

# URBAN POLICY IN GERMANY : FOCUS ON “SOCIAL CITY” PROGRAMME

## Introduction

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- **Urban policy key data**

Since 1999: The “Social City” (Soziale Stadt) urban development promotion programme

Since 2007: The National Urban Development Policy joint initiative (implementation of the Leipzig Charter in Germany)

Since 2016: The Social City programme’s interdepartmental strategy

- **Urban policy objective**

The objective is to ensure that cities are and remain attractive, successful and thriving places for all population groups. Cities, communities and regions need to be supported as they address a wide range of challenges, such as:

- Regional and global economic competition
- Climate change
- Demographic change
- Making urban development socially equitable
- Need to reduce regional disparities

## 1. The National Urban Development Policy and the urban development programmes

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In Germany, the LEIPZIG Charter on Sustainable European Cities is being implemented via a National Urban Development Policy – as a joint initiative of the Federal Government, the Länder and the country’s municipalities.

The National Urban Development Policy focuses on the following six activity areas:

- Motivating citizens to become involved on behalf of their cities – civil society
- Creating opportunities and nurturing cohesion – the social city
- Innovative cities – motors of economic development
- Building the cities of tomorrow – climate protection and global responsibility
- Improving the ways cities are designed – building/construction culture
- Regions are the future of cities – regionalization

The Federal Government operates a range of urban development promotion programmes, whose objectives are to support cities and communities in creating sustainable urban structures.

The current urban development promotion programmes include:

- Social City (Soziale Stadt)
- City Reconstruction
- Active City and District Centres
- Preservation of Historic Buildings and Monuments
- Smaller Cities and Towns
- Future Urban Greenspace
- Renovation and development measures oriented to urban development
- Investment pact for energy-efficiency-oriented renovation of social infrastructure

## 2. Focus on the Social City programme (Soziale Stadt)

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Since 1999, the Federal Government has used the "Social City" urban development promotion programme to support urban improvements and to strengthen social cohesion in disadvantaged city and town areas.

Through 2017, a total of 891 areas, in a total of 513 municipalities, received assistance. The involved areas differ in size, and they can include inner-city locations, areas near city centres and areas on the outskirts of cities.

### 2.1 Objectives

In the framework of urban development promotion, the Social City programme is operated as a lead programme for social integration.

Its main objectives are the following:

- Improve the social cohesion and integration of all population groups in the relevant neighbourhoods
- Improve coordination, consolidation and design (especially in terms of efficiency) of local instruments, initiatives and measures
- Involve partners from the areas of business and civil society, such as foundations, volunteer services and companies
- Develop and implement projects that cross all important urban-development, economic, social, cultural and environmentally relevant areas of activity

### 2.2 An integrated approach

Funding is tied to the preparation of an integrated strategy:

- It should be based on analysis of the challenges and potential found in the neighbourhood or district to be developed
- It involves local stakeholders and serves as a common basis for defining aims and actions for the neighbourhoods
- It shows how the described options for integrated neighbourhood development will be integrated within pan-municipal strategies
- It includes information about efforts that are to be made, throughout the applicable funding period, to "anchor" successful measures in the long term
- It must stimulate and promote dialogue between administrative departments, local neighbourhood residents and other local stakeholders

### 2.3 Budget and financing

- **Federal funding**

- As a rule, the Federal Government provides one-third of the total volume of funding involved. The Länder and municipalities bear the remaining two-thirds of the funding.

- A total of 78 % of the programme measures are focused on large and medium-sized cities, while 22 % are assigned to small cities and rural communities.

-1999 to 2017: a total of some 1.7 billion euros of federal financial support was provided for this effort.

- In 2014, the federal funding available for the Social City programme was increased from 40 million euros – the funding level in 2013 – to 150 million euros. In programme year 2015, the Federal Government also



provided 150 million euros for the Social City programme. In 2016, it provided 140 million euros. In 2017, the Federal Government increased its financial support for the Social City funding programme to 190 million euros. In 2018, 190 millions euros were also added to the Soziale Stadt budget. The funding was increased to strengthen the Social City programme. It makes an important contribution to local social integration and cohesion. The urban development promotion is to be continued at a high level. The allocation of the federal portion between the 16 Länder is based on the following criteria:

- 70% population
- 22,5 % unemployment rate
- 7,5% share of foreign inhabitants
  
- The division of the total volume of funding between the federal, Länder and municipal level, the amount of the financial budget and the distribution among the Länder and urban development programmes are regulated in the “*Verwaltungsvereinbarung*” (annual administrative agreement) between federal government and the Länder.

- **Other funding**

### ***Integrated approach***

There is no set rule that Soziale Stadt areas should always be prioritized in programmes run by other departments. But the key concept that defines the Social City programme is its integrated approach. That means that already in the planning process other departments should be involved in the whole process, desirably with own funding. Therefore the Social City programme’s interdepartmental strategy was implemented. It aims at showing the benefits of working in a defined social area to reach your target group more efficiently to the other departments.

### ***Interdepartmental cooperation***

The Social City programme’s interdepartmental strategy provides funding specifically to programmes of other departments to encourage that they concentrate their work in socially deprived areas. The Social City programme is thus aimed explicitly at interdepartmental cooperation, and socially oriented combinations, with programmes in other policy areas at the federal, Land and municipal levels. It is designed to exploit synergies – for example, with the policy areas of education and training, integration, health promotion, strengthening of local economies and employment. Examples are the ESF Federal programme “Education, Economy, Work in the Neighbourhood - BIWAQ”, implemented by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, or “STRENGTHENING YOUTH in the neighbourhood/ JUGEND STÄRKEN im Quartier” (the joint programme with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth).

In addition, urban development promotion funding of the Federal Government and the Länder is to be combined with, and complemented by, private-party funding and/or other public sector funding.

- **Modalities of allocation**

The State governments are responsible for carrying out the programme and distributing the financial support to the various municipalities. The Länder select the municipalities. Municipalities have to hand in an application on which the selection is based. Selection criteria vary among Länder usually prioritizing those most in need.

The municipalities receive funding and distribute it to the defined funding areas, which are then subdivided into individual investment and investment accompanying projects.

## **2.4 Interdepartmental Social City Strategy**

In 2013 the Social City programme’s interdepartmental strategy was implemented. It provides funding specifically to programmes of other departments to encourage that they concentrate their work in socially deprived areas.

The objectives of this interdepartmental strategy are the following:

- Combine and consolidate the available funding from other departments' programmes
- Improve the links and coordination between different departments' know-how
- Improve access, for stakeholders in affected neighbourhoods, to information provided by the relevant federal ministries

=> The interdepartmental strategy represents the start of on-going cooperation, on the part of relevant federal ministries, on behalf of neighbourhoods with special social-integration requirements.

## 2.5 Typology of "Social city" areas

In 2017: 891 areas in a total of 513 municipalities

78% of the programme dedicated to large and medium-size cities and 22% for small cities and rural communities. Municipalities are responsible to identify socially deprived areas in their community and apply for grants at the Lander level. The Lander then pick a certain amount of applicants. Area definitions are based on socio-spatial analysis aimed at identifying problem areas and potential in/of individual neighbourhoods. A defined funding area is thus both the focus of, and the starting point for, integrated approaches in neighbourhood development. Individual projects, and projects taking place outside of so-defined funding areas, such as projects limited to renovation of a single building, are not funded.

## 2.6 Thematic fields

The thematic fields covered by the Social city programme are the following:

- Housing, and living environments
- Social activities and social infrastructure
- Coexistence of different social and ethnic groups
- Schools and education
- Local economies
- Health promotion
- The environment and transportation
- Local cultural life
- Sports and recreation
- Image enhancement and public relations

## 2.7 Participative approach

Measures, and efforts to get local residents involved, are coordinated by the local neighbourhood management structures. Management offices for neighbourhoods are key-actors for networking with other stakeholders (representatives of local NGOs, training and education institutions, housing companies and local businesses) and involve the local residents. Local residents must be engaged in the preparation of the integrated concept. This is written in the *Verwaltungsvereinbarung*. In most federal States, the instrument of "Verfügungsfonds" allows local residents to personally invest in smaller scale projects in their neighbourhood.

A « Verfügungsfonds » is a deposit in which local residents/businesses/stakeholders can make a down payment. The collected amount can then be used to finance smaller scale projects such as neighbourhood festivities. Usually there is a council consisting of local actors that decide which projects should be sponsored. The « Verfügungsfonds » is an instrument that allows local residents to financially support activities in their neighbourhood and to get involved in the development of their neighbourhood.

## 2.8 Evaluation

The Social City programme is a "learning" programme. Evaluations play an important role in improving the programme, adapting it to actual requirements and confirming the value of its strategic and thematic approaches.



- At the national level: 2 interim evaluations and 3 national surveys have been carried out
- At the land level: 2 evaluations have been carried out
- At the local level: such evaluations have also been conducted in many areas