

URBAN II Evaluation

Case study Rotterdam



1.0 Introduction

The URBAN II target area of Rotterdam covers parts of the Borough of Rotterdam Noord (the neighbourhoods of Oude Noorden, Agniesebuurt and Liskwartier).

The original choice to include only two neighbourhoods in the URBAN II programme instead of the borough as a whole was made due to their common shared problems and the level of deprivation found within each area. However, a third neighbourhood was added prior to the original bid (Liskwartier) to fulfil the minimum of 30,000 inhabitants required by the Commission under the original rules relating to the allocation of URBAN II funds.

The population of the URBAN II area is relatively young with 9% of the population being older than 65, compared to 15% for the city of Rotterdam as a whole. The population density in the URBAN II area is also high: 151 inhabitants per hectare against 98 for the borough and 28 for Rotterdam as a whole. At the start of the programme, the URBAN II area was characterised by a mixed population, of which more than half have a non-Dutch background who moved in to the area during the renewal process of the 1980s. According to stakeholders, with migration flows increasing, existing residents felt they no longer had a strong relationship with their neighbourhood. The number of people leaving and arriving was higher than in the rest of Rotterdam (13% and 14% respectively for the URBAN II area compared to 11% for Rotterdam as a whole).

The URBAN II area had an unemployment rate of 13.6% in 2000, compared to 10.4% in Rotterdam as a whole. At the end of the programme period, the situation had worsened as the unemployment rate increased to 16.3% in the URBAN II area and 10.9% for Rotterdam as a whole meaning the difference between target area and the host city had increased over time. During the same period, the long-term unemployment rate decreased from 46% to 41% in the URBAN II area and from 42% to 40% for Rotterdam as a whole. Levels of unemployment have remained high as the new employment opportunities that have been created in the city have benefited people from outside the URBAN II area who tend to be more skilled and qualified. Furthermore, people with stable jobs and higher incomes had a tendency to leave the area – leaving behind the residual unemployed. The unemployment situation in the target areas are accompanied by low education attainment levels: Agniesebuurt shows a lower education level, Oude Noorden complies with the Rotterdam level and in Liskwartier the education level is more favourable compared to the Rotterdam average.

The levels of income in Rotterdam show a mixed picture. People with jobs have a relatively high income – which can be seen as a potential indicator for gentrification. However at the same time many people in the URBAN II area depend on social welfare. The average disposable income per URBAN II inhabitant at the start of the programme period was € 28,900 compared to € 30,700 for the borough as a whole, € 31,300 for Rotterdam and € 33,300 for the Netherlands.

In the years prior to the programme period, the number of reported crimes increased dramatically in some parts of the URBAN II area, particularly in the Agniesebuurt. This high figure was related

to the poor quality of the public space, the lack of social control, unsafe areas and lack of occupancy. However, the safety index improved during the implementation period of the URBAN II programme.

Table 1.1 Safety index by neighbourhood and over time

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rotterdam	5,6	5,6	6,2	6,6	6,9	7,2	7,3	7,2
Noord	5,2	4,8	5,8	5,9	6,5	6,3	7,1	6,9
Oude Noorden	3,0	3,1	5,1	4,0	5,2	5,3	6,0	5,2
Agniesebuurt	4,9	5,0	5,3	4,9	5,8	5,3	6,0	6,0
Liskwartier	6,0	5,8	6,7	6,9	7,7	7,5	7,7	8,1

Legend:

- Problematic neighbourhood 3,9 - 5,0
- Threatened neighbourhood 5,0 - 6,0
- Neighbourhood in need for attention 6,0 - 7,1
- Safe neighbourhood $\geq 7,1$

Source: *Veiligheidsmonitor 2003, 2005 and 2009, Municipality of Rotterdam*

1.1 The URBAN II Programme, its mission and objectives

The URBAN II programme was based on inputs from all the main stakeholders and built upon an existing strategy that was already developed (called the strategic neighbourhood approach). The main thrust of the URBAN II programme was to tackle a number of key problems related to:

- Crime
- Family breakdown (acknowledging that this was a source of multiple problems);
- The physical environment, in particular the degradation of the neighbourhood, empty shops, lack of occupancy and a lack of high quality areas in the neighbourhood;
- Cultures and community groups that existed next to each other but with very little cohesion between them.

These key problems formed the basis for the overall mission of the programme (which remained the same during the programme period as a whole):

'improve the quality of life and increase the opportunities for residents and entrepreneurs by tackling social problems combined with opportunities in the field of public space, culture, education and economy'.

The table below shows the measures foreseen under each of the three priorities and the original budget allocated to them.

Table 1.2 Overview of priorities and measures:

Priorities and measures	Original budget (Euro)
Priority 1 URBAN II economic environment	
Measure 1.1 Improve physical commercial environment	1,685,189
Measure 1.2 Improve sustainable commercial quality and accessibility	8,438,400
Priority 2 Promote economic activity	
Measure 2.1 Strengthen business and stimulate entrepreneurship	855,168
Measure 2.2 URBAN II image and information and knowledge networks ¹	3,656,667
Measure 2.3 Improve working of the labour market	1,273,863
Priority 3 Strengthen socio-economic potential	
Measure 3.1 Local involvement, environment and safety	5,448,767
Measure 3.2 Socio-economic activation	1,134,450

1.2 Contextual changes during the programme lifetime

The political situation in the Netherlands and in the city of Rotterdam changed dramatically during the programme's lifetime. In 2002, the national politician Pim Fortuyn was murdered, and in 2004 the film maker Theo van Gogh. Following these deaths and after the subsequent elections, a new coalition started in Rotterdam which stressed, among other things, safety within the city. The URBAN II programme was influenced by this change in scope and incorporated more safety-related projects in the programme.

2.0 The Impact of the Programme

2.1 Direct Impacts

Looking at the output and result indicators, it can be seen that most of the priorities achieved their set targets. However, stakeholders felt that not all achievements are measurable and could be assigned a specific indicator, with the monitoring system not allowing for the recording of more intangible effects such as self esteem and the confidence of local people.

The programme outputs include, among others, renovated floorspace, public space redevelopment and social/economic inclusion projects. These outputs resulted in new jobs, new business start-ups

¹ The knowledge network mentioned here is referring to cooperation and interaction in projects that are relevant for other areas, on national and international level, which will contribute to the marketing of the URBAN II area as well.

and many participants in social and economic inclusion projects, an important result given the problems in the area covered by the programme.

Priority / measure	Output (O) or Result (R) indicator	Indicator	Target until 2008	Realised	Difference	% realised compared to target
Priority 1 – physical environment						
Measure 1.1 Improve physical commercial environment	O	Hectares of revitalised business area	0,4	0,54	0,14	135%
	O	Renovated/new business space	4000	7890	3890	197%
	R	Gross created employment	100	0	-100	0%
Measure 1.2 Improve sustainable commercial quality and accessibility	O	m ² renewed public space, including green areas	50000	109845	59845	220%
Priority 2 Promote economic activity						
Measure 2.1 Strengthen business and stimulate entrepreneurship	R	Starting entrepreneurs	20	81	61	405%
	R	Gross created employment	100	41	-59	41%
Measure 2.2 URBAN II image and information and knowledge network	O	Number of projects in the field of preservation and dissemination of culture	30	81	51	270%
	O	Number of exchange projects	8	43	35	538%
	R	Number of participants from vulnerable groups in	6000	12550	6550	209%

		coaching projects in social and economic fields				
Measure 2.3 Improve working of the labour market	O	Number of educational projects	10	4	-6	40%
	R	Number of participants from vulnerable groups in coaching projects in social and economic fields	1000	694	-306	69%
Priority 3 Strengthen socio-economic potential						
Measure 3.1 Local involvement, environment and safety	O	Number of coaching projects	9	24	15	267%
	O	Number of new safety measures	3	10	7	333%
	R	Number of participants from vulnerable groups in coaching projects in social and economic fields	500	3221	2721	644%
Measure 3.2 Socio-economic activation	O	Number of coaching projects	3	8	5	267%
	O	Number of new services	2	1	-1	50%
	R	Number of participants from vulnerable groups in coaching projects in social and economic fields	500	749	249	150%

The physical priority underperformed, although the basis for these figures is not final and not all activities had been accomplished at the time of measurement (2007). Examples of physical projects include:

- **Renovation of the railway station area.** In this area all important urban transport modes (cars, pedestrians, bikes, buses and trains) come together. However, the area was widely perceived to be unsafe by those using it and because the area is located on the border with another borough neither authorities felt directly responsible to improve the situation. With the URBAN II project, the area has undergone extensive renovation, which is reported to have resulted in safety improvements and an overall increase in the quality of the neighbourhood.
- **Teilingerstraat** was a neglected street with a huge unused potential for shops and without appropriate provision for traffic movement and parking. It was completely renovated and the traffic situation improved substantially. Commercial private sector activity is also reported to have increased following these measures.
- **Re-development of the streets Zwaanhals and Zaagmolenkade** proved to be very important to reverse the downward trend that had taken hold of the neighbourhood. The re-development of these streets also established new links between the neighbourhood and the bordering river.

The social pillar can be considered successful; the numbers of participants in social improvement projects significantly outperformed target values. This also holds true for the number of business start-ups. The performance of projects aimed at families, youth and the empowerment of marginalised groups was particularly strong. Some of the projects in these areas were highly innovative, not only for the area covered by the programme, but for Rotterdam and the Netherlands as a whole and inspired similar activities in other parts of Rotterdam and other Dutch cities. An important element of the specific approach of these projects was the acknowledgement that social problems were not so much a result of the physical environment, but mostly related to the behaviour of young people and their families and the circumstances they live in. This was a new way of thinking, for which innovative empowerment projects were developed. Examples of successful projects in this field are:

- **Vigon:** this project was directed to families with multiple problems like low economic participation, difficulties with integration and crime. A family coach supports the family in the areas of employability and parenting to establish the preconditions for greater social inclusion and labour market integration. This approach provided the basis for a city-wide programme after the completion of the project.
- **Benefits for kids:** The philosophy that society needs all the available talent forms the basis for this project. However, children in the URBAN II area often do not get the opportunity to fully develop their talents, due to an unfavourable situation at home. For these children, the 'Benefits for Kids' project was created. It allows them to discover their talents and develop opportunities by providing talented and motivated youngsters with a mentor. Mentors are typically

professionals from the commercial or public sector and guide their 'mentorees' in anything from homework to sport and games. 'Mentorees' also take part in information programmes and recreational activities at sports clubs. The organisations where the mentors work organise (group) excursions, and enable the 'mentorees' to gain work experience as trainees during school holidays. This project is also now being expanded to include other areas of Rotterdam.

- **Cineac TV** is a TV station at neighbourhood level. Cineac Noord provides the chance for people living in the neighbourhood to participate in the making of TV programmes about their own area. In this way they are given a voice and the TV station can serve as an indicator for the state of the area and its societal challenges. The project won several prizes, such as the Olon air RTV award and the European City Award Rotterdam.

Overall, the economic pillar performed well – even though it must be acknowledged that the gross number of jobs created failed to reach the targets. In the short term, the projects were unable to create work in the area. However, many citizens participated in training and coaching projects, which may lead to better chances on the labour market in the future. The projects did stimulate business start-ups, which could also eventually lead to more employment.

New entrepreneurs in the area mainly came from the outside of the target area. This proves that the area offers business opportunities, but that the population of the area is insufficiently equipped to take full advantage of them. Finally, one should realise that significant numbers of people are working in the informal economy – not measured by statistics – and the incentives for moving from the informal to the formal economy are not always strong and something that was not anticipated by the URBAN programme and its associated projects.

Physical regeneration and business support projects were often run in conjunction with each other, for example:

- **The neighbourhood safety project Zwartjansstraat** aimed to boost the capacity of entrepreneurs to contribute to neighbourhood safety. Before the URBAN II projects started, the overall safety perception in the shopping street had constantly deteriorated, with a negative impact on businesses. The entrepreneurs were trained on safety and crime prevention measures and security guards were deployed on the streets. After the project had finished, although the security guards disappeared the shop owners were trained and could take over some of their tasks in terms of preventing crime to happen in the first place. Within this project there was a close cooperation between police, refuse collection and entrepreneurs who all worked together in a way that had not been seen previously.

2.2 Indirect Impacts

Many of the stakeholders commented that the real indirect impacts of the programme are often in issues which are difficult to measure or require expensive and specific research assignment to uncover and measure what the impact has been). Furthermore, the specific contribution of the

programme is very difficult to determine. Having said this, stakeholders identified a number of indirect impacts from the URBAN programme:

Institutional level

At institutional level, the programme had a strong impact on youth and family work. First of all, the topic received the full attention of local policy makers, whereas prior to URBAN II this type of family-assistance was an area where government tend not to intervene or saw it as 'someone else's priority'. The neighbourhood safety related activities under URBAN II also inspired constructive political discussions about how to deal with the necessary trade-off between safety and privacy. Furthermore, the cooperation between institutions working in this field improved and support measures from a range of different organisations were better streamlined into one 'single approach'. Of course, this is not only due to the URBAN II programme, as it fits a more general trend, but the URBAN II programme certainly encouraged further joint collaboration.

Cooperation

The URBAN II programme was a big driver for cooperation between different groups of stakeholders. The physical regeneration projects involved local residents, housing corporations and property developers. However, to what extent this type of cooperation can be sustained is unclear. It is very likely that in some cases cooperation will cease, as it was strongly focused on specific URBAN projects (that now do not exist). In other cases however, cooperation continues, as there are important individuals that function as drivers for the cooperation or because it was agreed within the project to develop additional activities after the initial project has come to an end.

The safety index improved

The safety index improved. This was reached by a combination of several measures, such as the "stadsmarinier", a dedicated person responsible for safety issues and the increased political attention and initiatives related to this goal. URBAN II certainly made a contribution to this positive development. The renovation of public areas, removed 'hot spots' that encouraged anti social behaviour and crime.

The public space became more attractive

The investments in the shopping streets and other areas, together with investment in training of the shopkeepers on safety issues and measures like installing CCTV cameras, made them more attractive and safe. However, the costs for maintenance of this infrastructure are borne by the borough and there are questions about the long-term ability to accommodate these costs in public budgets.

Ability to experiment and innovate

The programme provided the opportunity to experiment with new initiatives. The programme added substantial value in terms of innovative projects in the social field. This is particularly relevant for the pilot projects aimed at assisting families and the prevention of crime. As the programme also allowed for the financing of relatively risky projects, the programme was used for the funding of pilot projects in the social sphere. Many of those projects were later implemented on a broader scale as they proved to be successful.

3.0 Links with other policies and programmes

The URBAN II strategy is closely connected to existing strategies at local, regional and national level. This implies that a number of projects may have been implemented regardless of the URBAN II programme. The added value of the programme lies above all in its ability to design and implement these projects in a manner which was well-thought through and showed the internal and external coherence of the actions financed.

At **local level**, the vision 2010, “Rotterdam op Koers” (Rotterdam on course), was the basis for a programme on the borough level, called the strategic neighbourhood approach. This integrated approach was directed to reduce the social, physical and economic disadvantages faced by some boroughs and was closely connected to the national policy. The programmes defined under this approach were the translation of the national policy in development programmes within the boroughs, based on the social, economy and physical pillars. The strategic neighbourhood approach comprised actions and measures similar to those implemented under URBAN II.

All projects that were approved under the programme were in compliance with the policies and strategies of the borough as well as the sectoral policies of the municipality of Rotterdam. This was guaranteed by the fact that the selection committee involved governors of both the city and the borough. Furthermore, officials working in the relevant policy area in the borough were consulted on how compliance could best be ensured. On top of this, many projects were initiated and managed by the borough itself, which enabled them to link into their own strategy.

During the URBAN II period, the second tier of the **national level** “Large City Policy” (1999-2004) was in place. This policy aimed at the “Complete City”, a city with liveable and safe neighbourhoods, quality housing, integration of minorities, quality education and care facilities, a differentiated living climate, good connections, green areas, economic vitality and employment and safe playing areas for children. The national policy promoted an integrated approach and the choice was made to connect the URBAN II programme as closely as possible to the national policy.

4.0 Factors of success

The key factors for success of the programme can be summarised as follows:

- **The fact that there was a budget for experimental projects**

The fact that there was a budget for experimental projects was one of the factors for success and stakeholders valued the flexible and sometimes risky projects the programme supported. Many of these innovative initiatives proved to be effective and relevant and were seen as a 'test bed' for more mainstream activity within the city.

- **The level of support for the URBAN 'strategy'**

The programme was broadly supported by all stakeholders, the city and the borough. The programme built on the strategic neighbourhood approach that was already in place and that was in compliance with the needs of the city, the borough and the national policy on Large Cities. Hence, all partners agreed that this was the strategy they wanted to implement and stick to. There was a feeling of ownership among the main stakeholders and decision makers, which was seen by stakeholders as a precondition for success.

- **Co-financing was in place**

As the strategic neighbourhood approach already had a budget and the URBAN II programme was in full compliance with this strategy, the co-financing was guaranteed from this budget. This meant that the programme and its projects were not constantly seeking match funding from a variety of different sources but could rather fully fund activities in full.

- **Flexibility of the programme**

The programme coped well with the changes in the political context, and adjusted to an overall change of political focus from social projects to safety issues. Clearly, a more inflexible programme would not have allowed such a change and would most likely have fallen out of grace with the responsible politicians.

- **The management structure**

The management of the programme was explicitly independent from the borough government. This made sure that the programme management could not be put under political pressure which may have resulted in a deviation from the programme strategy. This fact contributed substantially to keeping the programme focused and consistent.

5.0 Integrated approach

The integrated approach cannot be considered new in the Netherlands, and is closely connected to the national policy approach: the National Large City Programme.

The linkages between the priorities are generally helpful, especially between the physical and economic themes. Most projects implemented under these priorities were interrelated, as shopkeepers in streets that underwent regeneration were in parallel trained on how to improve neighbourhood safety. At the same time, projects under the economic pillar often actively encouraged the involvement of people living in the neighbourhood and also had strong links to the physical regeneration component. Examples include “De Verleiding” which aimed at placing art in the public space encouraging a "cultural route" in De Zaagmolenkade. At the same time, the Zaagmolenkade was renovated, creating a clear link between both projects.

The integrated approach is now further pursued by the borough under the title “Area-based approach”. This means that relatively small areas with specific problems now have an integrated strategy (physical, economic and social). Rotterdam is currently pioneering this approach. The

URBAN II programme has very much influenced the application of the integrated approach to small areas. The development of green areas, for example, used to be pursued independently from other areas of urban development but the URBAN programme has encouraged those who have been tasked with developing green areas to take account the needs of specific groups such as young people.

6.0 Programme management and partnership

Project development

The manager of the URBAN II programme was located within the borough itself, although the programme managers were actually employed by the development agency of the city. This location brought the programme management in direct contact with the residents of the area and enabled informal communication.

There has been one call for proposals for the programme period as a whole. Hence, applicants could apply for a project at any time they were ready for it. This procedure also allowed for providing advice to applicants during proposal preparation.

Project selection

The call for proposals was an open 'on-going' call during the entire programme period. As a consequence, all eligible and well-developed proposals could be considered. The technical assessment of the proposals was performed by the programme manager, assisted by the financial manager who assessed the budget on eligible costs and cost effectiveness.

The programme management was responsible for ensuring that the accepted project proposals were in-line with existing policies and strategies of the borough and liaised with the borough government. The technical and financial assessment of proposals was presented to the steering committee. Members of the steering group were the alderman of Rotterdam (who had decision making power, the president of the borough, a member of the Ministry of the Interior and other advising members). The composition of the steering committee allowed for a thorough final check and assessment of the compliance with and contribution to the policies and strategies of the city and borough. Furthermore, as the alderman had a good overview of projects applied for under the Objective 2 URBAN II programmes which covered two other boroughs of Rotterdam, duplication could be avoided.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the projects took place through four-monthly reports to be delivered by the beneficiaries and on-the-spot checks performed by the two financial managers. The on-the-spot checks normally took place quickly after the contracting was concluded. During these checks specific attention was paid to project administration and where necessary advice was given on this topic.

The programme management arranged meetings for all projects, where the link between individual projects and the URBAN II programme was stressed. These clearly positioned URBAN II as an EU programme and tried to provide the participants with the 'bigger picture'.

Evaluation

During the lifetime of the programme an interim evaluation has been performed by an external evaluator. This evaluation was followed by an update of the evaluation by the programme management.

Communication

The borough had an important role in communication the programme. Many of the beneficiaries were informed by the borough on the opportunities that the programme provided. Next to this, a communication expert was attached to the programme. News and project descriptions were placed on a programme website.

Partnership

The programme development was clustered around issues identified as common problems and solutions in which inhabitants, entrepreneurs and firms were involved. Inhabitants were asked for their opinion in the setting of a "mobile outdoor café", which was moved to different places in the area encouraging people to discuss which developments they would appreciate in their neighbourhood.

Cooperation was considered an important issue and within the programme a broad range of partners were involved. The social partners were not involved in the steering group, but they played a role in the implementation of the programme. The programme management established strong links with educational institutes, social organisations, housing corporations and entrepreneurs.

Within the projects, partnerships came into existence as well. Sometimes these partnerships reached beyond the formal URBAN II project period. This is for instance the case in projects where agreements were made with the housing corporations: URBAN II financing was only approved if the corporations committed themselves to a second phase directed to the renovation of houses. Other partnerships were sustained due to the involvement of enthusiastic people who decided to continue the partnership. Whether the partnerships established within projects are sustainable depends very much on the presence of leading figures who continue to invest themselves in the partnership.

Building on their special role within the Netherlands, housing corporations played a key role in the URBAN II Programme. They owned large chunks of property, and their cooperation was vital especially for upgrading the shopping streets.

The shopkeepers were directly affected by the physical projects in their streets. It was crucial to involve them in the physical projects, concerning planning of the work but also to involve them in the design process, so that the outcomes would be in line with their needs. In parallel to the

physical improvements, the shopkeepers were involved in neighbourhood safety programmes, providing them with training in safety issues. Both types of projects contributed to the upgrading of the streets.

7.0 Sustainability and legacy

The “area-based way of working” now taken forward by the borough is a direct result of the programme and was seen as one of its key legacies. The fact that all stakeholders in the different fields work for the same objectives is a good way to ensure that problems are addressed from all relevant directions.

The development of the shopping area together with a development manager is a concept that has been copied by the City of Rotterdam and many innovative social pilot projects have been replicated in other areas since this URBAN intervention. The overall participation of marginalised social groups, such as immigrant women, is reported to have increased as a result of URBAN II projects. A very important aspect is that the safety index has increased considerably and that its improvement appears to be sustainable. This opens the door to increased attractiveness of the area and higher retention rates amongst successful citizens with a job.

URBAN II is likely to be remembered as a successful programme because:

- The integrated approach was followed-up;
- Public participation in the design of public spaces was high;
- The experimental social projects were highly innovative and in some cases very successful.
- The image of the area improved considerably and this is expected to have a lasting effect;
- The administrative procedures connected to URBAN II projects required people to work in a structured and consistent way and to pay due attention to a multiplicity of factors. This led to heightened awareness of public procurement rules, state aid and sound project administration.

Finally, this URBAN II programme has demonstrated that value added can also be created in a relatively advanced policy environment, where the integrated development approach is already firmly rooted and where various complementary programmes and strategies already exist.