

# **URBAN II Evaluation**

## Case Study: Sambreville

# 1.0 Introduction

---

The city of Sambreville is composed of 7 municipalities: Auvélais, Tamines, Moignelée, Arsimont, Falisolle, Velaine and Keumiée. Unusually, Sambreville's URBAN II programme covered the whole of the city which had a population of 27,197 people and covered an area of 34.2 square km (making it one of the largest URBAN target area). The programme received a total of 7.1 million euro of URBAN II funds representing about a third of Belgium's total allocation. Sambreville had never been covered by any other national, regional or European (including URBAN I) funding scheme prior to the existence of the URBAN II programme.

Sambreville is a highly industrialized city that has suffered over the last twenty years through the restructuring of its traditional industrial base which has led to a significant loss of industrial jobs in its key employment sectors. As a result, the economic and social situation of Sambreville is characterized by a high unemployment level (20%), particularly among women (25%) and young people (39%). This high unemployment rate is reinforced by a lack of professional qualifications of the population meaning access to high growth sectors is limited for the local population. Linked to this high unemployment, the city is also characterized by a large number of people on welfare benefit.

Alongside these socio-economic problems, the decline of the old industry in the area has also led to the physical degradation of Sambreville making the city a relatively unattractive area. This has led to a stagnation and decline in the population of the area which is in contrast with the generally positive demographic trends in other municipalities of the Province of Namur. Moreover, the city of Sambreville is composed of 7 villages that are not linked with each other meaning it is often seen as a mosaic of separate settlements without a real central heart.

The main characteristics and challenges of the target area are summarized in the following table:

**Table 1.1 Sambreville – Main indicators at the beginning of the URBAN period**

Indicator	Year	Sambreville	Belgium
Unemployment level	1999	20,1%	7,0%
Long term unemployment as % of total unemployment	2001	68,5%	54,2%
% of beneficiaries of unemployment benefits on total population	2000	9,2%	6,1%
Average income of total population (EUR)	1998	9.375	10.273
Percentage of population with welfare benefit for 1.000 habitants	1998	12,7%	8,2%
Density of population (hab/km <sup>2</sup> )	1999	800	334
Percentage of crimes for 1.000 habitants	1999	7,0%	7,6%
Percentage of population of foreign origin on total population	2000	11,0%	8,8%

Source: Operational programme of Sambreville

However, despite these weaknesses, there were also a number of identified strengths to the area:

- An excellent accessibility throughout the city thanks to a good transport network
- The presence of a motivated group of businesses, schools and other local organizations who were committed to an URBAN II programme and who wished to collaborate with one another.
- Support of external authorities (e.g. trade unions, higher tier authorities)
- The investment society of the Province of Namur (BEP)<sup>1</sup> which focused on the development and provision of support for local companies

As covered later in this case study, some of these strengths are also success factors of the URBAN programme of Sambreville.

In order to be selected as a candidate for URBAN II funding, the municipalities of the Walloon region needed an unemployment rate that is 20 % higher than the average for the Region. In total, 6 communes submitted an application: Mons, Boussu, Charleroi, Seraing, Liege and Sambreville. The selection of Sambreville by the Government of the Walloon region was based on the quality and relevance of its strategy to the local socio-economic context as well as the strength of its partnership.

## 1.1 Background to the URBAN II Programme and the target area

The major problems and difficulties faced by Sambreville can be grouped around four key priorities that represent the four axis of strategy of the URBAN programme of Sambreville:

- **Economic change and local economic development:** This involves creating networks of companies, stimulating the use of new information and communication technology by small firms and improving the infrastructure for businesses.
- **Development of human resources and improving skills:** This priority covers training for those that are in and out of employment and the integration of young people into the local labour market.
- **The social revitalisation of the city and neighbourhood:** This involves coordinating and expanding services for marginalized groups and handling drug-addiction and crime in order to reduce the feeling of insecurity among inhabitants.
- **Improving living conditions in the urban environment:** This involves improving roads and public spaces.

<sup>1</sup> The BEP is an organisation that provides business support to companies.

The strategy of the URBAN II programme was generally regarded to be in accordance with the identified challenges of Sambreville, a point which was also put forward by the stakeholders and by the mid-term evaluators of the programme<sup>1</sup>.

There seems to be a good balance of funding over the different themes and the priorities of the programme. The largest part of the budget was allocated to the physical and environmental regeneration of the area (45.3% of the budget) whilst 26.9% of the budget went on improving entrepreneurship and employment and social inclusion projects received 14% of the budget. Finally, information and communication technologies received 7.3% of the total budget while technical assistance represents 6.5% of the budget.

The URBAN II programme of Sambreville has not changed significantly during the programming period. The only important modification concerned the realization of some projects. In 2006, the project WAN (Wallonie Aerotraining Network which consisted of a training centre for aeronautic emergency services and an airplane simulator to teach students to deal with on-board fires) had to be abandoned. This was because the building where the facility was to be built was not ready in time meaning the centre was opened at Gosselies instead of Sambreville. The funds of some existing projects have also been enlarged including those for the 'centre for auto-training' and the 'city project'. A few new projects have also been added to the original list using the funds from the abandoned WAN project: 'an atelier for welding trainings' and 'a public space for social economy'.

It is important to note that all projects that were supported through URBAN II tended to be innovative and all were completely new types of activity that previously did not exist before. According to the local stakeholders, it would not have been possible to develop any of the projects without the URBAN programme and the added value of these new projects were significant because they were not in existence prior to the URBAN programme.

Although the programme covered the whole of the city, most of the infrastructure projects were concentrated on Auvelais, e.g. the renovation of development sites, the renovation of the centre of Auvelais and its surroundings and also the centre for auto-training. This was a deliberate strategy that aimed to create a 'new' centre of Sambreville at Auvelais. The creation of this centre was considered to be necessary in order to improve the links between the 'mosaic' of villages which made up Sambreville. However, this strategy has also been criticized by some local stakeholders as it concentrated most of the projects in Auvelais and did not take into account the needs of the periphery of the city which also suffered from its own socio-economic problems.

<sup>1</sup> The mid-term evaluation concluded that most identified difficulties of the city (e.g. the high unemployment rate, concentration of employment in few large companies, the high level of precariousness and insecurity, the insufficient number of new companies created, the deteriorated quality of some neighbourhoods, low level of education, the non attractive character of most urbanised neighbourhoods,...) were covered by the proposed strategy.

## 2.0 The Impact of the Programme

---

This section deals with the impact of Sambreville's URBAN programme according to both programme information as well as the views of local stakeholders. It firstly looks at whether the target area has changed over the life of the programme and then assesses the direct and indirect impacts of the programme and its associated projects.

### 2.1 How has the target area changed?

Statistical information does not show any significant improvements in the macro-economic situation in Sambreville during the lifetime of the programme. Nevertheless, some of the economic indicators show that the situation in the target area has improved slightly throughout the delivery period. For instance, the unemployment rate decreased by 2.9% between 2001 and 2008 (from 20.1% to 19.5%). The percentage of long-term unemployment as a proportion of the total number of unemployed decreased by around 10% between 2001 and 2008 (from 68.5% to 62%). However, this reduction is not significantly different from the drop observed in Belgium over the same period. The average income of the total population of Sambreville increased with 21.4% between 1998 and 2003 (from 9,375 to 11,384). However, again, the average income in Belgium increased even more (with 23.2%).

However, there are many indicators which show a decline in the socio-economic context of Sambreville. The number of active companies decreased with 13.8% between 2001 and 2007 (from 1,358 to 1,170). The percentage of crimes per 1.000 habitants increased by 21.8% between 1999 and 2003 (from 7.2 to 8.7) while it decreased by 11.4% in Belgium. The number of beneficiaries of welfare benefits as a percentage of the total population increased from 10.8% to 12.8% over the same period.

Globally, there was no real improvement to the macroeconomic situation for Sambreville over the lifetime of the programme. This lack of any economic upswing was sometimes criticized by stakeholders who saw it as a failure of the programme. However, for the majority of stakeholders the injected funds from the URBAN II programme was too small to induce any real impact in the socio-economic situation of an area. According to these stakeholders, the URBAN II programme had no effect on the macroeconomic situation of the area and it was never expected to change large deep rooted macro economic issues.

### 2.2 Impact of the programme

Most measures of the URBAN programme in Sambreville have largely reached or even exceeded their initial objectives in terms of output and results. There is no significant difference in the level of achievement between the different measures or the different themes (social, economical or physical).

If we consider the impact of the URBAN programme in Sambreville, overall, there is a lack of evidence. This lack is also evident in the overall end of term evaluation of Sambreville's URBAN programme. However, based on the opinions of stakeholders interviewed the following impacts were highlighted:

According to local stakeholders, the most important impact of the programme is that it **developed collaborations and partnerships** in the city. Thanks to the URBAN programme, local companies, associations and public organizations realized they could work together for the common good of improving the target area. Before the existence of URBAN, the different actors were not interconnected with one another and tended to work in cycles- sometimes against each other. The URBAN programme created the spirit of working together and created a local network of organizations to work with one another. The partnership was also very diverse and brought parties together from very different backgrounds and very different spheres from the social, economic and cultural fields. This partnership was also highlighted as being sustainable and has continued to develop other projects after the URBAN programme ceased to exist (e.g. the collaboration between the investment society of the Province of Namur (BEP) and the Public Social Welfare Centers or between the industrial school and local social associations (see later)).

Thanks to the training programmes and the support to companies, the URBAN programme has led to new **employment opportunities for local people**, especially vulnerable and unqualified people. Even if the programme did not offer a job to all unemployed of Sambreville, the programme has led to an increased **motivation and revitalization** of the population, especially the more vulnerable ones.

Thanks to the 'city project' (see later impact of some successful projects), the URBAN programme has also led to the **development of a long term-strategy for the city of Sambreville** which is relatively unusual compared to other cities of the Walloon Region. Generally, the Walloon Region also adopted a top-down strategy: a strategy is developed for the whole region and is implemented by all local authorities. By developing its own strategy, the city of Sambreville is considered as a 'good example' in the Walloon Region. Such strategy is more likely to take the long-term needs of the city into account than a strategy developed for the whole region.

Finally, thanks to the renovation of the centre of Auvélais and its surroundings, the URBAN programme contributed to the **improvement of the image of Sambreville**. The different implemented projects under the URBAN programme and the mediatization of these projects provided also to Sambreville an image of a dynamic city.

## 2.3 Impact of some successful projects

In total, the URBAN II programme established 21 projects. According to stakeholders, most projects seem to be a real success and have reached satisfactory outputs and results. The greatest impacts (mostly micro-economic) have been observed for the following projects:

- **The support to companies of the investment society of the Province of Namur (BEP):** In total, the BEP supported 252 local companies in a number of different ways. They offered accompanying measures for individual and collective projects and a web portal. They organized journeys, conferences, etc. with different local companies to allow them to meet each other. By presenting and describing the different business activities in the city of Sambreville, the BEP has helped to fill up the zoning of Tamines. This industrial zoning existed before the URBAN programme, but it had not been possible to fill it.
- **Welding training programmes:** Based on the needs of local companies, different training programmes have been organised. Amongst others, the welding training was particularly successful as 80% of the people undertaking the welding training have found a job. The training was such a success that it has been decided to construct an atelier for welding trainings with the reallocation of the WAN funding.
- **Training programme for those with only a primary education:** For the first time, the industrial school and the GABS, a small local association, organized a training programme together. This training was aimed at people with only a primary education degree and focused at allowing them to graduate into secondary education. 12 persons in total have received their diploma of secondary education, and some of them have also continued with higher education.
- **The city project:** With the funds of the WAN project, a study that made a diagnostic of the socio-economic situation of Sambreville has put forward the strengths and weaknesses of the city. This study has been used for the development of a strategy for Sambreville (the city project). The city project can be seen as an instrument to support demands for European or regional funds. Moreover, the city project has been included in the 'contract for the future' which defines a long-term programme for the city of Sambreville (15-20 years). The URBAN programme has thus permitted to develop a city project and a long-term strategy for the city of Sambreville.

## 3.0 Links with Other Programmes and Policies

---

At the local level, Sambreville was not covered by any local policy or development strategy prior to the implementation of the URBAN II programme meaning URBAN allowed Sambreville to develop a real and meaningful strategy for the city for the first time. URBAN has led to the development of the 'contract for the future' which defines a long-term programme for the city of Sambreville (15-20 years) (see the impact of some successful projects: the city project). The city of Sambreville has also developed the Agenda 21 initiative which combines strategic planning and sustainable development principles. This project is based on the long-term strategy developed thanks to the URBAN programme. Moreover, some ongoing projects under the URBAN programme are present in the Agenda 21 action plan which shows the level of linkages between the two key initiatives.

At the level of the Walloon region, Sambreville is covered by the Contract for the future of Wallonia. This is a global development strategy for the Walloon Region which has been established since 1999. The URBAN programme takes the Contract for the Future of Wallonia directly into account by fully integrating its 4 priorities:

- The long-term economic development
- The acceleration of the development of the areas supported by the European Union
- The involvement of young in the development of the Walloon region
- The development of a knowledge society

According to stakeholders, until now, the Walloon Region adopted a top-down strategy where the regional strategy had to be implemented by all local authorities. However, in the case of Sambreville the strategy is more bottom up where the city developed its own strategy, taking into account the local issues and local problems but at the same time trying to be coherent with the Contract for the future of the Walloon region.

Sambreville has never been covered by any other European funded scheme before the existence of URBAN II. For the period 2007-2013, Sambreville is covered by the 'regional competitiveness and employment' programme under the European funds for regional development although projects that have come from this source are linked to any corresponding URBAN projects. One exception is the case of the atelier for welding trainings. This atelier has been constructed with funds from the URBAN II programme but the training equipment will be financed through funds under ERDF 2007-2013.

## 4.0 Factors of Success

---

The key factors of success of the URBAN programme of Sambreville have been identified as follows:

- **The enthusiasm and motivation of all involved parties:**

The most important factor of success is the motivation of the team, the project managers, the local associations and all the parties who have been involved in the URBAN programme. According to the stakeholders, the success and the sustainability of the projects largely depended on the motivation and involvement of the project managers and the concerned associations. Most projects that did not succeed have had problems with the project manager and their poor quality management has generally been the driver behind a poor quality project. The success of the URBAN programme thus largely depended on the human aspect.

- **The involvement of the community and of local actors:**

The community and local actors have largely been involved in the development of the URBAN programme and local forums have been organized with local residents so that they could define the programme orientations (between 150 to 200 persons were present at these events). Local partners also provided inputs on which parts of the target areas should be prioritized and which sorts of actions should be developed. Consequently, the projects that have been proposed to the Walloon region for selection presented a large local consensus.

Moreover, the strategy of the city has been focused on the URBAN programme for five years and the inhabitants of Sambreville have been well informed about its progress during this period. For example, advertisements have been placed twice during the URBAN programme to explain the programme of Sambreville and describe some projects of the programme, media have been invited each time new projects were launched and as a consequence, URBAN was discussed many times in the city newspaper. However, despite these communication actions, the actions undertaken under the URBAN programme have not always been well understood by the inhabitants with most of the local people recognizing more the more tangible physical regeneration aspects of the programme as opposed to the unobservable social actions that have been undertaken.

- **The political support:**

After its application, the city of Sambreville received a real injection of support from the political authorities because of the realization of the URBAN programme. The mayor of the city was involved in the programme and in the application of Sambreville. However, this political engagement in the URBAN programme can also be seen as a disadvantage. For example, some local companies did not want to participate in the URBAN programme because it was related to the political authorities (and one specific party) and it took a lot of work for the organizations involved in the URBAN programme (e.g. BEP) to convince people that the programme was not political.

- **Coherence with the needs of the area:**

The strategy of Sambreville has been defined through a greater understanding of the needs of the target area. To do so, local organizations, companies, and associations have all been consulted far and wide on the key issues found within the area and what the main improvement should be.

Moreover, a coherent strategy has been defined for the selection of the eligible zone. It is so that most infrastructure projects and social inclusion projects were concentrated in Auvélais while the economic development covered the whole territory of Sambreville. According to the stakeholders, this is a good strategy as the economic development needs a sufficiently large territory to have enough critical mass and to create agglomeration effects. For the social and physical regeneration projects it is better to concentrate on a small territory as it is necessary to take into account the sub-local needs. However, according to some stakeholders, the city of Sambreville is too small to implement projects of economic development which would have sustainable and noticeable impacts. Economic development projects would perhaps work better when implemented at the interregional level where key stakeholders and cities work with one another. For example, the problem of unemployment in Sambreville will not necessarily be resolved with the development of an industrial zone within the city as local residents will not automatically find work within any new jobs that are created.

- **Concentration of budgets on some important activities:**

The budget has not been spread across a large number of small projects and actions. Instead, the programme was concentrated on a small number of large projects (21 in total), including the construction of a manufacturing space on the site of the glass industry of Saint-Roch at Auvélais, the atelier for welding trainings, the public space for social economy, the renovation of the centre of Auvélais and its surroundings. According to some stakeholders, supporting larger projects is more successful than concentrating on different small actions as impact is more likely to be felt.

## 5.0 Level of an Integrated Approach

---

The different themes in the URBAN programme are well balanced and there was a desire to create a real collaboration between the different partners involved in each priority. Examples of this included:

- **Collaboration between the BEP and the Public Social Welfare Centers:** thanks to this collaboration, the BEP could improve the match between the needs of local companies and the Public Social Welfare Centers. E.g. some companies have employed persons from Public Social Welfare Centers.
- **Collaboration between the industrial school and the GABS (a local social association):** This collaboration has led to the development of training programmes for persons with only a primary education degree in order to allow them to graduate in secondary education.

On top of this collaboration between partners of different priorities, there are also different projects in the URBAN programme that followed an integrated approach, for example:

- **The public space for social economy:** In this project, infrastructure has been constructed and different social economy activities have been established in this space, e.g. service vouchers, a training centre, a laundry, a second-hand shop, a social taxi, a bicycle atelier, etc. The number of clients of this kind of shops doubled as all these activities have been concentrated in a single space.
- **The atelier for welding trainings:** The urban funds have been used to build an atelier for welding trainings. This project is not only an example of a project combining different themes, but also an example of a project combining different funding sources. The atelier has been built with URBAN funds, but training equipment was financed through ERDF 2007-2013 and training hours of teachers by the FOREM (public employment service) through funds of the Marshall plan of the Walloon Region.

## 6.0 Programme Management

---

The government of the Walloon Region was the managing authority for the URBAN II programme and was responsible for the final selection of the projects.

The municipality of Sambreville was responsible for the technical assistance. Their role was to produce the annual reports, organise the monitoring committees and contact the project managers. Next to this technical role, they also had a more fundamental role in the URBAN programme, as they led on most of the URBAN projects and initiated most partnerships. Besides that, they also supported the government of the Walloon Region in the selection of the URBAN projects together with representatives of the government of the French community, of the Economic office of the Province of Namur (BEP) and of the territorial management committee. Each project was evaluated by this committee and the alignment with the targeted objectives of the overall programme were analysed.

The technical assistance team was composed of two full-time employees. One was specialised in structural funds and had a lot of connections in the political arena. The other was more present in the field. According to the stakeholders, the URBAN team was a competent, dynamic and motivated group of individuals. It was very involved in the programme and it was present out in the field, providing project managers with a lot of valuable advice and support. They also strongly improved collaboration and partnership by setting up different organisations. There was a clear communication between the team and all the involved parties.

The monitoring system set up by the technical assistance team can be considered as a key strength in relation to output and result indicators. However, although the monitoring tables attached to the programme were strong in relation to outputs and results, they were relatively weak when it came to recording the impacts. There was not enough emphasis on the assessment of the effects of URBAN beyond its outputs and results.

The technical assistance team also offered an important support to project managers for the provision of indicators. Many of these organisations had never been involved in European funded projects previously; therefore support on developing monitoring procedures was extremely important.

## 7.0 Sustainability and Legacy

---

One of the most important impacts of the URBAN programme of Sambreville has been the **development of partnerships** in the city. The URBAN programme created a stimuli amongst local companies, associations and public organizations to work together whenever possible and as a result reinforced a local network within the city. According to stakeholders, this is a sustainable and structural effect which has been maintained after the URBAN II period. These partnerships have also led to the development of other projects after the URBAN programme. Some examples of collaborations that have been maintained:

- **Collaboration between the industrial school and the GABS (a local social association):** This is a permanent partnership which should lead to the development of a new training programme in the future.
- **Collaboration between the BEP and local companies:** The BEP has fewer contacts with the entire network of companies, but it has always individual contacts with companies. The companies have build in the custom to contacting them for support (e.g. when developing new activities) even if there is no more URBAN budget allocated for this.
- **Collaboration between local companies:** The BEP has allowed to local companies to get to know each other and to improve cooperation. A real dynamic has been created and companies still keep in touch.

Moreover, Sambreville is now covered by the urban pillar of the “Regional Competitiveness and Employment” programme. This programme aims at strengthening the physical actions initiated via URBAN II. The city therefore deliberately chose to focus the funding on the same intervention area. For example, the atelier for welding trainings has been constructed with URBAN funds but the training equipment will be financed through funds under ERDF 2007-2013.

However, a lot of projects were not sustained after the URBAN II funding. It is especially the case for projects found under axis 3: ‘The social revitalization of the city and its neighborhoods’. Most of the projects under this axis have not been maintained. For example:

- **Rives d'art:** The objective of this project was to organize theatre plays in Sambreville with the help of volunteers and aimed at creating social inclusion in Sambreville. On the basis of the number of participants, this project can be considered a success, but it has been criticized by some stakeholders because it is considered as a 'one shot' project. This project has not been sustained and can be considered as having a limited sustainable impact on the population.
- **Street educators:** This project has not been sustained. However, local partners try for the moment to start this project again with other funds.

If we consider the three other axes, a lot of the projects under these axes consisted of the construction of some structures, e.g. the construction of a manufacturing space on the site of glass industry of Saint-Roch at Auvélais, the centre for auto-training, a public space for social economy, etc. These structures permitted to develop activities that are still a real success (namely Nanocyl on the manufacturing space and social economy activities at the public space for social economy).

The sustainability of the projects depends largely on the quality of the project but especially on the motivation of the people responsible for the project. As noted earlier, the quality and sustainability of projects depends on the human aspect, and this is probably also one of the vulnerable elements of an URBAN programme.