

**PARTNERSHIP IN THE ESF
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION**

Name of practice:

LOS – *Lokales Kapital für soziale Zwecke* (Local Capital for social causes) (2000 – 2006) and
SvO – *Stärken vor Ort* (*Local empowerment*) (2007 – 2013) www.staerken-vor-Ort.de

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)

Author:

Reiner Aster

Country:

Germany

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. The following summary describes the ‘LOS – *Lokales Kapital für soziale Zwecke*’ which stands for the ‘Local Social Capital’ (LSC) programme at the German national level. In the new funding period – 2007 – 2013 – the programme has been slightly adopted to a new strategy of the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, i.e. focusing on the target groups “youngsters” and

“women” and addressing deprived areas in German cities as well as remote rural areas. The name of the adopted programme is “Local empowerment”.

The rationale behind LOS is to develop and establish a structure which works closely with people who want to carry out micro-level projects. An example of this is the ‘Peace Initiative’ in Northern Ireland. Local groups should not be treated as passive recipients of aid but as independent players who participate actively in local networks created by the intermediary bodies. LOS essentially targeted people who are excluded (or threatened with exclusion) from the labour market and, as a consequence, from society. The definition of these target groups threatened by exclusion may differ according to regional or local realities. Thus, one of the first tasks of a partnership is to find out which are the most vulnerable groups in the region or locality which have to be addressed.

Many initiatives dealing with such groups of people fail to materialize because of the lack of necessary funding, support and professional advice. Accordingly, an important aim of LOS is to facilitate the reintegration of particularly disadvantaged people into the workforce by utilizing local resources, such as local networks of civil society organizations, local enterprises or committed local people, departments and local authorities’ special schemes. Here, the aim is to reach local players who, as recipient agencies for micro-projects, have previously been largely overlooked within the framework of traditional ESF interventions. These may be legal or natural bodies.

In addition to supporting people, the respective micro-projects are intended to facilitate structural changes at the local level which will continue to have an impact beyond the duration of the LOS programme. It is also intended to combat xenophobia as well as to strengthen regional cohesion and sustainability. Eligible organisations and target groups with similar aims are being sought.

The German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) is responsible for conducting the programme areas allocated to the German government. In 2007, roughly 200 communes with 286 local areas and 8,800 micro-projects have been involved in the programme. One percent of the European Social Fund was earmarked for this programme.

A total of € 113 million has been provided for the period 2003–2008 in Germany to conduct the LOS programme at national level. The programme is 100% financed by the European Social Fund, which was an exception in the structural funds period 2000–2006.

Micro-projects can be funded to a maximum of €10,000. The programme is being implemented on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Regiestelle LOS (ARGE Regiestelle LOS), which comprises the Gesellschaft für soziale Unternehmensberatung mbH (gsub mbH) and the SPI Foundation Berlin. The Regiestelle LOS (LOS co-ordinating office) is the contact and contractual partner for all local authorities taking part in the programme.

The LOS project types (MicroProject Types 1–3) serve to attain the following programme objectives:

- Supporting individual activities to promote vocational integration (MP 1)
- Support for organisations, initiatives and networks which take up the cause of disadvantaged people in the labour market (MP 2); and,
- Support for start-up companies and for establishing social enterprises (MP 3), including:
 - Start-up advice
 - Limited start-up aid for disadvantaged people (Deminimis)
 - Start-up aid for social enterprises and self-help organisations
 - Support for start-ups/social enterprises which foster tolerance and democracy.

All projects must contribute to improving the employability of disadvantaged groups in the labour market, but all measures which agree with the policy priorities of the European Employment Strategy can be funded. With regard to these objectives, the following policy priorities play a particularly important role:

- Active and preventive measures for the unemployed and people who are economically inactive;
- Promoting entrepreneurship and job creation;
- Gender equality; and,
- Promoting integration and combating the discrimination of disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

Format and language:

Websites: www.los-online.de (information in German); www.gsub.de (short information in English available); www.staerken-vor-Ort.de

Testimonies from users (strong and weak points):

In Germany, the programme was successful not only in urban but also in rural areas because the micro-projects and the rationale behind it brings people together even if they live away from each other. Small, flexible resources can also be provided for the agricultural sector and rural initiatives. The approach addresses and stimulates the civil society.

The MicroProject type 3 has proved to be an appropriate tool to prepare or to coach business foundations and social enterprises. In the German LOS programme, an additional special thematic focus is on 'Tolerance and Democracy' (i.e. micro-projects which address, for example, intercultural or multicultural and inter-religious dialogue, ethnic minorities, or actions tackling xenophobia) which was also very successful.

However, the German Federal LOS programme was limited to so-called 'areas with special development needs' up to 2007, according to the parallel German national programme 'Socially Integrative City' (i.e. 440 Germany-wide areas have been defined as 'areas with special development needs'). This sometimes raised the question of 'over funding', which should be avoided. (This means that some of the areas which received funding by the programme have proved to be too small in terms of square miles, inhabitants, and percentage of vulnerable groups in relation to the different funds which had been allocated to them, whereas other areas, often in the neighbourhood of those officially-defined areas of 'special development needs', did not receive any funding at all).

In the new funding period this has changed. The follow-up programme "Local empowerment" covers a much broader range of areas within Germany.

Implementation guidance

The national level required certain prerequisites, which were compulsory for the eligibility of the programme applicants, these include: (1) a sound local action plan, (2) an efficient local co-ordination office, (3) a steering committee which decides autonomously on the micro-projects, including local residents and/or target group representatives, (4) the gender mainstreaming approach (5) the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system right from the beginning. Thus, the programme started with a 'call for proposals' and only local authorities and local areas were selected, which guaranteed by contract to pursue the goals, the strategy, and the methodology described above. Furthermore, it was crucial that the programme be accompanied by an intermediary, who organised regional conferences for

exchanges by local co-ordinators in the regions and provided counselling and central application, monitoring, and accountability tools.

Programme implementation: Regional (or local) Co-ordinating Office

Each managing authority shall establish a Regional or local Co-ordinating Office and provide one member of staff to manage it. The Regional Co-ordinating Office is responsible for forwarding information within the administration and, through its communication channels, creates transparency. In addition, the Regional Co-ordinating Office is also responsible for the following tasks:

- Contact and contractual partner for the Regiestelle LOS/ SvO at the national level;
- Instructing the local network; Contact partner for potential micro-project providers;
- Drawdown, allocation and controlling of funding; Providing information on the LOS programme at the local level, determining and advising applicants for the micro-projects and processing the applications (together with the local network and a monitoring committee);
- Participating in the regional conferences of the Regional Co-ordinating Offices/Collaborating with the evaluation provided by the national government; and,
- Producing documentation on the outcomes and impacts of the micro-projects and forwarding them to the Regiestelle LOS.

The LOS programme also aims to increase the participation by stakeholders and/or committed citizens in local decisions. For this reason, the micro-projects are selected not just by politicians and local authorities but also by representatives of all relevant players who assume responsibility in the respective development area. In addition to representatives from the local authorities or rural districts, the local networks should, in particular, include residents from the respective development area and representatives from the LOS target groups. Applicants for micro-projects will be determined and advised and the corresponding applications processed. Based on the LOS project types and the action concepts described in the respective local action plan, the local monitoring or steering committees will decide on which submitted projects receive funding and monitor these during the implementation. These monitoring (or steering) committees are owned by the main local stakeholders. Additionally, representatives of the local residents and local target groups must be recruited for the committees. (According to the official guidelines of the programme, the membership of the

latter is compulsory and has to be documented in the reports to the National Ministry in order to guarantee the 'participation issue').

The Federal LOS programme, described above, should be distinguished from the various Federal States (Länder) programmes. The Länder programmes are implemented in accordance with their own specific guidelines.

Contact person for more information:

Name: Dr. Reiner Aster
Organisation: gsub mbH
E-mail: Reiner.Aster@gsub.de
Telephone: +49 (0) 30-284 09-101
Web address: www.gsub.de
Skype Address: