
CASE STUDY: VOIVODSHIP OF KATOWICE, POLAND

Background

Many new Member States are only beginning to build local partnerships and other less formal governance structures for the first time. The example of the Voivodship of Katowice provides a good example of these forms of governance in a traditionally centralised new Member State.

The local context

The Silesian region of Poland has experienced a period of fast economic restructuring and growth (5.9% in first quarter of 2004) but which has tended to bypass the potential of the labour force and the potential to grow indigenous business (SMEs). Reskilling of the labour force lags behind economic restructuring leading to high unemployment (19.7%), and opportunities to develop indigenous small and medium sized enterprises have been missed with insufficient availability of capital investment and state investment (e.g. in R&D). As a result there is an increasing recognition of the need for a more structured approach to economic development including ‘soft’ measures to spread the benefits of economic growth (e.g. education, social development measures).

Activities

Reflecting this new approach, in 1997 the Voivodship of Katowice has started establishing Local Development Agencies as a basis for the development of Local Pacts as initiatives for community support for development. The mission of the development agencies is to address unemployment and support local economic development in particular cities and poviats. There have been variations in the way that local partnerships have developed. Initiatives implemented have included business incubators, training centres, loan guarantee funds, counselling for SMEs and personal resource banks. In addition ten Local Employment Pacts have been developed in the region under the PHARE programme – and forming part of the Silesian regional employment strategy involving the voivodship regional government, labour office and regional partners (NGOs and business).

Lessons

- Economic development is indispensable, but it has to be supported by ‘soft’ measures: (education, CVT, social development, efficient systems of legislation, justice and administration, public safety etc.)
- The Voivodship of Katowice is a good example of local partnership working in a traditionally centralised new Member State.