



Welcome to the third European Learning Network (LNet) newsletter. The Network partners – Amsterdam, Hamburg, London, Milan and Prague – are all actively developing and implementing policies to promote enterprise in deprived urban neighbourhoods. Through LNet the cities will develop common approaches to realising the economic and social potential of deprived urban areas and practical tools to support enterprise in these areas.

- LNet update

LNet Milan Workshop focuses on social enterprise

Social enterprise was the central theme of the first LNet workshop, which took place in Milan on 10th February. The event was structured around a discussion on the potential of social enterprise to help address the economic and social imbalances in our cities.

On day one, project managers and social enterprise experts, hosted by the Milan North Development Agency (ASNM), held a lively exchange of views and experiences on the development of social enterprise in their cities and countries. With the support of a questionnaire designed by ASNM to help capture the policy background and implementation of social enterprise in the partner cities, the discussion centred around practical case studies and their impact on the economic and social development of deprived urban areas.

While the definition and development of social enterprise in the different cities presented clear divergences, particularly as a result of the varying strength of the welfare state and some partners' countries communist past, on the ground many initiatives aimed at addressing similar aims could be found. In fact, the definitions of social enterprise as a business with primarily social goals where the surplus is reinvested in the business or wider community for these same goals did not provide a common ground, as partners' interpretations varied in terms of the focus on the enterprise element rather than the social goals.

A more fruitful starting point was the discussion on the motives for social enterprise, looking at the rationale for start up, particularly in areas of disadvantage where social enterprises can and are providing effective tools to counter social and economic challenges. Ali Somers from Social Enterprise London provided an interesting framework for looking at social enterprises from the 'motive' perspective, ranging from the improvement of public service delivery to addressing market failure.

LNet Conference on new perspectives on social economy

The conference 'New perspectives on social economy: comparing European experiences' was organised by the Province of Milan in collaboration with ASNM. The event was a valuable opportunity to compare experiences from the different partners and learn about the dynamics of the Third Sector in the Milan area. The conference was opened by the Councillor for Economic Development and Innovation of the Province of Milan, Luigi Vimercati, who highlighted the importance of activating a commitment to a sustainable economic development with a strong social dimension.

The transnational experiences presented by the partner cities highlighted the range of expressions of social enterprise in the European context, as well as its potential for sustained and positive change. The presentations from Hamburg and Milan focused on migrant entrepreneurship, offering an overview of opportunities and barriers to business start up for this group.

After the five cities' presentations, a panel discussion with representatives from Milan's economic development and social economy agencies. Work has been done to map the third sector in the Milan area and enhance social and sustainability audits for businesses, as presented by Mr Montelli, Director of the Milan Chamber of Commerce. Mr Ferlini of Compagnia delle Opere stated that if the sector is to move forward, more subsidiarity and less state involvement is a requirement. Social enterprises were active long before the state began to legislate on them. This innovative aspect is at the heart of social enterprise and should continue to remain so if the sector is to develop further.

LNet case study approach

LNet partners have developed a case study template to support the collection of information and data on examples of best practice that is easily comparable. The template offers a rigorous framework for measuring the impact of interventions in deprived urban areas and analysing the positive and negative lessons drawn. It also stresses the transferability factor, which is crucial to ensuring that the experience learnt in one context can be applied to a different reality and that any barriers to implementation are taken into account.

LNet Glossary and City Portraits

LNet is based on a structured learning process among partners, the fundamental basis of which is mutual understanding. For this reason, one of the first outputs LNet has developed are the LNet glossary and City Portraits. The former provides common explanations or different meanings key economic and social development terms might have in the partner cities, to ensure the learning process is not hampered by definitional discussions. The latter provide a political and socio-economic portrait of the partner cities, highlighting specific challenges and identifying areas of deprivation.

• LNet events

First dissemination seminar, Prague April 2005

Prague will host the first LNet dissemination seminar, which will take place between 28-29th April. The aim of this event is to engage a wider audience of city managers and practitioners from cities outside the core partnership, particularly from the new EU Member States and bordering countries. Mutual learning and exchange is at the heart of LNet and the network places particular emphasis on identifying and transferring success through a quality assurance framework. The seminar will therefore provide an opportunity to feed a wider range of views and experience into the LNet learning method and to test the effectiveness of the frameworks and policy tools which the project will develop. In addition to this, the second day of the event will provide an opportunity to discuss the benefits and added value of transnational working and opportunities available to public authorities and other organisations from across Europe. The keynote speech Jiri Paroubek, Czech Minister for Regional Development will be followed by interventions from economic development practitioners and high level officers from across the EU, giving an overview of their practical experiences of European cooperation.

2nd Thematic Workshop and Public Conference on Innovation in Hamburg

The next thematic approach will take place in Hamburg, with an innovation workshop and study visit. Scheduled for mid September, the two-day event will include presentations of their work on innovation from each partner city. Field visits will be organised to relevant local development projects in the Hamburg area, including the Channel Hamburg.

migration@work conference in Hamburg

LNET Partner in Hamburg, TuTech Innovation, is co-organising a local event focusing on social enterprises and entrepreneurship by immigrants. The conference, titled "Migration@Work" will showcase initiatives undertaken by migrants in Germany. It is co-organised with a local social enterprise (Enterprises without Borders www.unternehmer-ohne-grenzen.de) and will gather 200 or so people in the Hamburg district of Wilhelmsburg. It will be held on 2 to 3 June 2005.

LNet will be further promoted in Hamburg at the with a stand on the annual Hamburg Life Science Day on 27th June. The event, held in the deprived district Hamburg-Harburg, will address local companies and entrepreneurs of the life science sector.

Further details at: lnet@tutech.de

• News from the LNet partners

Innovation is easy

In co-operation with the Chamber of Trade Hamburg, the TuTech, LNet's partners in Hamburg, has developed the poster series "Innovation leicht gemacht" (innovation is easy). The series, which portrays local SME innovators, illustrate that innovation is not to be equated simply with high-tech and large of companies with research divisions, but that it can also means the use of new techniques and the modernisation of operational processes. The posters have been distributed to Hamburg's SMEs, particularly in deprived areas, to promote innovation as a mean to secure jobs and to raise competitiveness. Contact: LNET@tutech.de.



• LNet wider partnership

LNet's wider partnership circle is constantly growing, as the interest in the Learning Network's activities and outputs increases. Here are some examples of organisations which have expressed an interest in being kept up to date on the project's activities:

- The Greater Nottingham Partnership, formed by Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils, with a view to improving partnership working with the business, public, voluntary and community sectors across Greater Nottingham. Promoting enterprise and innovation is one of the key areas of interest for this work whilst at the same time ensuring that local communities directly benefit.
- The Habitat Moldova Centre (HMC), aiming to improve management and governance of cities, ensuring sustainable growth and poverty reduction. Set up in the framework of the UN "Mesmerizing Moldova" Project, an initiative set up to assist the Moldovan Government with the implementation of Habitat Agenda, HMC's mission consists in strengthening the capacity of local actors, support the government in enhancing the legislative and regulatory planning framework and facilitating the exchange of information on projects and programmes on human settlements.
- NESST, an international, nonprofit, nongovernmental organisation, dedicated to finding lasting solutions to systemic poverty and social injustice through the development of social enterprises - mission-driven businesses that increase the financial sustainability and social change impact of civil society organizations.

Please visit the LNet website: www.thelearningnetwork.net
