

The IDELE Project

INTRODUCTION

As a part of the European Commission IDELE project, we are inviting project promoters and policy-makers to a seminar at the Jewish Museum in Berlin on 16th July 2004 to debate the following theme:

“Local actions for employment and economic insertion in large cities: promoting the inclusion of immigrant and minority ethnic groups”

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT

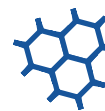
In recent years, employment and economic development has seen a shift of focus towards the local. ‘Local employment development’ rests on the idea that action can be taken locally to identify new sources of demand for labour. The argument is that, left to itself, the market can fail to meet certain gaps in local service provision and local approaches are needed to translate these gaps into real job opportunities. It is also acknowledged that the local level can make a significant contribution to assisting people in accessing local employment opportunities, through overcoming the barriers certain groups face in accessing employment.

The central question is how, in practice, people working at the local level can transform local gaps in service provision and local training opportunities into job creation. The main tool proposed by policy-makers is the partnership approach; partnerships are felt to combine both creative potential and good access to local knowledge, across a series of thematic areas. They also have the potential to bring key people (from the public, private and voluntary sectors) around the table, which is an important factor in implementing successful projects. There are, however, many different approaches to local employment development across Europe that can be used to tackle a variety of problems and issues at the local level. The identification, exchange and dissemination of such examples is one of the key aims of the IDELE project.

THE IDELE PROJECT

The European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs) has appointed ECOTEC Research and Consulting to implement the IDELE project to “identify, disseminate and exchange good practice in local employment development”. IDELE pays particular attention to identifying and disseminating best practice between localities that share common characteristics.

The IDELE seminars provide a platform for policy-makers and promoters facing similar problems to share a real dialogue about how the local approach can make a difference and thereby strengthen local employment development across Europe. The lessons, principles and tools identified will be disseminated across Europe.



The IDELE Berlin Seminar

The seminar in Berlin will be looking particularly at how local employment development activities can create routes into employment for immigrant and minority ethnic groups. It will identify good practice lessons, principles and tools that can inform European policy and be disseminated to localities and regions across Europe. The seminar will focus on:

- The role of local partnerships in removing barriers to job and enterprise creation that affect immigrant and minority ethnic groups with high rates of unemployment;
- Demonstrating how local authorities can act creatively to stimulate the development of sustainable, good quality jobs, accessible to all members of the local community, based on the innovative filling of service gaps;
- Demonstrating the effectiveness of local action in creating a climate of entrepreneurship and enterprise, particularly among immigrant and minority ethnic groups, and in supporting SME growth and job generation;
- The role of 'supportive policy environments': how policy makers at the European, national and regional levels can make it easier for local people to develop and implement local employment initiatives.

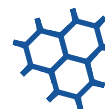
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: LARGE METROPOLITAN CITIES

Large metropolitan cities are generally characterised by dynamic labour markets with a significant number of potential employment opportunities. However, these cities are also home to particular groups that are disproportionately affected by high levels of unemployment and deprivation; notably immigrant and ethnic minority groups. These groups may find it particularly difficult to gain employment, other than in low-paid, low-skilled, insecure jobs, often in the informal economy. The challenge for those working in local employment development is therefore to find routes into employment for such groups. Within large metropolitan areas, the existence of fast-moving labour markets and the dynamism of population and residence (certainly in the inner cores) can make strategy development particularly difficult. Local partnerships may have to confront real issues of low attachment to a particular place and closer identity with communities based on ethnicity, faith or interest.

TARGET GROUPS

Recently arrived migrants often have particular problems in accessing the formal labour market. However, established minority ethnic groups can also experience difficulties. For example, research in the United Kingdom has shown a differential in employment rates between the white and minority ethnic working-age population of 17 percentage points (77% white, 59% ethnic minorities), a figure that has been relatively stable for the last two decades. Within certain sub-groups the employment rate is lower still.

The needs in relation to integration into local labour markets of established minority ethnic groups and recently- arrived migrants differ considerably. Moreover, different approaches will be needed to assist people with varying skills levels.



In order to reflect the diversity of need among the target groups, the seminar will draw on the following matrix to inform the debate:

	Recent immigrant groups	Other minority ethnic groups
High skilled	<i>Approaches might include ensuring the recognition of qualifications. Projects to provide skills audits, validation of prior qualifications</i>	<i>Approaches might include support for entrepreneurship and career progression Projects to tackle employer prejudice Positive action projects</i>
Low skilled	<i>Approaches might include language training Projects which help draw people away from the informal economy</i>	<i>Approaches might include outreach training projects Projects which seek to reintegrate demoralised and disenfranchised groups</i>

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE

The core question for the seminar is:

How can local employment development initiatives be tailored to address the needs of immigrant and minority ethnic populations in large metropolitan cities?

There are a number of underlying questions related to this theme:

- 1 What opportunities are present in large metropolitan cities for those working locally to develop access to employment and entrepreneurship amongst immigrant and minority ethnic groups? For example:
 - Exploiting gaps in local service provision to develop employment and entrepreneurship among immigrant and minority ethnic populations
 - Addressing and working to “regularise” employment in the informal economy
 - Combating discrimination among employers and in the workplace
 - Meeting the needs of immigrants from within the enlarged EU
- 2 Which tools and approaches are most relevant to different types of target groups?
- 3 What are the constraints to working locally in large metropolitan cities?
- 4 What lessons exist regarding the successful management of projects and partnerships in this field?
- 5 How can local, regional and national policy contexts best support local action in this area?
- 6 How do local, regional and national policy contexts influence the transferability of the tools and approaches used?