At first sight it might not make too much sense to look for regulation in the linen trades of Munster. The city of 10,000 inhabitants was one of the central places for the regional linen trades in Westphalia from 15th to 18th century, but as it looks, most of the linens were not produced by urban weavers. There is no evidence that weavers organized themselves until the beginning of the 17th century. This does not mean that there were no organizations at all concerning the linen trades. The importance of Munster arose from the certification of linen coming from town and the surrounding Munsterland. Since late 15th century this was done on the so-called Legge, an institution led by a sworn employee and his housewife, who were responsible for quality control and certification of the linens. The proceedings of the inspection were fixed in an ordinance of the city council, which was revised from time to time with the intention to improve the quality of control. One of the main issues of these ordinances was that all linens that were to be sold in town, had to be brought to the Legge. The Legger was supposed to approve the correct measures, which had to be written on the linen, and that the quality met usual standards, which were not qualified in any abstract form. Those pieces which met these requirements had to be sealed on both ends and could be sold.
Although it is not possible to quantify the share of linens being sold directly on the *Legge*, the regulations for orderly behaviour of the servants of merchants suggest, that linens were bought there. Since the suppliers of linens had to pay a fee, which depended on the measured length of each piece, it is obvious that these regulations of control were followed in many cases, as the incoming amounts of money indicate. The account books of the city council indicate a rather stable level of controlled linens from 1545 to 1565 which was followed by a peak up to the mid 1570s and a long term decline into the 17th century. These changes were keenly recognized by the city council, which tried to counteract by reforming the *Legge*. In this context the question arises, whether there was a total decline of production and trade with linens or an increasing disobedience towards the regulations concerning the *Legge*.

For the early 17th century only one prosecution is documented. Did Munster have such a well ordered market for linen, that there were no infringements? Further evidence raises some doubts. For the years between 1615 and 1620 there are some accounts of the *Legge*, in which the names of the suppliers of linens were documented. At the same time the *Dom-Elemosyne*, a foundation dedicated to poor relief, bought some pieces of linen each year and recorded the names of their suppliers. Although about fifty names can be found in both accounts, only few persons were documented during the same year and not one single piece of linen can be traced through both. The accounts do not explain where the *Dom-Elemosyne* has bought its linens, but since the suppliers changed often, it looks like they were purchased on the market. As a foundation of the chapter of the cathedral, maybe the *Dom-Elemosyne* did not find it necessary to obey the order of the city council that linens had to be bought after being controlled on the *Legge*, but it is probable that in general only a part of the linen traded in Munster passed the *Legge*. There is not much evidence that the city council tried to enforce this rule very strictly. One of the reasons may be that it would have been very difficult to do so. Most of the weavers produced in the country-side surrounding the town, where linen traders of Munster and Osnabruck bought up linen in direct competition. Since the political power of the city council was restricted to the town of Munster itself, whereas the countryside was governed by the rural gentry and the prince bishop, it was impossible for the council to impose the use of the *Legge* beyond its walls. Instead the *Legge* had to be kept attractive for the producers and traders for selling their linen with the trade mark of Munster. The accounts also show, that about 75% of the suppliers turned up only once with one piece, which meant...

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2 The 23 account booklets cover the months March and December 1615, January to December 1616, March 1617, January and February 1618 and 1619, January, February, August and December 1620.
that during the five years for which the detailed accounts of the *Legge* have come down, about 3,685 persons were registered. Considering that during the 16th century there were even more people delivering single pieces of linen, it would have been difficult to control the sale of every piece brought into town. How strictly the rather small group of established traders, having a share of about 20% of the linens on the *Legge*, was observed cannot be said. At the beginning of the 17th century some of the merchants reorganized the *Legge* as members of the city council, but since at least two of them died shortly after, their names cannot be found in the accounts 15 years later. The only case of prosecution which is documented in the register of fines\(^4\) concerned the widow of the merchant Peter Ralle, who was fined in October 1616 for having packed linens originating from the town of Dulmen in the Munsterland without bringing them to the *Legge*. The widow of Peter Ralle was one of the largest suppliers of linens on the *Legge*, but perhaps this case was too obvious for not being punished. It also may be considered, that the traders did not bring those linens into town which they did not want to be controlled there, but rather organized the trade with these linens outside the town. It seems that until the early 17th century the city council followed a rather pragmatic policy as far as the control of the linen trade was concerned.

Attempts to change the situation were not made by the council, but by a group of weavers, who asked for permission to establish a brotherhood. They handed in a supplication on July 10, 1602, arguing that they had come to Munster for weaving so-called broad and small cloth. For this they had taken pains for gaining citizenship. There would live about twelve or 13 weavers in town, who were citizens, and more than 30 persons who were not. This situation would cause a lot of troubles since the production of so-called narrow and other *Legge* linens had traditionally been a free trade for men and women, a condition that should not be changed, but the making of the small, fine, broad linen cloth would be something different. Citizens would collect the best yarn they could gather and give it unsuspectingly to masters partly inexperienced or drunk and without confidence, who would only cause damage. Also in case of conflicts inexperienced journeymen would start to work on their own. For putting their trade in order the weavers proposed the foundation of a brotherhood for which the city council was asked to appoint an administrator and to give rules.

Besides the established 17 guilds, which exerted political power, brotherhoods gave artisans the possibility of organizing themselves without participating directly in urban politics. For this time the weavers did not convince the city council, but they apparently founded a brotherhood on their own. Ten years later the members of this brotherhood supplicated again

\(^4\) Brüchten-Protokollbuch of the Kämmerei.
on September 13, 1612. They essentially repeated their arguments, pointing out that their
brotherhood contributed to the community services like other guilds and brotherhoods, while
an increasing number of weavers who had not obtained citizenship would not. For better
regulation of their trade they repeated their demand for an administrator of the city council
and added a list of weavers who were considered not to be citizens.

The city council took the supplication in consideration during its meeting on September 22,
but as the protocol suggests, it did not follow right away the intentions of the weavers. The
council only wanted that the weavers who had not gained citizenship, should obtain it during
the following two months, otherwise they would be banished from the city. Those who were
without means should at least been sworn in. The brotherhood was not mentioned at all.

Therefore some time later the weavers handed in a proposal for the rules of the brotherhood.
In May 1613 the council gave a revised version of the rules to the brotherhood and delegated
an administrator. The main points of the rules were:

- no one should be allowed to practice the trade without having gained the citizenship
  properly and afterwards the membership of the brotherhood. The production of the so-
  called narrow linens remained explicitly a trade open to anyone;
- only apprenticed and qualified persons should obtain the title of a master craftsman;
- some rules were intended to regulate the behaviour of apprentices and journeymen.

Obviously the city council tried to prevent any form of disorderly conduct in the trade by
threatening with sanctions. In the following years some additions were made, for example the
number of looms was restricted to four and in case they had more yarn than they could use
themselves, the weavers were supposed not to give it to weavers in the countryside but to their
brothers.

One might expect some conflicts on the question of membership, but there are almost none
documented. On the contrary, it can be observed that many weavers acted as guarantors, who
were necessary for gaining citizenship. It rather looks like the weavers were interested, as
they had declared, that those who were weaving linen became citizens. In 1616 two weavers
complained of being refused admittance to the brotherhood, since they had not done their
apprenticeship in Munster. Both claimed that they had served for several years in the
workshops of master-weavers in town, an argument which the city council accepted, giving
the brotherhood the order to admit the two weavers.

Unfortunately there is no register of the members of the brotherhood. Therefore, precise data
on membership is not available. Only the relatively few officials of the brotherhood can be
named, its size remains unclear. The already mentioned list of names, which was supplemented to the second supplication in 1612, and two additional lists resulting from the following inquiries of the city council give some interesting indications. The lists give the names of weavers, divided into those who were citizens and those who were not. Singling out the names of all three registers, there were 94 persons known as professional weavers in 1612. Record linkage gives some hints, that there must have been more weavers, who were not taken into consideration in the discussion on the foundation of the brotherhood. For example one of the first principals of the brotherhood and a weaver, Herman Mesch, who brought considerable amounts of linens to the Legge, all in the precise length of a double piece of broad linen, were not mentioned. On the other hand only 25 names out of these registers can be found in the accounts of the Legge, most of them only with one to four pieces, but also some with six, and single persons with 11, 15, 24 and 33 pieces. Only Johan Strick was mentioned in one of the registers of weavers, in the accounts of the Legge, and as one of the first principals of the brotherhood, delivering 24 pieces of linen of different length and without obvious attempt to meet the norm of broad linen.

Unfortunately only two incidents give insight in what might be an interesting field in the study of regular and non-regular work. In 1627 the brotherhood accused Johan Timmer of letting one of his maidens work on the loom for broad linen, which meant that she would do the same work as the journeyman. The brotherhood took this as an offence against their role, especially since Timmer had already been warned not to let his maiden do this kind of work. Meanwhile Timmer replied that the maiden had done this work for other masters of the brotherhood before. Therefore, the council decided to take this case into further consideration. In 1635 a new article was issued as an addition to the role that prohibited maidens from working on looms for broad linen. Prosecuted masters had to be fined. The only exception was made for daughters of masters, who had learned the trade from their parents and who were allowed to weave broad linen as long as they stayed with their parents.

The second incident concerned the rule that no master was allowed to run more than four looms, of which one had to be operated by himself. The brotherhood accused the weaver Puffken for holding two journeymen and a boy to operate three looms. The question at stake was who worked on the fourth loom, since Puffken’s mother, while living in the same house, kept her own journeyman. The council decided that in this case the mother would operate her own workshop, without causing any disadvantage to the brotherhood.

These two cases show that inside the households quite multiple forms how the production was organized are to be expected and that the actual work was not only done by the male persons.
who fulfilled the legal requirements. Together with further evidence, it has to be considered, that women contributed strongly to the production of linens, although the brotherhood was an association of men.

It seems that general patterns of formal order cannot be easily found. There are rather indications for a pragmatic use of concepts of order, which were applied in certain contexts. Obviously people delivered their linen to the Legge, when they found it useful to have it labelled as originating from the city of Munster and probably sold it to merchants. Otherwise it does not seem that they dared to sell it right away without having it inspected on the Legge. For a very pragmatic way of handling the rules, further evidence can be found years later in an addition to the role of the brotherhood. Although the city council had already given the order in 1627 that the broad linens, like the narrow ones, had to be controlled on the Legge too, the council passed an addition to the role of the brotherhood in 1635 which declared that the broad linens should have their proper size, being seven half quarters wide and 48 ellen in the measure of Munster long. After having finished the weaving, the weavers were supposed to attach their mark to the cloth and the principals of the brotherhood were ought to inspect and measure it. Inadequate measurements had to be fined. Besides the fact, that this order shows that one main task of the brotherhood was the control of quality. It is interesting to note that the city council impeded its general rule that all linens that were to be sold had to be brought to the Legge with this special order. However, this practice did not last for a very long time. Considering in 1638, after the immediate threat of military action of the Thirty Years’ War had turned away from Munster, how to improve the fiscal income of the city, the council decided to reorganize the Legge, since there had been a steady decline in the amount of narrow linens being controlled, which also caused diminishing incomes from the fees that had to be paid. Therefore the council decided, besides maintaining the control of the narrow linen, to put up a new ordinance which directed the weavers to bring their broad linens to the Legge. The brotherhood reacted with sharp protests, but the council successfully threatened the protesters with strict penalties. Although the conflicts between city council and the brotherhood on the practices of operating the Legge never ended and were continued into the 18th century, in the end the council succeeded with its attempt. As the account books of the council show, the income from the fees for the control of broad linen almost instantly reached a high level. With the ordinance of 1638 the council tried to combine the by then practiced control in the homes of the weavers with the inspection on the Legge and intended to supervise this system of parallel control through written documentations. This probably turned out being too complicated in practice. Therefore on October 24, 1642 the Legge was
again reorganized, and in principle this form of organization was kept until the Legge declined in the 18th century. Now the inspection was concentrated on the Legge and had to be carried out by the Legger and two deputys of the brotherhood. In addition two members of the city council, who kept the key for the box containing the stamps for sealing, had to be present. What looks like a rather simple concept of successfully organizing a kind of well ordered linen trade had some interesting side effects. Although the weavers often formulated their discontent of being forced to use the Legge, it can be observed that weavers also were engaged in the operation of the Legge up to the point that the brotherhood offered to operate it on its own. It is also more than obvious that most of the citizens outside the brotherhood, who were producing linen for sale, did not bring their products on the Legge. In late 17th century the weavers complained that they were the only ones, who would follow the rules, but at the same time it is very likely that also the weavers smuggled a good deal of their production out of town, a practice the council tried to prevent with visitations and searches in the homes of the weavers. After the council had been rather flexible with the control of the linen trades and not very much interested in having forms of organization besides the Legge, it changed policy in 1638, combining the control of the Legge with the control of the brotherhood. There are no signs that the council ever thought of enforcing the control of the traditional narrow linens produced by a wide range of citizens, it rather thought of giving incentives like reduced fees to those, who would bring certain improved qualities of narrow linen to the Legge, but as it seems without great success. On the other hand the council had noticed that there was an increasing production of broad linens at least partly organized by the brotherhood. Being an organization directly supervised by the council, it was quite comfortable to reduce the policy of control and sanction to the brotherhood instead of trying to police hundreds of unorganised citizens.

Under the point of view of shadow economies most citizens concerned with the production and trade of linen did not care much about the rules, except if they saw some advantage in selling their products with the certifications of being controlled in Munster. The changes in the policy of control after 1638 changed also the relationship between the brotherhood and the rest of the weavers. Even though not handed down through archival evidence, conflicts between the weavers of broad and narrow linens seem to have occurred. Since there is no evidence that such conflicts had turned up until that point, though it is quite probable that not only members of the brotherhood produced broad linens, it is interesting to note that on the same day, October 24, 1642, when the new ordinance came into force also a treaty between the brotherhood and the so-called narrow-weavers was being confirmed. In this treaty the
narrow-weavers were not allowed to work on looms that were more than six half quarters wide, which was one quarter less than the broad linens were supposed to have. They were also prohibited to produce broad linens for their own use. The apprentices of the narrow-weavers had to start their training from the very beginning for getting admitted to the broad-weavers. The broad-weavers and their brotherhood were allowed to make visitations of the narrow-weavers without any prior notice. Remarkable are the last two paragraphs that concern both groups. If they both produced pieces of six half quarters, they were again ordered to bring it to the Legge, and the payment of the clients should be measured in ellen, not in the specific measure of doeck. Obviously there were some intersections in the production of both groups, although the broad-weavers were put into a quite strong position towards the narrow-weavers. Other as one might expect, at least according to the archival evidence there were not many conflicts between the brotherhood and other weavers being accused of weaving broad linen. Maybe an explanation for the relevance of the treaty and the few conflicts that followed can be found by taking a look at the procedures of control. In their supplications asking for approval of their brotherhood, the weavers declared that trust in the quality of their products was so important, that they wanted to have certain standards of quality being protected. Obviously for them the quality certifications of the Legge, which were oriented on mass-produced linens being sold without any reference to the weavers by merchants on the markets of long distance trade, were not relevant. We do not know, how the quality control of the brotherhood was organized in the beginning, but it may be supposed that these weavers had personal relationships to their customers, who could expect that the work of a member of the brotherhood would fulfil certain standards of quality. For this there are probably no conflicts to be recognized concerning the legality of broad weaving, since the brotherhood had its own specialised market. As we have seen, the procedure of control through the brotherhood became formalized after being practiced for more than 20 years. The reform of the Legge in 1638 did not cause too much a problem in this respect, but 1642 the council concentrated control of the production of the broad weavers on the Legge. Perhaps the weavers were anxious that the new certifications of their products being done on the Legge could be mistaken for the traditional certification of the narrow linen. More important seems the fact, that in principle all weavers, whether they were members of the brotherhood or not, were supposed to have their broad-linen controlled on the Legge. For this the linens of the members of the brotherhood and those of other weavers could no longer be separated through different certifications. Therefore the new procedure of control on the Legge made it necessary to close off more strictly from the narrow-weavers, ensuring that nobody else than the members of the
brotherhood would bring broad linen to the Legge and that the certification of the Legge for broad linen could further on be exclusively assigned to the brotherhood. This was not perfectly done, since there are some indications that at least a few pieces of broad linen were brought from outside the town. On the other hand, being involved in the process of control, the weavers could easily find out by whom the broad linens were delivered. In the long run the brotherhood was more or less exclusively connected to the Legge, and the question of competitors became less relevant. At least some weavers of the brotherhood were in direct contact with merchants in Amsterdam, the most important stock market for linen in Europe. In this context of their specialized market relations the weavers expressed very certain ideas what the best way of selling their linen would be and tried to get certifications that would fit. The question of competition rather became relevant on the informal markets that developed in the last third of the 17th century. Despite all prosecutions of the city council, the sorts of linen that did not need the certification of the Legge of Munster were smuggled out of town without any control and sold outside. The brotherhood also claimed that lots of linens were being sold openly inside the city without any control. In late 17th century there are some indications that some masters worked for others as wage labourers, having the status of journeymen. In principle this was allowed, but the council declared, that in accordance with the role no master should be allowed to employ more than three journeymen. How far the role was respected remains unclear, since these relationships of employment within the brotherhood seem to be part of a rather clandestine economy. Although data is scarce, there are some indications that the members of the brotherhood covered a rather wide range on the scale of individual wealth, and some of the wealthier weavers also traded with linen. The precarious situation of many of the members in the brotherhood during the late 17th century maybe led to the few conflicts with other weavers. After the political order of Munster had been changed with the conquest of the city in 1661, the brotherhood managed to get the status of a regular guild in 1697. In the records the term Amt has been used. In the first article of the new role the claim was made, that nobody should be allowed to produce any sort of linen with the exception of the masters of the new cloth makers’ guild, a claim that does not seem to be very realistic, since it meant nothing else than declaring any production of linen outside the guild illegal. There are no signs that this point was taken very seriously. With the transformation of the brotherhood, which was explicitly open for persons of illegitimate birth, the weavers themselves were confronted with a new legal obstacle, when the city council demanded letters of birth, to ensure that only persons of legal birth would be admitted to the new guild. But as it seems, this demand did not cause any exclusions of former members of the brotherhood.
These examples show that the linen trades in Munster were neither under one strict rule nor without any rule. Since the general claim of passing all linens through the Legge could not be enforced on a general level, most rules were made out of certain situations and were conducted to specific groups of people. In a rather principal perspective this caused inconsistent forms of regulation, opening opportunities for the occasional use of certain rules. The citizens of Munster did not seem to have too many problems with that, as long as they were not too much restricted in their specific form of participation in the linen trades. The enforcement of rules on the side of the city council depended on the specific aims that should be reached. Therefore, in this case it is not easy to deal with the question of a shadow economy. In some respect the linen trades in Munster were a huge shadow economy giving a lot of citizens the opportunity to earn part of their living with weaving. Maybe the city council did not want to disturb this important part of the economy with the enforcement of formal rules, seeing the risk of getting even more poor citizens for whom he would have to take care of with poor relief. But even the quite well ordered segment of the brotherhood was accompanied by aspects of illegal action. The acceptance of the control through the brotherhood by the city council was in contradiction to the ordinances of the Legge. Later on the council tried to force the brotherhood to observe the new ordinances of the Legge, but could not prevent that smuggling linen out of town became a common practice. For the council this was also an important question of receiving excises and taxes, but the practices of their payment constitute another field of early-modern shadow economies.