



Multi-Level Implementation Scheme: The Southwest Finnish partnership approach

Smart Blue Regions / GoA 2.1

In Southwest Finland the implementation of the smart specialization strategy is carried out alongside with implementation of the regional strategy. The smart specialization strategy of Southwest Finland is heavily integrated in the measures and implementation of the Regional strategy thus making separate smart specialization implementation schemes needless.

This paper presents how *the Partnership Forum*, main body of the implementation of the Southwest Finnish regional strategy, works and operates. The concept of partnership has proven to be very successful, resource efficient and inclusive model of regional cooperation and strategy implementation.

Besides the Partnership Forum, the regional council is in charge of making decisions of ERDF grants for Southwest Finland. The projects' suitability to smart specialization priorities is emphasized in the decision-making process, thus making the granting of ERDF funds a very concrete way of promoting smart specialization priorities. According to studies made in the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, the proportion of funds allocated to smart specialization priorities has been quite large.

What is the Partnership Forum?

The Partnership Forum is a new approach towards regional cooperation, ways of working and structures of collaboration. One could describe the Partnership Forum as an igniter of Southwest Finnish cooperation. The Partnership Forum is both a tool and a network for actors who work to reach the goals stated in the Regional Strategy. As stated in the regional strategy, the concept of partnership is seen as a crucial key to success and well-being in the region.

People and knowledge are the basis of the Partnership Forum. The forum brings together open data and those whose aim is to accomplish more by working together and sharing information. The Regional Council organizes partnership meetings promoting the implementation of the regional strategy and taking the new ideas to the right stakeholders. The new website of the Partnership Forum alongside the regional information services enables a better presentation, delivering and use



of information and creates a new way of regional cooperation. The thematic entities of the Partnership Forum reflect the functional contents and objectives of the strategy and are implemented through the activities. The partnership networks develop thematic contents, bring partners together and support them in networking. The Partnership Forum is ever changing and continuously developing. New networks and features are added based on the needs of the forum.

- A key implementation form of the regional strategy that is based on people and information
- A new approach on regional co-operation, practices and cooperation structures
- The Partnership Forum is not stable but converts and takes new positions based on needs of different actors. The regional council of Southwest Finland coordinates the operations of the networks but gives the networks the freedom to act as they think is the best.
- The Partnership Forum is a platform for e.g. meetings, seminars, utilisation of open data
- South-West Finland Regional Information Services has an important role of providing information for the regional partners and stakeholders.
- According to the surveys on Partnership Forum, the methods and operations of the Forum are widely accepted and supported among the actors in the area.

The Partnership Forum as a tool for implementation of the Regional Strategy and RIS3

The Partnership forum is the main tool for implementation of the regional smart specialization strategy and the Regional Programme.

RIS3 priorities of Southwest Finland in Regional Programme 2018-2021:

1. Blue Growth and Industrial Modernization
2. Innovative Foodchains
3. Medicine and Biotechnologies

The forum operates through 9 priority areas or thematic entities:

1. Open data
2. The developmental paths of the environmental programme of Southwest Finland
3. Smart Specialization
4. Common regional and urban planning structure
5. International center of the Baltic Sea region
6. Cooperation in education and economic activities



7. Roadmap to a circular economy
8. Creative Southwest Finland
9. Synergies between nature and tourism

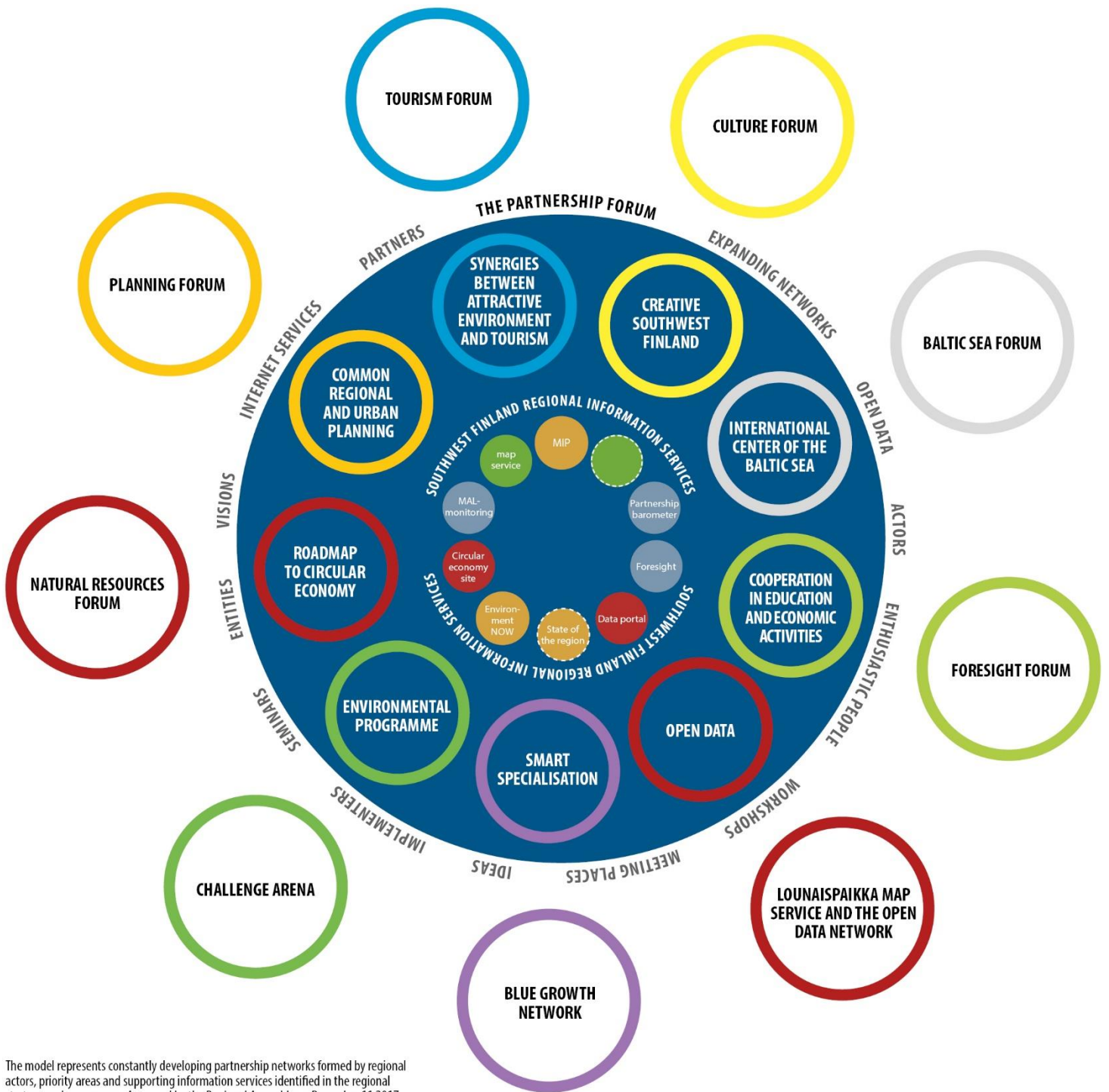
When looking at the 9 priorities above, one can see that for example the RIS3 priority Blue Growth can be found in multiple areas, not only in smart specialization. Priorities 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 can either directly or indirectly be linked to Blue Growth. Our smart specialization priorities can be found everywhere in the strategy and in the work of many of our networks. This is also the reason why we have not decided to have a separate implementation strategy for our RIS3. The communication between different themes is thus extremely important for the implementation of Blue Growth.

The work in the aforementioned themes is carried out by networks or forums. The activity and the forms of networks vary a lot among each other because they are based on needs and wishes of the networks themselves. At the moment there are 10 networks and more are in the planning. There networks also for our other two RIS3 themes, innovative foodchains and medicine & biotechnologies, are also set to be introduced in the Partnership Forum during next autumn.

Current networks:

1. Open data network
2. Challenge Arena (Environmental issues)
3. Blue Growth Network
4. Planning Forum (Regional planning)
5. Baltic Sea Forum (Cooperation in the Baltic Sea)
6. Foresight “academy” (Cooperation between authorities, educational institutes and businesses in preparing for future needs in education and labour skill needs. There is an especially strong link to maritime industry.)
7. Natural Resources Forum
8. Culture Forum
9. Tourism Forum
10. Forum for Associations

The forums have the main responsibility in implementing the regional strategy. The networks identify common challenges and themes that have to be focused into. This work is also future oriented because the challenges and themes identified in the implementation phase are taken in account in the creating of next regional strategy.



The model represents constantly developing partnership networks formed by regional actors, priority areas and supporting information services identified in the regional strategy and programme. Approved by the Regional Assembly on December 11 2017.

The regional strategy has a total of 29 measures under four objectives (responsibility, collaborative skills, accessibility and resource wisdom. More information on the last page!). The measures that have been listed, guide the work of these networks and give them concrete points of focus for the work that they are carrying out. Each network thinks themselves which are the ways in which they can most efficiently work towards the goals set in the strategy. There have been networks before, but the Partnership Forum approach has made them more visible, more concrete and given a lot more focus in the work than before. It has also made the actors see the big picture and their place in the work for common good.

The most important thing this far has been to make clear for the actors that they are all already important actors in the implementation of the regional strategy. Because the strategy has been written using a bottom-up approach, the needs and challenges of the actors are very strongly identified in the strategy and the measures within it. Thus, it is the advantage of the actors to participate in the implementation because, at the end of the day, achieving the goals set in the strategy is very beneficial for them. It also means that the actors that participate in the implementation work are very motivated in achieving common goals.

The Partnership Forum has been very successful in attracting strong actors into its networks. Currently almost all the important players from various fields of business are represented in the work of the networks. The businesses are not currently participating in the Partnership very actively but the presence of business support organizations, interest groups and other actors guarantees that the important messages concerning the Partnership Forum reaches also them.

The implementation work of the networks is followed and updated using Trello service online. Using Trello, each network can set measures that they think are important for them and organize their actions using an easily accesible online database. The networks can set certain measures as to be started, currently working or finished. The progress in measures is updated at least two times in a year and there is going to be an annual follow-up report on the work carried out by the networks. The operating of the Partnership Forum is also monitored by a survey that is carried out every year. The survey is targeted to all the relevant stakeholders in the area.

The regional council acts as a coordinator of the Partnership Forum and its networks. It doesn't, however, dictate unilaterally how the forum should work. The role of the regional council should instead be seen as a facilitator, as an enabler and as an actor who brings partners together. The regional council appreciates the top know-how of the actors in their own fields of business and trusts that they know how to carry out the implementation of the strategy as efficiently as possible.

Blue Growth Network in the Partnership Forum

The Blue Growth network is currently at a starting phase. The network coordinated by the regional council consists mainly of regional authorities, cities, higher education institutes, interest groups and business support organizations like the Turku Science Park. The regional council is currently organizing biannual meetings (Expert meeting group for maritime business) with representatives from aforementioned organizations where we exchange ideas, bring up current issues and discuss future actions. Besides that, the blue growth network participates actively also in other kinds of events organized by the Partnership Forum.

The new blue growth success case website (August 2018) will be a new kind of tool for the Blue Growth Network. Its aims are to bring together actors around the region, to showcase blue know-how around the area and also to show the Southwest Finnish actors opportunities for transnational collaboration by presenting the regions that participate in the Smart Blue Regions project. It will also be a platform for communicating the goals of the regional programme more efficiently to actors working around the themes of blue growth. It will help in communicating the successes and needs in implementing the measures stated in the regional strategy. The new website will also be a pilot for the other two smart specialization priorities. If it turns out to be successful way to ignite regional cooperation, there is a possibility of opening similar services also for the other two priorities.

At the moment, the Blue Growth network has a lot of smaller networks coordinated by different actors. For example, Turku Science Park coordinates the cooperation with maritime enterprises and start-ups in the area. The Finnish Maritime Industries association also have their own networks of enterprises. There is also many smaller networks for B2B cooperation.

The work of the blue growth network consists mostly of marine industry. The tourism sector of the region has their own, very active and formally constructed Tourism Forum where the aspects of coastal tourism are very important due to the importance of the archipelago to the tourism sector. Circular economy that is increasingly important in maritime sector, also has their own network. The work of the Foresight Academy is also very important to the maritime sector because a large part of its work consists of how to get more engineers to the area, either through education or through different kinds of recruitmental measures. There is a huge shortage of workforce in the maritime sector in Southwest Finland and it is thus extremely important for the future to find sustainable solutions on how to get people with needed skills to the area.

PARTNERSHIP

The vision is implemented through partnership that includes setting shared goals for building the region's future. It means committing to working together and having shared means to achieve the goals. The regional strategy wants to involve all the residents, companies, education providers, associations and other actors in Southwest Finland.

The vision can be achieved in an innovative atmosphere that allows for joint testing and new types of activities and where it is allowed to also make mistakes. The region focuses, in particular, on measures that increase participation, openness, encounters, interaction and a sense of community.

Southwest Finland invests in promoting participation, developing a resident-centred service culture, supporting good and vital leadership and improving the competence of personnel. Local influencing is made easy and motivating. The activity and creativeness of a resident-centred civil society is being supported and promoted.

Partnership is an approach that values the common goal over individual benefit. Each area has its own identity and role within the big picture that places importance on the development of their strengths and characteristics instead of mental and geographic borders.

FUTURE IS SHAPED BY CHOICES NOW RESPONSIBILITY

The decisions we make today are extremely important. We build our future actively, ensuring the mental and physical well-being of everyone and creating the foundation for a safe and equal society. We do not simply anticipate the changes, we affect them through our own actions. In Southwest Finland, active and entrepreneurial ways of working are regarded highly and treated as the norm. We must cherish our unique environment with each decision and choice we make. The success of Southwest Finland is built on a renewing business life, work and well-being that is created through responsible, sustainable choices.

TOGETHER ACROSS THE BORDERS COLLABORATIVE SKILLS

Stronger cooperation and partnership helps us achieve a new kind of inspiration and an active culture for our region. Partnership is a way of working that benefits all parties. Cooperation increases competence. We can achieve high-quality results by matching multidisciplinary competencies in creative ways. The region does not stick with existing structures but strengthens the foundation on which to build new things.

APPROACHABLE GATEWAY TO THE BALTIC SEA ACCESSIBILITY

Mental and physical availability is an asset and a source of vitality for our region. The international Southwest Finland is a central operator in the northern growth area. Visible international networks are a strong pull factor. Southwest Finland has a functional infrastructure with a sustainable urban structure and an intelligent transport system. The open, inspiring and dialogic Southwest Finland is a good place to live and work. The clean Baltic Sea and the attractive environment, combined with the approachable and collaborative reputation, enable the area to serve as an important partner and collaborative platform.

INNOVATIVE FORERUNNER RESOURCE WISDOM

Southwest Finland is a comprehensively resource-wise and carbon-neutral region that makes information transparently available to everyone. The region uses the combined resources of the natural and cultural environment, regional structure and people, and organizations, with a strong focus on the future. Resources are allocated to measures that can make Southwest Finland a forerunner and model area in the circular economy and resource wisdom. Working for shared resources is a way of thinking and an ability to see the benefit to each party.

PARTNERSHIP FORUM AS THE MAIN STRATEGIC ACTION

The Partnership Forum is the network of actors that implement the regional strategy for Southwest Finland and the trigger of cooperation within the region: it is a window to regional cooperation and activities. Together with the regional information service, the Partnership Forum gathers open data, operators and networks that aim to achieve more together. It comprises working groups, thematic forums and a large number of regional actors. It increases encounters that involve creating and strengthening networks, finding new ways of working and utilizing and developing existing ones. Working together and networking in different directions simultaneously are keys to success, but finding new partners and cooperation networks requires gaining visibility and making one's ideas known. The Partnership Forum and regional information service offer a channel and tools for sharing information and serve as a communications channel for analyzed and visualized information.

Networks between people and open data are the backbones of the Partnership Forum. Visible networks are an international and national pull factor. Areas with a reputation of having good connections and networks have a strong foothold.

M R1. Strengthening local practices that are based on consumer power and promoting the five development paths identified in the environmental programme for Southwest Finland.

M C1. Promoting partnership and bold experimentation for the purpose of encouraging a dynamic cooperation culture in the region.

M A1. Promoting the creation of digital and physical meeting places that are accessible in different languages and support networking between actors.

M RW1. Supporting material, energy, nutrient and resource efficient and carbon neutral choices, following the regional circular economy roadmap.

MR2. Making Southwest Finland a pilot area for positive structural change.

M C2. Creating regional cooperation models for associations and the culture sector.

M A2. Developing Southwest Finland into a centre for international connections and operations in the Baltic Sea region by using the potential of the northern growth area.

M RW2. Speeding up innovative procurement in the public sector in order to develop new business activities and promote business life in Southwest Finland.

M R3. Creating a model for active dialogue between regional decision makers and student unions at different educational levels and piloting a regional youth parliament.

M C3. Ensuring the availability of competent workforce and the prerequisites for lifelong learning in different fields in order to secure regional competitiveness.

M A3. Ensuring the progress of the one-hour train plan and promoting the transport connections in the coast area, inland and within the region.

M RW3. Making Southwest Finland a forerunner in data business. Promoting the availability of open data and the development of a data-driven business ecosystem.

M R4. Continuing the implementation of the regional work and traineeship scheme for the young and the mentoring programme with companies and targeting measures at young people at different educational levels.

M C4. Supporting startups, changes of ownership, innovation skills and entrepreneurial education.

M A4. Implementing a comprehensive regional model for sales expertise that spans all education levels.

M RW4. Promoting extensive cooperation between higher education institutions in order to make the area and its business life more competitive.

M R5. Developing the working life, entrepreneurial and innovation skills of students by taking into account the requirements of industrial renewal, strengthening and deepening education choices in technology and supporting the employment or further education of students who are about to graduate.

M C6. Ensuring effective communication in the planning and development cooperation for a sustainable regional and urban structure and increasing innovation and joint responsibility for land use planning and interaction in order to build an attractive environment.

M A5. Continuing the productization of education expertise and the development of education exports with the help of regional and national consortia.

M RW5. Ensuring the renewal of the functions and content of education and an effective network of providers that is based on needs, as part of the secondary vocational education reform.

M R6. Supporting immigrants to continue from secondary education to higher education and involving them in political decision making and developing active integration politics in municipalities.

M C7. Creating a strong cooperation platform for maritime spatial planning.

M A6. Building a sustainable and visible leisure concept in which the vital archipelago, attractive national parts and the rich regional cultural environment both on the shore and inland offer year-round experiences.

M RW6. Promoting the innovative use of buildings and enhancing the use of public spaces.

M R7. Developing diverse environmental reading skills by extending the scope of environmental education and establishing the operations of the environmental network.

M RW7. Ensuring the start of a master of science in engineering programme in a regional university.

M R8. Promoting everyday physical activities and sustainable choices of transport among the residents.

M R9. Continuing to develop strong food production and the food industry in Southwest Finland.

THE THEMES SERVE AS THE FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION NETWORKS THAT COORDINATE THE MEASURES

Visible networks are an international and national pull factor

