The Role of the Latvian Planning Regions in National Regional Development Policy Implementation and European Union Structural Funds Management

Aim of the study is to find out whether the degree of regional development administration in Latvia affects regional development policy implementation and structural funds management. Based on an analytic model of Guy Hollis and Karin Plokker in Towards democratic decentralisation. Transforming regional and local government in the new Europe (1995), the degree of decentralisation of Latvian regional development administration is analysed. The model specifies three degrees of decentralisation based on the structure, functions, finance, and internal management. The three degrees of decentralisation are the deconcentration, delegation and devolution. Implementation of regional development policy and structural funds is based on the guiding principles presented in Latvian Regional Development Law (2002). The principles are compared to the respective ideas presented in the EU documents. The principles of programming, subsidiarity, additionality, partnership, and transparency are analysed in the implementation of the regional development policy and structural funds management. The study indicates that the regional development policy implementation and the structural funds management in Latvia remain largely centralised. Structural fund functions and finance is controlled by the central government. Along with the Regional Development Law, some regional development functions have been transferred to regions, but the dominating role of the central government in allocation of finances hinder the realisation of the functions decentralised to the regions. The research proposes further decentralisation of the regional development and structural funds implementation. The study suggests that the definition of the Planning Regions’ position in regional development planning process would clarify the role of the regional authorities.

The research is based on case study and evaluation methods. Empirical research material consists of eleven interviews half-structured and open-ended interviews of the Latvian and Finnish regional development experts. Analysis includes comparative traits as at some points of the study comparison between the Latvian and the Finnish regional government systems is conducted.

**Keywords**
- decentralisation
- Latvia
- European Union
- regional development
- structural funds

**Where deposited**

Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information