The Initial Training Network (ITN) RegPol² – Socio-economic and Political Responses to Regional Polarisation in Central and Eastern Europe – centres on new patterns of regional disparities between metropolised regions and the remaining parts of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Such a spatial pattern has become a striking feature of the current settlement system of these countries and has lately fuelled concerns about further polarisation and peripheralisation of non-metropolitan and declining, old industrial regions. Patterns of regional polarisation, however, do not remain restricted to CEE, but can be found throughout the European Union, albeit at different degrees.

RegPol² draws together research and training capacities on socio-economic forms of regional polarisation, their wider impacts on society as well as the responses conveyed by social, economic and political actors. This includes research on practices of the production and reproduction of peripherality and centrality as well as the logics of responses at multiple scales.

RegPol² conducts research using a mix of quantitative and qualitative social science methods (such as secondary statistical data analysis, content analysis, discourse analysis, expert interviews, participant observation, focus groups) in a transnational comparative case study approach.

Against this background, RegPol² trains 16 young researchers for careers in academia, public administration, NGOs and the private sector.

Research training is organised in 3 work packages which comprise individual, albeit interconnected research projects. Each project includes intersectoral secondments providing trainees with occupational links, while at the same time strengthening the interface between academia, the public and the private sector. Overall training will be supplemented by network-wide events enabling collaboration between the partners and fellows. Training includes theoretical and methodological units as well as transferable skills.

The network draws on expertise from academia and private sector specialists from 7 countries and 8 scientific disciplines used to working in interdisciplinary and multinational contexts. Next to new training capacities at the European level and an increased employability of ITN fellows, the project aims at improving regional policy instruments by raising the awareness of politicians, public and private sector policymakers related to issues of regional polarisation.
RegPol² has received funding from the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013/under REA grant agreement n° 607022.


Martiene was born and raised in the Netherlands, where she also completed her BSc and MSc degrees in International Development Studies, with a focus on rural sociology, at the University of Wageningen. In the coming three years at the University of Tartu, Martiene will be researching Leadership and Institutional Change in peripheral Estonian regions.

**Project title**: Public leaders shaping peripheral regions? Analyzing practices, relations and discourses of public leaders in peripheral regions of Estonia and the Czech Republic

**Description**: Up to now, little is known about the role public leaders play when it comes to the formation of local and regional policy responses to social and economic polarisation. Efficient policies to propose new forms of development always build on institutional change and certain adaptive capacities. Martiene’s project will therefore analyse the impact of leadership to these forms of change. For doing so, the project also builds on the Czech municipality advisory centre MEPCO’s manifold experiences with local and regional decision makers.


Before joining the RegPol² project and starting his research at the University of Tartu, Sebastian studied Human Geography, Public Law and Sociology at the University of Bonn, Germany and at University College Cork, Ireland. In his diploma thesis, he analysed the impact of EU Regional Policy on spatial development in the Republic of Ireland, with the focus on governance and the consistency of European and national regional policy.

**Project title**: “European and national regional and innovation policies reproducing peripheries? A critical analysis”

**Description**: Sebastian’s project focuses on identifying how regional innovation policies both on EU level and national level may induce and contribute to the processes of peripheralization. Taking on an evolutionary political economy perspective, the project aims at gaining deeper insights into how the conceptualization of innovation in regional policy is affected by imbalanced power relations, as well as analysing how regional innovation policies, policy-making and policy outcomes may foster peripherality in Estonia, Slovakia and Eastern Germany.
Junior Research Fellow: Cyril Blondel (01.09.2014 – 30.06.2015)

Cyril is a researcher at the University of Tartu, working on governance of core-periphery relations in Eastern Europe. Currently, he is also completing his PhD at the University of Tours on cross-border cooperation and interethnic reconciliation between Serbia and Croatia during the EU pre-accession context. Previously, he obtained a M.Phil. and a M.Prof. in Urban & Regional Planning at the University of Tours, France, and a MA in Politics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. His main research interests are connected to the comprehension of peripheralisation, exclusion/inclusion, and bordering in Europe.

**Project title:** “Theoretical foundations for transnational comparative research on governance of core-periphery relations”

**Description:** The term “governance” bears normative, theoretical and methodological meanings. This makes it necessary to disentangle the different discourses around the concept of governance, and to propose sound theoretical foundations to improve transnational comparative research on the governance of core-periphery relations.

**Website:** www.regpol2.eu

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