
LOCAL ACTIVATION CENTRE IN SZOPIENICE

KATOWICE

What are the objectives of the project?

The project aims at activating local communities and stimulating social interaction in the district of Szopienice in Katowice. In particular, the programme's main goals are to:

- create strong and integrated local communities;
- activate local communities through civic activities;
- develop local civil society organisations and support groups;
- support social, education and charitable activities in the district;
- activate and support local resources such as local government institutions in the area, NGOs and community groups;
- promote the inhabitants' participation in social life, especially those marginalised ones.

Timeline

The project started in 2008 and will continue until 2013.

Background

Szopienice is one of the Katowice's most deprived neighbourhoods. With almost 18,000 inhabitants, the area suffers from serious social problems, in particular from alcohol abuse, both among adults and young people. Social workers working in the area also observed an increasing amount of people that are the social services clients for more than one generation and have no positive role models in their local area. These are people with low skills and low social competencies.

The launch of the programme in 2008 and the activities that have taken place to date have shown that there was a great need to promote actions to integrate the local community. These activities include social skills training or providing the inhabitants with patterns and opportunities for spending time without alcohol.

Who is responsible for project implementation/delivery?

The programme is implemented by the City Social Assistance Centre (*Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej*). The programme is a part of a larger project 'We will manage - programme for social and employment activation in Katowice' (*Damy radę - program aktywizacji zawodowej i społecznej w Katowicach*).

How does the project work?

The programme started with the needs analysis of two streets in the district. The analysis focused on needs of the inhabitants and the available resources in the district that would meet those needs.

The programme has two main types of activities: support for the inhabitants and support for local institutions and activities.

Support for inhabitants is carried out through training, guidance sessions and support groups (for lone mothers, local leaders and young people). The programme also provides assistance for the inhabitants' own initiatives.

The programme also backs local events and activities. One of them is a local theatre group made up of clients of the social assistance centre. Furthermore, there are voluntary activities, such as learning support for children, organisation of local festivities and integration events. Finally, there are trips and events for local inhabitants and a crime prevention programme.

What are the results of the project?

Since its launch in 2008, 78 people have participated in training sessions on communication skills, conflict resolution, working in a group and meetings with addiction therapists. In the framework of the programme, the Centre for Development of Local Initiatives carried out training for local leaders and local cultural operators (15 people in total). As a result, the inhabitants established a support group (12 people) that works in their neighbourhood and organised two integration events.

One of the project's main successes is an initiative by local inhabitants to build a children's playground. The inhabitants drafted the project, found sponsors and involved local institutions in the project.

Since its inception, the project has shown that there was great potential amongst the local inhabitants, which not only was used but helped to identify further needs in the community. It also allowed the local social assistance centre to specify the plans for future work in the neighbourhood.

Between October and December 2008, 60 volunteers helped 74 children in learning. In addition, the project team works together with the School of Economics and Silesia University in order to recruit student volunteers to work in the neighbourhood.

The project team organised three debates on local planning for local inhabitants in order to encourage them to solve their problems themselves. They were attended by 78 people.

The project team organised a meeting with the representatives of 16 local institutions (schools, housing cooperative, police, etc.) to discuss the possibilities for cooperation and for solving local problems.

Local families, together with the social assistance centre and local institutions (such as the fire brigade) organised a First Family Sobriety Festival. Its goal was to show alternative ways of spending time than drinking. The event gathered more than 100 people, including social assistance centre clients, families, welfare workers and the local inhabitants in general.

The programme received wide media coverage with three TV programmes and 20 articles in local and national press.

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

The evaluation of the programme is based on observation, discussions with citizens and contact with companies, institutions and associations involved in the project. The programme allowed for better needs analysis in the area and as such is a good basis for designing new activities.

The programme encourages local inhabitants to be active in their local community. The number of initiatives carried out by them increased from two in 2008 to nine in 2009. These initiatives were organised not only by families living in the area but also by schools, youth clubs and young people themselves.

In 2009, the project team carried out further research in other areas of Szopienice and found out that they experienced similar problems (alcohol abuse, neglected public spaces or lack of opportunities and facilities for children and young people to spend their free time).

What lessons did you learn?

The experience gained through social work and the project suggests that socially excluded people need more time to re-engage in social and economic life. They are, however, willing and motivated to do so and therefore require constant, long-term and individualised support.

What was the budget and resources allocated to the project?

The project is coordinated by the City Social Assistance Centre and is financed out of the European Social Fund. Local Activation Programmes are carried out under the project 'We will manage - programme for social and employment activation in Katowice'. In 2008, the project budget was 3,115,891 PLN (approximately €778,000), including 85% finance from the ESF. The budget for the Local Activation Programme in Szopienice was 149,000 PLN (approximately €37,250). There are two full-time, one part-time employees and several people employed for fixed terms.

Who is the contact person for the project?

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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.