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Status Report The Programme “Social City” (Soziale Stadt) Summary



Centre for Knowledge Transfer ‘Social City’

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Summary

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The Programme “Social City” (Soziale Stadt)

The urban development programme “Social City” was launched in 1999 by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs (BMVBS) with the aim of counteracting growing socio-spatial polarization in German cities and upgrading and stabilizing deprived neighbourhoods. In addition to investing in the renovation and redevelopment of buildings and the living environment, the programme aimed from the outset to improve the living situation of neighbourhood residents. To this end, the Social City programme investment is to be pooled with funding from other departments.

As part of the Social City programme, some 500 neighbourhoods in around 320 cities and communities were allocated funding of more than €2 billion in the period up to 2007. The federal government finances a third of the yearly programme; the *Länder* and municipalities bear the remaining two-thirds. Each year, some 50 new neighbourhoods become programme areas.

Since 2006 pilot projects in the fields of education, local economy and integration of migrants have also been eligible for Social City funding. In addition, supplementary labour market programmes such as the ESF Federal Programme “Social City – Neighbourhood Training, Economy and Work (BIWAQ)”, managed by the BMVBS, and “Local Social Capital (LOS)”, a project of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, are being implemented in the programme areas. Furthermore, health promotion and sports initiatives have been launched for the first time against the backdrop of Social City programme areas.

The programme works on the premise of area-based, socio-spatial action and active resident participation. This also represents a new challenge for local authorities which often believe this will entail little more than a “minor local government reform”. Thus, it was not without reason that the Social City was understood from the outset as a “learning programme” at all levels – federal, *Länder*, municipal, neighbourhood level – which had to be open to change. And this still applies today.

Since the programme was launched nine years ago, the Social City has not only established a name for itself in professional circles, but also among local players – first and foremost, residents in the deprived neighbourhoods which receive funding. Surveys, evaluation reports and, not least, the diverse experiences of field workers confirm that much has changed for the better in the programme areas. This applies particularly to how residents perceive the situation in their neighbourhood. There has been a range of feedback, including the assertion that much has been accomplished in improving the living environment in the neighbourhood (projects concerning modernization of housing and improvement of the physical environment, among other issues, have made a visible, profound impact), and the conviction that quality of life and the prevailing mood in the neighbourhood has improved, and that it has been integrated into the city as a whole.

The Social City is a successful programme. Despite its inability to solve overriding structural problems such as unemployment and the resulting low income, which can hardly be expected of a micro-spatial approach, the programme has enhanced the

living environment and set important benchmarks for training, education and participation of neighbourhood residents.

The Social City programme serves as a key point of reference for the future of national and international urban development. The “National Urban Development Policy Initiative” and the “Leipzig Charter”, adopted during the German presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2007, stress the importance of the approaches employed by the programme which comprise integrated urban development in conjunction with interdepartmental cooperation and pooling of resources.

Strategic Approaches in the Social City Programme

Key to the implementation of the Social City programme are the strategic approaches of personnel and financial resource pooling, empowerment and participation, as well as the creation of suitable organizational structures required in city government and in neighbourhoods. The framework for this comprises a clear area based focus and the resulting integrated development concepts. Furthermore, successful programme implementation is dependent on monitoring systems, which accompany processes and feedback from evaluations.

Overall, socio-spatially oriented activities on all steering and implementation levels can be observed in the Social City programme. Cooperation between the Federal Ministries of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs, of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, of Labour and Social Affairs as well as of Health is an indication of progress concerning resource pooling at federal level. Numerous success stories have already been reported at municipal and neighbourhood level.

In the neighbourhoods, there is still room for improvement, above all in the field of mobilizing outreach, target-group oriented work. There are very few systematic and comparative findings concerning the qualitative design of neighbourhood management. The same applies to the question of which players designate and delineate programme areas and what criteria they apply to do this. Whereas evaluations have been conducted or are in progress in many programme areas, there are relatively few monitoring systems in place.

Fields of Activity in Focus

Housing and urban regeneration

From the outset the field of activity “Housing and urban regeneration” has been a core element of programme implementation. Numerous other fields of activity are linked to these structural and urban development measures. The central strategic fields of activity include modernization of buildings, enhancing living environments, measures promoting social stability and homeownership, and diversification of services. It has been noted that measures are being implemented primarily in the area of

living environment and public space, while projects concerning housing provision and the housing industry often assume a relatively minor role in the programme. Investment measures are increasingly being supplemented by projects concerning social issues, above all in areas where large housing companies are key players in neighbourhood development. In the last few years, sale of urban housing has been on the increase. When drawing up contracts, particular attention must be paid to securing municipal and resident interests in the long term.

School and education

In the course of implementing the Social City programme, the field of activity “School and education” has continually grown in importance in conjunction with issues concerning social and labour market integration. Several factors play a key role here, including schools’ openness to new teaching methods and possible ways to provide individual support for pupils, and the opening up of schools to neighbourhoods and their residents (premises, services). Issues such as “Transition from education to professional life” can only be elaborated if extended cooperative forms are established with other players involved in neighbourhood development. The ideal solution would be to create a district based “educational management” body.

Integration of immigrants

In the last few years, the integration of immigrants has become a core area of programme implementation. It received a considerable boost with the National Integration Plan, a federal government initiative, which was elaborated in 2007 with the broad participation of all social groups. A core theme of this joint integration strategy is “local integration”. Integration strategies in neighbourhoods include promotion of language learning and education, fostering the ethnic economy, improving opportunities for immigrants to participate and contribute, and heightening the intercultural awareness of local government and social facilities. In general, it is easier to achieve results concerning local integration if neighbourhood projects are supported by a coherent, city-wide integration policy. However, such a policy is lacking in many places. There is also room for improvement regarding utilization of neighbourhood managers with immigrant backgrounds.

Health promotion

Despite playing a subordinate role in programme implementation, the issue of health promotion is gaining importance in the Social City. This is due to various factors, including the cooperation between the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Health, which began in 2007. Estab-

lished district based health promotion strategies include the creation of health-related networks, the development of low-threshold and target-group related health promotion services and creation of infrastructural roots for these measures in the form of health care centres, health shops and health clubs. In order to strengthen this field of action, it is particularly important to improve ways of incorporating players from health authorities in the implementation process of the programme.

Local economy

Local economic strategies aim to combat the most acute problems in deprived urban areas, namely unemployment, reliance on government transfer payments, poverty and declining local business and trade structures. Strategies include supporting corporate development and business start-ups, developing measures to promote employment and training and strengthening the economy of the local community. During programme implementation, however, it has become apparent that despite gaining in importance, strategies and actions in the field of local economy are relatively difficult to implement in the Social City programme areas. Problems which arise at supra-local level can rarely be solved in a neighbourhood context and, up until now, it has proved difficult to contact private businesses within the scope of neighbourhood development. It is therefore necessary to intensify local business development, promote targeted participation of local entrepreneurs, strengthen the ethnic economy and make provisions for the regional contexts of economic growth.

Employment promotion

The Social City's key objectives comprise creating access to training and the labour market, particularly for the long-term unemployed and young people, boosting the local economy with a view to creating new training positions and jobs, and fostering a sense of community and civil society structures. The special programme "Local employment, education and participation" was launched in 2006 and followed by the ESF Federal Programme "Social City – Neighbourhood Training, Economy and Work (BIWAQ)" in 2008 to pursue these goals. For the first time, these programmes are enabling socio-spatially oriented promotion of labour market projects in the Social City programme areas. In terms of content, the projects exhibit similarities in terms of their integrated development concepts, utilize investment in construction measures provided by the Social City programme, such as district and neighbourhood centres, and are implemented in consultation with relevant local players. The BIWAQ programme is expected to run between 2008 and 2015 in two stages. Each funding period will last a maximum of four years. A total of €60 million has been provided by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs (BMVBS), and €104 million by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Impact of the Social City Programme

The Social City programme has triggered positive changes, in particular with regards to the design of living environments, quality of housing and provision of socio-cultural infrastructure. It has also succeeded in improving the quality of community life in many areas, often improving the neighbourhood image at the same time. The programme's further achievements include expanding opportunities for participation and empowerment of residents and other central players. However, a more differentiated picture emerges with regard to the fields of activity which have proved pivotal for programme implementation. While considerable progress and improvements have been reported in the areas of school and education and the integration of immigrants, much still needs to be done to reach objectives set in the field of local economy.

A wide range of positive results have been noted in the political-administrative and strategic fields of programme implementation. These include the programme's capacity to motivate local government to function in a more cooperative manner, successful pooling of Social City programme funds with those designated for non-structural measures and advances in the networking of local players, institutions and initiatives. There is, however, room for improvement concerning the spatial orientation of several municipal departments and the accessibility of various segments of the population and groups of stakeholders, such as immigrants, businesses and house-owners.

Since 2006 BMVBS has also enabled financing of pilot projects and initiatives in the fields of local economy and employment policy, youth and educational policy and the integration of immigrants within the Social City programme, several hundred pilot projects had already been launched by 2008. In doing so, the federal government is making a considerable contribution to resource pooling activities. In the majority of *Länder* this funding is authorized within the scope of competitions or similar competitive selection procedures. "Viable partnerships", among other criteria, play a key role here. It is still too early to conduct an impact analysis of these initiatives due to their short implementation period. They have, however, helped the Social City programme considerably expand its networks and pooling of resources. The introduction of the pilot initiatives and the ESF programme has given a considerable boost to the Social City's socio-political orientation.

Sustainment

The limited duration of the Social City programme and the requirement to gradually reduce apportionment of expenditures – as is stipulated in Article 104b of the Basic Law concerning financial assistance provided by the federal government – makes implementing sustainment strategies in programme areas and at the administrative level increasingly important. The task at hand is twofold: to maintain important projects, uphold configurations of stakeholders and networks in the neighbourhoods after termination of the special support period, and to ensure that the integrated

approach is permanently rooted at the administrative level. In reality, however, it has become apparent that developing sustainment strategies has yet to feature on the agenda of all *Länder*. In areas where such approaches are being tested, many players encounter, above all, problems securing the necessary long-term financial foundations. In general, the integrated approach without the additional incentive of Social City funding has proved a suitable strategy for the development of (not only) deprived neighbourhoods in only a handful of municipalities. More extensive experience sharing and more intensive research into this topic, among other solutions, can help develop sustainment strategies and measures.

Recommendations for the Continued Development of the Social City Programme

Federal and *Länder* level

1. The Social City programme has already succeeded in considerably improving physical and social living conditions in the programme areas. Furthermore, in many places it has led to the creation of sustainable networks and partnerships between various players from politics, administration, business, institutions and the local citizens. However, the number of new areas adopted by the programme each year is evidence alone that there is still much to be done before the Social City programme has reached all deprived neighbourhoods. It is therefore essential to continue the programme and to account for its financial requirements.
2. Interdepartmental cooperation and coordination should be strengthened further at both federal and *Länder* level. In doing so, particular efforts must be made to continue work in the fields of school and education, integration of immigrants, health promotion and local economy. The relevant departments should endeavour to create further 'partner programmes' to accompany the Social City programme. Furthermore, in the case of relevant specialized programmes at federal and *Länder* level, the responsible departments should identify priority areas in deprived urban neighbourhoods.
3. Despite evidence of considerable advances in the harmonization of federal, federal-*Länder* and *Länder* programmes, there is still much room for improvement. This applies to compatibility in terms of content, funding periods, application procedures and contact persons, inter alia. Furthermore, provision of comprehensive information concerning the possibilities of pooling various (funding) resources remains a desirable objective within the scope of a relevant website with an online database, for example, or in the shape of one stop agencies at *Länder* level.
4. Some areas of the Social City programme still lack integrated development concepts. In addition, many concepts exhibit deficiencies in terms of content. The *Länder*, as the programme initiating authority, should, therefore, make greater efforts within the scope of their monitoring and decision-making capacity to

ensure that all municipalities participating in the Social City programme do, in fact, devise and update comprehensive integrated development concepts (cf. also Article 171e BauGB).

5. It has become increasingly clear that monitoring systems and evaluations in the municipalities are prerequisites for the impact and quality controls required within the scope of programme implementation. As these have both been relatively uncommon in the programme areas to date, federal and *Länder* governments should provide stronger incentives for the development and implementation of both these instruments (by commissioning state-wide evaluations, elaborating indicators for monitoring systems etc.)
6. Systematic sustainment approaches have only been elaborated at municipal level in a few *Länder* to date, in spite of the fact that public funding can, fundamentally, only be guaranteed for a limited period of time. The *Länder* should, therefore, make greater efforts to demand and promote the creation of sustainment concepts at municipal level. Supporting this complex endeavour by conducting research – empirical investigations, expert opinions, topic-related evaluations – and by sharing experiences concerning sustainment at a federal and *Länder* level is also imperative.
7. Many different parties – particularly the municipalities and neighbourhoods participating in the programme – have repeatedly expressed the wish to share experiences at the federal and *Länder* level on a wide variety of aspects of the Social City. The considerable developments that have occurred in numerous fields are one reason for this (sustainment and evaluation, key fields of activity: school and education, integration, local economy, health promotion). Thus, approaches which involve an intensive exchange of experiences concerning the “basis implementation” in the form of workshops and conferences, similar to those conducted in the initial period of programme implementation, should be adopted once again.
8. In addition to the topics mentioned, scientific-systematic analyses have yet to be conducted in the fields of area designation/delimitation, neighbourhood management and local partnerships. Scientific studies and reports should be carried out to redress this shortcoming.

Municipalities and neighbourhoods

9. Municipalities, like federal and *Länder* governments, have yet to incorporate all relevant departments into the programme implementation. This applies in particular to local business promotion and health management. It is essential to convince players involved in these areas that working in an integrated and spatially-oriented manner can also benefit their objectives.
10. Cooperation with local players in neighbourhoods – in particular with schools, businesses and in the area of health promotion – should be strengthened and, where necessary, institutionalized. It is, above all, necessary to further intensify

cooperative links with housing companies, which are already strong in many places, as the housing industry is considered to be one of the most important partners in the endeavour to sustain the Social City projects and strategies after the end of the funding period.

11. All municipalities should create urban monitoring systems.
12. Sustainment measures should be accounted for as early as possible and prepared thoroughly. It would appear necessary to establish a form of neighbourhood management, which can exist beyond the funding period, and to initiate a search for reliable sponsors and strategic alliances in good time, in order to safeguard indispensable projects, facilities, networks and services.
13. Activation of citizens should be viewed as a field of activity in its own right alongside participation and should be pursued more intensively. It is particularly important to continue development of outreach activation forms for hard-to-reach groups, such as immigrants, low-skilled workers and commercial players, and to deploy them more actively, despite the high levels of resources required. In doing so, (local) businesses should be made aware of how much they can benefit from engaging more actively in the neighbourhood.
14. In order to formulate realistic expectations with regards to the programme implementation, Social City project aims and measures should be geared towards the actual resources and potential in neighbourhoods from the outset.
15. Neighbourhood-related integrated development concepts, projects and measures should be rooted in citywide or even urban region strategies.

