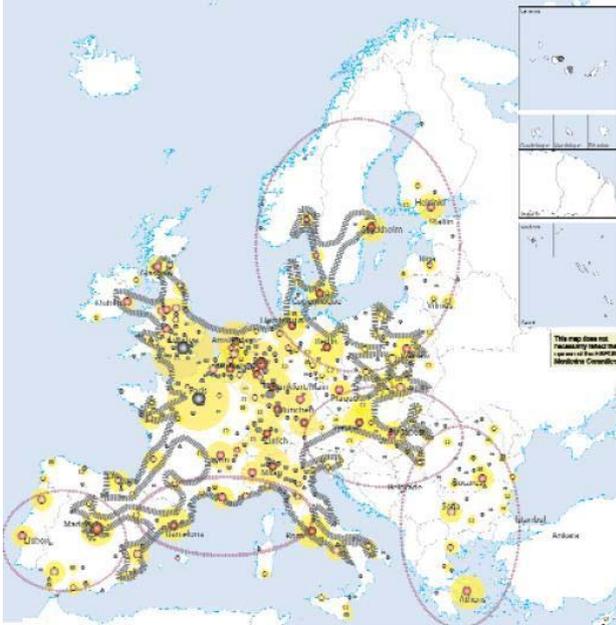
The fourth reform of EU regional policy was heavily influenced by the Lisbon Agenda (2007). Because this reform can be seen as an essential change compared to the previous periods, the context of this plan will first be described.

Main aim of the Lisbon Agenda is to develop the EU into the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.¹⁹ Sustainable economic growth with, more and better jobs and a greater social cohesion were designated as the main goals of the plan. This had to be achieved by investments in innovation, promoting entrepreneurship and reforming labor markets. Regional cohesion policy is seen to be essential to implement this strategy (Bachtler, 2010, p. 4, also see Bachtler & Gorzelak, 2007, pp. 309-310; Lázne, 2009, p.2 and Manzella & Mendez, 2009, p.18). The foundations of the Lisbon Agenda can be traced back to the *Sapir Report* (2003). Two important conclusions were formulated by the authors: Firstly, the EU under-performed in an economic sense, especially when compared to the United States. Secondly, the EU policies and the allocation of EU budgets were outdated. Regional policy had to become more efficient. The rationale of equality would not rapidly ensure the economic growth of the whole Union. A fundamental redesign of the policy was essential. Future regional policy needed to have a strong focus on competitiveness (Dunford, 2004, pp. 1-9 and Pelkmans & Casey, 2004, pp. 1-2). Obviously, not all member states welcomed the proposals. The report triggered a fierce debate at European level. ESPON (a spatial research network related to the EU) studied the spatial effects of a cohesion and competitiveness scenario. Two

¹⁹ This step was considered to be necessary. The EU didn't want to fall behind in an economically globalizing World. The rise of other supranational trading blocs such as: NAFTA, ASEAN, SAARC and apart from this, China strengthened this opinion.

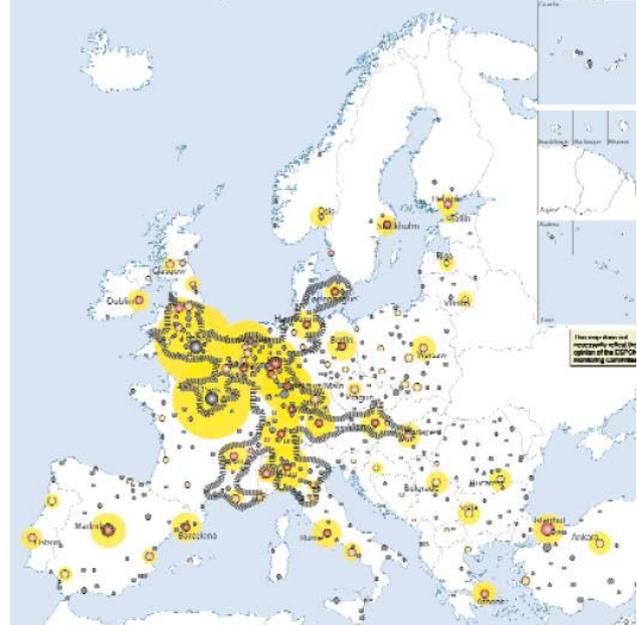
possible outcomes of regional policy are shown in figures 7a and 7b.²⁰ A cohesion scenario will allow a more balanced development of the EU. Whereas the competitiveness scenario emphasizes the growth of urban centers and industrial heartlands (ESPON, 2007, p. 52). In 2005, after a long process of reflections and negotiations, the EU determined the new budget and allocated the funds among the member states.

Figure 7a: cohesion scenario, 2007



Source: ESPON, 2007, p. 53

Figure 7b: competitiveness scenario, 2007



The Lisbon Agenda and the underlying *Sapir Report* left a clear mark on the new regional policy that was operative from 2007. Innovation, knowledge and entrepreneurship were addressed to be the key themes (Bachtler & MacMaster, 2007, p. 259 and Manzella & Mendez, 2009, p.18).

4.2.5 From controversy to consensus: the fourth budgetary period (2007 – 2013)

To better attune EU Regional policy to the Lisbon Agenda, the Commission formulated Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG). The CSG are broad guidelines that member states must take into account when developing their regional policy. The following three guidelines are leading: creating more and better jobs, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship and lastly, improving the attractiveness of places to invest in and to reside in (European Commission, 2005c, p. 12). Hence, the new EU regional policy based on efficiency proved to be a thorny topic for the member states. In countries such as Germany and Spain reducing disparities is part of the constitution. And what would happen with structural underperforming regions, such as West-Wales (United Kingdom), Hainaut (Belgium) and Norrland (Sweden)? Besides this, the efficiency objective was a touchy theme for the Eastern member states that recently joined the EU. Countries, such as Romania and Bulgaria were relatively poor. Efficient regional policy would only increase the socio-economic disparities within the Union (Manzella & Mendez, 2009, p.18). Equality and efficiency was also still debated at Commission level. This

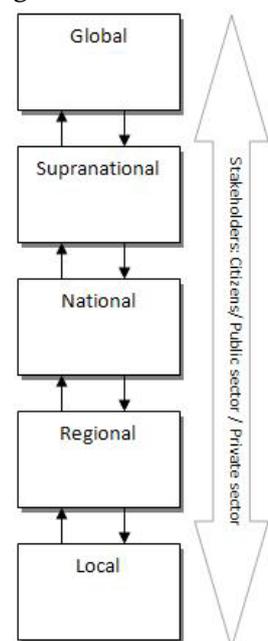
²⁰ The yellow color indicates the economic growth. A darker yellow means more growth. Emerging peripheral zones in figure 7a are encircled.

is reflected in the CGS's with the notion of the term Territorial Cohesion (see paragraph 4.2.7). Thus, Territorial Cohesion is directly associated with balanced spatial development, such as the sustainable development of urban and rural communities and improving cross-border regional development (European Commission, 2005c, pp. 4-9; pp. 29-32). A compromise was the only way for the debate to be resolved. This became clear in the three priority objectives of the policy for the period 2007-2013. Firstly, the Convergence objective. This objective virtually remained unchanged since 1988. The '75 % rule' was still applicable. Approximately 80 % of the regional funds were reserved for this objective. Secondly, the Regional Competitiveness objective was created to strengthen the competitiveness of regions (figure 10 on page 61). INTERREG became a full objective. This third objective was named European Territorial Cooperation and was available to facilitate all sort of territorial cooperation on a pan-European context ²¹ (European Commission, 2008a, pp. 23-25). 308 billion Euros was made available for Structural and Cohesion funds (Molle, 2007, p.143). This appears to be an increase. Nevertheless, with one third of the total EU budget, it comparatively stays at the same level of the previous budgetary period. At the first sight, no radical changes are noted because most of the funds are still reserved for the lesser developed convergence regions (figure 11 on page 62). However, the efficiency objectives were not abandoned.

Large amounts of funding were 'earmarked'. Key investments intended to stimulate growth and jobs, by means of research, innovation and sustainable energy (Lisbon objectives) received an earmark. For convergence regions it was mandatory to allocated 60 % of the funds to earmarked objectives, for other regions this is 75 %. This development indicates that there really is a shift in regional policy focused on efficiency. Furthermore the term 'subsidy' is replaced by 'investment'. Also the Commission shifted its responsibilities further to the strategic level. Member states are now responsible of audits, financial control and monitoring (Haase, 2009, p. 63-65). Nowadays, developing and implementing regional policy is to be done in a dialogue with various stakeholders at different administrative levels. This is further elaborated in the *White Paper on Multilevel Governance* published in 2009.

Governance processes will play an increasingly prominent role in regional policy issues. In *European Governance, a White Paper* the dimension of scale was already discussed. The *White Paper on Multilevel Governance* (2009), published by the CoR, continues on the specific context. The CoR argues that top-down and bottom-up governance in practically can't be seen separated. EU policy can have an impact on national, regional and local scales. However, national, regional and local governments are able to formulate and implement their own policy. It is therefore inevitable that different scales will intersect (Figure 8). Multilevel governance is understood as the cooperation between these levels of government, often together with firms, action committees, citizens and other actors from civil society. Multilevel governance is not

Figure 8: Multilevel governance



²¹ For example, a Spanish region and a Finnish region can now together apply for funds.

regarded as a legally binding instrument but represents a political ‘action blueprint’ in which the subsidiarity principle is respected (Committee of the Regions, 2009, pp. 6-7). In the White Paper, the CoR speaks of ‘Building Europe in partnership’ with help of the mechanisms of multi-level governance:

“The legitimacy, efficiency and visibility of the way the Community operates depend on contributions from all the various players. They are guaranteed if local and regional authorities are genuine “partners” rather than mere “intermediaries.” (Committee of the Regions, 2009, p. 5).

In the fourth budgetary period, partnership is also established in the CSG. Involving regional and local actors is assumed to be a crucial factor for the successful development and implementation of regional policy. Article 11 obliges member states to implement the principles of partnership:²²

“The objectives of the Funds shall be pursued in the framework of close cooperation, (hereinafter referred to as partnership), between the Commission and each member state. Each member state shall organise, where appropriate and in accordance with current national rules and practices, a partnership with authorities [...] Each member state shall designate the most representative partners at national, regional and local level and in the economic, social, environmental or other spheres (hereinafter referred to as partners), in accordance with national rules and practices [...]” (European Commission, 2006, p. 2)

If the needs of stakeholders are reflected in regional policy, the implementation will be more effective and less costly. Furthermore the EU will be more visible. The *Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion* even states, that active participation of regional and local communities is a crucial success factor to cohesion policy (box 8). The success heavily depends on the long-term involvement of different layers of government and citizens. Good governance frameworks should provide this (European Commission, 2010e, p. XXXIII):

“Evaluation evidence has clearly demonstrated that the active participation of people and organisations on the ground at regional and local level, from the design to the implementation stage, is a crucial success factor in making development initiatives work. In fact, such partnership is one of the key sources of the added-value of Cohesion Policy, mobilising their skills and knowledge to make programmes more effective and inclusive.” (European Commission, 2010e, p. 256)

Box 8: responses to the Fifth Cohesion Report

Between November 2010 and January 2011, the *Fifth Cohesion Report* was open for consultation. 444 responses were counted. Most reactions came from regional and local management authorities. Furthermore, 29 contributions came from civil society organizations and 21 from individual citizens (European Commission, 2011d; see, Citizen Summary). After studying the latter, it can be said, that these 21 individuals are very well informed in the workings of EU regional policy. This is mostly due to their profession.

²² Article 11 can be entirely viewed on the World Wide Web, see EUR-Lex, 2008. See ANNEX 4.

However, a recent EU study on all the member states shows that the quality of government in several member states is described as poor (European Commission, 2011b, pp. 1-3). This is seen as a threat that undermines Cohesion Policy. Economic growth can be hindered and personal well-being and freedoms can be reduced. According to the research, the quality mostly falls behind in the Eastern member states. Furthermore, several are also confronted with an internal variation in the perceptions of quality of government (figure 12 on page 63).

4.2.6 The sixth pillar (2013 and beyond)

Today, the debate on the next budgetary period is in full swing. The future of EU regional policy is associated with the ambitious *Europe 2020 strategy*. This strategy has to develop a strong European economy in which 'smart growth' (knowledge and innovation economy), 'sustainable growth' (a sustainable and competitive economy) and 'inclusive growth' (shared growth) are central themes (European Commission, 2010e, p. XI and European Commission 2010f). One of the most well known contributions to the debate on EU regional policy after 2013 comes from the so-called *Barca Report -an Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy* (2009). The report recommends that there is a strong case for allocating a large share of the regional budget to a place-based development strategy (Barca, 2009, p. 156-157). The term, 'place-based development policy' is one of the cornerstones of the *Barca Report*. Barca defines place-based development policy through three points: First, the objective of the policy is to reduce persistent inefficiency and inequality in specific places. Second, the policy is to be integrated, designed and implemented by means of local preferences and knowledge and through participatory political institutions. Third and last, the policy is to be formed by a system of multilevel governance in which funds are subjected to conditionalities.

“Place-based” (or territorial) refers both to the context-dependent nature of the efficiency and equity problems that the policy deals with, and to the fact that the design of integrated interventions must be tailored to places, since it largely depends on the knowledge and preferences of people living in it.” (Barca, 2009, pp. 5-6)

The *Barca Report* challenges the widely accepted idea that pursuing one objective, equality or efficiency, automatically influences the other objective in a positive or negative manner. The thoughts about the regional policies of Delors (equality) and Sapir (efficiency) should therefore both be pursued (Barca, 2009 pp.17-18; p.26; p.34). The report devotes considerable attention to the local dimension of the place-based approach:

“Although local elites might not set the rules for representative democracy, they are responsible for how the local democratic process works. [...] These local elites, can often choose the economic institutions that best suit their own interests [...].” (Barca, 2009, p.21)

Barca explicitly pays attention to the role of local actors in place-based policy development. Not only in the broad sense of the term, but he especially mentions citizens. If regions want to achieve economical growth, the institutions will have to fit within a local context and local knowledge should be a part of these institutions. Within this 'one size does not fit all' principle, public and private institutions need to have an opportunity to coordinate a collective decision-making process. Democratic participation in decision making is a prerequisite for

policy choices to be in line with the preferences of citizens. An institutional climate like this is able to stimulate development by encouraging the participation of citizens. Knowledge can be brought together and with this, new collective projects can be created. Furthermore, institutions will become stronger if citizens are involved (Barca, 2009 pp.21-25).

“[...] local knowledge needs to be exploited and “participatory political institutions [can be thought of] as meta-institutions that elicit and aggregate local knowledge and thereby help build better institutions.” (Barca, 2009, p.26).

The reason why Barca commits himself to a greater role for local institutions is twofold. An idealistic approach is visible. He assumes that by addressing local knowledge, citizens will become more active. Also a more technocratic is visible, that is aimed to strengthen the institutions (after all the report is written on behalf of the Commission). The recommendations of the report also pay specific attention to this matter. According to the Barca, the new cohesion policy can be based on ten ‘pillars’ (see Barca, 2009 , pp. 156-189).²³ The sixth pillar is called, ‘*Promoting experimentalism and mobilising local actors*’. One of its aims is to promote the public debate and encourage participation with EU regional policy:

“A place-based approach ultimately relies on the capacity of external interventions to promote (in the target places/regions) a process for eliciting the knowledge and preferences of individuals, facilitating innovative actors and new ideas, and designing projects for the production of public goods and services.” (Barca, 2009, p.178)

To achieve this, the various Directorates-Generals (DG) of the Commission have to be strengthened. Furthermore, the different DG’s have to work closer together. Themes, such as regional innovation systems, climate change and education are nowadays not reserved to one DG anymore. If the pillar is to be a success the Commission also needs to get closer to the member states and regions. Contact with the local scale could provide the creation of project based ‘community-based indicators’ that are usable for monitoring their objectives and results. As a result it will be possible to actually connect the policy process to the preferences of citizens. The involvement of member states and regions is of crucial importance. From this level, local actors are brought together to create a constructive debate. Concurrently, the Commission would be given the opportunity to play a more prominent role:

“[...] the opportunity would be given to the Commission (and formally recognised) to exert a more active and direct role in raising public awareness at local level, by organising highquality workshops and bringing international expertise to places of particular relevance for the core priorities; and by directly organising, in selected places, pilot experimental impact evaluations.” (Barca, 2009, p.179)

²³ The report indicates that the pillars should be seen as ten statements. The statements serve as a starting point for a debate on reform of cohesion policy (p.156).

The workings of these processes also have a bottom-up dimension. How much can sub-national public institutions make their views known in an effective way at EU level? Regions who already directly speak to the Commission are represented by the CoR. Actors, such as NGO's, firms, environmental and emancipation movements also want their voices to be heard. The debate on the progress and achievements of regional policy should also be open to the views of these groups from civil society (Barca, 2009, pp. 178-179). Debating the sixth pillar therefore equals the debate about multi-level governance issues.

4.2.7 The rise of territorial cohesion

In the course of time regional policy got more wider and spatial interpretation. Since the 90's the traditional economic and social objectives of regional policy were increasingly connected to the geographical constraints of territories. It was assumed that conditions such as, topography, distance and geographic location influenced access to all sorts of public services. Therefore the policy also required a spatial perspective (Bachtler & Polverari, 2007, p. 107). The term, territorial cohesion was first introduced in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and was loosely associated to a 'more balanced development of European space' (Mole, 2007, p. 84). To achieve this, a European spatial planning agenda was developed. The *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) published in 1999 is an attempt to the 'polycentric development' of the EU. According to this view, regions were to be developed in a balanced and sustainable manner and should also form networks (see the corridor concept, e.g. Zonneveld & Verwest, 2005, pp. 177-203). Regional collaborations have to ensure that historical barriers, such as national boundaries, are overcome. Besides this, poor performing cities and regions are then able to reinvent themselves on the European scale (Hague & Jenkins, 2005, p.61). Because the vision had no formal status within the EU, member states were not obliged to follow the principles. The ESDP wasn't designed in vain. One of the most interesting outcomes was the establishment of the *European Spatial Planning Observation Network* (ESPON). ESPON was given the task to carry out research on spatial impact of European policy. Through this, the thinking about spatial issues got more status within the EU. The ESDP also offered guidelines for developing various interregional (INTERREG IIC) projects. Member states were urged to take these guidelines into account (Van Ravesteyn & Evers, 2004, p. 18-20). Meanwhile, the term territorial cohesion was accentuated. In 2004 the Commission states the following:

"The concept of territorial cohesion extends beyond the notion of economic and social cohesion by both adding to this and reinforcing it. In policy terms, the objective is to help achieve a more balanced development by reducing existing disparities, avoiding territorial imbalances and by making both sectoral policies which have a spatial impact and regional policy more coherent. The concept is also to impose territorial integration and encourage cooperation between regions." (from: De Pater, 2009a, p. 293)

The term was formally acknowledged in the Lisbon Agenda. Nevertheless some member states regarded the term is vague, according to these countries territorial cohesion had always been a part of cohesion policy. Economic, social and territorial cohesion cannot be seen separately from each other (Vanolo, 2010, p. 1306). The debate on equality and efficiency is also reflected within the conceptualization of territorial cohesion. In the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* from 2008, the Commissions called to come to a better shared understanding of the term

(European Commission, 2008b). Many of the comments underlined the importance of the solidarity dimension of territorial cohesion (Box 9).

The *Fifth Cohesion Report* approaches territorial cohesion in the following manner:

“As with economic and social cohesion, territorial cohesion highlights a number of issues that merit more attention. Economic and social cohesion focuses on regional disparities in competitiveness and well-being; Territorial cohesion reinforces the importance of access to services, sustainable development, ‘functional geographies’ and territorial analysis.” (European Commission, 2010e, p. 24).

In this definition territorial cohesion is at the service of economic and social objectives. ‘Territorial imbalances’ and ‘territorial integration’ from the definition in 2004 are replaced by ‘functional geographies’ and ‘territorial analysis’. Despite the reactions on the Green Paper, no direct association is made with the principles of solidarity (European Commission, 2010e, p. 24). The focus is attuned with the Lisbon Agenda. Territorial cohesion must strengthen the competitiveness of regions in order to foster growth. Obviously, this rationale can be questioned. Regions cannot be regarded to be firms. For example, a region cannot exit from the market because it is not performing. Furthermore, cohesion can be approached intrinsically; it’s not only about increasing the income of regions (Vanolo, 2010, pp. 1308-1309).

Box 9: responses to the Green Paper

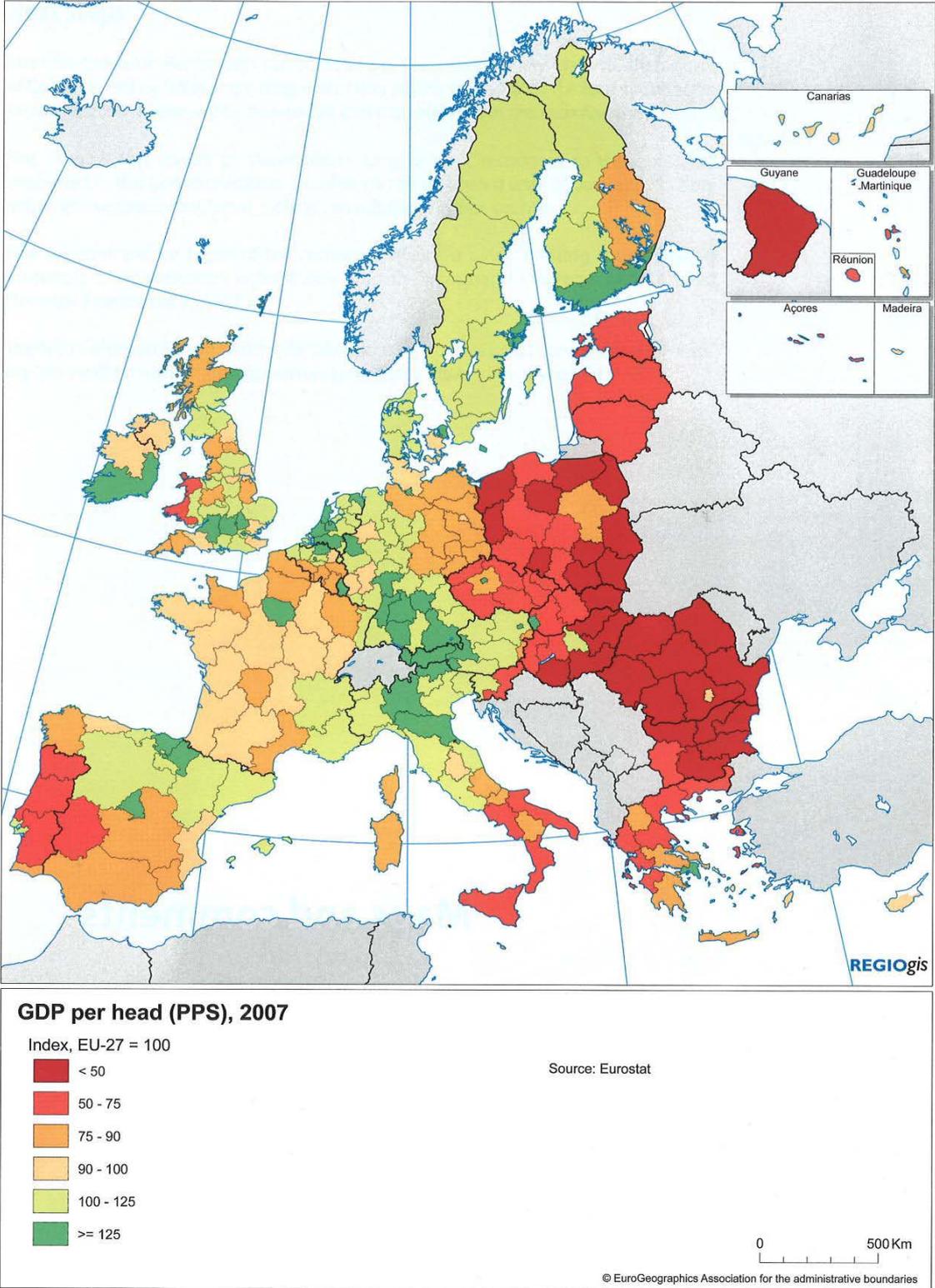
Almost 400 responses on the Green Paper were counted. The responses came from various EU institutions, but also from various layers of ‘European society’. Besides the discussion on the territorial cohesion, the paper also brought forward the term ‘new regional partnerships’. Is it useful to involve ‘new actors’ such as, representatives of the social economy, local stakeholders and voluntary organizations? If so, how is the desired level of participation to be achieved (European Commission 2008b, p. 12)? Most respondents positively reacted to the questions. Representatives of civil society needed to have a greater role in formulating, implementing and evaluating EU territorial policies. In accordance to Barca, they state that the Commission needs to become more active. Facilitate cross-border governance in order to develop projects with public support is seen as a way to stimulate territorial cohesion (European Commission 2009b, p.13).

4.3 Conclusion

In part one of these findings the development of European Citizenship and EU regional policy is elaborated. In general it can be said that the search for a European audience is ongoing. The formal European Citizenship and the complementary citizenship programmes can be seen as the most significant attempts to attract the attention of the people. Within regional policy an essential shift from solidarity towards competitiveness is noted. Simultaneously, partnerships gradually became more imported. Originally, EU regional policy promoted the collaboration between the EU and the member states. This was extended to the sub-national public institutions. Recently the collaboration with civil society (e.g. firms, interest groups, NGO’s and citizens) is also notably propagated. In the second part of this chapter the literature findings will be deepened by means of in-depth interviews.

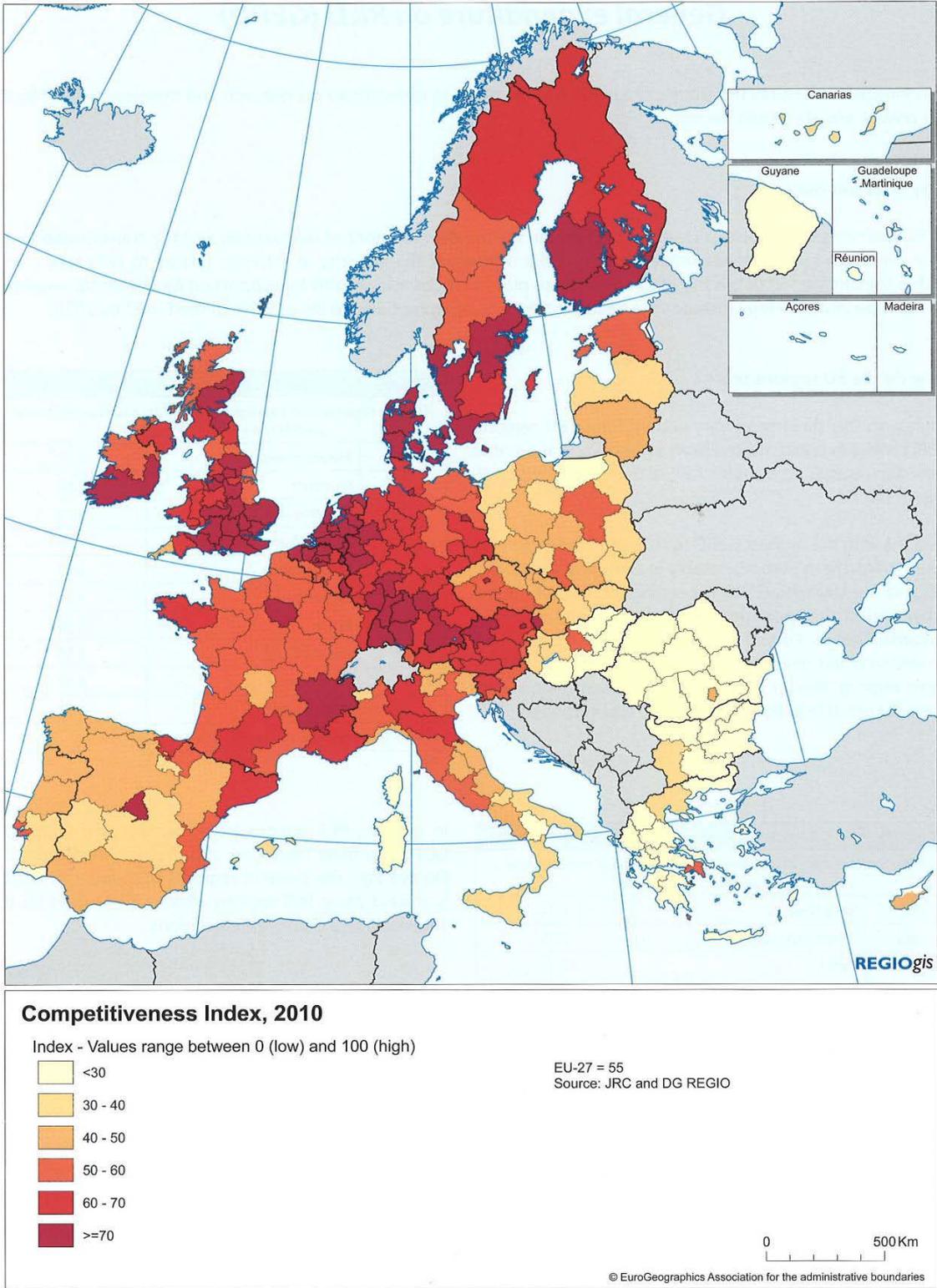
4.4 Maps on regional diversity in the European Union

Figure 9: GDP per head (PPS), 2007



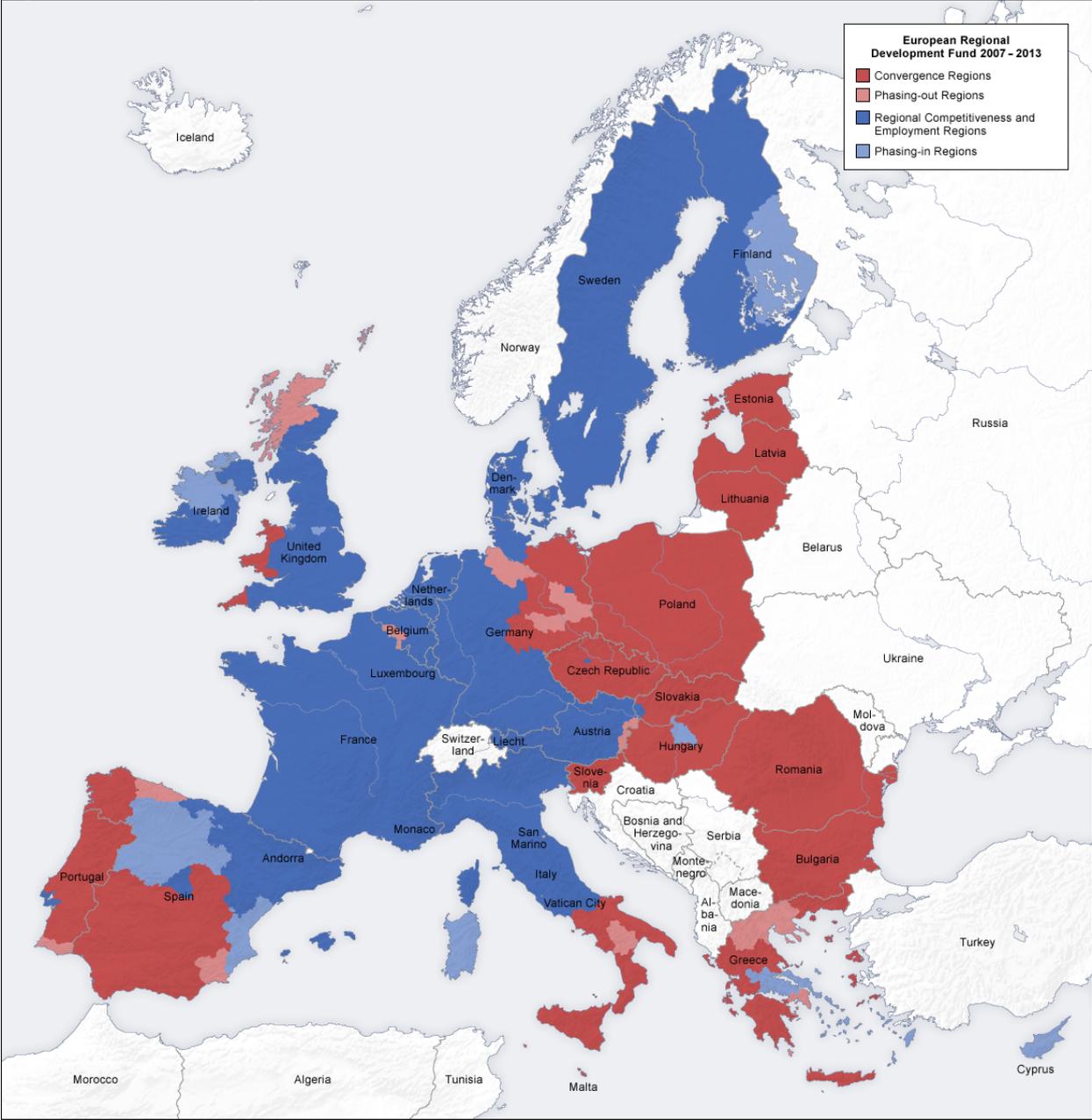
Source: European Commission, 2010e

Figure 10: Competitiveness Index, 2010



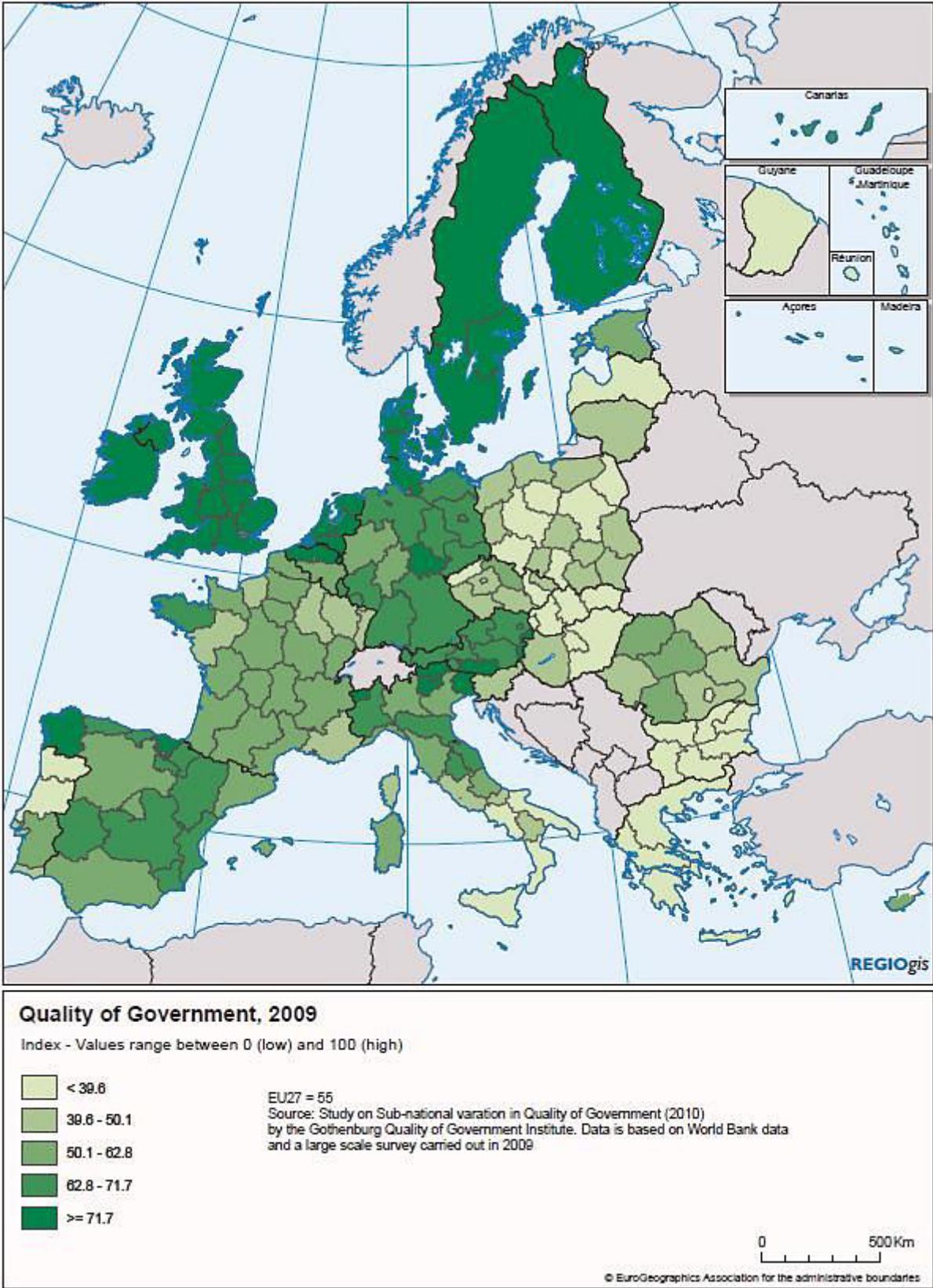
Source: European Commission, 2010e

Figure 11: European Regional Development Fund, 2007-2013



Source: Wikimedia Commons, 2011

Figure 12: Quality of government, 2009



Source: European Commission, 2011b

Chapter 5: Findings in-depth interviews

To gain a more nuanced understanding of the previous study, the in-depth interviews are presented. The findings coming from these interviews will explore the thoughts and opinions about citizen participation within EU Regional Policy. Three themes are used to present the findings. These are: Europe and its citizens, citizen participation in EU regional policy and citizen participation and EU governance. Further elaboration will be done by means of sub-themes. To further enrich the empirical findings, two case studies will complete this chapter. One case is about the developments around the lake area of the Veluwe in the Netherlands. The other case is about the South-East Cohesion Region in the Czech Republic. To be clear about who says what the respondents are given a code. This coding scheme can be used while reading the upcoming paragraph (Table 7):

Table 7: coding respondents

Code	Function	Organization
DGCOM	Policy Official	EU – EC - DG Communication
DGREG ₁	Policy Official	EU – EC – DG Regional Policy
DGREG ₂	Policy Official	EU – EC – DG Regional Policy
DGREG ₃	Policy Official	EU – EC – DG Regional Policy
MEP	Member of European Parliament	European People’s Party / CDA
CONS	Consultant Regional Policy	International consultancy agency
MINECO	Policy Official ERDF	Dutch Ministry of Economic affairs
NLCASE	Regional Programme Manager	Dutch Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management
CZCASE	Policy Official	Czech Republic, Regional Council South-East Authority

5.1 Europe and its citizens

In this paragraph will be shown what various respondents think about the gap between the EU and its citizens, how the EU wants to get closer to its citizens and what the thoughts are on concept of citizen participation. These opinions serve as a contextual background to further discuss citizen participation within EU regional policy.

1. A European sense of belonging

When addressing citizen participation on level of the EU, fundamental questions about how citizens associate themselves to the EU arise. Indeed, a legal European citizenship does exist since the Maastricht Treaty (1992), but what about the ‘Europeaness’ of the citizens? How is this perceived by the various respondents? In the literature study of chapter 4, it has been made clear that a gap between the EU and its citizens exists. The respondent of DG Communication confirms this:

“The gap between the EU and its citizens comes from both ways. The EU is perceived as being remote from its citizens and citizens are remote from the institutions. The fact remains that today the EU is a very complex organization and is very hard for citizens to understand.” (DGCOM)

Legitimacy is a key-reason why the EU wants to come closer to its citizens. Today it's not only output legitimacy that counts (i.e. legitimacy through results) but also input legitimacy (i.e. legitimacy through involvement). Input legitimacy is about the connection between the EU institutions and the citizens. Or to put it in the words of the policy officer of DG Communication: *"To what extent are citizens associated with the decisions that concern them?"* Evidently this raises questions if citizens want to be associated with the EU. The MEP has a clear and somewhat 'Schumpeterian' opinion:

"Individual citizens are usually not interested in any form of government. A citizen is primarily concerned with his or her own life. Only when something goes wrong in society, one addresses the government. The role of EU is therefore also a minimal one. This is a state of fact." (MEP)

All the other respondents more or less conform to the opinion that citizens see Europe as a remote and complex organization. They elaborated their answers usually in terms of 'citizens having no feeling with what EU institutions do' and, 'there is no reason to feel a sort of Europeaness'. One respondent for example states:

"European citizenship is not something meaningful to the lives of individuals. I think that people have little interest in Europe." (MINECO)

The presumed lack of interest of citizens is no reason for the European Commission not to stimulate a European sense of belonging. The aspect of territorial identity is also a theme of debate. The respondent of DG Communication strongly believes a European sense of belonging can exist next to other territorial identities (see box 4). The EU should stimulate this for reasons of input legitimacy:

"If the EU wants to function properly it is important that citizens are associated with its functioning. [...] I believe that this involvement only can be triggered if they feel a sense of belonging. Having a new identity next to your local, regional and, national identity, these are not excluded at all. I acknowledge that there is something European in us that justifies that we are interested in European affairs." (DGCOM)

This statement is functional and idealistic at the same time. Functional because a European sense of belonging contributes to the workings of the EU and idealistic because it is assumed a European feeling is present in all Europeans. The functional view is generally found with various statements of the respondents of DG Regional Policy. In general they support the stimulating of a European sense of belonging. However, they do so for mainly functional reasons. European sense of belonging is seen as a tool to create more support from the civil society for proposed policy measures. Next to this, these respondents doubt if a European sense of belonging can really exist. For example one respondent remarks that individuals identify themselves with regions and localities. Therefore the creation of a common social European citizenship remains to be seen (DGREG3). This is in contrast with the opinion of DGCOM. Idealist approaches to the European sense of belonging are also noted. The

functional approach is marginalized by the MEP and replaced with the higher objectives of the EU:

“The fundamentals of a European sense of belonging should go beyond consensus building. The basics lie in a mutual understanding between different European citizens and the deepening of the foundations of the EU”. (MEP)

II. EU policy development and citizens

Despite these differences in opinions, the EU decided to further stimulate the European sense of belonging. This part generally outlines the current situation of citizen involvement in EU policy development. A reference can be made to the second objective of 'Europe for citizens' programme.

According to the respondent of DG Communication the Lisbon Treaty must be seen as a substantial turn to improve the input legitimacy of the EU. Participatory processes are now obligatory within the Commission. Currently there is an ambition to put citizens in the middle of EU policy-making. For example, all the policy must respond to the needs and concerns of citizens. The citizenship programme, 'Europe for citizens', has to contribute to this. The first objective is considered to be a success. Evaluations of the town twinning method in 2008 and 2009 are highlighted by the respondent. In general, the participants of these programmes feel more connected to other Europeans. Yet, this is only about a 'people to people' connection. The second objective is about associating 'people to the EU institutions'. The respondent admits this objective is less successful but also stresses that the principles already exist. The principles are determined in *European Governance, a White Paper* (2000). However there is an unequal level of implementation of these principles across the DG's. Some DG's obviously conform themselves better to the governance principles than others. Traceability of the input of citizens during EU policy development is identified as a key issue to tackle. Currently only consultations can be traced. The process of developing EU legislation contains an obliged consultation procedure. There is documented, who is consulted, what were the results, what was done with the results, and so on. The respondent believes this process works fairly well. For dialogue mechanisms this is vaguer. DG's are in contact with civil society by the means of structured dialogues, it's assumed that policy development is improved by this. However it's indistinct what input exactly comes from structured dialogues and what impact this input has in the decision making process:

“We know it is been done, but the traceability is still lacking. If a result comes back they would find some trace, but it wouldn't be easy. Let's put it this way, it wouldn't be in the procedures. The consultations of the services [DG's], discussions in the parliament, the amendments, all this is documented. We do not have any equivalent for dialogues.[...] At the same time we have the bear in mind not to overburden our procedures.” (DGCOM)

III. Thoughts on citizen participation

This paragraph will conclude with the thoughts of the respondents on citizen participation. Their thought can shed a light on the position of a respondent towards citizen participation. What are the conceived strengths and weaknesses? And does he or she think citizen

participation is meaningful during decision-making processes? Chapter 2 serves as a contextual background for this part.

The respondents of the European Commission generally favor the involvement of citizens in EU policy-making. However they do point out different nuances. The policy officer of DG Communication continues the previous elaboration on consultation and structured dialogue as the main participation mechanisms that are used by the EU. When it comes to dialogue, there is still much to be learned. This can be done by transferring knowledge on this topic between the DG's. Yet, it is unclear where the different DG's stand on the implementing of structured dialogues with citizens. Currently this is mapped out. In the mean time DG Communication also gathers knowledge on the dialogue practice. The '*Europe for citizens*' programme therefore contains an initiative called the '*European Citizens' Panel*'. This panel is typified as an experiment by the respondent. One of the foremost lessons learned, is that citizens want to be involved in European affairs:

"When given the opportunity citizens have an opinion and they are willing to give it. [...] If they are invited to give an opinion they would be very happy to do so. They think 'oh, my opinion matters'. Not only did they give an opinion. They gave a sensible opinion on what to do." (DGCOM)

This actively thinking along and the sensible output are perceived as the strongest points of citizen participation. This can help EU policy officers to better understand local circumstances. The obtained information should be very useful in the policy development process. Furthermore it is stressed that not only interest groups should be involved. The term 'interest groups' is regretted by the respondent. The EU should also try and involve ordinary citizens:

"It [a citizens' panel] really involves citizens directly so it gives ordinary citizens a voice. [...] Sometimes ordinary citizens do not feel represented by civil society organizations. Civil society organizations represent active types of citizens and not everyone, by no means, is an activist. [...] These people can be represented in those panels" (DGCOM)

Weaker sides of citizen participation were also shown according to the policy officer of DG Communication. The success of applying citizen participation heavily depends on what you want to achieve. This leads to extensive debates. Therefore the preparation phase takes a lot of time. Thereafter it is hard to reach ordinary citizens. Citizen participation is only useful if the sample of citizens is representative. Altogether the process is time-consuming. There is a reasonable chance that another six months are added to the already long-winded procedures of EU policy development. Last but not least, citizen participation is relatively costly and it's difficult to check what citizens actually contributed to the policy.

The respondents of DG Regional Policy share the positive perspective on citizen participation of their colleague. However an important difference was observed. Instead of explicitly talk about citizens, the respondents of this DG more referred to terms like 'civil society' or 'stakeholders'. Within this broader perspective citizens are considered to be one of the actors. Nevertheless citizens are to be involved in policy-making. One policy officer says policy can be

more visible and legitimate if citizens and other stakeholders are involved. Local people want to be involved, but not all people are ready to do so. Yet, this no reason not to involve citizens:

“If we want to have a policy that is close to citizens and is visible for citizens we need to make sure the different stakeholders are involved. This might not be the easiest way to go for projects, because it requires a lot of work and a lot of involvement of different actors. [...] The more people are involved the better the result will be, because people will simply be happier with what is going to come out. [...] People are not stupid and people know what they need in their living environment and only people know at the end.” (DGREG₂)

DGREG₃ agrees and presumes that local knowledge in EU policy-making is useful. It helps policy to be more connected with the preferences on ‘the ground’. Problems can be detected in the early stages. Yet, the respondent also states:

”The biggest challenge is to organize participation in the most efficient and effective way. If this is not done, the efforts that are made can be contra productive. [...] One must be clear to the citizens. You cannot make everybody happy. There are always compromises to be made.” (DGREG₃)

Finally, one other policy officer of DG Regional Policy holds a more neutral opinion on the topic of citizen participation. It is stated that there is something to be said for both positions. Indeed, it is always good to involve people, this is difficult argue against. Otherwise this does not automatically justify that participation is a good thing. The respondent acknowledges this is an interesting question but is not in the position to answer it: *“It is a very thin line between too much participation and no participation at all.”* (DGREG₁) The other respondents pronounced themselves more critical towards citizen participation. The MEP for example states:

“The citizen’ is a concept that doesn’t exist. Citizens are free to do what they want and to express themselves. A topic should be meaningful to citizens, if this is not the case, participation is useless.” (MEP)

And:

If you are naïve to a certain level and think you can involve citizens on all sorts of subjects, forget about it. They can’t think in a holistic way. [...] Citizens are only interested when there is a local problem. The participation of ‘key players’ or ‘experts’ are more of use to form an image of a policy issue.” (MEP)

Other respondents state that the involving of citizens in policy-making depends on the geographical level. Citizen participation only is meaningful when it concerns local issues. The subjects that are debated have to affect the everyday lives of people. On higher levels it is doubted if citizens can participate in a useful way. For example, the designing of Operational Programme (OP) is more the terrain of social and economic partners. However it is noted that on an even higher level the European Commission tries to stimulate citizen involvement by the

means of public consultations. The Consultant Regional Policy does not believe the involvement of citizens in EU policy-making is fruitful in any way. Practice shows that public consultations do not attract individual citizens. Only interest groups, social and economic partners are active on this level. Nevertheless, the involvement of citizens does take place when programmes are implemented. This primarily has a communicative purpose; it has nothing to do with policy-making (CONS). The Policy Official ERDF defines citizen participation as a helpful tool which administrations can use to improve their plans. The views of citizens often contribute in their originality. Therefore, no harm is in it. Emphasis is laid on the fact that eventually government officials always should make the final decisions. Officials need to be able to balance various interests and make sensible decisions. The use of the participation tool is not only positive. In the opinion of the respondent there is an administrative contradictory side to citizen participation:

“Citizen participation may not be used by government officials as an excuse for not making decisions themselves. Government officials must ultimately execute power and display administrative decisiveness. Sometimes unpleasant decisions for citizens have to be made. [...] Citizen participation may not be used to pass on decisions.” (MINECO)

The above mentioned statements give a clear image about the respondent’s opinions on how citizens associate themselves to the EU. In general they believe the EU is perceived as a bureaucratic institute that doesn’t relate to the everyday lives of citizens. The respondents differ on the subject if this gap should be closed. The ‘*Europe for citizens*’ programme is a main tool for the Commission to promote a more active European Citizenship. Successes are seemingly observed when it comes to connecting the people of Europe to each other. On the other side the programme hasn’t made much progress with the connecting of citizens to EU policy. The respondents of the European Commission have a positive opinion about citizen participation in EU policy. The other respondents also have a positive attitude but are more critical when it comes to the involvement of citizens on a European level. When relating these general attitudes to the ladder of participation from Pröpper & Steenbeek (1999), it can be said that the opinions can be placed in the broad range from *respondent* to *co-decider*. Yet again, citizen participation proves to be a difficult subject to grasp.

5.2 Citizen participation in EU regional policy

The backgrounds that were described in the previous paragraph are to be kept in mind when reading the following section. I will present the findings on citizen participation in EU regional policy starting with the partnership principle and continuing with the current practice of citizen participation in EU regional policy and the evaluation of this practice. This paragraph is concluded with the opinions about the future of citizen participation in EU regional policy. The paragraphs from 4.2 serve as a contextual background.

I. Partnership principle

The development and implementation of EU regional policy is increasingly related to the term ‘partnership’. As is explained in the previous paragraph this term was basically about involving other administrations. In the course of time the definition of partnership was widened. Today it applies to involving different actors in society. It goes without saying the latest concep-

tualization is rather vague. For this reason the respondents of DG Regional Policy are asked to their opinions about the partnership principle and how this relates to citizens.

The partnership principle was created to explain and make clear what the EU is and does for its citizens. Therefore partnership and citizen participation can be seen as equivalents. Although partnership is interpreted broader; this is about including all kinds of actors from civil society, not only citizens (DGREG₁). The other two policy officers agree with the previous remark but also add a more layered perspective to it. Partnership is about different levels of government, including civil society working together on defining and implementing regional policy actions (DGREG₂ and DGREG₃). The *Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion* (2010) is brought forward as an example of the partnership practice. Not only citizens, but also private actors, all kinds of interest groups and platforms were consulted by DG Regional Policy. For example (pp. 235-237), various private actors shared a view that regional policy was too much aimed at rural areas. They plead for more urban approach. This view was adopted in the report. DG Regional Policy now also intends to create more economic activity in urban areas to create more lively neighborhoods. A lot of the recommendations in this report are formulated bottom-up, thus in cooperation with civil society groups (DGREG₁). Theoretically spoken, consultation is not participation. Pröpper & Steenbeek (1999) classify this as non-interaction. Another EC respondent more or less agrees to this and criticizes the consultation mechanism:

“There is one major issue. The partnership principle is, from my perspective, often understood as consultation. Partnership is not consultation. In the case of cities, this is often heard. The regional government prepared the Operational Programmes and we [urban officials] have been consulted. It doesn’t mean that they had any say in that programming document. [...] Consultation is an initial tool to come to a real working partnership.” (DGREG₂)

It is difficult to confirm if individual citizens are really involved. Usually civil society groups say they represent citizens. If this is true for all civil society groups, remains to be seen. The amount of active interest groups is extensive and constantly changing. Therefore it is hard for DG Regional Policy to analyze all of them and keep track of their activities. The respondent doubts if this should be something for the Commission to tackle (DGREG₁). Another respondent deepens these statements:

“The quality of partnership is not satisfactory. It is not only about having a lot of participants and the workings of consultation. It’s about how participants can contribute to the whole process. The quality of partners in a programme can be different. Are the partners prepared to share responsibility and can they provide useful comments? If these are super technical comments the quality of the implementation will decrease.” (DGREG₃)

The involvement of citizens is thus perceived as problematic. Is it therefore useful to involve citizens? The Consultant Regional Policy expresses this as follows:

“I think the involvement of citizens [within the partnership principle] is very difficult. How are citizens selected? How do you organize an EU consultation? And what is subsequently the value of these opinions? Of course this depends on the ambitions of your programme [...] what can citizens contribute on a high and abstract level? I don't think this is meaningful. It is better to involve social partners; they have the expertise and are the ones who implement the programmes.” (CONS)

II. Current practice of citizen participation in EU regional policy

The interviews with the EU policy officers show that bottom-up proposals from citizens are welcomed. On the one hand they want ordinary citizens to be involved in EU regional policy-making. On the other hand the term ‘citizen’ was usually replaced with broader terms like, ‘civil society’ or ‘social partners’. These broad terms better fit the broad principles of partnership. As was mentioned before, citizens are usually named as one of the actors in a network (or network society). Firms, unions and NGO’s and citizens together represent civil society. Collaboration with the whole of civil society is the main objective. What civil society contributes is unclear to the EU respondents. They do however state, that the Lisbon Treaty (article 11) increased the importance of involvement of civil society considerably.

According to social support is needed in order to make regional policy more legitimate. In the case of the general EU regional policy (Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds) consultation is addressed to be the main method of participation. Civil society is consulted each time new regional policy is developed. Drafts are openly discussed on the website of DG Regional Policy. Also policy officers attend various meetings and conferences across Europe to discuss regional policy with various actors in civil society. The *Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion* (2010) was created in this way. The same method applies in the forming of regional policy for the next budgetary period. A broad consultation process ensures different actors in civil society to be involved and propose ideas. However not all bottom-up proposals are admitted in regional policy. Ultimately this is a political decision. DREG₁ is aware of the fact that if there is a solid social basis for a proposal, politicians can't ignore it. Thereupon a proposal has a better chance to be adopted by the Parliament and Council. [...] *proposals must be approved by other EU institutions. This is a complex political process, but a solid social basis for a proposal can have positive effect.* The same respondent furthermore states, that significant attention is paid to the participation of civil society in various regional funded projects. For instance this is a precondition in INTERREG IIIC project applications. Initiators are obliged to form cross-border partnerships to work together on common projects (DGREG₁). Another policy officer of DG Regional Policy confirms this statement:

“As a result of article 11 in the Lisbon Treaty the principle is becoming more visible within the Union. Members states or regions who want to make use of the funds coming from EU regional policy nowadays must demonstrate in their application that the partnership principle is applied. Managing authorities must involve various levels of government and civil society. Various social actors must take part in the defining and implementing of a programme. There is no explicit rule that states citizens are one of those actors.” (DGREG₃)

DGREG₃ conceptualizes civil society in the same manner as DGREG₁. Furthermore partnership and participation are considered to be equal principles that are used to improve the legitimacy of regional policy. Consultation is used as a main method to accomplish this. The respondent doubts if other methods should be used by the EU to tap into regional and local knowledge. It's unclear in what way other methods can contribute to the whole process of regional policy-making. More importantly, this sort of involvement (e.g. social dialogue) is not something for the EU to implement. This is a competence for the member states. DG Regional Policy is able to facilitate this process by means of 'technical assistance' budget. Regional programmes can use this part of the funding to pay for the organization of participation processes. However it is emphasized that they are not obliged to do so. This is left to the discretion of the manager of the programme.

The previous respondents of DG Regional Policy did not speak separately of 'citizens'. The term citizen is in a way irrelevant, as it is a part of the wide concept of civil society. The following policy officer acknowledges what is said before but also connects regional policy directly to citizens:

"If a region imposes a street going to a rural community somewhere, just because there is a regional plan for doing that and local community is not involved, this project is going to fail. It will be confronted with massive protest. I think you can transpose that situation for all regional operations we are doing. [...] We want people to be involved and we want things to be well coordinated. Otherwise it [a programme] will come back and fall back on our heads." (DGREG₂)

Yet, the EU has no say in this. Obviously, this is for reasons of subsidiarity. Regional development and planning is a shared competence of national and regional authorities. DG Regional Policy is not directly involved in the programmes. Only an appeal is made to the national and regional authorities to involve civil society. Furthermore LEADER+ and INTERREG offer small budgets for technical assistance. DGREG₂ further says that no connection between the EU and the local level exists. With the Urban II initiative there was a local connection; it proved that programmes that were created in co-production with citizens were very successful. However URBAN II ended and the local connection was lost:

"The level on which we communicate is basically the member state. The member states decide if they organize their regional policy at national level or at regional level. So that means we speak with national or regional authorities. We don't even speak with local authorities. [...] We regret we don't have URBAN II anymore. There we were directly speaking with the cities. That helped to understand what cities were actually doing, then to hear it through a filter of a member state or region." (DGREG₂)

Furthermore DGREG₂ also states that the Lisbon Treaty improved citizens' involvement. However, not from the perspective of regional policy. The respondent states, the Treaty primarily strengthened the position of the MEP's. With this, and the adding of the European citizens' initiative a bit of the Council's power is broken. Despite the various practical and legal annotations, citizens are perceived to be useful in the development and implementation of EU

regional policy. The other respondents have contrasting opinions. The MEP argues that regional policy is to be used by the EU, to communicate the vision of the future to the citizens. EU policy can be a 'vehicle' to organize debates on various regional topics, hence forming a social agenda. However the respondent stresses that these debates do not concern citizens directly:

“Regional policy is discussed on a high meta-level. [...] I don't believe everybody is interested. It's about involving key-players. These are of more importance than citizens. Without leadership and without vision society will degrade, this is still the case. Cities, regions and the European Union are to be expected to propagate these visions.” (MEP)

The EU is not perceived to play a significant role when it comes to the involvement of citizens. Indeed, citizens have an opportunity to contribute by means of consultation. Practice shows that ordinary citizens are not reached or are not interested. Consultation is therefore mainly a method that is used by interest groups. The respondent noticed that citizens are given a more prominent place in EU regional policy documents. However, this is seen as a more symbolic feature of the policy. The view about mainly involving key-actors in EU regional policy is shared by two other respondents. Actively involving social partners in regional policy development is a critical success factor. It benefits the outcomes of the whole programme. Due to the high and abstract focus of the policy (innovative clusters, infrastructure and so on), citizen participation in EU regional policy is not considered to be useful. The foremost goal of regional policy is economic development and if citizens can meaningfully contribute to this is sincerely doubted. On the project level, or implementation phase, citizens do have a greater part to play:

“I distinguish three levels of regional policy; an overall European level, the national/regional programme level and the local project level. In some cases citizen participation is useful on the local level. [...] When projects are implemented citizens can be individually affected. If a planned road comes through the backyard of someone, you're automatically confronted with citizens. In specific cases and depending on the subject, citizen participation on a project level can therefore be useful. These subjects have to relate to the everyday surroundings of citizens. For example the decision of building a new office block is not for citizens to make. But when it comes to the location of this office, the citizen can be asked for an opinion.”(CONS)

The Dutch ERDF policy officer fully concurs with the opinion that EU regional policy is too abstract for citizens to participate meaningfully. Ergo, citizen participation in regional policy can't be adequately organized and therefore is not useful. However one possible advantage of citizen participation is noted but was nuanced later on in the conversation:

“Management authorities are able to test if their Operational Programmes are supported. If it's not, adjustment can still be made. [...] I doubt if Dutch ERDF projects contain a citizen participation element that is mandatory from the European Commission. Social partners, key-players are more likely to be involved.” (MINECO).

As been stated before, EU regional policy is primarily economic policy. Therefore projects often don't connect to the daily lives of citizens. The INTERREG initiative is an exception according to the respondent:

“The INTERREG is considered to be successful when it comes to involving citizens. [...] For example, between Flanders [Belgium] and the Zeeland [the Netherlands]. These projects were about trans-border collaborations on a variety of topics. It was not only about bio-based economic development, but also about the well-being of people.”
(MINECO)

Healthcare in this area was better organized by means of INTERREG funds. People from Zeeland were better enabled to reach medical facilities in Flanders, and vice versa. This actually breaks boundaries and shows that the European Union isn't just a cumbersome bureaucracy to its citizens. The Consultant Regional Policy states that INTERREG pays a lot of attentions to the soft sides of regional development. Cross-border -cycling paths, -football tournaments, -nurseries, and so on. How this connects to the economic objectives of ERDF is unclear. INTERREG is characterized as a 'maverick' among the European Structural Funds. Furthermore it is doubtful if INTERREG reaches ordinary citizens. Citizens that participate usually have higher education. INTERREG is therefore regarded as a programme that only applies to the elite of society.

III. Evaluating citizen participation in EU regional programmes

The evaluation of the partnership principle (or civil society involvement) is addressed to be the biggest challenge of today. DG Regional Policy mostly evaluates programmes on physical accomplishments. Has the road been build, is leisure improved, has a factory been expanded, and so on. This traditional approach is still leading today. However social aspects are increasingly being evaluated in a most quantitative way. The number of civil participants is noted and sometimes it's measured if the consultation was successful. In general it is unclear to what extent civil input contributed (DGREG₁). Today, ex-ante, midterm and ex-post evaluations often contain chapters on how the practical proceedings of partnership took place. Mainly these chapters are about the collaboration with the national and regional authorities. Indeed, some programmes are also evaluated on involvement citizen participation. Yet, this is not done consistently. For example, representation of civil society is not always addressed. If it is the case, a lot of questions arise about the operationalization of this variable. Representation within involvement processes can't be tackled by the EU. The Commission needs to trust the member states on this (DREG₂). More pressure on the evaluation of the partnership principle is been noted by DGREG₃. Ergo, involvement of civil society is getting a more prominent place in EU regional policy. For now the evaluation methods are about monitoring if a programme meets the partnerships requirements that are stated in article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty. Is there involvement in the development stages and in the implementation stage? These are the most important questions. The managing authority monitors this process and annually reports the proceedings to the Commission. The Commission decides if the funding is continued or not. In a worst case scenario the funding can be brought to a halt if article 11 isn't met.²⁴ Essential

²⁴ At the request of the respondent specific cases were not discussed.

questions on the evaluation methods are still to be answered; what is the quality of partnership? This lies in the hands of the member states:

“In a way the EU is not in full control in how the regional funds are spent. EU auditors do check programmes on the level of the managing authority. Mostly this is a final check, they don’t talk to the partners or civil society. [...] this [social participation] is usually evaluated afterwards. During the implementation of a programme, EU officers are sometimes present for advice on project management. However they do not have the power to resolve any planning issues.” (DGREG₃)

IV. The future of citizens’ participation in EU regional policy

Currently, participation in the EU is embedded in a different way within the DG’s; some are further than others. The terminology is not the same everywhere and there is a lack of visibility or access to the participation initiatives of the DG’s. In general it can be argued that the EU is not up to the level of participation that the Treaty of Lisbon laid down. Progress is being made but much remains to be done. Participation is needed by the EU in the future:

“Europe 2020, all interested parties [...] at all levels, everyone has a role to play in this strategy. All parties need to come together, citizens as well. That is what we want, but it doesn’t depend only on us. Member states have a big role to play too. We encourage them and intermediaries to contribute to Europe 2020.” (DGCOM)

The respondent would not answer the question if member states were committed to this strategy. All respondents of DG Regional Policy endorse the fundamentals of the Europe 2020 strategy and state that regional policy is on track to meet this strategy. One of the cornerstones of new EU regional policy will be partnership. The DG is currently active to find civil support for proposals and is improving the methods to do so. Civil society is, like always, invited to contribute with their ideas and remarks. The future of the partnership principle will be at least as strong as in this budgetary period. The OP’s will in the future be formed in a more bottom-up way. DG Regional Policy is keen to promote this among the management authorities among the Union. The main objective is to further strengthen multi-level governance between different levels of government and civil society. DGREG₂ is the only respondent who also directly relates the future of regional policy to citizens:

“I think, if everything goes as we planned, we are going to have a renaissance of the URBAN initiative. We are going to bring back an instrument working with a bottom-up approach and local partnerships. I think we will also see strengthened rules in terms of local development. The approach that was followed by URBAN II and LEADER for instance, that is something we want to facilitate. We are going to create common rules for different funds. Which is about time, because if you want to do some local actions now, you find yourself confronted with a huge amount of different regulations and instructions. That is going to be one set of rules in the future. So hopefully it could be more easily accessible for people.” (DGREG₂)

These positive opinions are nuanced when ‘the sixth pillar of Barca’ was discussed:

“I support the ideas of experimentalism in policy development in the Barca Report, however it is an advice and no official policy at this moment. The EU does not develop national policy. Member states cannot be obliged to the development of their civil society.” (DGREG₁)

This last statement is put into context by DGREG₂:

“I mostly agree with Barca, I think his ideas for Cohesion policy were good and justified. He also brings a more innovative spirit of the whole thing by saying the Commission should rediscover its role about European progress and promoting sometimes experimental things which can turn out to be great successes. [...] I don't see it happening at the moment. Overtime the role of the Commission has been diminished in a way. I wouldn't say it's non-existent [...] [During Delors II] there was a very strong role for the Commission, in monitoring commissions, in advising on what one could do. There was a power there. In the following budgetary period the Commission was only an advisor, they were not present at the decisive points. Nowadays, if you look at programmes, the Commission has hardly anything to say. What is not in the regulations is not the topic of the Commission. For instance, even if a project is hilarious and you think, my God what are they doing, you wouldn't have much power to say something about it. The rule of the Commission got lower and lower. I think that will be very difficult to turn this around again.[...] A new Commission with a real role in promoting new approaches [the sixth pillar of Barca] and progress will not be there in the next budgetary period.” (DGREG₂)

And:

“I think that the regional policy which is smaller in terms of budget and would be more directly involved in some initiatives, not everything, that would make a real difference. It would make much more of a difference than to build some highway somewhere in East-Poland. That could be a starting point for a new cohesion policy. As long as there is so much money involved there is a great eagerness of member states to control what is happening and to give the Commissions as little powers as they can. If there is less money, there might also be less pressure on completely handing over the policy.” (DGREG₂)

The other respondents all have different opinions of the role of citizens in future policy:

“Partnership will be at least as important as it is today. To the Commission it is a sort of bottom-line. Sometimes they use it as an educational instrument to the new member states. An imported principle of democracy is the involvement of social-partners. Partnership is promoted in the Public Administration Reform Strategies [...] the NGO sector is to be strengthened. This will remain important to Europe and therefore it will be reflected in future regional policy.” (CONS)

In the previous parts of this paragraph it has been shown that the MEP favors the involvement of key-players above citizens in the development regional-policy. When discussing the future of citizen involvement in EU regional policy this opinion seems to change slightly:

“Sometimes the Parliament debates the topic ‘how Europe 2020 must reach the member states so they really feel it’. We want to create a feeling of ownership of the themes of Europe 2020. This is best done in the regions. Regional policy could be a tool for the EU to connect more to its citizens. [...] I hope the new regional policy will bring citizens and EU closer to each other; however I don’t want it to end up in re-nationalisation. [...] The attempt to involve citizens is not only about placing dark blue, 15 centimeters by 15 centimeters, EU logos on project signs. [...] To me this is an open debate. I don’t know how this can be improved. There is no report available on ‘participation ‘of the ‘the citizen’ in ‘general terms’ in EU regional policy.” (MEP)

MINECO directly connects the future of citizen involvement in regional policy to the debate on solidarity and competitiveness. This led to the following comments:

“The governments decided together to invest in innovation and the development knowledge [Lisbon Agenda]. This is the way to make money in the future. Individual citizens do not relate to this. For them it’s more about [e.g.] facilitating leisure, like bicycle tracks. The image of ERDF was that it is only about financing small-scaled projects. One can ask if this contributes to the objectives of today and tomorrow.” (MINECO)

And:

“Today the policy is about investing the limited funds you have into your best competences. I wonder if you develop regional policy with the citizens, you’ll end up with the same strategy. I don’t think so. Everyone will get a slight part of the funds and minor projects will rise everywhere. EU money will be evenly distributed over space. That period lies behind us. [...] I relate citizen participation [in regional policy] to fragmentation. Policy can’t be focused because the interests and ideas of everyone else will then be leading.” (MINECO)

With these statements an interesting perspective is shown about the thoughts on citizen participation in EU regional policy. In the current and future policy no substantial place for citizen participation is foreseen by the respondent. Overall it can be said that the respondents from the European Commission see citizens as a part of civil society. Regional policy must be developed and implemented in civil society. The involvement of citizens is therefore welcomed. But in practice it is doubted if citizens take any part. Currently this is not consistently evaluated. The other respondents don’t see any role for citizen involvement in regional policy. The policy should be developed in collaboration with key-players, like social partners. In some cases citizens can contribute to the implementation phase of regional policy. The EU respondents hope that in the future citizens will come closer to the policy. However, due to the principles of subsidiarity, they doubt if this will happen.

5.3 Citizen participation and EU governance

The cooperation between various levels of government is essential to the successful implementation of the partnership principle. The EU respondents endorse to importance of multi-level governance in regional policy. However a gap seems to exist between theory and practice: *“Ideally partnership goes up and down as far as possible. We know that in reality this is not always the case”* (DGREG₂). In the upcoming section this will be further discussed. Furthermore partnership in the new member states is discussed. Does the EU try to influence these relatively young democracies? To conclude, the respondents are asked if they feel if an EU vision on citizen participation and partnership contributes the policy of the member states. Or to put it in other words, should citizen involvement be an EU competence?

I. Strengthening multi-level governance

The Commission does involve the national and regional authorities when developing EU regional policy. At the same time the Commission expects member states to ensure their levels of government closer are brought together. The latter is mandatory since the Lisbon Treaty. However member states can freely implement multi-level governance:

“Implementation of partnership on different levels of administration depends on the member states. How far are they in involving partners? They are required to involve them, but to what extent is really up to the member states. Information exchange between management authorities and partners is crucial. [...] There is a role for member states to evolve partners by educating them. This is not an EU competence. We can assist with ‘best practices’ but are not entitled to intervene in member state affairs. We can only encourage the cooperation between governments and civil society through funding.”
(DGREG₃)

The interpretation of multi-level governance and partnership is underpinned by constitutions and planning methodologies of the different member states. Because of the subsidiarity principle the EU can't oblige member states to involve a certain level of administration or specific partners like citizens. The argument of subsidiarity is often used by member states to block EU initiatives. One can argue if this is always a good argument. According to DGREG₂ the real reason for the not fully working of the partnership principle on different administrative levels lies in the aspect of power:

“Many levels of government simply have a fear to share power with others. If a region for instance would involve the cities, many things will come into play. Politics is a main aspect. If the regional government and the regional capital are in different political hands, what do you do then? [...] Liberal ideas en conservative ideas about sharing power can collide. There I would see a real role of the Commission, to be there as a broker, who is neutral and somehow tries to facilitate this multilevel cooperation. [...]

We know that in reality the Commission had close to no powers or no say in what the partnership principle means.[...] If we want a regional policy that is close to citizens this has to be improved.” (DGREG₂)

The MEP stresses that the workings of multi-level governance is essential to a representative democracy. Citizens may rely on the fact that various layers of government consult each other to come to the best policy. Key-players must be involved by the member states to prevent re-nationalisation. Some member states already say that they decide where regional funds are spent. The EU should oblige these countries to improve their governance structures: *“When multi-level governance isn’t working correctly, it will be felt by citizens, who are then activated to protest.”* (MEP) The Consultant Regional Policy also recognizes the before mentioned gap. It is mandatory for authorities to involve partners in steering committees, but it’s unclear, from the EU level, what part they play during a programme. The Commission could pay more attention to the process of involvement:

“I don’t think this would be a problem regarding subsidiarity. Programmes are financed by the Commission for 50% or 75%, depending on what country you live in. In my opinion it’s logical for the Commissions to make demands on how a programme is formed. [...] On the other hand, today there is a lot of complaining on the vast amount of rules coming from the Commission, evidently more Commission involvement will lead to even more regulations.” (CONS)

Partnership and multi-level governance are in line with each other according to the Policy Officer ERDF. Collaborations of government, knowledge institutions and firms and so on, work together on a regional plan. Multi-level governance is primarily something for institutions to address. Elaborating about the Dutch situation:

“I think that the ERDF funds in the Netherlands contribute to the further strengthening of multi-level governance and partnership. European money further stimulates partnership. Because there is money, stakeholders look each other up and take up initiatives. [...] Ministry of Economic affairs for example, points out national sectors of excellence. The next step is to further develop these sectors in collaboration with various partners. To the outside world it seems to work very well. However in practice different levels of government collide. Ultimately this is a political debate about money and influence.” (MINECO)

This collision manifests itself within and between regions. The Consultant Regional Policy gives an example about the institutional situation within the Netherlands:

“When developing and implementing an Operation Programme in the Netherlands a lot of management authorities are involved [...] ‘West’²⁵ is extremely complex in terms of regional organization. First of all, four biggest cities each carry out their own spatial policy. Each city has its own steering committee. You don’t have to expect that a management authority from Rotterdam has any say on the ERDF Programmes in Amsterdam, Utrecht or The Hague. Furthermore there are the four provinces. They have an informal agreement on the distribution of the funds. However in reality they all strive to reach their own goals.” (CONS)

²⁵ ‘West’ is one of the Dutch ERDF regions. It consists out of the provinces North Holland, South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland.

Even in a country like The Netherlands, known for its consensus in decision-making ('polder model'), multi-level governance and collaboration on the basis of partnership can be difficult. In paragraph 5.4.1 more can be read on the Dutch situation of citizen participation in regional development.

II. Influencing new democracies

When 'participation' was on the rise in the 1960's in the West of Europe, Central and Eastern Europe was under the rule of Communism. As been argued by Maier (2001) in paragraph 2.9, the structure of civil society in Central and Eastern member states is considered to be different from the Western member states. One can raise the question, if the EU tries to influence these new democracies to evolve their civil society. Possibly by promoting citizen participation in regional policy. All respondents recognize the differences between old Western and new Central and Eastern member states:

"The involvement of civil society as an actor in this whole game [of EU policy development] differs from country to country. Furthermore there are very strong differences at the moment between parts of the new member states and the old member states. [...] If you haven't been involved in planning processes in the past 50 years why do you think you would be now? [...] The cultural differences and the cultural history certainly determine if people are able to speak up. It maybe takes more time and people need to be pushed to get them really going." (DGREG2)

Not all countries in Central and Eastern Europe have a passive civil society. Unlike DGREG2, another respondent believes that the legacy of Communism could have a positive effect on the evolving of the civil society today.

"In some new member states the civil sector is better organized or more advanced then certain other new member states. One can argue that in post-Communist countries the civil society is still structured very well. Partners who want to collaborate are easy to be found. [...] In general the [East – West] analysis is valid but there are exceptions on both sides. There are old member states lagging behind and there are new member states that are catching up quick. I think Slovenia is one of them." (DGCOM)

However:

"We observed a difference between the EU members from before 2004 and the members that acceded after 2004. In the new member states a very different perception of civil society exists. In many of these countries it was compulsory during the Communist period to be member of the civic movement. It was compulsory and therefore it was not free. When they transitioned to democratic systems, the people wanted to get rid of all that was compulsory. [...] Indeed the EU wants to stimulate the civil society in Central and Eastern member states. It will never be the same as in Western Europe, for example in the UK, where it is nearly abnormal not to be involved in some kind of charity movement. I think we have to have reasonable goals and respect the traditions in each country. [...] I really

like the idea of peer-learning by exchanging best-practices; this is what we are trying to do here” (DGCOM)

According to the Consultant Regional Policy big EU technical assistance projects were organized before the accession of the new member states (2004 and 2007). Best practices were exchanged. These projects were implemented by officials and consultants from the old member states. Their knowledge and experience was transferred from the West to the East. It led to one considerable disadvantage:

“Among the officials of the new member states a sort of laziness was created. ‘Consultants, you do it. Just write down how we should work’. To what extents the processes of partnership are actually initiated remains to be seen. They let themselves to be guided by officials and consultants from the West. Today this attitude is still noticeable. I just started a project in Croatia about the exchange of knowledge. In the first sessions they asked me to write their procedures. Then the procedures are not theirs. They are mine.” (CONS)

EU regional policy is assumed to directly and indirectly influence Central and Eastern member states the building of an active civil society. DG Regional Policy funds support the set ups of regional institutions. This eventually also contributes to the possibilities for local initiatives to bloom. Also the preconditions of projects applications can contribute. The policy can bring people from across Europe together in projects, hoping that this creates bonds that are viable even after de funding ends. Indirectly this could support the socialization process: *“People have to get used to it, their mental framework has to adapt. You can’t expect to see changes overnight. The democratization process only started 20 years ago” (DGREG₁)*. However some developments are already observed in a few new member states:

“The methods implementing and designing cohesion policy already involves partnership. In fact it is a requirement. It triggers the developments of member states in Eastern Europe, were partnership doesn’t really exists, because there is hardly an active civil society. In the Baltic States, Poland and the Czech Republic I see positive developments. Also I see issues of concern, the quality of partnership and the motivation of partners. Here the management authorities play a big role. They have to motivate the partners.” (DGREG₃)

DGREG₂ concurs with this statement and says that the role of regional policy to improve this is fairly small:

“First governments of the new member states need to respect the principles of democratic and local empowerment for it to work. You need to get the people to speak. I went to a regional conference in the Czech Republic three months ago. There was no interaction with the public during this conference. You can’t generalize from this, but I imagine that in Western counties there would be a lot of questions. Maybe there is a history over there that if you speak up or criticize something, you might face negative consequences.” (DGREG₂)

In the opinion of CONS the passive behavior in the new member states is indeed closely connected to their culture and recent history. Hands on experience showed:

“[...] Due to their culture a lot of people hide oneself behind legislations and regulations. For the people it’s a huge cultural change to be involved. A part of the people did not change and another part is changing. But who possess the senior posts? I saw this in Bulgaria. I trained young government staff members. They understood the changes I proposed. However higher management blocked these initiatives. [...] This is an inheritance from Communism. The younger generation of government officials wants to change but isn’t heard by higher management.” (CONS)

The policy officer from DG Communication already noted geographic disparities within Central and Eastern Europe. CONS confirms this statement by giving two examples:

“In Poland, the Województwa regions ²⁶ are one of the success stories when it comes to the implementation of EU regional policy. The regional authorities play an imported role in connecting the Operational Programmes with initiatives that come from the various partners. [...] On the other hand the accession of Romania and Bulgaria was untimely. They were really lagging behind. The real change takes place before a country officially joins the EU by means of the Public Administration Reforms. [...] Now that Romania and Bulgaria are a part of the EU there are almost no means to influence them to change their governance structure.” (CONS)

In paragraph 5.4.1 an example is given of citizen participation in regional development in Eastern Europe.

III. Does the EU need to promote citizen participation among its members?

As described in the previous sections the EU has close to no power to influence the governance structures of member states. One can therefore debate the question if the propagating of the partnership principle and subsequently the emancipating of civil society is of any use? Does an EU vision on involving citizens in policy-making and implementation contribute to the initiatives that already take place in member states?

The respondents from the European Commission are not convinced an EU vision on citizen involvement contributes. DGCOM thinks that the EU can stimulate the transfer of knowledge about participation between different levels of government. However, the current ideas of the EU on participation do not complement the ideas and practices of countries like the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The EU is far less advanced. DGREG₃ generally supports the above statement about transferring knowledge. The EU can promote best practices of partnership and even citizen participation that come from regional policy. Member states and regions can learn from each other. The EU builds the bridges and stimulates ideas to be exchanged in a sustainable manner. Once again this is nuanced. Like

²⁶ In 1998 the administrative division of Poland was reformed. Sixteen ‘thick’ regions (Województwa) were created on the basis of the country’s historic regions (more on this topic can be read in Regulski, 2003, pp. 73-84).

with the implementation of the partnership principle, the sharing of best practices also depends on the willingness of the member states to cooperate. DGREG 2 adds:

“Regional policy can’t impose emancipating civil societies in the member states. Essential democratic developments go far beyond regional policy. [...] Also, it will not improve the willingness of citizens to be involved. We can incentivize it by reserving money. Everybody who wants to set up a participation project can then do so.” (DGREG₂)

One EU policy officer had a less reserved opinion:

“Indeed the term participation suggests it is a bottom-up process. This doesn’t mean an EU vision on this topic can’t contribute. The perspective of socializing and involving actors on various geographical scales is typically something for the EU to promote”. (DGREG₁)

The other respondents share this positive approach. They don’t expect changes overnight, but they do endorse the supranational vision to contribute:

“If the European Union pleads for multi-level governance and citizen participation and earmarks specific objectives to promote this, something will change in ten or maybe twenty years. The Union is like a super tanker. Things like this will not move or change quickly. It’s a good thing that Europe has a vision like this. It’s eventually of added value to the member states.” (MINECO)

The EU bottom-line of partnership stimulates management authorities to involve key-players. This is not something to take for granted, even in the old member states, according to the Consultant Regional Policy. The propagation and obligation from the EU level will have a positive effect on the implementation of the partnership principle. When a good concept is created to do so it could have a positive influence on regional developments across Europe. The MEP supports this:

“I think a supranational vision about citizen participation can contribute. If the EU creates a general framework that’s really good, the thinking on citizen involvement will improve. On the other hand, you don’t want to arrange everything. In the end it’s about the intrinsic dynamics of people.” (MEP)

Multi-level governance is recognized by all respondents to be of essential importance to EU regional policy. At the same time it is described as extremely complex. The workings of multi-level governance heavily depend on the different governance structures of the member states and the political climate. Again this goes beyond the grasp of the EU. If there is any EU influence, it is indirect. Evolving civil society and partnership in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe is closely watched by the EU. Due to the historical differences involvement is practicality different than in Western member states. The EU has no real means to directly accelerate the emancipation of civil society. Time will gradually improve this. The Commission respondents don’t think an EU vision on participation contributes to the existing

practices of member states. It's somehow striking to observe that the other respondents, who in general don't favor the involvement of citizens in EU regional policy, approach this in a more positive manner.

5.4 The practice of participation

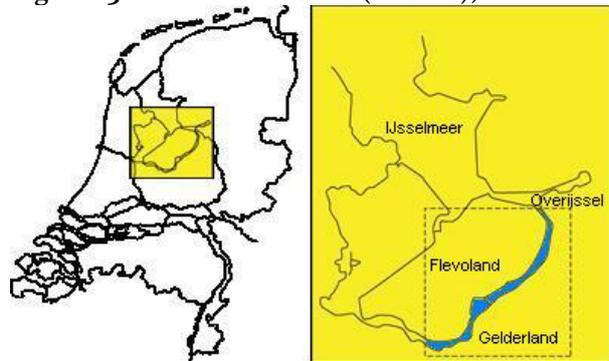
To give a more nuanced understanding of the previous findings, this chapter is to be concluded with two cases. One case elaborates on the practical proceedings of citizen participation in a regional development programme in the Netherlands (The Veluwe lake area). The other case gives an insight on the thoughts and proceedings of citizen participation in the Czech Republic (South-East Cohesion Region). The case studies will include a brief elaboration of the national context of administration, the main programme features and an in-depth interview with a directly involved official (see paragraph 3.8). Both cases received recourses from the ERDF.

5.4.1 Redeveloping the lake area of the Veluwe in the Netherlands

The administrative system of the Netherlands is established in the so called '*Thorbecke House*'. Dutch administration is divided into three layers of government, the central government (national), the provinces (regional) and the municipalities (local). Currently spatial policy in the Netherlands is exposed to three main processes of change. Firstly, decentralization, which is about delegating responsibilities to lower levels of government. Secondly, the rise of multi-level governance. Every administration has full responsibility for the scale on which it operates and does not have to answer to a higher authority. Since 2004 the motto of the Dutch national spatial strategy is: '*to decentralize whenever possible and to centralize what is needed*'. And thirdly, regionalization. For example, clusters of cities in the Netherlands have the tendency to form networks. By doing so they are able to address spatial issues in a regional manner (De Roo & Eenhoorn, 2010). The following case study on the redevelopment of the Veluwe lake area will illustrate this in a practical sense. The Veluwe lakes, are four lakes that belong to the southern part of the IJsselmeer (Figure 13). The lakes are connected to each other and geographically span on the territory of three Provinces; Flevoland, Gelderland and Overijssel. Seen from south-west to north-east they are called; the Nuldernauw, the Wolderwijd, the Veluwemeer and the Drontermeer. After reclamation of Eastern Flevoland (1956) and the closing of the dikes in the South of Flevoland (1967) the lakes were formed as we know them today. The surrounding area of the lakes is characterized as rural. Various medium-sized towns, like Kampen and Harderwijk, mostly lie to the east of the lakes.

Initially, the water in the lakes was of splendid quality. However, due to the increasing proportion of phosphate and nitrogen from the nearby agriculture and households the water turned into 'green goo'. Governments from various administrative levels intended to stop the rapidly deteriorating situation together. Around 1992 the fight against excessive algal growth started to pay off. The water became clear

Figure 13: the Veluwe lakes (in blue), 2011



Source: IIVR, 2011

again. However there was one big difference: the number of recreational visits substantially increased. More people with more demands were attracted to the lakes. The various regional and local governments made separate plans to deal with this increase. Administrative fragmentation and lack of public support caused delay in the execution of these plans. In response to this, a programme to redevelopment the Veluwe lakes and its surroundings was set up in 1996 (Dutch abbreviation: IIVR).²⁷ The main aim of IIVR is to interactively create and implement plan for the lake area that goes beyond the geographical boundaries of government (IIVR, 2011). A wide spectrum of governmental partners committed themselves to the Veluwe lakes. Four Ministries, three Provinces and two district water boards and level ten municipalities took part.²⁸ The Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, as one of the four involved Ministries, is the managing partner of IIVR (BOVAR-IIVR, 2001, pp. 39-41). In 2001 a regional development plan was presented. The plan contains 36 measures to strengthen the balance of recreation, nature and economic interests (Figure 14).

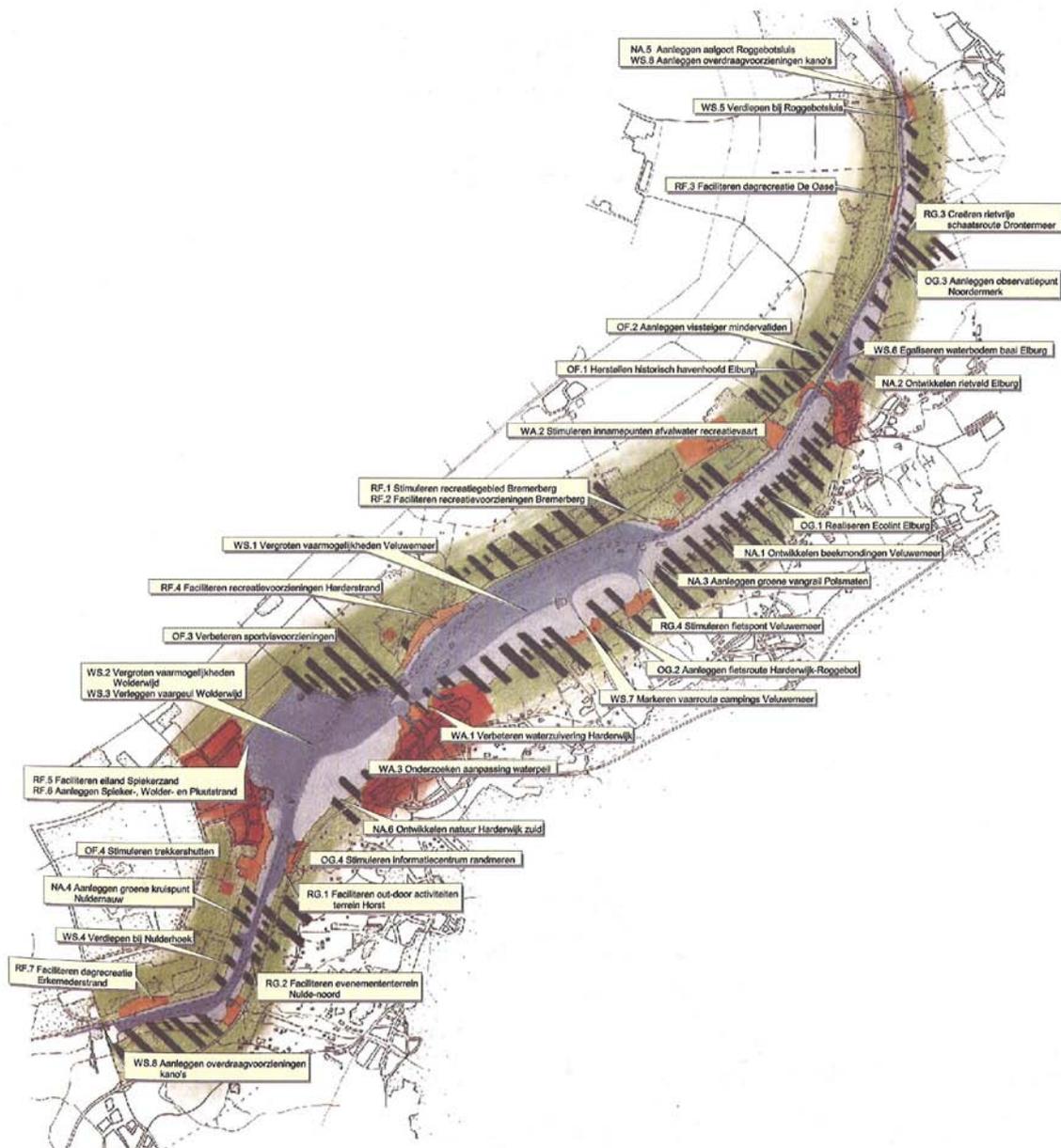
The quality of water is to be maintained and biodiversity needs strengthened. Yet, water banks are also to be improved for all kinds of recreational activities. When studying the plan in more detail, it becomes clear that 27 of the 36 measures impose to strengthen the recreation objective. For example, these are about improving the area for anglers; pleasure cruising; water sports and construction of bicycle lanes. Additionally, a great deal of the measures starts with words like, 'the stimulating of' or 'the facilitating of' (BOVAR-IIVR, 2001, pp. 23-26; pp. 32-33). The margins of the plan are not very clear. Besides the authorities, citizens and interest groups were also involved in the drafting of the Veluwe lake plan. Several sessions were organized to identify problems and to discuss ideas (IIVR, 2011). In 2008 the programme received 1.3 million euros from ERDF as a co-financing (Kansen voor West, 2011). The practical proceedings of citizen participation during the plan-making process and the implementation phase are described in the next subsection of the case. The possible role of the EU is also discussed.

In the past decades the Water Management division of the Ministry was closely involved in the improving of the water quality, says the respondent. During the outline phase of the IIVR project it was clear that a lot of parties wanted to be involved. Many parties already knew each other from the previous project. Therefore a key-objective for IIVR was to make use of interactive planning. These planning methods were already applied in some infrastructural projects of the Ministry. Top officials wondered if the same methods could be applied in a more regional, 'water based' surrounding. Consequently, the lead of IIVR was assigned to Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management. IIVR is characterized as a pilot programme for the Ministry.

²⁷ In Dutch the program is called: Intergrale Inrichting Veluwe Randmeren (IIVR)

²⁸ The Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, the Province of Gelderland, the Province of Flevoland, the Province of Overijssel, Water board of the Veluwe, the Water boards of Zuiderzeeland, the municipalities of Dronten, Elburg, Ermelo, Hardewijk, Kampen, Nijkerk, Nunspeet, Olderbreek, Putten and Zeewolde.

Figure 14: 36 measures of the redevelopment of the Veluwe lake area, 2001



Source: BOVAR-IIVR, 2001, pp. 33

One of the main tasks of the respondent is to coordinate the collaboration of the nineteen participating governments and the various other actors. Among the other actors, the citizens of the municipalities surrounding the lake area played a prominent role in the developing of the final plan:

“[...] Eventually we wanted the result to be legitimate. To this day the public support for the programme is very important to us. About two thousand people are still actively interested in the proceedings of IIVR. I think, because of the process [of interactive planning], the people feel more connected to the environment of the Veluwe lakes. This is a good thing.” (NLCASE)

A large-scale participation project was set up at the start of the IIVR in the mid-nineties. Citizens, companies, interest groups, and so on were all included. Debates, boat trips and design sessions were organized to tempt citizens to participate:

“Participation goes two ways. It’s not only about getting information; it’s also about bringing information and showing results. You have to invest in this. [...] People will get the feeling that their opinion matters. I think IIVR was successful in doing so.” (NLCASE)

Almost 1500 responses were counted, the participation project was considered to be a success. However a significant part of the responses was not regarded to be useful for IIVR:

“Maybe the scope of our participation project was too broad. We asked the citizens to name the plusses and the minuses of the area. They named a lot of minuses that lie in the context of local management, for instance comments were made about dog dirt on the beach. From the 1500 responses, 1200 were about local management issues. Looking back, I think we had to state that our regional plan was not about this sort of issues. We had to tell the public that these things happened in a different context without causing disappointments. We had to make clear that IIVR was about the arrangement of a regional plan.” (NLCASE)

300 contributions remained. Special sessions with local interest groups were organized to cluster these contributions. Only interest groups with a direct interest were selected to participate in this process. Eventually the contributions were converted into three scenarios that would improve the Veluwe lakes. Which scenario was followed was a decision that was made by the steering committee of IIVR. Eventually one scenario that contained 36 measures was chosen to redevelop the Veluwe lakes area. Here the bottom-up process ended. From this point on the various involved authorities had the last say:

“The democratic enactment of the IIVR plan was a very difficult phase. Imagine, if your plan is created bottom-up but the authorities discard it. You don’t want that to happen. You have to show to the authorities how the plan was created. You [as a Programme Manager] need to have a timely feeling in what is managerial possible and what is not. If it goes wrong at the last moment, the whole plan is a disillusion for all people who participated in it.” (NLCASE)

Authorities are only involved at the end of the process. Obviously, because then a final decision has to be made. According to the respondent, officials have been informed before that time. If this is of any use, remains to be doubted. The duration of IIVR exceeds the time of the regular election intervals. Thus, political context varies over time. However, the IIVR programme remains active and needs to adapt to the constantly changing political landscapes. Obviously local and regional authorities have different agenda’s. If one authority wants to see a change in a plan, the whole negotiation process starts over again. The main challenge is not to change the initial plan. For IIVR this was a difficult period. These difficulties were overcome by informal consultation meetings between representatives of IIVR and various representatives of government. More than a year was needed to align all nineteen authorities. After the signing of

a covenant the implementation phase began. No real bottlenecks arose. IIVR started in 1996; the respondent states that this is hard to explain to citizens why it takes this long. Mostly this is due to vast amount governmental regulations that must be followed. Furthermore participation processes have to be added to the overall programme duration. In 2008, IIVR was funded with money from the ERDF. According to the respondent the management of IIVR had nothing to do with this application. Since the start of IIVR all involved authorities finance a piece of the programme. In 2008 the Province of Flevoland decided to apply for EU funds to finance five specific measurements of the plan. This was partly a substitute for their provincial contribution. More EU regulations were indeed noted by the respondent. It was however no problem to handle this. The Ministry was already EU-proof. IIVR is used in twining projects of the EU, management is however not directly involved in this. Higher officials of the Ministry use it as a 'best practice' and promote it across Europe. To what extent this reputation reaches is unknown. The respondent is clear about the visibility of the EU funds for the citizens:

"I'm very sure that the citizens don't know about the investments of the EU. [...] We do communicate the EU logos as obliged. But no further attention is paid to it." (NLCASE)

The partnership principle was not included because it's prescribed in the regulations of EU regional policy. Basically partnership is the key rationale of IIVR. Next to this, it is stated that the programme is in an advanced phase of implementation:

"EU money is not used to facilitate the participation process. The funds are used for the implementation of the measures. The plan-making process lays behinds us. [...] We already passed the participation phase [2001], we received EU money afterwards [2008]." (NLCASE)

The respondent does not believe that EU regional funds specifically aimed at citizen participation will contribute to the practice of regional development:

"Citizens are involved to improve your programme, and more importantly to improve the environment. Citizens should not be involved because Europe wants them to be. You have to want it yourself. It takes a lot of time and energy to organize such a process [...] If you don't want public support, an EU funding scheme will lead to nothing." (NLCASE)

The use of the EU funding to develop regions is also fundamentally questioned by the respondent:

"Regional development is in the first place something for the region. It is appreciated that the EU supports this. But you're not going to develop a region because Europe wants this. The motivation to start a regional programme must come from the region itself. Europe, even from a regional point of view, is still far away. [...] On a more abstract level the EU or a country can state that a region needs to be developed. If you're acting on a lower level of administration than you're a part of it or you're not. [...] Regional development has to start from the bottom and not at the top. The sense of 'us' is stronger in municipalities than in Europe." (NLCASE)

5.4.2 The South-East Cohesion Region of the Czech Republic

In the decades before 1989 the unity of Czechoslovakia was under a 'unanimous' rule of the state, or de facto the Communist Party. Everything was owned and under command of centralized planning from the national level. All economic decisions could be characterized as an intervention from the central state. Regional policy hardly had any effect under this regime. The command economy principles blocked all forms of decentralization. In 1989 the centralistic system collapsed and in 1993 the Czechs and Slovaks peacefully separated their countries. Attitudes towards regionalism, bottom-up approaches and so on were expected to change. Since that time regional policy gradually became a government competence. Since the beginning of the nineties the government in Prague recognized regions with economic problems. In addition to this, projects were created to support border zones, suburban regions and regions with pressing environmental problems (Kára, 1994, pp. 74-81). The preparation for the entry to the EU accelerated the development of Czech regional policy. NUTS II regions (oblasts) and 14 self-governing regions (kraje) were established in 2000.²⁹ With this the coordination and implementation structures were brought up to EU standards. However, the newly created regions were just learning to play their part. Czech regional authorities still feel the legacy of the former centralist government, next to this they have to align the time horizons of regional programmes to the multi-annual approach of EU cohesion policy. Last but not least, the improvement of the culture of evaluation is needed to guarantee an effective and efficient use of public resources. The latter cannot be achieved without the involvement of local and regional representatives (Blažek, 2003, pp. 11-15). Czech civil society is not perceived to be actively involved in government policy development. Indeed, during the communistic regime, the participation of ordinary citizens in policy-making was of little importance. Czech society has been recovering from this since the oppressive regime disappeared. Some scholars however state that the central rule of the state of the days of yore still live on the minds of the people. Also officials of authorities are still seen as 'cogwheel of a machine'. Czech citizens therefore do not feel challenged to be involved. Within this 'silent majority' several interest groups are active. Yet, these groups are isolated from each other, don't cooperate and have poorly defined objectives (Maier, 2001, p. 708-709). In the next case study a closer look is taken into the involvement of citizens within Czech regional policy. The area of study is the South-East Cohesion Region (SECR). The Vysočina Region and the South Moravian Region, together form the South-East Cohesion Region (dark blue areas in figure 15). In terms of km², this NUTS 2 region is the second largest in the Czech Republic.

Furthermore, of the total Czech population 16% reside in this region, mostly in the urban areas of Brno and Jihlava. GDP per capita is 91.6% of the Czech Republic's average, placing it third after Prague and the Central Bohemia Cohesion Region. In the current budgetary period (2007 - 2013) the responsibility of the development and implementation of the Structural Funds was decentralized by the EU. Instead of one OP, seven Joint Regional Operational Programmes (JROP) within the NUTS 2 cohesion regions were established.

²⁹ NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics), is a geocoding standard for referencing the subdivisions of countries for statistical purpose.

Figure 15: The fourteen regions (kraje) of the Czech Republic, 2011

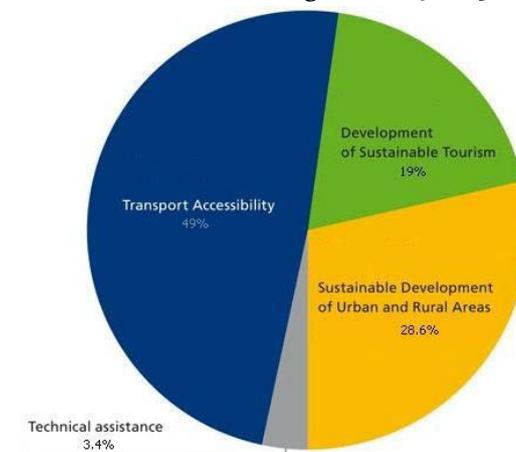


Source: Jihovýchod, 2011

All these NUTS 2 regions (the whole territory of the Czech Republic except for the region of Prague) are connected to the Structural Funds within Objective 1. In total the NUTS 2 regions receive 26.7 billion euros from the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund. 4.6 billion euros are allocated to the South-East region. In a period of seven years the funds will be spent on the following key objectives: improving the living conditions of citizens in small towns and rural areas, improving the transport accessibility (including transport services) and to developing tourism (Figure 16). Technical assistance is the ‘fourth objective’. Management activities are financed by this small part of the budget. The programme defines it as a sort of repository for studies and analyses, project and programme monitoring, assistance and methodical guidance to potential project proposers and publicity. Anyone can apply for a subsidy. Regions, municipalities, unions, railway operators, NGO’s and non-profit organizations, small and medium enterprises are named as possible applicants (Jihovýchod, 2011). The agenda of *Territorial Cohesion* is clearly visibly in this program. Accesses to services and sustainable development have a prominent place. Citizens are not explicitly mentioned in the main features of the programme. In the upcoming subsection citizen involvement is further discussed.

Despite the new system of JROP, Prague still has a central role when it comes to regional development. According to the respondent (a methodologist of the SECR) governance in the Czech Republic is very complex and follows a vertical consultative structure. Allocating Structural Funds is an example of this. Project proposals are gathered by the SECR and are in practice submitted to the Ministry for Regional Development. After their approval money is transferred to the regions (kraje) to implement the

Figure 16: Funding structure Southeast Cohesion Region, 2007-2013



Source: Source: Jihovýchod, 2011

projects. Monitoring is something for SECR to pick up. The SECR rarely directly sees EU money. The national government controls the EU funds and maintains the contact with the EU. The unclear responsibilities of regions (see paragraph 2.8) eventually leads to entanglement among citizens:

“For citizens it is unclear which government executes what program. The central state also is active in regional development. They first pick the themes that concern them. Usually this is about national matters which have a regional impact. Main motorways are an example of a national intervention. What is left over is transferred to the regions. For example, regional roads (cycling paths) and local community initiatives (e.g. from schools, health care services and so on.). [...] This is a structural mess. Citizens do not know to who they can turn.” (CZCASE)

Currently SECR is underrated by higher level of government, also in the context of tapping into regional and local knowledge:

“The national government and the EU can’t say a lot about the needs of people. Regions [Kraj] are able to do so. [...] When the needs of people are known, the implementation of plans is more dedicated and effective. Also the feedback on proposals is faster.” (CZCASE)

On the one hand the respondent doubts if the role of citizens is of any use when developing regional plans. Programmes are sometimes too broad and relates to strategic levels. Not all citizens will understand, and if they do understand it will be a hard and timely process to reach a decision that is supported by all actors. On the other hand spatial topics are at least discussed with civil society, the outcome is therefore always more valid. Today, objections and consultations are standard participation methods. The respondent acknowledges that these methods are not really about involving people. Hence, it’s not clear if ordinary citizens are contributing to regional policy-making:

“The policy is sort of visible. Programmes are indeed created by the means of partnership. People who contribute are well informed. I don’t know if this concerns ordinary citizens. The Kraj is responsible for the publicity of the programme. We do monitor the awareness of the public. Due to the tremendous amount of projects that is funded with EU money it is difficult to analyze all the programmes. I presume that EU regional policy is not visible to the citizens.” (CZCASE)

The SECR is perceived to be quite open to civil society. With the help of the Technical Assistance budget conferences and seminars are organized that are open to anyone. These sessions are seen as a good way to get feedback from interest groups and citizens. However:

“Not much people attend the meetings. [...] There are not much interest groups involved. But only the ones that hold a formal position like the chambers of commerce. [...] The level of citizenship could be higher. Hopefully in a way as is seen in Western Europe. The revolution only took place 20 years ago. One can’t expect to see an overnight change. Today not many people want to be involved.” (CZCASE)

Recently the SECR also consults citizens during midterm evaluations. It's not yet clear what the results of this will be. Nonetheless the respondent foresees a change. Due to the recent economic crisis the Czech national government implements various massive budget cuts; vice versa the South-East Region has a large amount of EU funds to spend. People's awareness for EU funds will be raised and consequently it is more likely that people want to be involved. Citizen participation is a regional and local phenomenon. The idea of forcing regions to involve their citizens by means of special created funding conditions is not supported. Regional authorities must decide if and how citizens are involved. Furthermore, the amount of EU regulations for the SECR to fulfill is enormous already:

"Sometimes it's better that some lines are not crossed. [...] I understand that the EU and other member states want to know what happens with the money from the Cohesion Fund. But at times, I don't see the forest through the trees anymore." (CZCASE)

The respondent supports the Barca recommendations and expects a continuation of a regional policy based on competitiveness. Be that as it may, solidarity must not be approached in a negative way. Solidarity has nothing to do with less active actors: ³⁰

"This is not that black and white. Sometimes yes, if there are too much subsidies it could be not attractive to participate. But if you [a region] are in a very bad starting position support is very helpful. The 'catching up' will go faster and otherwise you maybe can't start at all." (CZCASE)

5.5 Conclusion

With these two case studies the chapter 5 is concluded. This chapter extensively deepened the insights from various actors about the role of citizens in EU regional policy. Furthermore a contrast is shown in the citizen participation practice within two 'thin' regions (see box 4). In the Dutch IIVR programme the level of citizen participation can be perceived as high. Within the SECR in the Czech Republic citizens are, as yet, less willing to take part. All the previous described findings serve as a fundament to answer the main research question that was formulated in chapter 3. In the next and final chapter the conclusion is presented. Ultimately a discussion will conclude this research.

³⁰ I asked the respondent to react to the statements of MINECO, paragraph 5.2; part IV.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Reflection

In the previous chapter, the themes of citizen participation and EU regional policy were brought together. The literature study showed an evolution of EU citizenship and EU regional policy. Furthermore it discussed the application of the partnership principle within this policy. Through the in-depth interviews, a wide spectrum of feelings and attitudes from the professionals were uncovered. In this final chapter I will offer a comprehensive description of citizen participation within EU regional policy. Firstly the most important insights from chapter 4 and 5 are highlighted. The development, attitudes, role towards the member states and the future of regional policy will come forward once more. Subsequently the main research question will be answered. Ultimately, the research is ended with a reflection about the results.

6.1 Conclusion: The position of citizen participation in European regional policy

Today, the 'active participation of people' is explicitly named in EU regional policy documents. Before this time, the Commission was very cautious in doing so. During the first reform in 1988, visibility and 'keeping the policy close to the ground' were already addressed by Delors as an important topic. Indeed, citizens are not explicitly named. Yet, his statement revealed a sort of an affinity for a policy that was close to the people of Europe. Furthermore, the partnership principle was formally established in this period. Partnership was conceptualized as the collaboration between the EU and its member states.³¹ The development of EU regional policy was therefore primarily a matter of the administrative elites. On the other hand, Community Initiatives were more open to citizens, although it was no requirement to involve them. The second reforms took place against the background of the revived European Citizenship debate in the 90's. It aimed to create programmes that were broadly supported by civil society. Therefore the Commission cautiously widened the concept of partnership during the second reform. Partnership now meant that various levels of government were urged to work together. And in addition to this, an appeal was made to also involve non-governmental organizations during the implementation of regional policy. Who or what non-governmental organizations were, was left in the middle. No conspicuous signs of citizens' involvement are noted. Nevertheless, the interviews revealed that INTERREG and URBAN initiatives are conceived to be successful on the terrain of citizen participation. The INTERREG initiative is essentially based on sharing knowledge and experience among institutions, firms and people from different (bordering) regions. INTERREG programmes are obliged to meet these 'partnership requirements'. Common social projects, such as supporting the development of cross-border -cycling paths, -football tournaments and -nurseries are important to this initiative. The main objective of INTERREG' is to break through 'social borders'. URBAN was the only initiative that was related to the local level. Commission officials directly communicated with local authorities on how to improve social circumstances in disadvantaged urban areas. In these programmes, involving citizens and initiating local initiatives were regarded as a critical factor for success. Because the involvement of citizens was not an obliged part of the partnership principle, one can debate if the success of URBAN and INTERREG is directly due to the efforts

³¹ Participation in EU jargon, is called partnership. This term returned in all policy documentation and the interviews that were used in this research. The Commission thinks in terms of partners, who collaborate because of a shared interest.

of the Commission. I suppose the role of the regional and local authorities had a bigger impact on this success. Partnership in the late nineties principally meant that EU regional policy was developed by the elite. Ordinary citizens are welcome to contribute to implementation of the Community Initiatives. This was however mostly a local and regional phenomenon. Perhaps a logical choice because participation was often connected to these levels of administration (see e.g. Friedman, 1993 and Larsson, 2006 in paragraph 2.8). The third reform of EU regional policy became effective in 2000, a year before the release of the groundbreaking *White Paper on European Governance* in 2001. At the same time, the theory of the network society by Castells (2000) was published and became popular among scholars and administrators. Nevertheless, no essential changes were observed in the partnership principle of EU regional policy. Also the most successful Community Initiatives from the previous period were continued. At the beginning of this period, the Commission decided not to be on the foreground anymore. Programmes were to be implemented by the member states and were monitored by the Commission. Lastly, the fourth reform was influenced by the previously mentioned *White Paper*. Not only a shift was made to competitiveness, but it also designated partnership to be the central axis for the development and implementation of regional policy. The basic ideas of the network society can be seen as a fundament for this ambition. The Lisbon Treaty made partnership an obligatory feature for member states to implement. Also in the *White Paper on Multilevel Governance* (2009) and the *Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion* (2010) it is stressed that a dialogue with various actors (including civil society), on different levels is necessary to keep the policy close to the ground. The grassroots support of local actors, such as citizens, is presented as desirable. During the interviews with the Commission several important issues were exposed when discussing the involvement of citizens in EU regional policy. First of all, the EC respondents did not all agree about the conceptualization of term civil society. On the one hand it is stressed that citizens are one of the parts of the civil society. The EU wants to create broad support for its policies. Therefore it is necessary to address civil society at large in regional policy. Citizens who want to be involved can take part, along with NGO's, firms and so on. On the other hand it is said that citizens are to be addressed separately. If they are one of the many participation actors, their opinions will have a great chance not to be heard. The EU should therefore give citizens and localities a separate status in regional policy development. As a result, grassroots will be directly challenged to participate. Currently only interest groups participate. To the EC respondents it is not clear if these groups represent the attitudes of common citizens. One can assume the silent majority will be left out if the Commission broadly speaks of 'involving civil society'. The opinions also differ on the consultation method as a mechanism for participation. None of the respondents were openly against the use of the method, but some doubt if citizens (and other actors) could actually influence regional policy by this. Box 8 and 9 from chapter 4, show that these doubts are reasonable. In both cases approximately 400 responses were counted. The most came from national authorities and EU institutes. Only a small part came from civil society, and even a smaller part directly came from individual citizens. If one realizes that the EU has 500 million inhabitants; the number of responses from civil society are a 'drop in the ocean'. EU regional policy is therefore not developed in collaboration with civil society. If one does state this, it can be understood as a symbolic statement or maybe even an illusion. To this day, EU regional policy development still remains an elite controlled process. In covert terms all EC interviewees confirm this. On several occasions they say that the EU is still passive towards its

citizens. To this day, the fundamentals of direct citizens' influence, as are described by Michels (2004), don't apply to regional policy development. At the same time they don't want to take the blame for this. DG Regional Policy has the best intentions when it comes to citizen involvement. Indeed, partnership is now mandatory. However this research shows that, due to the subsidiarity, the EC has practically no influence on how partnership is organized. From this perspective the EC is therefore 'dead in the water' when it comes to engaging citizens. It was stated several times that member states are responsible to activate their citizens for European affairs. One respondent (DGREG2) desires a bigger role for the Commission when engaging citizens. The EC has to rely on the information given by national and regional authorities on what happens on the local level. The Union has to go beyond this and be more visible on the local level (by means of new forms of local partnerships). This statement resembles the wish of the European Citizens' Panel (2007), who favour a direct connection between the EU and the local level. All other EC respondents didn't openly criticize the current situation but more covertly stated the role of the Commission has to be strengthened by improving the monitoring of the partnership principle. Frequently it's unclear to the Commission what role a partner has, what participation methods are used and what kind of influence a partner has on the policy development process. Again the passive role of the Commission is confirmed. What strikes me most is the fact that the Commission obliges partnership to the member states, but doesn't have the means to effectively evaluate it. Hence, it is stressed that DG Regional Policy is currently bettering the monitoring mechanisms.

As is shown with the in-depth interviews, each respondent has a specific opinion towards citizen participation in EU regional policy. I chose to closely study all critiques and remarks to create a general impression. First of all, the basic ideas of involving citizens in policy-making are unanimously supported. Most prominently because they are seen as a new source of information to improve plans (see Burke, 1979). Indeed, this can be seen as politically correct responses. Arnstein (1969), therefore was right when she said that "*The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you*". Besides this, none of the respondents stated that the influence of experts was to be reduced as argued by Taylor (1999) and ECAS (2008). Overall it can be said that citizen participation is endorsed for functional and not for ideological reasons. The findings also expose an interesting contrast in the opinions when the ideas of citizen participation are connected to the level of the EU. It comes as no surprise that all the Commission respondents endorse a European sense of belonging. For reasons of legitimacy, they hope that citizens will somehow come closer to the Union. All other respondents more or less take the gap between citizens and the EU as a state of fact. Attempts to close the gap are perceived to be a fruitless endeavor. Both rationales return when my research context is discussed. Citizen participation in EU regional policy development and implementation is welcomed by the respondents of the Commission. As is elaborated in the previous section, these respondents don't agree on the extent of this involvement. It can be said that the one policy officer has a more pronounced opinion than the other. Again legitimacy is brought up to be the main reason for involving citizens. Furthermore, the policy will be improved and is more effective, if it's closely connected to place-based circumstances. The other respondents don't think that citizen participation should be a feature of EU regional policy. In general they argue that the abstract spatial and economical concepts are too difficult for ordinary citizens to comprehend. Only

the involvement of key players is considered useful when EU regional policy and Operational Programmes are developed. Citizen participation is perceived to be a local phenomenon. Therefore participation of citizens could be useful on the level of project implementation (INTERREG is named several times). Notably, also the MEP holds this view. I consider this to be a surprising finding, because this respondent factually represents the citizens in Brussels. The debate from the European level revolves around three political and geographical themes; (1) legitimacy: will citizens be more associated with the work of the Union and is European democracy improved? (2) Proximity of government: should the complex EU institutes directly relate to civil society or is a regional and local approach more appropriate? And, (3) rescaling of policy: is it suitable and useful to downscale the abstract EU regional policy by empowering citizens? The multifaceted concept of citizen participation is therefore not only reserved to be discussed from the regional and local government levels, as is shown in paragraph 2.6 and 2.8. The dynamics of the EU do add a new perspective to the already lively debate on citizens' involvement.

In the practical sense, citizen participation in regional development is found to differ among regions. This is most evident when the extents of citizen involvement in the Dutch and Czech cases are discussed. The Dutch case is about a 'region' that was created by regional and local authorities, to tackle a specific spatial theme (functional geography). The level of collaboration between various governmental and civil partners can be seen as difficult and successful at the same time. Harmonizing governments to one another is conceived to be the most challenging aspect. This is further complicated by the multilayered context. On the other hand, the regional development plan is broadly supported by the inhabitants. This is seen as main strength of the programme. In the case of the NUTS 2 region in the Czech Republic, citizen participation is said to be lacking. Two reasons underpin this. The administrative culture is still based on a top-down manner. Some (key) regional programmes are carried out by the national government and other regional programmes by regional authorities. Due to this administrative indistinctness between the national and regional levels, citizens don't know who is responsible for what. Decentralization, with a clearer role for regions is favored by the respondent. The other reason for the lacking participation is ascribed to the mindset of the Czech people. It is mentioned that the centralistic regime 'only' fell twenty years ago. People are still adapting to these new freedoms. Both respondents reject the idea of the EU playing an active role in promoting citizen participation through regional funding. They state genuine participation has to come from inside regions. Top-down involvement will be counterproductive to the practice of participation. Only regions and localities are able to suitably organize meaningful participation. As is described above, the case studies show a distinction in the level of involvement. Two findings catch the eye when reflecting on this. Firstly, the two regions can be considered as thin regions that are artificially created (see Terlouw, 2009). To achieve a bottom-up involvement from citizens it seems evident a rooted, or thick identity, is a prerequisite. Regions with a thin identity, like NUTS2 regions, are then not likely to achieve high levels of involvement from citizens. The Czech case confirms this. Yet, the Dutch case shows the opposite. This thin region is created around the Veluwe lakes and did attract a lot of active inhabitants coming from different parts of the territory. Indeed, no generalization is to be made. Nevertheless these findings do call for more research in the field of citizen participation and (new) forms of regional identity. Secondly, one can't argue on

the basis of these two cases that the civil society in the old member states is more active than those in the new member states. However the in-depth interviews with the other respondents, corresponds with the remarks of Maier (2001). Therefore an East–West divide, regarding the active involvement of civil society is assumable. It's imported to stress that the interviews also showed an important nuance. A number of Central and Eastern Europe countries are making significant progress with partnership. In this context, Slovenia, Poland and the Baltic States are explicitly named. To the Commission it's not clear if citizens are involved in these partnerships. Unfortunately, there are also countries which lag behind. Bulgaria is said to be one of those, because of their passive attitude towards partnership. Among the Commission respondents a slight difference in opinion is observed on, how direct or indirect, partnership contributes to the evolving of the civil society in new member states. The commitment of management authorities is stated to be essential. One respondent (CONS) argues that, actual administrative changes can only be made before a country joins the EU (Public Administration Reforms). After the accession the influence of the Commission considerably decreases.

Currently the EC is catching up with the partnership goal of the Lisbon Treaty. The respondents of the Commission hope for a bright future of citizen participation in regional policy. 'The sixth pillar' in the *Barca Report* is positively approached. Nevertheless, these recommendations are understood as a sort of wishful thinking because the Commission is bound to the administrative reality. If there is any participation, it is a part of sub-national policies. The Commission sees itself as a distant actor in the whole process of regional policy. By no means is the Commission in the position to oblige citizen participation. Only if the Commission claims a stronger role in the implementation of regional policy, the influence could be more direct. This is not expected to happen. The EU respondents foresee a continuation of the current (efficient) regional policy. Yet, one respondent hopes an instrument that promotes local partnerships will be part of the new policy. Major changes regarding partnership are not expected. Views on the future of participation in EU regional policy are therefore rather conservative. Eventually, addressing citizens is something for the member states and sub-levels to decide upon. A European vision on participation is perceived to be unnecessary. In the future the EU is merely seen as an institute that interchanges experiences about participation among its members. The previous chapter also revealed the opinions of the other respondents. In detail they all have a different view on the future of participation. In general, however, it can be said that respondents who are active within a national and regional level are opposed to the idea of citizen participation as a feature of EU regional policy. The arguments coming from the regional level have a social perspective. As is described earlier in this paragraph, they consider citizen participation to originate from inside regions. From the national level, the arguments have an economic perspective. If citizens have a greater say, it is more likely that funds will be distributed equally over space. Evidently, this is conflicting with the competitiveness objective of the Lisbon Agenda. Further research is needed to confirm or reject this perception. Several non-Commission interviewees interpret partnership in EU regional policy as a long-term objective. The main aim is to make member states aware of the fact that regional policy needs to be created in collaboration with all kinds of actors. Therefore this will be reflected in the future of the policy.

These main insights shed a light on the main topic of this research. To further clear up the indistinctness, the upcoming section will answer the main research question that was formulated in chapter 3:

What is the position of citizen participation in European regional policy and how does the EU deal with this in relation towards its member states?

The first part of this question is answered as follows: one can hardly speak of any position of citizen participation in European regional policy. This research shows that citizen participation is no distinct feature of the regional policy development process. However, citizens are welcome to participate (or to be consulted). If citizens do come forward, the Commission will treat them like any other actor. Participation is principally about involving key players. On a regional and local level citizens are considered to be more important by the Commission respondents. Yet, in this case citizens are not expected to contribute to European regional policy.

Before underpinning this, it is essential to divide EU regional policy into three layers: Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, Operational Programmes and Community Initiatives. Within these three layers citizens could have an influence on the policy. On the level of the Commission, where general guidelines for the funds are designed, citizens have practically no influence. The policy is generally designed by means of consultation with civil society. Every actor that's interested is welcome to let themselves to be heard, including citizens. However, no evidence was found that this was actually the case. The consultation process is heavily institutionalized. Mostly NGO's such as, theme based interest groups, economical and social partners are active at this level. Indeed, some of the interest groups can claim to represent a specific group of citizens. According to the Commission respondents, this is not checked because it's no EU competence. Furthermore, consultation does not equal participation. Compared to the concepts of Creighton (2005) and Pröpper & Steenbeek (1999), consultation is seen as a passive form of involvement, in which it's unclear how the input of the participants actually contributes to the final decision. However, some respondents of the Commission do understand consultation to be participation. Yet, others do not endorse this and stress the EC has to raise the level of ambition of involving citizens. Operational Programmes are designed by the national and regional authorities. Several respondents' state, that citizens don't play any role in developing these programmes. Nor is it useful to involve them because of the degree of complexity. Partnership at this level is about involving economical and social partners. Commonly the regional and local levels are associated with the Community Initiatives, which arise out of EU regional policy. These initiatives are also known to facilitate citizen participation, as it is an EU requirement. Best known are the cross-border regional initiatives of INTERREG. If these initiatives concern participation to be associated with policy-making, is sincerely doubted. This is confirmed by most respondents. Community Initiatives are mostly connected to very soft social projects in a practical sense that have nothing to do with contributing to policy-making. If citizen participation in EU regional policy development related to the 'Participation Ladder' of Pröpper & Steenbeek (1999), one can say the bottom rungs apply. The policy is created in a non-interactive manner. The elites dominate the policy development process and eventually make the final decisions. A space for citizens to

take part in this process does not exist. Only the highest level citizens are able to contribute by means of consultation. They can express a view but don't actually participate in a policy dialogue with the Commission.

The answer to the second part of the main research question is: from this research a clear image emerges, that the Commission does not force member states to involve citizens in regional policy development and implementation. Subsidiarity is the main reason for this. Nowadays, partnership is an obliged feature of EU regional policy which challenges member states to make the most of their governance structures. Yet, the implementation of citizen participation is not regarded to be affected by this.

After analyzing the results from this empirical research a paradox between the principles of subsidiarity and partnership arises. The Union has no lawful power to enforce changes into the governance of the member states, but contradictory, it compels member states to cooperatively develop regional policy. This study shows that the latter is widely interpreted by all respondents. Partnership has no fixed definition and is only about working together on different levels. In accordance with their administrative cultures, member states decide how it's implemented. Therefore partnership is no real constraint for member states to apply. Managing authorities can execute this as they please, as long as they can demonstrate they collaborated with 'various partners'. With who one collaborates, for example citizens, it not for the Commission to decide. In addition to this, the monitoring and evaluating of the partnership principle by the Commission is stated to be lagging. The quality of partnership is trusted to the member states. This confirms the distant role of the Commission. They can only hope the compulsory partnership principle, leads to the improvement of governance. Especially in the new member states that, in some cases, still are top-down orientated. Nevertheless, the non-Commission interviewees don't think partnership will devolve upon citizens. Generally, it is closely associated to Operational Programming. Partnership is therefore about involving administrators, experts and key players. Operational Programmes follow the communication guidelines of the Commission. Yet, this is merely about making the EU influence visible by means of promoting EU symbols on project signs. In this respect, the formally top-down promoting of citizen participation is no part of European regional policy. Member states, and more notably the sub-national levels, are still leading when it comes to involving citizens in European regional policy. The profound wish of the European Citizens' Panel (2007) to develop a deeper connection between the local and European level will not come true if the Commission only relies on one-way public relations.

6.2 Reflection: a symbolic meaning

Instead of the traditional economical focus, EU regional policy is now viewed from a social perspective. Therefore this research is assumed to contribute to the already extensive amount of academic knowledge that exists within the field of European Regional Studies. By doing so, I hope doors will be opened for additional research. Instead of the EU centered approach, I propose new research to have a strong regional orientation. The cases studies showed that regions are an axis where policy and citizens come together. A further elaboration from the level of regional management authorities can be interesting. Is citizen participation for example represented in the newly established Regional Operational Programmes, how is civil

society addressed and what is the relation with (new) regional identities? It would be intriguing to relate this to the Eastern member states. In the findings chapter, Poland, The Baltic States and Slovenia are named as rapidly developing in this matter. Lagging countries like Romania or Bulgaria would be at least as fascinating to study. Furthermore an exhaustive overview of the practice of citizen participation within the EU-27 could be worth investigating. Last but not least the perspective of citizens could also be a topic of future research. What are their attitudes towards EU regional policy?

To conclude, it must be said that the answer to the main research question is to be understood within the context of European territorial, political and economic integration. If one assumes this process continues to unfold, the call to close the gap between the EU institution and the citizens will last. In interrelated society of today the elite can't take their power for granted anymore. Therefore the elitist process of European integration needs to be more transparent; the future of the EU future depends on this. The *White Paper on European Governance* (2001) acknowledges this and the Lisbon Treaty (2007) attempts to tackle this. European regional policy could be a bridge between Brussels and the European citizen. However I doubt if under the current circumstances this policy can substantially contribute to this goal. The Commission doesn't make clear choices and is powerless at the same time.

The views on citizens' involvement that are published in the White and Green Papers reveal that the Commission has the best intentions towards ordinary people. Nevertheless, after closely studying these publications and discussing them with various respondents, one can't escape the impression that the views are considerably ambiguous. Partnership, multi-level governance and participation are alternately used. In addition, the terms are all subjectively connected and disconnected from each other. A clear and focused debate on citizens' involvement is not found in EU regional policy. I suppose this is partly due to the lack of conceptualization. What is partnership, how does civil society relate to citizens and with who does one actually wants to participate on what? The Commission doesn't define these questions in the White Papers. The terminologies are conceived as vast grey areas. The lack of a conceptualization from the Commission is a non-decision. Citizens will not be reached and only organized groups from civil society and the elite will keep influencing the policy. Hence, the opportunity will be missed to actually unlock place-based knowledge. EU regional policy will then not come 'closer to the ground'. Adversely, the vague conceptualization is not the only reason that turns 'best intentions' into 'empty intentions'. Due to subsidiarity, the Commission cannot be pretensions when it comes to partnership. Subsidiarity seems to 'paralyze' partnership. Seen from an EU perspective subsidiarity is not solely about effective administration. With this principle, member states are able to protect their civil society from EU interference. Administrative cultural differences are preserved, but simultaneously, it devolves the significance of the compelled principle of partnership. Formally the Commission obliges partnership, but practically member states are free to implement it. I therefore argue that partnership is no real obligation, but it's more a means of encouragement. This is even further underpinned by the fact that the evaluation of partnership is inadequate. It proves that the Commission is relatively powerless to substantively enforce partnership. The recent attention for citizens in policy documents, such as the *White Paper on Multilevel Governance* (2009), the *Barca Report* (2009) and the *Fifth Cohesion Report* (2010), is therefore, in my

opinion, merely symbolic. Because partnership from a citizen perspective is weakly embedded in the policy development process, the Commission can only emphasize the importance of citizens' involvement. Ergo, citizens are not partners but symbols for the elite to propagate.

Finally, the results of the research can be seen from the increasingly complex relationship between citizens and spatial policy. Spatial policy issues today, frequently rise up from the traditional fixed and local boundaries. Hence, policy issues become more comprehensive and thus, are more remote from the daily lives of people. Within the dynamics of cross-border, regional arrangements, a multi-level perspective will be necessary to adaptively address the issues of tomorrow. Due to this complexity it is conceivable that ordinarily people and spatial policy are to drift apart from one another. The administrative elite and the key players should therefore properly realize that policy may be abstract, but ultimately, the effects are real.

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ANNEX 1: Consultations during the preliminary research phase

Name	Function	Organization	Date	Place
Petra Drankier	Former Regional Representative	Province of Zeeland	2nd of December 2010	Utrecht
Marit den Ouden	Consultant Regional Policy	ERAC	6th of December 2010	Utrecht
Anna Domingo	Participation expert	Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek	9th of December 2010	Amsterdam
Maurice Specht	Participation expert	Rootlink	4th of January 2011	Rotterdam

ANNEX 2: Example of Interview Questions

Introduction

1. Could you briefly introduce your organization?
2. Who finances it?
3. What is your role in it?

European citizenship

4. What are your thoughts about a common European citizenship?
5. Why do (or why not) citizens need to be European?
6. Does Europe (EU) need a civil society? Why or why not?
7. How do you think citizens should 'experience' Europe? E.g. like a territorial, social or cultural unity?
8. In your opinion, can European citizenship be constructed?

Citizen participation

9. "The idea of citizen participation is [...] like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you", do you agree?
10. What is your perception of an active civil society?
11. What are your thoughts about the role of citizens in policymaking? In your opinion, when is citizen participation meaningful?
12. Why (or why not) should citizens be more involved in EU in policymaking?
13. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of citizens' participation?
14. Do you think civil society organizations represent all citizens? (e.g. minorities)
15. Do you feel citizens are well represented by lobby organizations (interest groups / platforms) and politicians?
16. How do you tackle representation issues? Should the EU tackle this?
17. What are your feelings about the topic citizen participation and the legitimization of the EU?
18. How do you think the EU should engage the civil society?

Citizen participation in regional development

19. Can you define the partnership principle?
20. How do you see the role of citizens in relationship to the partnership principle?
21. Does your organization support citizen participation in regional development? If yes, in what way do you support it? If not, why?
22. What citizen participation initiatives are already been carried out by de EU? With a focus on regional development.
23. What is the role of regional funding schemes? Do funding applications require a citizen participation component? (e.g. INTERREG/LEADER funds)
24. Current and future practice of citizen participation in regional policy from an EU perspective: Do you feel that the topic of citizen's participation is well represent in EU regional policy 2007-2013 and the Lisbon Treaty?
25. Do you know if there is are special budgets available for citizen participation in regional development?
26. What role should citizen participation have on the policy agenda for the time after 2013? (e.g. Europe 2020)
27. The Barca report promotes experimentalism in policy development and mobilizing actors, do you agree and what is your opinion on this? (Also referring to multi-level governance and the subsidiary principle)

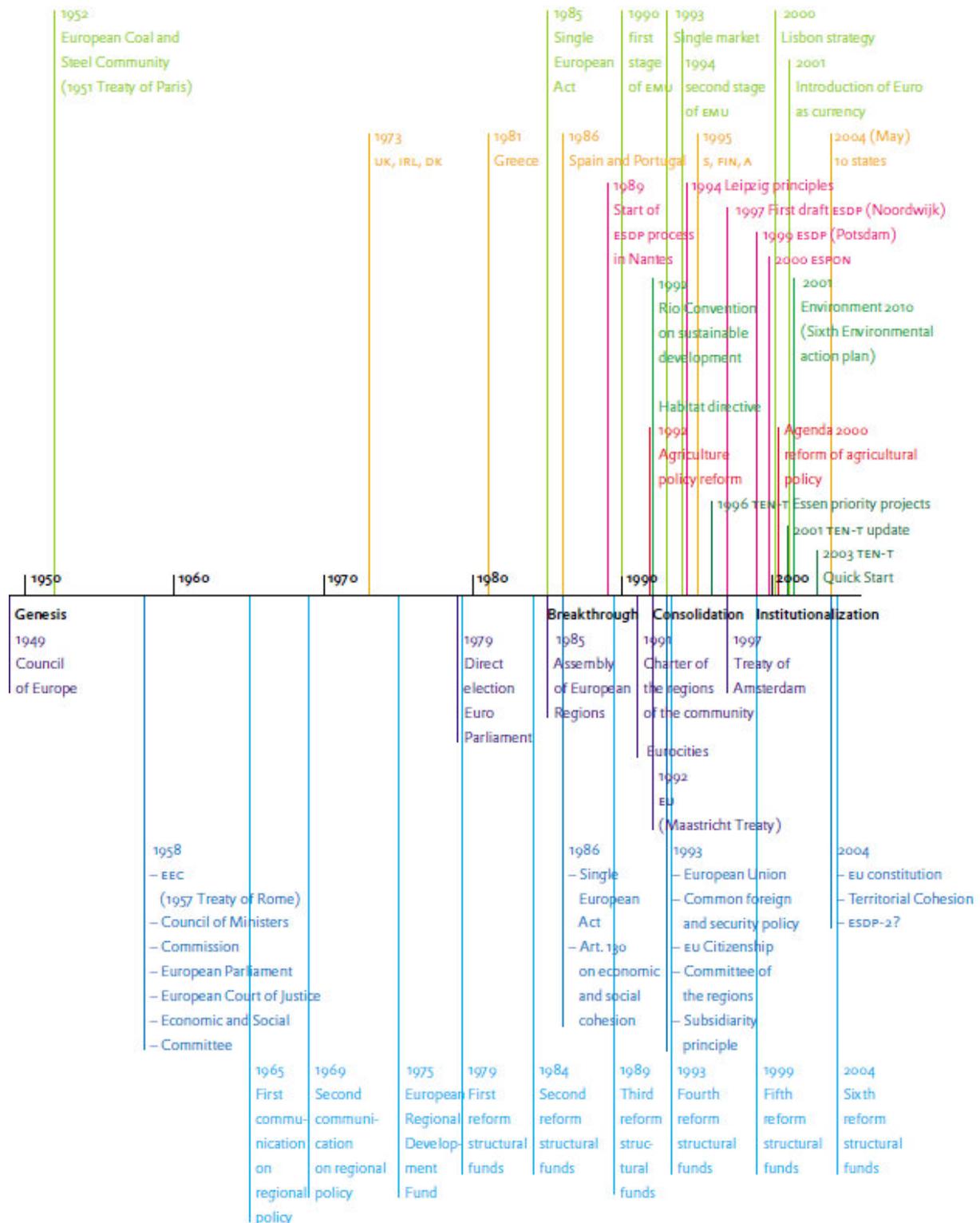
The position of EU member states in regional policy and citizen participation.

28. What is your opinion on citizen participation in the context of governance? Is it solely a local and regional phenomenon? Or can a supranational vision contribute?
29. What do you know about citizen participation (in regional development) in EU member states?
30. What lessons can be learned from citizen participation initiatives from the member states?
31. Do you think that citizen participation will have effect in non-Western member states?
32. Does your organization influence member states in involving citizens in regional policy? If yes, how? Funds? If no, why not?

Closing

33. Do you have any documentation that could help me further in my research?
34. Do you know any person at another EU, lobby, regional or political office that I could talk to?
35. Do you have any comments/suggestions/points of improvement for me?

ANNEX 3: Milestones in European Integration, until 2004



Source: Van Ravesteyn & Evers, 2004, p. 19

ANNEX 4: Article 11, Partnership

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With a view to ensuring that specific national circumstances, including the priorities identified in the national reform programme of each Member State concerned, are taken into account, the Commission and that Member State may decide to complement in an appropriate manner the list of categories of Annex IV.

Each Member State concerned shall contribute to these targets.

At their own initiative, Member States that acceded to the European Union on or after 1 May 2004 may decide to apply these provisions.

4. In accordance with their respective responsibilities, the Commission and the Member States shall ensure the coordination between the assistance from the Funds, the EAFRD, the EFF and the interventions of the EIB and of other existing financial instruments.

5. Operations financed by the Funds shall comply with the provisions of the Treaty and of acts adopted under it.

Article 10

Programming

The objectives of the Funds shall be pursued in the framework of a multiannual programming system organised in several stages comprising the identification of the priorities, the financing, and a system of management and control.

Article 11

Partnership

1. The objectives of the Funds shall be pursued in the framework of close cooperation, (hereinafter referred to as partnership), between the Commission and each Member State. Each Member State shall organise, where appropriate and in accordance with current national rules and practices, a partnership with authorities and bodies such as:

- (a) the competent regional, local, urban and other public authorities;
- (b) the economic and social partners;
- (c) any other appropriate body representing civil society, environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting equality between men and women.

Each Member State shall designate the most representative partners at national, regional and local level and in the economic, social, environmental or other spheres (hereinafter referred to as partners), in accordance with national rules and practices, taking account of the need to promote equality between men and women and sustainable development through the integration of environmental protection and improvement requirements.

2. The partnership shall be conducted in full compliance with the respective institutional, legal and financial powers of each partner category as defined in paragraph 1.

The partnership shall cover the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of operational programmes. Member States shall involve, where appropriate, each of the relevant partners, and particularly the regions, in the different stages of programming within the time limit set for each stage.

3. Each year the Commission shall consult the organisations representing the economic and social partners at European level on assistance from the Funds.

Article 12

Territorial level of implementation

Implementation of operational programmes referred to in Article 32 shall be the responsibility of Member States at the appropriate territorial level, in accordance with the institutional system specific to each Member State. That responsibility shall be exercised in accordance with this Regulation.

Article 13

Proportional intervention

1. The financial and administrative resources employed by the Commission and Member States in the implementation of the Funds in relation to:

- (a) the choice of indicators provided for in Article 37(1)(c);
- (b) the evaluation under Articles 47 and 48;
- (c) the general principles of management and control systems referred to in Article 58(e) and (f);
- (d) the reporting as referred to in Article 67,

shall be proportional to the total amount of expenditure allocated to an operational programme.

2. In addition, specific provisions relating to proportionality in relation to controls are set out in Article 74 of this Regulation.

Article 14

Shared management

1. The budget of the European Union allocated to the Funds shall be implemented within the framework of shared management between the Member States and the Commission, in accordance with Article 53(1)(b) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities⁽¹⁾, with the exception of the technical assistance referred to in Article 45 of this Regulation.

The principle of sound financial management shall be applied in accordance with Article 48(2) of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1.

ANNEX 5: Abbreviations

<i>CoR:</i>	<i>Committee of the Regions</i>
<i>CSG:</i>	<i>Community Strategic Guidelines</i>
<i>DG:</i>	<i>Directorate-General</i>
<i>EAGGF:</i>	<i>European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund</i>
<i>EC:</i>	<i>European Commission</i>
<i>EMU:</i>	<i>Economic and Monetary Union</i>
<i>ECAS:</i>	<i>European Citizen Action Service</i>
<i>EESC:</i>	<i>European Economic and Social Committee</i>
<i>ERDF:</i>	<i>European Regional Development Fund</i>
<i>ESDP:</i>	<i>European Spatial Development Perspective</i>
<i>ESF:</i>	<i>European Social Fund</i>
<i>ESPON:</i>	<i>European Spatial Planning Observation Network</i>
<i>EU:</i>	<i>European Union</i>
<i>GDP:</i>	<i>Gross Domestic Product</i>
<i>IIVR:</i>	<i>Integrale Inrichting Veluwe Randmeren (redevelopment the Veluwe lakes)</i>
<i>JROP:</i>	<i>Joint Regional Operational Programme</i>
<i>MEP:</i>	<i>Member of the European Parliament</i>
<i>NGO:</i>	<i>Non-Governmental Organisation</i>
<i>NIMBY:</i>	<i>Not In My Backyard</i>
<i>NUTS:</i>	<i>Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics</i>
<i>OP:</i>	<i>Operational Programme</i>
<i>SEA:</i>	<i>Single European Act</i>
<i>SECR:</i>	<i>South-East Cohesion Regio</i>

