

PARTNERSHIP IN THE ESF
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

Name of practice:

Local Social Capital (LSC)

Stage of use:

Add x to the table where applicable

OP Analysis and design	
OP Delivery planning	X
Call for and appraisal of proposals	X
Animation during Implementation	
Monitoring and Evaluation	

Partnership success factors that are addressed:

Developing partnership support structures (OP Delivery planning)

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Summary:

In Germany (and other EU countries) they pursued a two-fold LSC approach: one at the national (LOS) level and one at the regional level (LSC). The following summary describes the LSC program at the regional level of Berlin. The LSC programme was started in 1999 as a European Commission pilot project and mainstreamed in the period 2000–2006 under Article 4.2 of the ESF Regulation, Priority F: ‘Local Social Capital, Measure 11’ (small projects for promoting local employment development). Measure 11 includes encouraging locally-based initiatives to make greater use of the local and regional employment potential. Local Social

Capital (LSC) Berlin was a programme within the ESF strategy of the Land Berlin, referring to the European initiative “Local social capital” (global grants, pilot projects in several EU Countries 1998 to 2000). In Germany and in Berlin this initiative was mainstreamed in the OP during the ESF-period 2000 - 2006. It improves the skills of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups and people that are strongly excluded from the labour market. The programme further targeted to strengthen the social cohesion of local communities by activating target groups to develop and implement micro-projects (participatory approach) as well as by fostering local networks. Special attention has been given to certain disadvantaged groups such as youth without finished education, women, handicapped, migrants, single parents, long-term unemployed and other. It supports small local initiatives and micro-projects up to € 20.000 and covers the relevant costs up to 100%. In 2003 some 60 projects were funded, in 2004 roughly 73. Gsub administered the fund and assisted in the implementation. It promoted the programme and allowed a regular submission of proposals, where it subsequently evaluated them. It also assisted in the implementation process.

Thematic fields of the regional LSC programme in Berlin are:

- Single actions to improve the chance of professional integration
- Micro-projects to develop new employment opportunities
- Employment-oriented networks
- Preparation of business foundation or the foundation of social enterprises

Format and language:

Websites: www.loskap-berlin.de (information in German); www.gsub.de (short information in English available)

Testimonies from users (strong and weak points):

The local social capital approach (LSC) is crucial to foster the civil society through the participation by the residents in a neighbourhood and/or groups in danger of exclusion; second, it is an excellent tool to improve local governance and, simultaneously, multilevel governance as the micro-projects have to be embedded in a (regional) local strategy and a (regional) local action plan. The approach stimulates a process to overcome barriers between departments and external organisations/NGOs' initiatives because a 'county' or 'local monitoring or steering committee' has to decide who will be the final beneficiaries of the local

social capital fund. The keyword 'participation' is crucial for the approach: the local people or representatives of local groups are invited to join the decision-making process. In our Berlin example we observed that the decision-making process by the local (district) partnerships, which is essential in order to select the 'right' projects, was sometimes even more important than the projects themselves. The LSC responds very well to the scarcity of resources: with relatively small amounts you can move considerably towards local economic and employment development and in particular towards fostering social cohesion. Integrated into the local action plan, the LSC approach enables the completion of traditional employment strategies such as training measures or wage subsidies. Single actions can be undertaken to reach the 'hard-to-reach groups', to develop new employment opportunities or to foster small initiatives and networks between NGOs or businesses, for example.

The LSC approach is tailor-made for small initiatives and NGOs, which often have no access to national, EU, or other funding opportunities. The LSC approach is successful because it stimulates local action with 'tiny' resources which can be 'unbureaucratically' and very quickly distributed to different actors and actions. 'This is local money for local people', as a resident in Berlin Neukölln once noted. However, it is crucial that the micro-projects be embedded in a local or regional strategy or action plan committed by regional stakeholders and addressing overarching goals of participating localities, otherwise the single projects will not have any impact. One success factor was the financing by 100% EU (ESF) means. This made it easier to convince local politicians and local authorities to use this option.

A critical point for programme implementation was the bureaucracy due to the dual legal framework: one has also to take in account EU and national regulations. However, most of the initiatives which are in the programme focus have no experience in accountability and are unable to follow such complicated rules. Therefore, a very stable, professional and close accompaniment structure is essential for the programme's success. The evaluation of the European Union pilot action and the German programme too recommended that an intermediary (or a very professional local department as a co-ordinator) should be used, receiving up to 20% of the budget to ensure appropriate guidance, monitoring, accountability and dissemination of the programme.

Implementation guidance

How does the 'Local Social Capital programme' work in practice? - The Berlin case

At Berlin level the 'Local Social Capital' (LSC) programme works as follows:

1st step: Call for proposals by the local steering committees

Each of the twelve Berlin districts is the owner of a district partnership (or local pact) run by a steering committee with the most important local stakeholders. This steering committee starts a 'call for proposals' by local newspapers, events, meetings with civil sector organisations or other small organisations and single actors potentially eligible for micro-projects. Moreover, the members of the steering committees (the mayor or deputy, other local authority representatives, representatives from the employers' organisations, from the neighbourhood managements, from the Public (local) Employment Service, from the unions, etc.) contact their networks, in which they are involved, to disseminate the programme. As a result, many proposals will be submitted each year.

2nd step: Pre-selection by the 'operational office'

Each steering committee is supported by a (district or local level) operational office, which is set up by the programme intermediary and by a member of the respective local authority. This office is responsible for pre-selection according to the guidelines which have been set up at the central level of the Berlin Land. The responsible department at the Berlin Land level (regional) is also involved in the pre-selection.

3rd step: Final selection – decision-making

The final selection is made by the steering committees in the districts.

4th step: From proposal to application

After the finalisation of the selection, the eligible projects will be notified and asked for formal application. In order to reduce bureaucracy, the former proposal can be turned into an application very easily with some additional indicators and signature.

5th step: Implementation of the projects

Now the projects can start accompanied by a very close guiding structure provided by the intermediary. This is necessary and explicitly foreseen in the programme because most of the applicants have no experience in applying the European Social Fund and other general rules of financing.

6th step: Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring evaluation of all initiatives is an on-going process. In some projects, the members of the steering committees are 'parents' for the micro-projects. Other projects use self-evaluation tools. The intermediary for all districts is also responsible for the monitoring and reporting system.

7th step: Presentation of good practice

Sometimes awarded, the districts present the best projects after project closure (average duration of a micro-project: 6 months). All good practice projects will be presented and disseminated in a joint Berlin Land brochure.

The following are some examples of micro-projects that have been implemented at district level in Berlin:

- Foundation of a business incubator for migrant women;
- Establishment of the Neukölln citizen foundation – self-organised and financed by Neukölln residents with initial financial support by the LSC programme;
- Establishment of 'Sunhouse' – a social initiative promoting old and young living together;
- Start-up of a 'not-for-profit catering network' that offers catering for charities and vocational training opportunities for long-term unemployed youth;
- Establishment of a neighbourhood co-operative as an international encounter and service centre in a socially distressed borough; and,
- Design and delivery of special training courses for illiterates.

Within the framework of this programme, the company comovis GbR – a consortium of gsub mbH, ziz GmbH and SPI Consult GmbH - is in the role of an intermediary: directly advising, co-ordinating, funding, and monitoring these micro-projects. The decision-making process (selection of and eligibility for the micro-projects) in Berlin is made by the 'Territorial Employment Pacts' (district alliances) of each of the 12 districts of Berlin, in agreement with the Berlin Land Department for Labour.

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