

## BREMEN, GERMANY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Quartiersbildungszentrum (QBZ) Robinsbalje</b>
<b>Beneficiary</b>	City/Region of Bremen The Region covers the cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven ( <i>Land Bremen</i> )
<b>Duration of project</b>	01/2008 – 03/2011, duration 39 months
<b>Member State</b>	Germany, Bremen (city and region)
<b>Geographic size</b>	547 535 inhabitants in 2010 (Bremen and Bremerhaven), the wider urban area comprises 2.4 million.
<b>Funding</b>	Total budget: €2 764 500 ERDF contribution: €1 319 000 national and regional budget: €1 445 500
<b>Operational Programme</b>	Regional Operational Programme “EFRE-Programm Bremen 2007–2013” CCI nr 2007DE162PO006. EFRE (German) = ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)
<b>Managing Authority</b>	City of Bremen, Senator for Economics, Labour and Ports ( <i>Der Senator für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Häfen der Freien Hansestadt Bremen</i> ) Unit ( <i>Referat</i> ) Z3 ‘ <i>Abteilungsübergreifende Aufgaben</i> ’ ERDF Managing Authority ( <i>EFRE-Verwaltungsbehörde</i> ) Director: Thomas Schwender Zweite Schlachtpforte 3, D – 28195 Bremen, <a href="mailto:office@wuh.bremen.de">office@wuh.bremen.de</a> The Managing Authority is a city department which is in charge of implementing the programme in the city-region (cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven). Sub-priority 2.1 (where the project is placed) is managed by an intermediate body, the city department for the environment, construction and mobility.
<b>Cohesion Obj.</b>	Competitiveness
<b>Main reason for Highlighting this case</b>	The Robinsbalje centre demonstrates how a neighbourhood-based, integrative project can contribute to the EU’s multi-faceted inclusive growth objectives. With its focus on education and skills it helps people of all ages to anticipate and manage change. It supports bringing school drop-outs back into education and diminishing mental barriers to educational institutions by creating a new, open ‘district centre’. At the same time, the project supports specific target groups, especially women and young people, to get (back) into jobs. It also raises the city’s employment through counselling and coaching, childcare and extended school opening hours. By proactively involving ethnic communities in the project and by locating the Robinsbalje centre in one of Bremen’s most disadvantaged areas, it helps to fight poverty and enhance social inclusion. The project illustrates that inclusive growth starts at the local level – by empowering people through high levels of employment, by investing in education, and by fighting poverty so as to help people anticipate and manage change.
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<b>Keywords/Tags</b>	Social infrastructure, social inclusion, life long learning

<b>1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	
<b>Overall objective / goals</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating a neighbourhood-based 'connection' among schools with childcare facilities, youth support and health services as well as other NGO-based counselling and support institutions; creating synergies and co-ordinating supply;</li> <li>2. Improving social cohesion in the neighbourhood and improving access to education and training for children, young people and their parents, especially from disadvantaged <i>families</i> (ethnic minorities, low-income households); fighting poverty;</li> <li>3. Enhancing the opportunities of local residents in the labour market and improving their employability through an improved supply of education, skills and training, and reconciliation between work and family life;</li> <li>4. Using education as a catalyst to regenerate a deprived urban neighbourhood and strengthen the area's social and economic assets, opening the neighbourhood to other city areas</li> </ol>
<b>Description of activities</b>	<p>The project consists of two interconnected parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The construction of a building ('architectural shell') for all relevant institutions including multi-functional rooms and offices, a shared kitchen and canteen. The two-storey building will also be home to parts of a school. The building itself meets modern standards in terms of energy efficiency and was designed by Westphal architects. It stands next to a school and a kindergarten and now forms the heart of a 'campus'. This 'public' use function is vital as the public realm is very limited in the neighbourhood.</li> <li>2. The creation and functioning of a network among educational facilities, municipal departments, NGOs and other social support institutions. Activities include a moderated planning and discussion process among all stakeholders, the use of rooms in the new building and a centre manager. This manager coordinates all activities in the centre and supports NGOs in their information work.</li> </ol> <p>Parts of the project which are not co-financed by the ERDF include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Construction of classrooms for the Robinsbalje school on the first floor;</li> <li>- Maintenance and running costs of the centre, including the salary of the centre manager.</li> </ul>
<b>Recipients</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local communities of the Huchting district, particularly children and their parents, migrant communities</li> <li>2. NGOs supporting local communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hans-Wendt Foundation</li> <li>- Foundation for equal representation and education (Paritätisches Bildungswerk)</li> <li>- 'Family Home' association (Haus der Familie)</li> <li>- Alte Eichen Foundation</li> <li>- Staff at Robinsbalje elementary school and kindergarten</li> <li>- Grolland social support centre</li> <li>- Huchting neighbourhood management (Soziale Stadt/WiN)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Mainstreaming of gender equality and non discrimination</b>	<p>Empowering marginalised or disadvantaged groups through the project is considered as a tool for advancing social inclusion and reducing poverty, both at city and at neighbourhood levels.</p> <p>In its formulation, the project also evokes the fact that empowered women can contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation. This role also concerns migrant communities where women can play a crucial role in integration and community acceptance. By focusing on migrant communities (e.g. German classes for migrant children and parents), by taking a gender approach to reconciling work and family (e.g. longer opening hours of childcare facilities, kindergarten and public services) and by increasing supply to meet the needs of local communities (e.g. community building activities), the project actively contributes to gender equality and non-discrimination.</p>
<b>Intended outputs and results</b>	<p>Envisaged impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering social cohesion and combating poverty in Huchting</li> <li>• Enhancing learning and education, especially for low-income families and migrant communities</li> <li>• Increasing employment possibilities for women esp. by widening possibilities for women to combine work with family (childcare, training, opening hours of schools)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving social structures and access to social and health services in the Robinsbalje neighbourhood</li> <li>• Enhancing co-operation between local actors in education, social and health services in Huchting</li> </ul> <p>Envisaged results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Creating a support network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhanced cooperation between all involved stakeholders</li> <li>- relocation of all institutions in the new centre or creation of special opening hours there</li> <li>- setting up a centre management (1 person)</li> <li>- involving local residents through specific neighbourhood services and offers</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) Construction of a building of 841m<sup>2</sup>, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 365m<sup>2</sup> for multi-functional purposes (shared for activities/events between stakeholders)</li> <li>- 245m<sup>2</sup> for offices (stakeholders)</li> </ul> <p>(rooms for school are excluded – total space of 1,296m<sup>2</sup>)</p> </li> <li>3) Overall: creation of new jobs: 6.</li> </ol>
<b>2. POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT</b>	
<p><b>National and regional framework for implementing ERDF funded urban development projects</b></p>	<p>The <b>German National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF 2007–2013)</b> forms the national framework for ERDF-funded urban investment and determines that EU funding will be invested in four strategic objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Innovation and development of the knowledge-based society as well as strengthening the competitiveness of the economy.</li> <li>2. Increasing the attractiveness of regions for investors and citizens through sustainable regional development.</li> <li>3. More and better jobs.</li> <li>4. Developing regions to promote opportunities and reduce differences (territorial priority/objective).</li> </ol> <p>Sustainable urban development is defined as one of three horizontal objectives (in addition to equal opportunities and the environment).</p> <p>The <b>Regional Operational Programme for Bremen (2007-2013)</b> is the basis for investment from the European Regional Development Fund (€142 million). In total, including national co-financing (approx. €101 million from the public sector and just over €78 million from the private sector), almost €322 million is available to implement the programme.</p> <p>When the ERDF programme was drawn up, the existing situation in the state of Bremen was assessed in terms of economic, social and ecological criteria. On the basis of these results, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks of the state of Bremen were ascertained and contrasted. A programme strategy was developed from this, with a view to developing greater competitiveness in Bremen as a region and thus increasing both productivity and employment rates.</p> <p>With regard to the implementation of the assistance strategy, two ‘priority axes’ (conceptual priorities) have been defined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority axis 1: Promoting growth – advancing innovation and knowledge</li> <li>• Priority axis 2: Activating urban commercial and residential areas</li> </ul> <p>Both priority axes are investing exclusively in urban settings and can therefore be considered as ‘urban’. However, priority axis 2 follows a more ‘classical’ understanding of integrated urban development and refers strongly to neighbourhood-based action.</p> <p>The Robinsbalje project is placed under sub-priority 2.1 of the programme, which focuses on ‘neighbourhood centres and development’ with a total budget of €9.5 million. The objective of this sub-priority (or ‘funding area’) is to improve social inclusion in Bremen’s most disadvantaged areas and to positively influence the living and employment conditions in selected areas. So far, five flagship projects (one of them being the Robinsbalje project) have been planned and/or implemented.</p>
<p>The planning context</p>	<p>The <b>city-region of Bremen</b> is the second most populous city in North Germany and 10th in Germany. Together with its port, Bremerhaven, it holds the status of an independent German</p>

	<p><i>Land.</i></p> <p>While the two cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven together had 547 535 inhabitants in 2010, the wider urban area comprises some 2.4 million. The city's economic development is dominated by export-oriented businesses, reflecting the city's past as major Hanseatic port. Since the decay of the shipping and fishing industry in the 1970s–1980s (with dramatic social consequences), the city-region successfully managed an economic transformation – Airbus, Mercedes and Beck's brewery are just a few of the big players in Bremen.</p> <p>However economic change led to severe social segregation in parts and a problematic situation in terms of long-term unemployment. The trend to spatial social segregation amongst Bremen's neighbourhoods has become increasingly visible since the 1990s, leading to increased efforts to foster social inclusion and economic cohesion. Based on 22 social indicators, a monitoring system for identifying problematic tendencies (<i>'Bremer Benachteiligungsindex'</i>) has been in place ever since.</p> <p>Amongst Bremen's very diverse neighbourhoods, the <b>district of Huchting</b> was identified as one of the city's hotspot for increasing social tensions and physical decay. One of the district's neighbourhoods (<i>Mittelshuchting</i>), which is now the location of the Robinsbalje project, climbed up the list of most deprived neighbourhoods from 25<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> place in the period from 2003 to 2009 alone. With a share of ethnic minorities as high as 37.3% in 2009, the neighbourhood is 10% higher than the city average. Also the number of unemployed persons, particularly long-term unemployed, as well as persons receiving social transfers, is significantly above average. And despite many educational facilities and schools in the area, the number of school graduates is way below city-wide figures.</p> <p>Based on ongoing city-wide social monitoring (see also section 3.1, needs analysis), the neighbourhood became part of Germany's national <i>Soziale Stadt</i> programme (Federal-Länder Socially Integrative City Programme, in the following: <i>Soziale Stadt</i>) and the regional WiN (<i>Wohnen in Nachbarschaften</i>) programme for deprived urban areas (communal programme for urban renewal in neighbourhoods) in 2005.</p> <p>The 2006 "integrated concept for action in Huchting", developed by the city of Bremen, identified four priorities for future support:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving the educational situation of citizens;</li> <li>2. Supporting social cohesion and co-operation in the neighbourhood;</li> <li>3. Strengthening local communities and cultural/sports activities;</li> <li>4. Extending social infrastructure and services.</li> </ol> <p>These four priorities represent the conceptual idea behind the Robinsbalje centre and – in a way – are condensed in this one project. The idea of connecting education with social inclusion gave birth to branding Robinsbalje as Bremen's first 'learning neighbourhood'.</p>
<p><b>3. IMPLEMENTATION</b></p>	
<p><b>3.1. PROJECT DESIGN AND PLANNING</b></p>	<p><b>Project idea</b></p> <p>The general approach originates from an EU-funded project ('Modern School', 1/1 – 31/12/2006, INTERREG IIIC) which explored the idea of using public schools as multi-functional institutions for urban neighbourhoods. The university of Bremen (institute for labour and the economy) took part in the project. The university published recommendations for setting up school-related 'district centres' in Bremen and was later involved in preparatory conceptual work for the Robinsbalje centre in 2006/7.</p> <p>Other partners in the INTERREG IIIC project included Groningen (NL), the East Riding of Yorkshire (UK) and Riga (LT). Groningen's <i>Vensterscholen</i> project was a major inspiration for the Robinsbalje centre and is mentioned in several of Bremen's project documents. <i>Vensterscholen</i> (Dutch for 'window schools'), set up for the first time in Groningen in 1996, bundle several functions for education, health and social inclusion, try to create synergies between public institutions and NGOs and envisage positioning schools as open neighbourhood centres.</p> <p><b>Needs assessment research and/analysis</b></p> <p>Bremen has a detailed system for monitoring the social and economic development of its neighbourhoods. Based on this data, regular reports (<i>Stadtteilberichte</i>) are delivered to the city's government. They also form the basis for 'integrated concepts for action' (<i>Integrierte</i></p>

*Handlungskonzepte*) which propose concrete projects in Bremen's neighbourhoods. These concepts also constitute the basis for national and regional urban rehabilitation funding (*Soziale Stadt, WiN*).

In the case of the Robinsbalje centre, the integrated concept from 2006 identified the Robinsbalje area as a potential location for an integrated 'District education centre', using the *Vensterschool* concept. The concept highlights the great potential of the location against the background of a deteriorating social situation (e.g. increasing unemployment among under-25 year olds, low percentage of graduates in comparison to a rather high density of schools in the area, missing connection between institutions and NGOs in the educational and social sectors).

Based on this analysis and its recommendations, initial planning for the Robinsbalje centre (as a pilot project in Bremen) started in 2007. From June 2007, the city-owned 'Bremen Real Estate Company' was commissioned to find a suitable location for the centre in the Robinsbalje area. In its recommendations, the company identified the current location on a former carpark between two other school buildings as best suited for the project.

#### **Selection by Managing Authority**

The official start of the project was in early 2008. As the Managing Authority is a department within the city-region of Bremen, the project selection took place within the programming process for the ERDF operational programme. Based on the needs analysis and the available funds, the Robinsbalje centre was earmarked for funding at a very early stage. It also has strong political support.

Formally, the project appraisal is based on an agreement between the Managing Authority and other city departments involved. In February 2008 (shortly after the launch of the operational programme), three different senators, one of them being in charge of the Managing Authority, proposed the project for approval in the city/regional government.

Throughout the process, the Managing Authority supported other city departments and ensured the compatibility of the project with the programme's objectives and selection criteria.

#### **Consideration of risks**

As the project was 'new ground' for the city of Bremen, it bore several risks:

- Potential lack of co-operation within the city administration: As the project is of an integrated, multi-sectorial nature, co-operation between different departments within the municipality represented a major challenge. A lack of co-operation could have led to the failure of the project.
- Potential lack of acceptance within local communities: As the project is something new, it involved a certain risk that it would not be accepted by local communities. However, as there was already a strong sense of co-operation amongst NGOs before the project, the risk turned out to be less important than feared. This included access to deprived families and ethnic minorities.
- Potential lack of ownership and management: A risk which was considered only quite late in the implementation phase was the need to have one central person to manage the centre. A lack of this person, who was hired in 2011, could have led to a lack of ownership and lack of co-operation among the stakeholders.

#### **Sustainability, results exploitation and transferability**

Already in the design phase, the project took sustainability, results exploitation and transferability into account.

As the building, the school and the kindergarten are run by the city, sustainability in terms of maintenance was ensured from the beginning. Costs are estimated at around € 63,000 per year. To create a sustainable network between schools, NGOs and other services, much effort was put into involving other partners at an early stage. Using the city's offer for a new space/platform for co-operation was therefore in the interest of NGOs and other partners right from the start.

In terms of results exploitation and transferability, the Robinsbalje centre functioned as a pilot project for other similar projects across Bremen. The positive results so far gave a boost to the idea of creating more school-related district centres. In case of failure, other projects would have been stopped.

#### **Role of ERDF support**

As the city of Bremen has been in a difficult financial situation for years, the financial support from the ERDF played an important role. Without it, an 'experimental' project like the Robinsbalje centre would probably not have received sufficient regional or national funding.

	<p><b>Involvement of other programmes and EU funds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU funds: The project is solely co-financed by the ERDF. It was proposed to involve the ESF in the functioning of the shared kitchen, but this idea was abandoned after a special project for disabled persons (handling the kitchen work) could be set up with national funds.</li> <li>• Other funds: In addition to the 2007-2013 ERDF programme, the Huchting district is targeted by two national funding programmes: ‘<i>WiN – Wohnen in Nachbarschaften</i>’ (living in neighbourhoods, since 1998) and “<i>Soziale Stadt</i>” (since 1999). Both programmes aim to improve the living conditions in the three neighbourhoods of Huchting. The allocation of budgets and projects is based on a neighbourhood-based, “integrated concept for action” which is regularly updated. Within both programmes, the participation of local communities plays a central role. Between 1998 and 2011, the WiN programme supported 260 individual projects with funding close to €2 million (the total investment reached approx. €5 million). The “<i>Soziale Stadt</i>” programme helped to implement 74 projects with total funding of €2 million in the period from 1999 to 2011. Total investment was €6.6 million. The “<i>Mittelshuchting</i>” neighbourhood, the location of the Robinsbalje centre, became part of both programmes in 2005.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.2. MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM</b></p>	<p><b>Selection of project manager</b> The project manager was appointed by the responsible city department (construction works). The centre manager was selected in 2011 by the educational department.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Management structure</b> The construction project was led by the City of Bremen, department for Education and Science, which out-sourced the day-to-day management of the construction works to a city-owned real estate company (‘Immobilien Bremen’). The conceptual work and the coordination of the network were done through ‘coordination roundtables’ which involved all stakeholders. Since 2011, the networking activities lay in the hands of a centre manager, who co-ordinates all activities and links different stakeholders.</p> <hr/> <p>Throughout the implementation period of the construction project, a total of seven people were working full-time on the project. Currently, one person is working full-time for the networking part of the project (centre management).</p> <hr/> <p><b>Steering groups</b> ‘Coordination roundtables’ involving all stakeholders took place every two to three weeks for around 1.5 years.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme monitoring: The project was part of the ERDF programme monitoring which follows the implementation and progress of all ERDF co-financed projects in Bremen. Through this system, the main indicators such as newly constructed space and the number of jobs created were monitored.</li> <li>• Project monitoring: The progress of the construction works was closely followed by the relevant city departments and the city’s real estate company.</li> <li>• Neighbourhood monitoring: A city-wide monitoring of social indicators at neighbourhood level is in place and is updated yearly.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Evaluation</b> No evaluation of the project and its impact has yet been conducted (too early).</p> <hr/> <p><b>Quantified targets, performance indicators</b> The main indicators have been defined in the original project proposal (job creation: 6 new jobs; and new multi-functional space: 841m<sup>2</sup>). As the final report of the project is not yet issued, no final comment can be made. However, it seems very likely that the two main indicators have been reached. Unfortunately, no further indicators for the project were defined in the beginning (e.g. number of participants in neighbourhood activities).</p> <hr/> <p><b>Overcoming obstacles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of ownership and management: Taking ownership and co-ordinating the work of</li> </ul>

	<p>different stakeholders turned out to be a major challenge right after the opening of the centre. There seemed to be a real need to have one central person to manage the centre. Therefore, a centre manager was hired in 2011 who since then has kept the spirit of co-operation and local ownership alive.</p> <p><b>Coordination with other EU funds</b> N/A.</p>
<p><b>3.3. GOVERNANCE: PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT</b></p>	<p><b>Composition of the partnership</b> The project involved a wide range of partners, including several city departments and public authorities as well as NGOs and local associations.</p> <p>Project leader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Bremen, represented by the Senator for Education and Science</li> </ul> <p>Public authorities involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Bremen, Senator for the Environment, Construction, Transport and European Affairs</li> <li>• City of Bremen, Senator for Labour, Women, Health, Youth and Social Affairs</li> <li>• Huchting District Administration (<i>Ortsamt</i>)</li> <li>• Municipal Health Services</li> <li>• Bremen Real Estate Company (<i>Gesellschaft für Bremer Immobilien</i>)</li> </ul> <p>NGOs and other stakeholders involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hans-Wendt Foundation</li> <li>• Foundation for equal representation and education (<i>Paritätisches Bildungswerk</i>)</li> <li>• Family Home association (<i>Haus der Familie</i>)</li> <li>• Alte Eichen Foundation</li> <li>• Staff at Robinsbalje elementary school and kindergarten</li> <li>• Grolland social support centre</li> <li>• Huchting neighbourhood management (<i>Soziale Stadt/WiN</i>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Roles of partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding provider: City of Bremen (as ERDF Managing Authority for EU funding, as city-region for co-financing), Federal Ministry for Urban Development (for <i>Soziale Stadt</i> funding)</li> <li>• Implementation of project: City of Bremen</li> <li>• End-user: Local communities in the area, schools, NGOs, Municipal Health Services, staff at Robinsbalje elementary school and kindergarten</li> <li>• Expertise provider: Bremen Real Estate Company, City of Bremen, Huchting neighbourhood management (<i>Soziale Stadt/WiN</i>), local communities through involvement in public participation process</li> <li>• Inspirational/creative contribution: University of Bremen, INTERREG IIIC project partners.</li> </ul> <p><b>Involvement of the public</b> Residents, tenants and service users (including ethnic minorities and low-income families) were actively involved in the design and implementation phase of the project. The WiN forum, which is the neighbourhood-based communication platform for local residents and communities, was used for monthly updates and discussion on the project. Through this mechanism, local communities could also influence the final shape of the project and the services provided there. This proactive communication was, according to local authorities, very positively perceived by local residents.</p> <p><b>Role of the city administration</b> The city administration played and plays a central role in designing, financing and implementing the projects. It also ensures their future maintenance.</p> <p><b>Leadership in the process</b> The project was led by the city of Bremen, Senator for Education and Science, who worked in close co-operation with other departments and stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Political support</b> From its initial planning stage onwards, the project was supported by the political level. This is manifested in the fact that three senators – as political members of the city government – jointly proposed the project for funding in the city’s parliament. This support was sustained after the change of political representatives following regional elections in 2011 and continues</p>

	to this day.
	<p><b>Innovative elements of the partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New ways of internal co-operation: Owing to the project's integrated, multi-sectorial nature, co-operation between different departments within the municipality was required to make the Robinsbalje centre a success. By involving an external moderator and by setting up very regular 'coordination roundtables' new ways of fruitful co-operation between municipal departments were discovered. These synergies are to be used for future projects which will take the Robinsbalje project as a blue-print.</li> <li>- Close cooperation between educational institutions, public authorities and local stakeholders: This form of co-operation is unprecedented in Bremen (and most parts of Germany). The 'democratic' dialogue between different stakeholders and the diminishing of traditional roles (public authorities regulate, NGOs carry out) led to a very fruitful 'togetherness'.</li> <li>- Involvement of the public: see section. 3.3 'Involvement of the public'.</li> </ul>

#### 4. INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS AND NOVEL APPROACHES

##### 4.1 INNOVATION

	<b>Innovative elements in...</b>
	<p><b>...Project design, planning and management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transfer of European experience into local context: The project's approach is widely based on a concept which stems from an Interreg III project and follows the Dutch <i>Vensterscholen</i> idea. Transferring the (innovative) idea from an interregional project represents a novel approach by using the knowledge gathered in a European programme in a local context.</li> <li>- Involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and users in the planning and design phase. As described earlier, a wide range of stakeholders, including local residents, was involved in setting up of the project. A visibly high satisfaction amongst users and local residents seems to be tightly linked to this aspect.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>...Communication and dissemination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internal communication: As mentioned earlier, strong emphasis on good internal communication was key to success. New methods included involving an external moderator and setting up 'coordination roundtables' which brought different municipal departments together.</li> <li>- Communication between educational institutions, public authorities and local stakeholders: A 'democratic' dialogue between different stakeholders and a culture of free speech can be identified as innovative elements in the project communication area. It resulted in a project which corresponds to the needs of users and services.</li> <li>- Outreach to local communities: Regular discussion and information for local residents is another asset of the project. This helped to create local ownership and acceptance of the new centre amongst local residents and communities. Overall, this link to end-users was a key to making the network of services work.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>...Exploitation of results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After the successful implementation of this project (to be considered as a pilot project in many ways), it can be assumed that this approach will be used in other neighbourhoods in the Bremen city-region.</li> <li>- Both in terms of partnership and of concept the project stands out from earlier ones (see section 6.3 'transferability') and delivered useful results.</li> <li>- The political level seems well aware of the project's success and will potentially pick the example up in policy-making.</li> <li>- In addition, the ongoing communication of results to other regions and at national level might lead to similar projects in other parts of Germany.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Initiator of new approaches – comparison to previous practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating innovative approaches: The city of Bremen, supported by Bremen University, acted as a main initiator of new approaches. This was complemented by the local stakeholders' push for a new co-operation approach.</li> <li>• Comparison to previous practice: In contrast to previous projects in the educational sector, the project reaches out to a wide range of institutions and services (including health, social services, integration of migrants) and involves them in all stages of the project. Therefore, the project goes far beyond education, and is strongly tied to the European social inclusion agenda. Schools, kindergartens and social NGOs no longer act in isolation but create synergies, both through proximity co-operation and through conceptual coordination of tasks and offers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.2. KEY IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND PROBLEM-SOLVING PRACTICES</b></p>	<p>The main challenges during implementation, main obstacles, adaptation to challenges: Firstly, the sectorial thinking of different municipal departments represented a major challenge in the design phase of the project. This lack of co-operative spirit was overcome by appointing an external moderator who facilitated co-operation between different departments. Later, this mechanism was also used to involve external stakeholders. Second, taking ownership and co-ordinating the works of different stakeholders turned out to be a major challenge right after the opening of the centre. There seemed to be a real need to have one central person to manage the centre. Therefore, a centre manager was hired in 2011 who since then has kept the spirit of co-operation and local ownership alive.</p>
<p><b>4.3. THEMATIC FOCUS</b></p>	<p><b><i>Europe 2020 inclusive growth</i></b></p> <p>The first important contribution to inclusive growth is made by the project's focus on education and skills. It is an integrated solution to a strongly interconnected challenge. As such, it helps people of all ages to anticipate change and improve their employability. By consciously lowering access barriers to education, the project supports e.g. bringing school drop-outs back into education. The new, open 'neighbourhood centre' is a concrete symbol of bringing education and skills back into the life of local communities. The project also addresses and involves the parents of the children and makes a contribution to the reconciliation of work and life.</p> <p>At the same time, the project supports specific target groups, especially women and young people, to get (back) into jobs and to raising the city's employment through counselling and coaching, childcare and extended school opening hours. In doing so, it makes an important contribution to inclusive growth, both in terms of employment growth and social balance. By focussing on the active involvement of ethnic communities in the project and by locating the Robinsbalje centre in one of Bremen's most disadvantaged areas, it helps fight poverty and improve the city-wide image of the neighbourhood.</p> <p>The project shows clearly how inclusive growth can happen at local level. Targeted investment in education and social infrastructures and the creation of synergies amongst existing NGOs and public institutions help to achieve higher levels of employment and to fight poverty. Overall, the project contributes to closing social gaps between a disadvantaged neighbourhood and the rest of the city – and to fostering social cohesion.</p>
<p><b>5. FUNDING</b></p>	
	<p><b>Budget and funding of the project</b>  Total budget: €2 764 500  ERDF contribution: €1 319 000</p> <p>national and regional budget: €1 445 500, of which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• national programme <i>Soziale Stadt</i>: €400 000 (1/3 national, 2/3 regional funding)</li> <li>• regional programme 'Impulses for social cohesion' (<i>Impulse für den sozialen Zusammenhalt</i>): €150 000</li> <li>• regional/city budget: €895 000</li> </ul> <p><b>Match with other programmes</b>  As the split of national and regional co-financing shows, the ERDF budget was matched with existing regional and national funding programmes for disadvantaged urban areas.</p>

	<p><b>Annual allocation of ERDF budget:</b>  2008: €0  2009: €0  2010: €1 319 000  2011: €0</p> <p><b>ESF cross-financing</b>  none</p> <p><b>Relation</b> of the project's budget to the overall annual budget of the city (€4 billion): minimal (less than 0.07%)</p> <p><b>Impact on local tax:</b> A positive impact on local tax generation can be expected through construction works.</p>
<b>6. PROJECT ASSESSMENT</b>	
<b>6.1. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY</b>	<p>The sustainability of activities was already taken into account in the project's design phase. The sustainability beyond the end of the programming period is therefore ensured. As the building, the school and the kindergarten are run by the municipality, sustainability in terms of maintenance was ensured from the beginning. For creating a sustainable network between schools, NGOs and other services, much effort was put into involving other partners at an early stage. Using the city's offer for a new space/platform for co-operation was therefore in the interest of NGOs and other partners right from the start. Even though the project did not start as a pilot action or action plan (e.g. from URBACT), it shows various elements which were influenced by an INTERREG IIIC project (see section 3.1).</p>
<b>6.2. TRANSFERABILITY</b>	<p>The project represents a city-wide pilot project whose experience will be used for other projects in the future. The approach of creating a new neighbourhood-based, school-related centre will next be used in Bremen's Gröpelingen district. In this future project, the centre will have a reach beyond the neighbourhood level and function at city-district level. The new approaches in terms of partnership (co-operation between municipal departments, synergies between stakeholders, involvement of the public) and in terms of concept (educational facilities to boost inclusive growth) will certainly be used in future projects in the city of Bremen.</p>
<b>6.3 ISSUES AND PROBLEMS</b>	<p>Obstacles which needed to be overcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of ownership and management: Taking ownership and co-ordinating the work of different stakeholders turned out to be a major challenge right after the opening of the centre. There seemed to be a real need to have one central person to manage the centre. Therefore, a centre manager was hired in 2011 who since then has kept the spirit of co-operation and local ownership alive.</li> </ul>
<b>6.4 PROJECT OUTPUTS &amp; RESULTS</b>	<p><b>Results:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The project succeeded in creating a neighbourhood-based platform which combines schools and childcare facilities with youth support and health services as well as other NGO-based counselling. In doing so, the centre creates synergies between services and offers, and makes services more accessible, especially for young people, marginalised groups and low-income families.</li> <li>2. By actively involving these groups, the project makes an important contribution to social cohesion in the neighbourhood and to fighting poverty. By improving access to education and skills training, the project also succeeds in closing the gap to other neighbourhoods and in reducing disparities at city level.</li> <li>3. The project improves the opportunities of local residents in the labour market by improving their employability through a better supply of education, skills and training – but also by making the combination of job and family easier (longer opening hours of social, childcare and health services).</li> <li>4. The Robinsbalje centre also successfully uses education as a catalyst to regenerate a deprived urban neighbourhood and to strengthen the area's social and economic assets. Recent, positive public news about the project also helped to improve the neighbourhood's image at city level.</li> </ol>

	<p><b>Outputs</b></p> <p>The project was completed in autumn 2010, well within the foreseen implementation period. Both parts of the project, the network and the building, achieved the envisaged results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cooperation between all involved stakeholders is up and running;</li> <li>- all institutions are either located in the new centre or have special opening hours there</li> <li>- centre management (1 person) has been set up and has been working since 2011</li> <li>- local residents are actively involved through specific neighbourhood services and offers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Building: completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new space of 841m<sup>2</sup>, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 365m<sup>2</sup> for multi-functional purposes (shared for activities/events between stakeholders)</li> <li>- 245m<sup>2</sup> for offices (stakeholders)</li> </ul> </li> <li>(rooms for school are excluded – total space of 1,296m<sup>2</sup>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Jobs created (overall): 6.</li> </ul>
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**7. CONCLUSIONS: KEY SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

	<p><b>Five success factors of key importance for the project</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) An integrated solution for an interconnected challenge: Achieving socially inclusive growth is therefore not a challenge for one sector only. Connecting different sectors, from education to social integration, from elderly people to childcare, is key when designing and implementing a project at local level. By creating an adequate built and social environment, the Robinsbalje project stands out as an integrated project for an interconnected challenge.</li> <li>2) Overcoming fragmented competences and ‘administrative silos’: To make such a project happen, cooperation between administrative units (or ‘silos’) was crucial. For many actors, this co-operation was new (and difficult) ground, but led to important synergies and new impulses for future projects. Looking beyond the borders of ‘business as usual’ also contributed to raising mutual understanding among colleagues and to widening the horizons of those involved.</li> <li>3) Committed project team and moderated team work: The openness of the project team to do something ‘new and different’ was key for the project’s success. Individual commitments were mediated by an external moderator who helped to overcome difficult situations and could act as a neutral facilitator in case of conflicts. Frequent internal coordination roundtables ensured continuous communication and avoided misunderstandings.</li> <li>4) Wide range of partners and local communities: In addition to an engaged internal cooperation, the project’s success was largely determined by the proactive involvement of local stakeholders, NGOs and citizens. While existing service providers (mostly from the NGO sector but also public bodies) could benefit from better co-ordination of offers and services, local communities now benefit from better accessibility and needs-oriented solutions. The frequent information given to local communities through neighbourhood services helped to achieve high levels of acceptance among local residents.</li> <li>5) Soft and hard measures are important and need to go hand in hand: The simultaneous work on creating networks of services and on constructing a new physical ‘shell’ was important to avoid phases of standstill and to boost enthusiasm amongst stakeholders and local communities. Also, one part would have not worked without the other.</li> </ol>
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**8. FURTHER INFORMATION**

Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.efre-bremen.de/detail.php?gsid=bremen59.c.2727.de">http://www.efre-bremen.de/detail.php?gsid=bremen59.c.2727.de</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.buergerengagement.bremen.de/sixcms/detail.php?gsid=bremen89.c.5281.de">http://www.buergerengagement.bremen.de/sixcms/detail.php?gsid=bremen89.c.5281.de</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://edoc.difu.de/edoc.php?id=7J201EVH">http://edoc.difu.de/edoc.php?id=7J201EVH</a></li> </ul>
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Contact	<p>See page 2 (<i>Ms. Annette Jüngst</i>)</p> <p><i>Project website:</i>  <a href="http://www.efre-bremen.de/detail.php?gsid=bremen59.c.2727.de">http://www.efre-bremen.de/detail.php?gsid=bremen59.c.2727.de</a></p>
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## Bremen, Germany

### **Robinsbalje, Bremen's Learning Neighbourhood**

Bremen's emblematic Robinsbalje centre, opened in 2010, connects education with social inclusion and urban regeneration. With financial support from the European Regional Development Fund, a multitude of public and non-governmental institutions have joined forces in new premises to give the Robinsbalje neighbourhood and its residents better prospects for the future. The 'learning neighbourhood' is an expression of strong local efforts to make a difference.

### **Robinsbalje, Bremen's Learning Neighbourhood**

Since 2010, Bremen (Germany) has had its first 'learning neighbourhood'. At its heart, the emblematic Robinsbalje centre connects education with social inclusion and urban regeneration. With financial support of €1 million from the European Regional Development Fund, a multitude of public and non-governmental institutions have joined forces in new premises to give the Robinsbalje neighbourhood and its residents better prospects for the future. With the Robinsbalje project, Europe 2020 and its objective of socially inclusive growth become tangible for local communities. The 'learning neighbourhood' is an expression of strong local efforts to make a difference.

In the brand-new Robinsbalje building, local communities can benefit from a broad range of services ranging from health care and social matters to job counselling and support for migrant families. By rethinking the traditional role of a school and widening the understanding of education, the Robinsbalje centre has become a unique, open 'learning neighbourhood centre'.

The centre, located in one of Bremen's disadvantaged neighbourhoods, gives a long-awaited impetus to urban rehabilitation in the area. Investing in education and social inclusion – both by building a new home for social and educational institutions and by creating a sustainable network amongst these institutions – has changed the neighbourhood's situation, face and future.

To make the project happen, cooperation between the city's administrative units was crucial. For many of those involved, this co-operation was new (and difficult) ground, but led to important synergies and new impulses for future projects. Looking beyond the borders of 'business as usual' also contributed to raising mutual understanding among colleagues and to widening the horizons of those involved.

**Bremen, Germany**

## ***Robinsbalje, Bremen's learning neighbourhood***

Since 2010, Bremen (Germany) has had its first 'learning neighbourhood'. At its heart, the emblematic Robinsbalje centre connects education with social inclusion and urban regeneration. With financial support of €1 million from the European Regional Development Fund, a multitude of public and non-governmental institutions have joined forces in new premises to give the Robinsbalje neighbourhood and its residents better prospects for the future.

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### ***Three things about Robinsbalje***

Albert Einstein once wrote: 'Imagination is more important than knowledge, because knowledge is limited'. Written across the two-storey entrance area, these are the first words you read when you enter the Robinsbalje centre in Bremen. Einstein's words are the centre's emblematic statement on its understanding of education. Education is more than just about going to school. It is about being inclusive, life-long learning, mutual cultural understanding and engaging in civic dialogue.

Overall, Robinsbalje stands for three things:

First of all, Robinsbalje is the name of a neighbourhood in Bremen's district of Huchting. Some 10,000 people live in and around Robinsbalje. The neighbourhood hosts several educational institutions and has plenty of large panel prefab blocks – and it is, by many standards, not the most attractive urban neighbourhood in Bremen (or Germany).

Secondly, Robinsbalje stands for the building which is now home of the 'Learning neighbourhood centre'. Designed by Westphal architects and built between 2008 and 2010, this building has a surface of over 1 200m<sup>2</sup>, of which three-quarters are used for the neighbourhood centre and one-quarter for a school.

Thirdly, Robinsbalje is a network of institutions, public and non-governmental, and local communities, which fills the building (and the neighbourhood) with life. It is the core of the 'Learning neighbourhood centre' which connects education with social inclusion and urban regeneration. It opens up the existing campus of the Robinsbalje grammar school and kindergarten to local residents – and offers easy-to-access services, from health care and social welfare to sports and the integration of migrants.

### ***Making a difference***

With the Robinsbalje project, Europe 2020 and its objective of socially inclusive growth become tangible for local communities. The 'learning neighbourhood' is an expression for strong local efforts to make a difference – and to make social cohesion more than just an empty promise.

Taking a wider perspective, it becomes soon visible that the Robinsbalje centre is not only a local project for local communities. It is part of Bremen's push for socially balanced, inclusive growth which will bridge the gap between richer and poorer parts of the city. By addressing important, education-related issues, the project responds to European calls to raise levels of employment and education. It is an integrated solution to a strongly interconnected challenge. By consciously lowering access barriers to education, the project tackles a host of issues, from bringing education and skills back into the life of local communities to raising awareness of health and integration. Targeted investment in education and social infrastruc-

ures and the creation of synergies amongst existing NGOs and public institutions help to increase employment and fight poverty. Entire families, from young schoolchildren to elderly people, and from all social backgrounds, are given the chance to prepare for change – and to enhance their chances of succeeding in an increasingly tough labour market.

At the same time, the project supports specific target groups, especially women and young people, to get (back) into jobs and to increase the city's employment through counselling and coaching, childcare and extended school opening hours. In doing so, it makes an important contribution to inclusive growth, in terms of both employment growth and social balance. By focussing on the active involvement of ethnic communities in the project and by locating the Robinsbalje centre in one of Bremen's most disadvantaged areas, it helps fight poverty and improve the city-wide image of the neighbourhood.

### ***Huchting, Bremen, Germany***

The city of Bremen is special in many ways. It is both a city and a region, and holds the status of an independent *Land* – a powerful role in federal Germany. And the city-region of Bremen actually consists of two cities, the city of Bremen and its historic port, Bremerhaven. While the two cities, Bremen and Bremerhaven, together had some 661 000 inhabitants in 2012, the wider urban area comprises some 2.7 million.

Bremen is often described as open to the world and proud – attributes which stem from its Hanseatic past. Even today, a culture of open dialogue and the visible self-confidence of Bremen's 'citizens' in politics makes the city distinct. Bremen's economic fate is also still strongly tied to its Hanseatic past: the city's economic development is dominated by export-oriented businesses, from famous coffee producers to airplane producers. While the decay of the shipping and fishing industries in the 1970s and 80s was a major blow to the city-region's economy, and had dramatic social consequences at the time, Bremen has successfully managed an economic transformation in recent decades. Production sites of Airbus, Mercedes and Beck's beer and also a thriving university scene have put Bremen back on the maps of investors and businesses.

Economic change has however led in places to severe social segregation and a problematic situation in terms of long-term unemployment. Bremen has the highest per capita debt of all German *Länder* and faces severe restrictions on public investment. Trends towards spatial social segregation amongst Bremen's neighbourhoods have become increasingly visible since the 1990s, leading to increased efforts to foster social inclusion and economic cohesion.

Amongst Bremen's very diverse neighbourhoods, Huchting – the district in which the Robinsbalje neighbourhood is located – was identified as one of the city's hotspots for increasing social tensions and physical decay. The neighbourhood around the Robinsbalje centre (*Mittelshuchting*) climbed up the list of most deprived neighbourhoods from 25<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> place in the period from 2003 to 2009 alone. With a share of ethnic minorities as high as 37.3% in 2009, the neighbourhood ranks 10 percentage points higher than the city average. Also the number of unemployed persons, particularly long-term unemployed, as well as persons receiving social transfers, is significantly above average. And despite many educational facilities and schools in the area, the number of school graduates is way below city-wide figures. Based on ongoing city-wide social monitoring, the neighbourhood became part of national and regional urban regeneration schemes.

### ***Success: fathers, mothers and a vision***

Two famous sayings are usually associated with the word 'success'. Firstly, 'Success has many fathers' – and secondly, 'Success requires a clear vision'. For the Robinsbalje project, both sayings hit the nail on the head.

Let us start with the 'fathers of success' – or, as would be more appropriate in this case, the mothers and fathers of success. It is clear that the city of Bremen, as promoter and financier, played a crucial role in developing (and later implementing) the Robinsbalje centre. The city

had a wealth of experience with schools in other urban regeneration areas – but was still looking out for a model which could better connect local initiative with education and social inclusion. Inspiration was found using old, Hanseatic pathways: The Dutch city of Groningen had been working on a similar issue since the mid-1990s and had created what it called *Vensterscholen*, Dutch for ‘schools with windows’. First set up in Groningen in 1996, this new type of school bundles together several functions related to education, health and social inclusion. Located in new, architecturally ‘open’ buildings, these schools try to create synergies between public institutions and NGOs and play the important role of open neighbourhood centres. Schools thereby become much more than simply eight-to-twelve teaching institutions, and turn into easy-to-access centres for local communities.

Fascinated by this idea, Bremen University set up an EU-funded exchange project under the Interreg III C programme in 2006. Under the project title ‘Modern School’ the cities discussed the idea of using public schools as multi-functional institutions for urban neighbourhoods. At the end of the exchange project, the University of Bremen published recommendations for setting up school-related ‘district centres’ in Bremen. As one of its ‘mothers’, Bremen University was later involved in preparatory conceptual work for the Robinsbalje centre in 2007.

Although the idea of Robinsbalje might have a strong tie to academic and conceptual vision, its very core is still deeply rooted in the local communities living in the neighbourhood. When the idea of a new centre was introduced into the neighbourhood, a broad co-operation between NGOs, schools and local residents already existed. Indeed there was a concrete need for something to connect and engage with. What was missing, however, was a common space – a place, a room, and a platform in which to co-operate on common issues. Whoever wanders around the Robinsbalje area will soon recognise that, owing to property issues, public space is virtually non-existent. Privately owned, multi-storey buildings (and gardens) do not allow common activities. The Robinsbalje school and kindergarten are among the few exceptions. It was therefore clear that opening up these public places to a wider audience would be one good solution to the problem.

But what about the vision required for success? In the case of the Robinsbalje centre it was the vision of a new, better neighbourhood which emerged in the mid-2000s. Against the background of deteriorating social indicators, an ‘integrated concept for action in Huchting’ was published by Bremen’s government in 2006. This paper developed the vision of a new Huchting. It is a vision that uses existing territorial assets in the educational area (schools, kindergartens, NGOs) to initiate social and economic change. Indeed the idea of connecting education with social inclusion gave birth to the idea of creating Bremen’s first ‘learning neighbourhood’. Quickly, the Robinsbalje neighbourhood was identified as a potential location for an integrated ‘District education centre’ (*Quartiersbildungszentrum*). A 2006 analysis highlights the great potential of the location against the background of a deteriorating social situation – and a largely missing connection between institutions and NGOs in the educational and social sectors. Based on this analysis and its recommendations, initial planning for the Robinsbalje centre started in 2007. The city-owned Bremen Real Estate Company quickly identified the current location on a former carpark between two other school buildings as best suited for the project.

### ***The Robinsbalje centre takes shape***

The year 2007, the start of the Robinsbalje planning process, was also the start of the new Structural Funds programming period 2007-2013. Bremen was granted some €142 million for an ERDF operational programme – a programme for increased competitiveness, but also more social inclusion.

The project, one of the city’s pioneer projects in education and urban regeneration, was picked up by the programme’s managing authority. Based on the needs analysis and the available funds, the Robinsbalje centre was earmarked for funding at a very early stage. The project fitted well into one of the ERDF programme’s priorities, which was to improve social inclusion in Bremen’s most disadvantaged areas and to positively influence living and

employment conditions. In February 2008, shortly after the official launch of the ERDF operational programme, three different senators, one of them being in charge of the managing authority, proposed the project for approval in the city government. This was not only a formal requirement but also an important symbolic act to demonstrate the co-operation across different policy fields. Out of the total costs of €2.2 million, 45% (or €1 million) are financed from the European Regional Development Fund. National and regional financial contributions account for the remaining €1.2 million, plus costs for new school rooms which were not EU-funded.



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Work on the Robinsbalje centre started in early 2008. While public authorities, NGOs and local communities started discussing the future use and synergies of the centre, the construction of the centre's architectural 'shell' progressed fast. After 13 months of construction, some 1 200 square metres of built environment had risen from the ground, and the Robinsbalje centre was officially opened on 10 November 2010. The three senators who



have jointly paved the way for this project politically, jointly cut the ribbon – and gave the Robinsbalje neighbourhood something it had been missing for a long time: a new centre, a common space, a platform for co-operation.

And what appears to have happened fairly fast was the result of a process which changed both public authorities and local communities – a process, which was difficult and long, but definitely worth it.

### ***No more silos!***

Integrated action is by definition something which goes across different sectors and competences. Translating such an approach into concrete projects often runs up against the logic of public administration whose different 'silos' have a tendency to close up rather than to co-operate. Projects which are 'different' are often disliked by old-school bureaucrats who consider 19<sup>th</sup> century categories of public service as God-given. And things seem to get harder the more budget, human resources and competences are involved.

The Robinsbalje project is 'different' in many ways: it is an education project – yes – but also a social project, a health project, a school project, a construction project, an EU project, an urban renewal project. Overall, the risk of failure due to administrative problems was serious, when the planning process started in 2007-8. The project clearly exceeded the scope of previous experience in terms of partnership and complexity. This might also be rooted in the fact that the educational sector has a great variety of highly specialised areas which tend to work very well in their respective fields of expertise but rarely have to co-operate on a broader scale. It is also linked to a new understanding of 'education' which is not strictly limited to schooling but also includes cultural learning and civic dialogue. To plan and implement the project, the city's department for education and science steered the process, involving a great variety of other departments – from construction and transport via labour and social affairs to municipal health services. To facilitate the discussion process, the project team hired an external moderator who also acted as a neutral base for resolving conflicts. Over a period of one-and-a-half years, the project team met every two to three

weeks to discuss both conceptual and technical matters. These 'coordination roundtables' served as a platform for delivering this integrated project – and as a symbol of how traditional 'silos' can be overcome. 'We did not know each other and had no idea how much positive overlap there is. This experience has definitely changed the way my unit works now. We try to be more open, cooperative and listening,' explains one of the members of the project team.

The spirit of good co-operation continues to this day. And following the positive Robinsbalje experience, the city's project team is already working on its next big thing: a learning neighbourhood centre for an entire city-district. This new facility which follows the concept for the Robinsbalje neighbourhood will be located in Bremen's Gröpelingen district, a notorious social hotspot and the city's most deprived area. The opening is foreseen for 2014.

### **Yes, we care!**

Bremen's self-image of being a citizen-driven and self-governed city-region is a fairly unique asset, stemming from Hanseatic times. While other German cities usually have a mayor, the city-region of Bremen has a *Präsident der Bürgerschaft* – probably most accurately translated as 'president of the citizens'. It is therefore not surprising that the Robinsbalje project is also closely linked to local empowerment. Throughout the planning process, local communities and NGOs played a vital role in designing the project – and since its opening, they have been key stakeholders in operating the learning neighbourhood centre. Numerous NGOs, volunteer associations and foundations act as service providers, complementing what

public authorities offer. While the city of Bremen pays for a dedicated centre manager, the maintenance of the building and several public services (such as the school and the health service), a multitude of privately providers also offer free-of-charge or low-cost services and activities to local residents. Private organisations like the Hans-Wendt-Stiftung, a foundation to help disadvantaged children in their development, the Alte Eichen association, an NGO supporting the integration of



Opening ceremony of the school © City of Bremen

migrants and the Mädchentreff, a specialised NGO helping troubled girls and young women, are but a few organisations contributing to the common objectives. Public institutions like the neighbourhood management (*Quartiersmanagement*), the local city district government, the local police station, school health service and numerous other localised city departments join in to improve living and working conditions in Huchting.

'It has been a long process of almost four years to coordinate all the services we offer and to create synergies. But we finally managed quite well,' says one of the NGO representatives when asked about the planning process. Indeed the number of services provided today is remarkable. The average European neighbourhood can probably only dream of such a wide range of services. In addition, a dedicated center manager takes care that all offers are well-coordinated – and well-suited to the needs of local communities.

What unites public and non-governmental service providers is their push to eliminate access barriers and to have their 'users' come to the centre regularly. Especially migrant families often need special attention and a good dose of personal commitment, as the centre's school doctor explains. Picking them up in the lobby and keeping in regular telephone contact helps to build confidence. 'I have many parents who come not knowing a word of German and having no chance on the job market. When they come for their children's school medical check, I try to show them what we offer here,' the doctor adds. One of his biggest successes, persuading a migrant mother to attend German classes in the centre, to visit job search

counselling sessions and to bring her 'out of complete isolation', is only one of the many moving stories told by those engaged in the centre.

Today, a bit more than one year after the start of the Robinsbalje centre, the team of helpers, service providers and volunteers can already look back at a number of successes. One of the greatest is the establishment of a new neighbourhood centre and communication platform for local residents.

The initial risk of not finding acceptance amongst Huchting's proud citizens has been overcome with some extra efforts to reach out – and empower local residents. And since 2011, when German's biggest and usually bad-news-loving tabloid, *Bild*, mentioned the Robinsbalje centre as a 'really good project', recognition sky-rocketed in and outside Huchting. It is well-deserved recognition.

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