



CoNet newsletter Nr. 1 (November 2009)

The URBACT Cohesion Network CoNet is a network of 11 cities from 11 EU countries exploring current approaches to strengthen social cohesion in neighbourhoods. Lead partner is Berlin.

Introduction

Social segregation within cities and the social exclusion of many citizens in certain disadvantaged neighbourhoods are a growing problem for both richer and poorer cities in Europe. One example for this trend is Berlin. After the fall of the Wall, the 1990s brought new opportunities to the city but also increased social segregation and crisis. Unemployment has risen above national average as many less qualified jobs in industries were lost. More affluent families left the inner city for suburbia. These left some neighbourhoods with high unemployment and low educational attainment.

Since 1999 Berlin has a neighbourhood management scheme to tackle these problems, using ERDF, Federal German funds and the Berlin budget for numerous projects. The scheme is constantly monitored, adjusted and developed. URBACT offers the opportunity for Berlin to share experience and learn from other cities in Europe to improve the neighbourhood management scheme.

The general idea of the URBACT Cohesion Network CoNet is to learn more about integrated approaches to strengthen social cohesion in neighbourhoods and to implement this knowledge in innovative local projects - especially in the fields of community life, education, economy and employment.

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First Phase

The network's Development Phase lasted from 21 April to 21 October 2008. Besides Berlin, Alba Iulia (RO), Liverpool (UK), Sofia (BG) and Vaulx-en-Valin (FR) supported the application and contributed to the funding. At a first meeting in May 2008 in Berlin representatives of the five cities discussed the extension of the partnership and administrative matters.

Until September 2008 Apeldoorn (NL), Brussels (BE), Gijón (ES), Malmö (SE), Palermo (IT) and Zabrze (PL) were invited to join the network. At a kickoff meeting in Berlin in October 2008 all 11 cities came together. The Baseline study, describing the situation and tasks in all 11 partner cities was presented by the lead expert Prof. Dr. Rotraut Weeber.

The Final Application was submitted to the URBACT Secretariat and scrutinized by the Monitoring Committee.





Second Phase

The approval of the Monitoring Committee on 21 November 2008 was the starting point for the networks Implementation Phase, which will end on 20 May 2011. The network now works on three levels:

- the Local Support Groups
- the city to city project support scheme
- thematic network meetings

Local Support Groups

In each partner city a local support group (LSG) works on a local action plan (LAP). The topics range from youth unemployment (in Vaulx-en-Velin and Berlin) to improved services for one neighbourhood (in Liverpool and Zabrze) to increased participation of minority groups (Gijón and Alba Iulia). The Local Support Groups use local expertise, the URBACT toolkits for the creation of Local Action Plans available in the national languages and the experiences and examples from other partner cities to develop Local Action Plans that will be implemented with ESF or ERDF.



City to city project support

The city to city project support scheme allows CoNet partner cities to invite experts and officers from other partner cities or to send staff to other cities for a period of 5 days in average to have an in depth look at one problem or field to transfer knowledge. In 2009 Alba Iulia, Berlin and Liverpool hosted visits.

In January 2009 Reinhard Fischer from Berlin was invited to **Alba Iulia** to share with Alba Iulia's Local Support Group Berlin's experiences in neighbourhood management. Alba Iulia's Local Support Group works to improve the situation in the „New World“ neighbourhood, with more than 1000 inhabitants nearly all of Roma origin. Topics of discussion were activation with the help of key persons, setting up neighbourhood councils to discuss development strategies and sociological research to start the process.

In May 2009 Kathy Allen and Rachel Flood from Liverpool and Andreea Groza from Alba Iulia came to **Berlin**. They visited 4 neighbourhood management teams, looked at participation and the neighbourhood councils, discussed Berlin's monitoring system and integration strategy for immigrants and had a one day workshop with lead expert Prof. Dr. Rotraut Weeber on community development. They noted a variety of working styles and procedures to activate inhabitants and moderate meetings.

In September 2009 Albena Atanasova, Deputy Mayor of Sofia, Nadia Nikolova and Anton Dimitrov Konstantinov from Sofia and Katja Niggemeier from Berlin visited **Liverpool** to learn about social enterprises. They visited different enterprises giving long term unemployed people access to the job market. They noted a mixture of personal support for the individual and a market competition for the enterprises. Gaining additional qualifications within the NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) system is an important goal of employment in the social enterprise sector in Liverpool.



Thematic network meetings

Along with the work in Local Support Groups and the city to city project support scheme, 10 thematic network meetings, one in each partner city, are the third pillar of the network. These thematic network meetings bring together representatives from all partner cities and the Local Support Group of the host city. One thematic meeting each year and the final conference in Spring 2011 in Berlin will also involve the associated Managing Authorities.

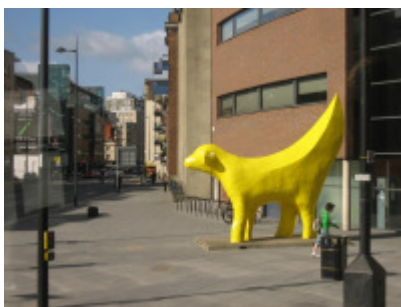


Meeting in Vaulx-en-Velin 19 to 21 March 2009 Transversal Approach for Youth employment

The CoNet Network Meeting in **Vaulx-en-Velin** revolved around the training and activation of young people for the labour market. In that respect, the major problem is the large gap between school and work. Young peoples' opportunities largely depend on effective measures to help their transition to the labour market. How can this gap be bridged? Several approaches were elucidated:

- Providing for stepping stones in between: career advice, mentoring or individual training.
- Bringing institutions closer: linking the schools with future employers, launch common projects, provide for first-hand career information.
- Strengthen schools' abilities to help young people 'jump the gap': provide for positive learning environments, foster creative expression, acknowledge students' efforts.
- Pick the young people up: Provide for attractive placements, re-entry programmes for drop-outs, offer work projects in the third sector.

The approaches should be integrated and streamlined in a multi-level perspective. Relevant actors and stakeholders need to identify common goals and strategies. Cooperation would hence involve actors on different territorial levels and different action fields and require concerted action in order to reach the common goals.



Meeting in Liverpool 7 and 8 May 2009 Integrated Services and Integrated Campaigns

In Liverpool the housing provider **Plus Dane Group** is cooperating with the job center, youth workers and other service providers to optimize support for the tenants of the Pinehurst estate in North Liverpool. The Community Justice centre offers counseling on employment, addiction and other issues to the offenders on trial. The community is invited to decide what projects people convicted to „community

payback work“ should work on. The balance between the rights of the individual person convicted and the interest of the community was discussed among CoNet partners.

Respect weeks were presented as integrated campaigns. The job centre, youth work, social services and the police combine their attention for one week to focus on a particular neighbourhood in order to make a real difference.

The degree of cooperation between the partners in integrated services and integrated campaigns seen in Liverpool is very impressive.



Malmö 25 and 26 June 2009: Community Development and Youth Work

In a presentation on Community development lead expert Prof. Dr. Rotraut Weeber identified three main approaches.

- involving key persons and focusing on interpersonal relationships
- the group approach facilitating cooperation between local groups and associations
- the committee approach supporting round tables or classic committees

All these approaches contain benefits and risks that need to be accounted for. The latter mostly stem from group dynamics that inhibit citizens' involvement or the misrepresentation of public needs (festivalisation, entertainment character, etc.).

The CoNet Meeting in Malmö offered the opportunity to gain insight into two projects focusing on young people: **The Green House** and **Young in Research**. Both aim at supporting and activating youth from deprived areas of the city. The **Green House** addresses intercultural competence and aspires to offer leisure time activities to youths aged 16 to 25. A group of 4 young people from the neighbourhood is managing the Green House project.

Young in Research is a project supported by the University of Malmö, offering a renewed approach towards research on youth from deprived areas. Departing from the problem-centered research structures, the project aspires to emphasize the potential that youths possess and aims at renewing knowledge on educational objectives. Within the framework of Malmö's summer job project, youths are involved in the research process, sharing their experience and knowledge. The center of the combined summer job and research project is empowerment, self-experience and knowledge-building.

Brussels 10 and 11 September 2009: Integrated Financing of Social Cohesion

The CoNet Meeting in Brussels also involved the associated Managing Authorities.

The first day examples of integrated financing for project from Brussels, Liverpool, Malmö and Sofia were presented. Dr. Alexander Ferstl from the European Commission's DG Regio and Mr. Michele Calandrino from the European Commission's DG Employment presented ERDF and ESF as financing tools for social cohesion. CoNet's lead expert Prof. Dr. Rotraut Weeber highlighted conditions and difficulties in combining financial resources in projects and presented examples from outside the network.

On the second day Brussels' Local Support Group presented integrated projects in the Neder-Over-Hembeek neighbourhood, like the **Ferme nos pilifs**, a farm that offers employment for people with mental and psychological difficulties and gives children experience in agriculture.

The Neder-Over-Hembeek neighbourhood in the north of Brussels will see new housing developments and additional residents will need infrastructure and services.

Bravvo an association working for the City of Brussels offers neighbourhood mediation and youth work in Neder-Over-Hembeek and other neighbourhoods in Brussels.



The next network meeting in Zabrze on 3 and 4 December 2009 will focus on guidance and counseling comparing target group based and area based approaches.

