



INNOVATIVE PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AREAS

Mutual learning between Germany, Sweden, Austria & Scotland

EPRC WEBINAR | 14 June 2023 | ZOOM meeting room

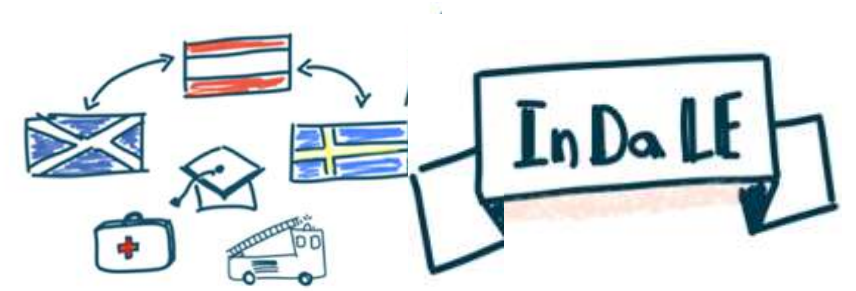


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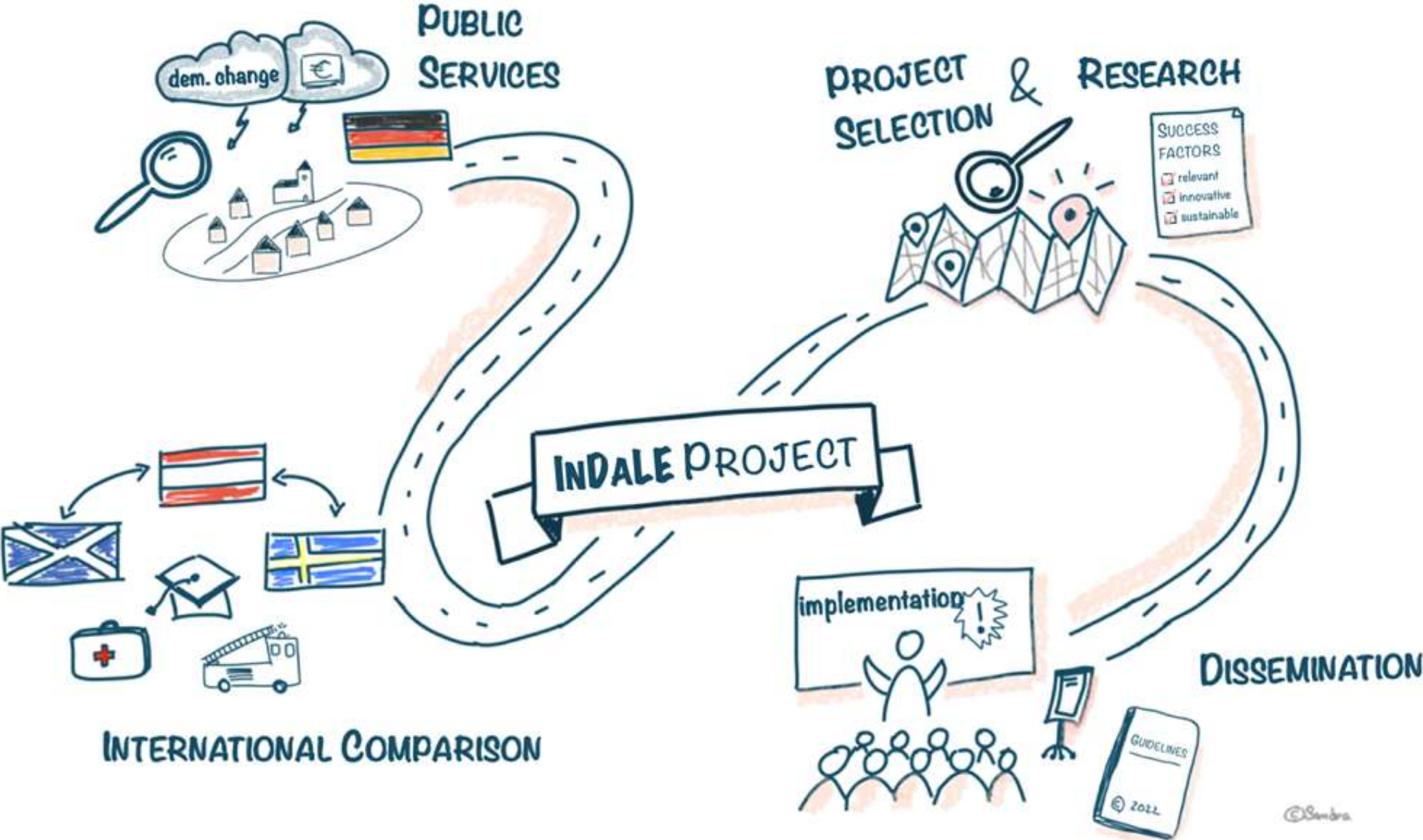
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AGENDA

























- General introduction to the research project
- Background of our research process and starting points
- Shifting Responsibilities in Co-Produced Public Services
 - Insights from **Fire and Rescue Services** in Germany, Austria, and Scotland
- Selected overall results leaning on the conceptual framework for project continuation developed by InDaLE

Introduction





CHALLENGING PROVISION OF SGIs IN RURAL AREAS

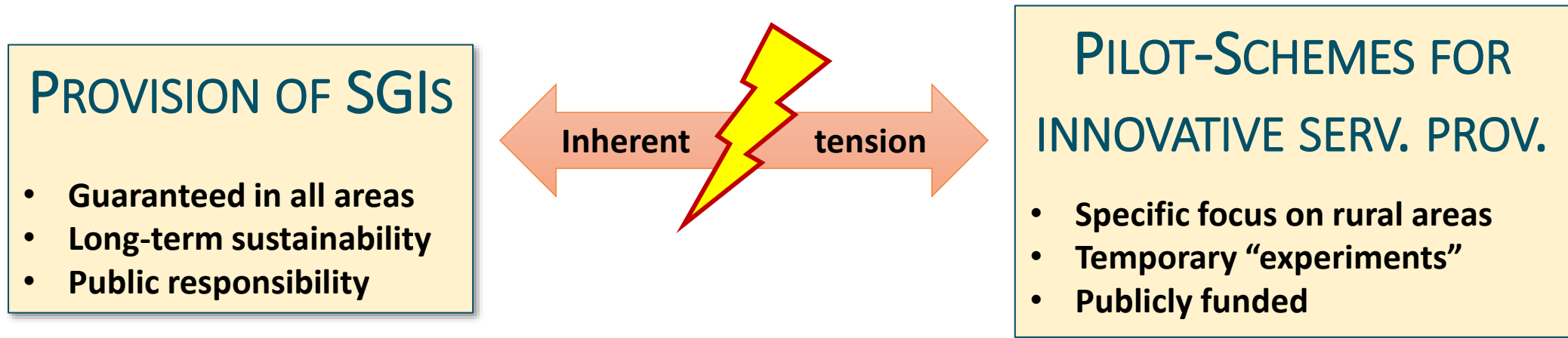


	Demographic change	Geographic conditions	Societal challenges	SGI-specific
Medical & nursing care	An increase of elderly population results in an increase in the demand of medical and nursing care. 	Allocation problems due to settlement of new physicians. 	Integration of skilled foreign workers to meet labour demands. 	The current expansion of educational offers is yet to meet the demand for young professionals. 
	Ageing workforce, insufficient young recruits. 	Difficult accessibility due to long distances leads to longer waiting times. 	Increase in formal care as informal care from relatives decreases. 	
Fire & rescue services	Decrease in the number of volunteer firefighters. 	Longer commutes result in low daytime availability. 	Difficulty in recruiting new volunteers. 	More interventions caused by natural disasters. 
	Ageing populations require more assistance. 		Changed societal perceptions on volunteering. 	Increasing costs and complexity of operation and interventions. 
Post-school education	Declining number of young people leads to closures of educational facilities. 	Educational institutions are overwhelmingly centralised; young people need to leave rural regions to attend higher education courses. 	Rigid structures in the education system results in lacking support for individual educational pathways. 	Missmatch between educational offers and skills demanded in the field of labour. 
	Lack of skilled workers even in thriving rural regions. 	Poor broadband and public transport infrastructures worsen accessibility. 	The advent of digitalisation in the workplace and changes in the structure of the labour market require retraining continuous training. 	Educational institutions lack the technical equipment to provide learners the skills needed in the modern economy. 

CHALLENGING PROVISION OF SGIs IN RURAL AREAS

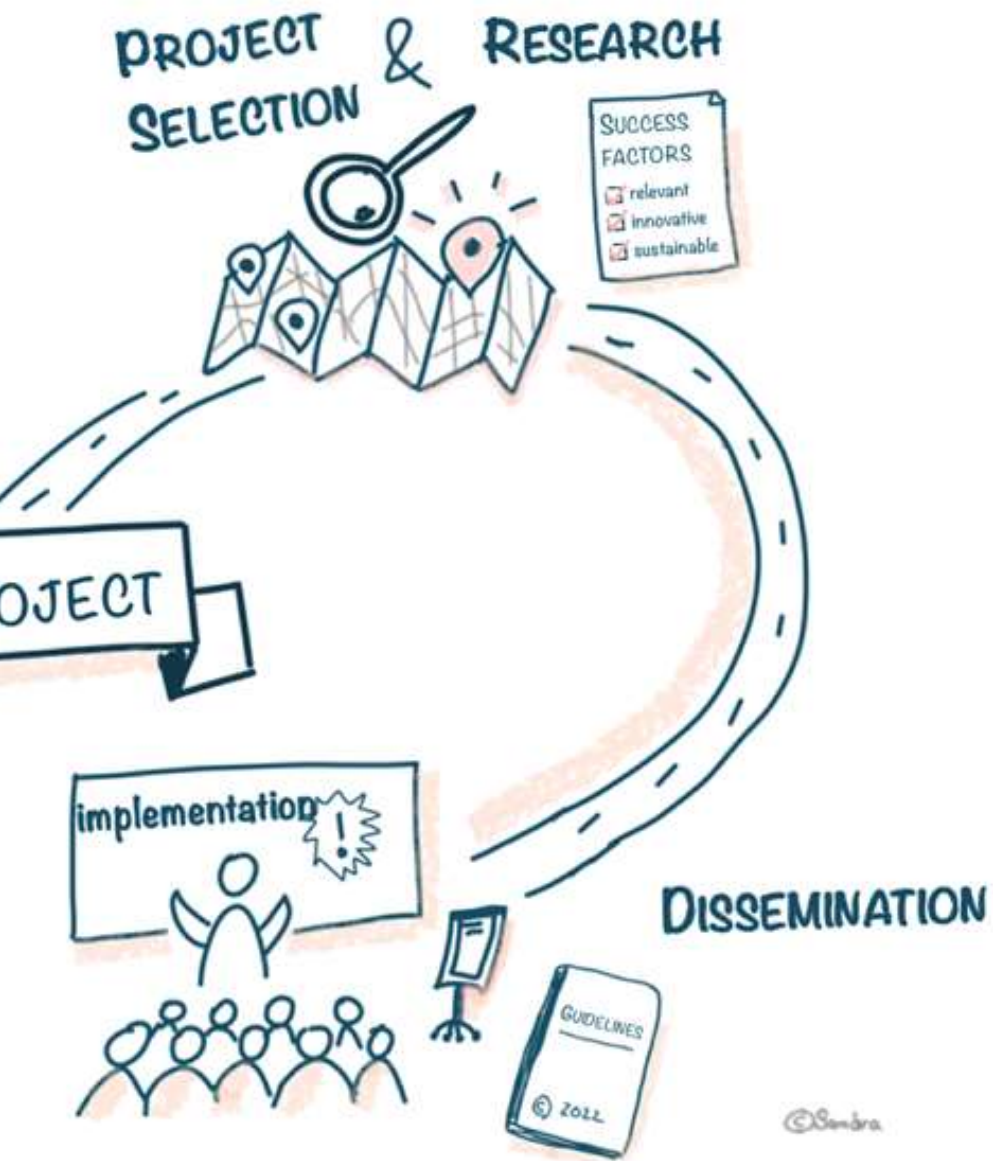
- Safeguarding services of general interest in rural areas is central to the “Postulate of the equivalence of living conditions”.
(vgl. Stielike 2018, S. 87)
 - From a spatial planning and territorial development perspective:
 - "The provision of services and infrastructures of general interest ... must be guaranteed in an appropriate manner to ensure equal opportunities in all areas; **this also applies in sparsely populated areas**". § 2 Abs. 2 Nr. 3 S.1 ROG
 - Formal/informal steering Instruments in planning and development
 - **Pilot schemes for innovative rural basic service and infrastructure provision**
(Adam Hernández & Schneider, 2021)
-   InDaLE's main research focus

RESOLVING AN INHERENT TENSION



Research interest and questions accompanying InDaLE 2020-2022

- What practical obstacles and success factors are associated with the implementation of pilot projects in the area of rural public services and infrastructure?
- What key factors influence the **continuation, long-term establishment and maybe mainstreaming** of these innovative projects?
- How can **the design of pilot funding schemes** be improved in order to better ensure the long-term sustainability of innovative solutions and therefore to help transform the provision of rural public services and infrastructure in the near future?



DURING INDALE WE RESEARCHED ...

GOOD PRACTICES EMBEDDED IN 18 SPECIFIC PROJECTS

- What makes them good practices?
- (Who) What and how can we learn from them?

THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF INNOVATIVE PILOT PROJECTS

- How can we conceptualise project continuation after funding?
- What factors are conducive/obstructive to continuation?

... AND FOUND NO “ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROCHES”, BUT ...

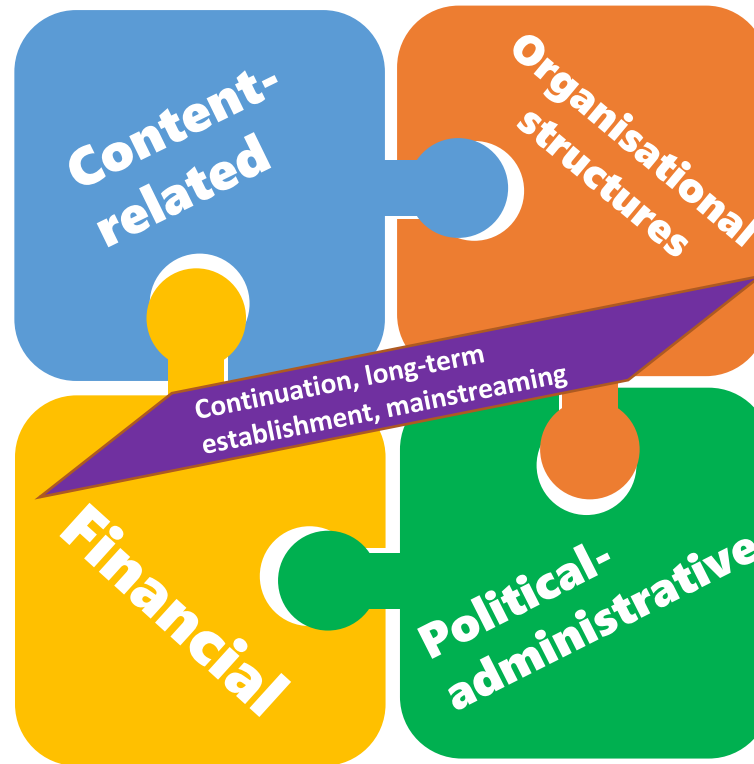
- found some transferable principles and ideas from comparing the projects examined and ...
- developed recommendations for different levels of action (federal, state and local governments or funding agencies and project owners/promoters).



A COMPLEX EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ...

- with 4 organisations in 4 countries and 3 areas of services of general interest.
 - Distinguishing feature: detailed in-depth research of individual projects.
 - Methods: semi-structured interviews with key actors implementing, financing or using projects. Also, document analysis.
 - Challenges: COVID-19 for fieldwork, (partly) very different governance models in the focus countries and diversity of spatial-structural conditions in rural areas.

	Deutschland	Österreich	Schottland	Schweden
Post-school education	AKADEMIE FÜR RAUMENTWICKLUNG IN DER LEIBNIZ-GEMEINSCHAFT 2 case studies		 2 case studies	 2 case studies
Medical and nursing care	AKADEMIE FÜR RAUMENTWICKLUNG IN DER LEIBNIZ-GEMEINSCHAFT 3 case studies	 2 case studies		 2 case studies
Fire and rescue services	AKADEMIE FÜR RAUMENTWICKLUNG IN DER LEIBNIZ-GEMEINSCHAFT 2 case studies	 2 case studies	 1 case studies	
N = 18	7 case studies	4 case studies	3 case studies	4 case studies



Dimensions of project continuation according to the developed conceptual framework in InDaLE

SELECTED

CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the 4-dimensional conceptual framework for pilot-project continuation in rural public service and infrastructure provision

VIER DIMENSIONEN VON VERSTETIGUNG



Dimensions of project continuation according to the developed conceptual framework in InDaLE

➤ Content related

What project aims and measures stay the same, are modified or are included during the process?

➤ Organisational structures

Who supports and implements the project? Which roles, capacities and interactions take place among the project participants?

➤ Political-administrativ

What support and acceptance does the project get from politicians and the administration?

➤ Financial

How does the project manage to enter regular operation with decreasing or totally without public/seed funding?

COORDINATING BETWEEN SECTORS, PROFESSIONS AND DISCIPLINES



👁️ In the midst of multiple challenges in rural areas, a "new" public or semi-public role/function is devoted to the **coordination of stakeholders** involved in the provision of services of general interest. Innovations are based on **interprofessional, interdisciplinary** and **intersectoral** cooperation projects.

Meaning of "coordination"

- ✓ Expert and low-threshold advice
- ✓ More than just a contact point/person:
"Caretakers", "networkers" and "problem solvers" needed
- ✓ Support volunteers = relieve their workload & make them feel appreciated

Challenging cooperation!

- ✓ No immediate success = requires practice!
- ✓ Use dialogue to agree on new and often shared responsibilities and roles
- ✓ Trust-building and close cooperation
- ✓ Overcoming competitive thinking (e.g. in local politics) is essential

DEALING WITH (MOSTLY UNAVOIDABLE) RESISTANCE



👁️ Establishing innovative approaches in public services is usually accompanied by fundamental changes in roles, responsibilities or established approaches that have historical roots. **Stakeholders** affected are sometimes not only trapped in entrenched patterns of action, but often **fear a loss of legitimacy and activity**.

Issues of acceptance and trust

- ✓ Affects both user-groups and stakeholders involved in the delivery of public services
- ✓ Scepticism = ignorance. Raise awareness and transfer knowledge
- ✓ Pay attention to transparency
- ✓ Key persons matter (reputation/persuasion)

Participation of stakeholders

- ✓ Find and involve actors who are “willing to change”
- ✓ Stakeholders bring in their needs and practical knowledge from the grass-roots level
- ✓ Provide scope for those affected to shape and make decisions

ALLOW FOR LEARNING PROCESSES AND CAPACITY BUILDING



👁️ The pilot projects under study take place in the midst of **complex and diverse stakeholder constellations and governance modes**. Stakeholders negotiate and agree on new tasks, interfaces and responsibilities consciously. This process is noticeably knowledge-intensive and **requires new skills and competences**.

Importance of learning (together)

- ✓ *Qualification and training are essential*
- ✓ *Professional facilitation is helpful*
- ✓ *Harmonise working methods, logics and communication cultures of cooperating stakeholders through joint capacity building*

High complexity requires clarity

- ✓ *Consciously agree newly emerging tasks, interfaces and responsibilities against a professional background*
- ✓ *Clarify questions of insurance and data protection or specific legal and technical issues*

PROJECT TEAMS/STAFF AS THE CATALYSTS OF INNOVATION



👁️ Project teams and staff are an essential part of the organisational structure in projects. Many of the case studies investigated are struggling to find them due to the **shortage of skilled workers** in rural areas. In many cases, project staff members are **lone warriors** and are sometimes **overwhelmed during project implementation**.

Between full-time & voluntary work

- ✓ Carry out realistic staff planning
- ✓ Ensure fair payment for full-time staff
- ✓ Pay attention to appreciation and a dedicated on-boarding of staff
- ✓ Involve volunteers, taking into account their limited availability

Key persons

- ✓ A strength and also weakness of pilot projects – mostly only one person in a leading or managing position
- ✓ Must have powerful intrinsic motivation, tireless commitment and marked professional competence

TOP-DOWN MEETS BOTTOM-UP



👁️ Security, health and education are subject to close supervision or provision by the state. In many cases, the **initiative to test innovations comes from federal and regional** ministries or departments. However, **involving local government is essential** due to its proximity to stakeholders and its detailed knowledge of local needs and problems.

Different governance & subsidiarity

- ✓ Regional level often formally responsible for setting the framework, therefore initiating reform and innovation processes
- ✓ Close cooperation on an equal footing needed
- ✓ Ability to negotiate between governance-levels in an open-ended manner required

Involving rural local authorities

- ✓ Scarce resources may prevent committed participation in innovative pilot projects
- ✓ Project continuation not feasible in terms of staff or finances
- ✓ Completely new or extended financial and legal competences sometimes required

LONG-TERM ESTABLISHMENT, ONLY WITH POLITICAL SUPPORT



👁️ **Political prioritisation and support** for innovative projects are a **key lever** for transformations in public services and infrastructures. If pilot projects are given "Top Priority" in ministries, district councils or in national federation committees at an early stage, this clears the way to long-term sustainability.

Political support is key

- ✓ Political leaders recognise the urgent need and include it in their own political agenda
- ✓ Political leaders push for the project in their own public relations work
- ✓ Priorities must inevitably be set in line with limited resources

Long lasting legislative processes

- ✓ Many projects reach their limits due to rigid guidelines and need a politically legitimised change in the law
- ✓ These political processes and legislative procedures take longer than funding periods

STIMULUS GIVEN BY FUNDING PROGRAMMES AND PILOT PROJECTS



👁️ It is **undisputed** that the various funding scenarios examined have **the effect of stimulating** project consortia in rural areas **to test innovative solutions** improving public services and infrastructure. The **transition to regular financial operation** of the innovations tested **remains challenging**.

When funding runs out ...

- ✓ Setting up regular public funding in shared responsibility across governance levels is common
- ✓ Acquiring further funding, sponsors & donations stays challenging
- ✓ Only a few case studies establish a functioning business model

Taking risks and securing funding

- ✓ Willingness to take financial risks in structurally weak rural areas is low
- ✓ Greater flexibility and manageable complexity of funding acquisition and administration is necessary

REFERENCES

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