

JOURNAL

PROJECT

home and care

📍 Landshut, Germany

TOPIC

Urban poverty

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EXPERT

The home and care Project - Journal 1

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Journal N° 1

Project led by the city of Landshut

The home and care Project

The home and care project aims to support single mothers and their children by securing employment opportunities and tackling social exclusion as well as child poverty. In 2017 there were 1.5 million single parents with minor dependents in Germany. Based on information from the Landshut job center, 394 single parents in the City of Landshut received state transfer payments. Of these, 240 have one child and 111 two children (status September 2018). The group of single parents thereby represents 21% of all benefit recipients. At the same time, around 100 single mothers in nursing, healthcare and care professions would be able to immediately find employment in Landshut, if childcare was available in the necessary hours. Taking into account that working hours in care, healthcare and child care professions are very often outside the traditional opening hours for childcare centers, the main challenge lies in providing tailor-made childcare so that employment and training opportunities for single parents can be expanded. By approaching this challenge, an important first step shall be made in removing the specified groups of individuals and their children from the poverty trap.

Partners

- City of Landshut
- Kinderstiftung "Zukunft für alle Kinder" - NGO
- Heilig-Geistspitalstiftung Landshut - NGO
- ZAK e.V. Landshut - NGO
- Klinikum Landshut - private company
- LAKUMED - private company
- University of Applied Sciences Landshut
- Fachakademie für Sozialpädagogik der Schulstiftung Seligenthal - Training center

1. Executive Summary

The "Urban Innovative Actions" program represents an approach to answering previously unsolved social challenges of central importance in a novel way. The high degree of innovation requires an experimental approach, in which success is determined not only by the achievement of a specific concrete result, but also by the exploration of conducive framework conditions and impact factors that ultimately contribute to the result.

In 2020, the home and care project explored precisely these framework conditions and thus gathered valuable insights for innovative approaches in poverty prevention. For in line with this concept, the first year of the home and care project is showing signs of success, consisting primarily in the exploration of enabling and hindering framework conditions as well as experiencing the impact of changing framework conditions.

The home and care project is based on the original idea of building a house where

- a novel form of living together for people in danger of becoming excluded from society,
- 24-hour childcare, seven days a week and
- the training of low qualified childminders to become educators and child day nurses

is provided within the project.

The basic condition for testing the feasibility of this idea is the building of a house which should have been completed in August 2021. Postponing the earliest possible opening of the house to June 2022 gives the project the opportunity to invest more time to design the framework conditions and to fulfil the preconditions. At the same time, it leaves less time to implement the project within the project timeframe.

In terms of content, important questions are currently being worked on that are of great significance for the project. The future shape of the project depends on the answers to these questions. The current questions include

- the extent to which a setting can be created in which single parents who work in the care sector want to live in a house with childminders,
- the possibility of affordable housing compared to the average rents in Landshut, with special considerations due to the ownership of the building,
- whether the better integration of single parents who work in the care sector through a two-shift system consisting of early and late shifts or a three-shift system consisting of early, late and night shifts can succeed, also with regard to the requirements of the care companies, as well as
- whether training childminders to become educators or child daycare workers is not possible within the framework of the project due to increased the requirements of the Free State of Bavaria.

For home and care, these questions mean examining and testing different possibilities to obtain answers to these questions. Success here means not only arriving at one answer, but also a rationale in order to be able to clearly answer the question about what the success factors are and the methods needed to achieve it.

In the project, innovative means looking for an improvement for single mothers working as care workers who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. 2020 was a year for the home and care project in which the complexity of the project as well as the dependence of the project on framework conditions that can only be partially influenced, for example the pandemic, the change in the poverty situation and the situation in the care companies, became clear.

2020 marked the beginning of a process in which the initial ideas had to be put to the test and changed to be adapted to a setting which fits the current needs and framework conditions in 2021. The project is thus in the midst of the challenge of putting aside approaches that are no longer feasible and not appropriate due to the needs which still exist and to look for new possibilities to implement the project proposal.

With this learning by doing, the ability to analyze, and the competence to change its own hypotheses, the project is in the midst of a challenging process,

- to adapt the approach
- to involve all the stakeholders and
- to obtain political support.

What is clear is that the need to improve the living situation of the target group still exists and only the methods to achieve the goal have changed and that the conceptual assumptions have to be adapted.

Current Status

Introduction to the challenge addressed

Landshut - a rich city with a poverty problem

The region of Lower Bavaria and the city of Landshut in particular are benefiting to an above-average extent from a long-lasting economic boom, which has not been sustainably weakened even by temporary challenges such as the financial crisis in 2008 and now also probably not by the current pandemic. Industries have been created or strengthened, the service sector is booming, and wages in Bavaria are above average by German standards. In addition, Bavaria has one of the lowest unemployment rates and the lowest rate of social welfare recipients through so-called Hartz IV unemployment and welfare benefits. Contrary to all forecasts, the economic boom has also led to a reduction in long-term unemployment. This means that the market has been more receptive to jobseekers with lower skills who were previously considered difficult to place.

Nevertheless, despite this very positive economic development, there is a group of people who are employed but considered working poor and still have only a limited ability to provide for themselves. This can be attributed to employment paid at minimum wage due to a lack of qualifications and/or occupational restrictions due to personal or family obstacles. Target groups which are particularly affected include female single parents and families with a migration background.

Poverty and social participation as a municipal challenge

For the city of Landshut, poverty and social participation are an immediate challenge despite the positive economic progress. Linked to the rising purchasing power and population growth, rising rents and resulting spatial displacement effects are also visible in Landshut as it is an economically prosperous city. Wages in the low-wage sector are not keeping pace with the rising cost of living, so that despite general growth, the gap between the income of disadvantaged people and cost levels is widening. At the same time, social housing, with its government-reduced rents, is at such a low level that disadvantaged groups are at the mercy of free market forces. This is where government support, connecting concrete needs and existing programs, as well as targeted support for disadvantaged population groups need to be strategically addressed.

How the project fits in the policy context at the EU, national and regional level?

With the approach of strategic support of single parents in low-paid professions based on a social space approach, this project fits into the strategy of the state of Bavaria, the German federal government and the European Union. At the same time, the challenge of the project lies in its multi-complexity and in the fact that the approach has yet to be knowledge-based on the basis of precise needs analyses, strategic planning and professionally operationalized design approaches.

What was the project status in December 2020?

As indicated in the summary, the project is in the midst of a stress test in which the initial ideas have encountered changed framework conditions and a refutation of basic assumptions. The project is in the middle of the challenge to engage with these changes and, on the basis of the actual needs of the target group that are now to be identified, to agree on a goal that corresponds both to the idea of the project and to the feasible conditions on the ground. For this development, it is indispensable to establish scientific support that records and analyzes these needs, develops professional goals in cooperation with the project participants, and provides critical and close support for the operationalization of the goals into a sustainable and meaningful project concept.

2. UIA Implementation Challenges

General overview

The table below displays an overview of the UIA challenges and what they mean in the context of the home and care project, by means of a traffic-light color code.

Challenge	Level	Comments
Leadership	green	The city of Landshut is leading the project with a now fully staffed project coordination team, fully established structures and political backing.
Public procurement	green	Public procurement has changed a lot due to the pandemic conditions. Important lessons have been learned for the project.
Cross-department working	green	The conceptual approach necessarily involves collaboration between different parts of the public administration and with private companies and initiatives. Valuable insights have been able to be gathered in the process.
Participative approach	red	The concrete needs of the target group with regard to the design of the program have not yet been able to be recorded by the project partners or the scientific monitoring team. This is the main challenge.
Monitoring and evaluation	red	In the project, beyond the work in the committees, there has not yet been any reflection on the content or on the process, due to the problems in the scientific monitoring team.

Communication	amber	In connection with the conceptual adjustment and the shifts in the construction of the building, it has not yet been possible to develop any external communication.
Upscaling	red	Due to the challenges the project is facing, it is too early to talk about upscaling.

Leadership

One of the concrete results achieved in 2020 was the establishment of a structure with which the project can be managed and coordinated. For a coordination team that was not involved in the application process and therefore had to familiarize itself completely with the subject matter, this was a major task that was mastered very well. The coordination of the project is the responsibility of the head of the administration of the city of Landshut, who is responsible for social affairs. Thus, with this expertise, the connection to the various departments and to local politics is guaranteed. Especially because of the political significance of poverty prevention as a municipal issue, political participation is particularly important.

Public procurement

In 2020, the public procurement for the construction of the home and care building was due. During the tendering process, it became apparent that the bids were all above the cost estimate and that the construction could not be realized within the planned costs within one single tender. Therefore, the construction of the building must now be divided into different tenders. This increases the effort and leads to massive time delays, which is why an opening of the building in June 2022 is possible.

Cross-department working

For the public administration, the tender was an exciting experience that led to cooperation between departments that otherwise have little to do with each other. The project management team and the building office cooperated with each other to accelerate the planning of the home and care building.

Participative approach

The project is based on individual preliminary assumptions about the needs of young single parents affected by poverty and social exclusion and the demands of the labor market. In the conceptual design, these pre-assumptions were brought together. So far, the systematic verification of these pre-assumptions by empirical studies is still pending. In 2021, the actual needs of single parents, employees in the care sector and people affected by poverty are to be systematically recorded and clustered. From the overlaps, a systematic exploration can be carried out in cooperation between the scientific monitoring team and the project partners in order to design the home and care project in a participatory manner.

Monitoring and evaluation

Beyond the structures established in 2020, only some individual processes have been developed that in addition to the construction of the building also advance the project in terms of content. This includes, for example, the development of a curriculum for the training of single parent childminders to become educators. However, it has been found that for the eligible childminders, achieving the language competencies to successfully participate in the training is a challenge.

A systematic evaluation of the project findings in 2020 did not take place because the previously planned scientific monitoring could not begin its work until April 2020 and there was no subsequent integration of the monitoring into the project activities.

Communication

The external communication of the project was only started when the corresponding position was filled in August 2020. For 2021, a broad communicative integration of the target groups through to the city's population is planned.

Upscaling

Due to the difficult start-up phase, it is not yet possible to assume that the findings will be transferred. The concept is extremely complex and therefore needs a programmatic adaptation to the real conditions on the ground and especially to the needs of the people affected by poverty and exclusion in 2021.

3. Conclusions

In 2021, the project must adapt to the changed framework conditions caused by the pandemic and the resulting changes in the care sector as well as the increased risk of poverty and draw conclusions from the initial findings with regard to the project's concept. The opening of the building, which has been postponed to June 2022, gives the opportunity to systematically record the actual needs in dealing with poverty and social exclusion in Landshut and to make them the starting point of the project. 2021 can and should be the year in which we do not talk ABOUT the people, but WITH the people. There needs to be an empirical basis and not assumptions to understand the problem of poverty and exclusion in Landshut before an answer can be found.

The state of discussion so far is promising, especially in the question of reconciling family and work in the care sector. With the continuing need for flexible childcare, for example also at weekends or during the night, the discussion with the care companies seems to have already achieved an innovative interim result, which goes beyond the approved project application. The rethinking in the work organization of the care companies shows that the need for a three-shift system for single parents is only apparently absolute! With the appropriate willingness on the part of all those involved, it can easily be avoided, for example, through the use of effectively working tandem models. The home and care project thus provides an opportunity to break new ground and to question one's own point of view.

Urban poverty

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