
INTEGRATED PATHWAYS TO ACTIVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION: ACTION PLAN 'SOCIAL CITY' DORTMUND

What are the objectives of the project?

The "Action Plan Social City Dortmund" has three main objectives:

- to generate jobs for Dortmund;
- to combat child poverty and to empower children and parents;
- to strengthen the social cohesion in the social districts.

The programmes' strength lies in involving citizens in the discussions and implementing the decisions immediately. In order to establish an integrated approach, new avenues of cooperation and new partnerships are being created between citizens, politicians, administration, welfare organisations and stakeholders.

Timeline

The project was launched in 2008 and is ongoing.

Background

More than 70,000 jobs have been lost in Dortmund as a result of the decline in traditional industrial production. Despite the fact that 30,000 new jobs have been generated, the radical structural change has caused deep-rooted social problems which result in a high unemployment rate, social isolation and educational disadvantages. The report on the social situation in Dortmund, commissioned by the city council, shows that problems have exacerbated in certain social districts, which are at risk of becoming centres of deprivation and marginalisation.

Cluster analyses of statistics for population, employment, income, housing and education show that three of the 39 defined social districts fall far below the average income of Dortmund's inhabitants and ten more are slightly below average. It is broadly agreed upon in Dortmund that resources should be concentrated on the 13 districts below the urban average income.



Who is responsible for the project's implementation?

A central project office is affiliated to the Mayor's Office. Hermann Schultenkämper is the project manager and responsible for the implementation of the Action Plan Social City Dortmund.

How does the project work?

Action plans and objectives were elaborated for each of the 13 social quarters.

Action offices will be opened so as to allow more organisations to participate. It is hoped that this will encourage initiative, ideas and co-operation. It is up to the task forces to develop job potentials and generate projects together with the inhabitants. Furthermore, the action offices should offer social services such as psychosocial care, addiction counselling and financial counselling, especially in regard to paying off debts.

Apart from helping in getting employment and creation of jobs and job-training positions, advice and support centres for businesses in the action districts is of prime importance.

For public information, the latest data, scientific analysis and decision processes should be available on the internet.

What are the results of the project?

Creation of a communication platform for social concerns

Through the participation process and with the help of the broad public debates, common goals were developed to which all participants feel committed. On 21 February 2008, over 600 participants came to the Dortmund Town Hall to take part in the initial meeting. The participation process attracts broad interest, and so far, more than 2,000 citizens have attended round table meetings and discussed ideas and projects to improve the situation in the targeted districts. More than 200 ideas have been developed.

Implementation of new service facilities

A central project office was established for coordinating the process of the Action Plan Social City. The project group is affiliated directly with the Mayor's office. All districts below targeted by the plan are appointed a district representative, who coordinates the citizen involvement. In nine districts, special contact points (action district offices) have been created.

Realisation of projects

In the last two years, 34 projects have been initiated. Depending on the situation in the districts, the activities focussed on different key aspects. The main subjects are:

- creating new jobs;
- qualifying young people for the working world;
- supporting parents and children;
- (further) education;
- healthy nutrition;
- development of neighbourly help; and
- neighbourhood enhancement.

New products established

In order to make the most up to date information on the projects in Dortmund accessible to interested citizens at any time, the Regional Atlas Dortmund (DORA) was developed. It is an internet database (www.dora.dortmund.de) in which information on population, employment, income, housing and education statistics are shown graphically and in tables for each social district. This information is updated constantly.

Reduced-price tickets for public transport in Dortmund have also been introduced for those people who are on benefits. All citizens of Dortmund who get welfare allowance can obtain this ticket for one-third of the full price.

Was the project evaluated and were there any follow-up activities?

Statistical information on population, employment, income and income support, housing, education and health is regularly evaluated. In 2010, the project Action Plan Social City Dortmund will be evaluated scientifically. The results and efficiency analysis of this will provide information about the success of the project and will determine if it will continue or not.

What lessons have you learned?

Experience with the Action Plan Social City Dortmund has shown that sustainable improvements in social problems can only be solved by a completely transparent implementation process. Important elements in achieving this include open dialogue and close collaboration with the citizens involved. Beyond that, single aspect projects should not be implemented. It is important to include all of the target districts. Since problems have multiple causes, which vary from one district to another, solutions have to be holistic and adapted to the local conditions.

How is the project funded and what resources are dedicated to its implementation?

The funds needed for the Action Plan Social City were taken from the budget of the municipal social administration. In the fiscal years 2008/2009, funds available for the programme were approximately €5 million.

Within the administration, a project group consisting of 18 members as well as a project office have been established for coordinating the process of the Action Plan Social City. The 13 "areas of action" (city districts ranked below the urban average) have each been provided with an action district representative and furthermore action district offices have been set up in nine districts.

Who is the contact officer for the strategy?

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If you have an example of a good practice that you would like to include in the database, please send an email to caroline.greene@eurocities.eu.