



Stadt Leverkusen



Wachsen mit dem Alter

Perspektiven und Strategien einer Aktivierung der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Potenziale einer alternden Bevölkerung

Expertise im Auftrag der Stadt Leverkusen
mit Unterstützung durch die EU
im Rahmen des Interreg IVb- Projektes „Cities in Balance“

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Abstract: Leverkusen – growth and ageing

Research objective

Target of this study was to investigate the status of Leverkusen with regard to age-friendliness and sustainability in view of social ageing. In detail the interdependency between demographic ageing and economic chances that indwell this process had been observed. From these findings a concrete strategy and operation recommendations had to be derived.

Approach

The study is based on the theoretic preliminary design of the concept of welfare-pluralism (cf. Esping-Andersen 1990; Evers/ Olk 1996) and on the continuously enhanced concept of silver economy (www.seniorenwirt.de), for the first time published in the “Wirtschaftskraft Alter” memorandum (cf. FFG, IAT 1999).

Annotation to the method

The survey is based on the secondary analyses of available data and statistics of the demographic and socio-economic development in Leverkusen and comparable cities, as well as on the evaluation of relevant literature, internet research and field work. Since a great number of projects dealing with the senior citizen-friendly and generation even-handed development of municipalities and regions have been conducted in the past years, the results were integrated in this study according to their relevance.

The secondary analyses were supplemented by a number of (qualitative) expert interviews and an addressee orientated review process. With the interviews special problem areas as well as already existing model projects and initiatives for the improvement of a senior citizen-friendly local development have been identified. Expert appraisal took place within an addressee workshop, when the concept of the study as well as intermediate results and project proposals were presented, discussed with and rated by the participants.

As the key instrument for the analysis of age-friendliness and demographic stability in Leverkusen the welfare-triangle, developed within the concept of welfare-pluralism, was used. The close and coordinated interaction of the three performance sectors market, state and third sector to this concept is a prerequisite for the optimization of available welfare potentials, be it on the micro-level (persons), the meso-level (e.g. municipalities, regions) or the macro-level (provinces, states).

Since all three sectors follow different mechanisms and logical frameworks, loss of production in one sector can only be compensated by a production increase in the other two sectors in a very limited way. This approach demonstrates how distinct the single performance sectors are, where overbalances and deficits exist and how they interact. This was transferred to the City of Leverkusen. As indicators the criteria for the valuation of age-friendliness of a municipality, devel-

oped by the World Health Organization (WHO) within the “age friendly cities” initiative has been used.

Socio-demographic facts

On this occasion a short socio-demographic classification of Leverkusen is given. The most important result is the awareness that the population in Leverkusen is ageing but hardly shrinking. Compared to other cities with a similar structure and size a low external migration and with regard to young families even a positive migration balance is recognized.

Based on long-term considerations, in the forecast for 2030, the average age of the Leverkusen population will increase slower compared to other cities in North Rhine-Westphalia. This means that for Leverkusen, too, the state-wide trend applies that certain metropolitan areas, to which the so called “Rheinschiene” from Düsseldorf to Bonn belongs, show a converse, meaning obviously better population development than other regions.

From an employment and labour market point of view Leverkusen is affected by its intense involvement into the metropolitan area of Cologne / Düsseldorf, so that the development of job-offers and employment as well as measures of local economic policies always have to be considered in a regional context. These regional relations explain the deviation in the functional classification, partly realizing functions as a regional centre for the surrounding counties, partly appearing as a county centre.

Earning capacity and purchasing power of the Leverkusen population are slightly above the state average and correspond to the earning level of the Cologne population, however, are beyond the earning level of the surrounding counties. Related to the disposable income, the low cost of living compared to the neighbouring cities of Düsseldorf and Cologne suggest good financial endowment, though. From an economic point of view the elderly population is relatively well-positioned. The household income of elderly people in Leverkusen compared to other regions of North Rhine-Westphalia is in the upper third, the percentage of people with 65 years of age and above suffering from poverty is under 5%.

Results and operation recommendations

Concerning age-friendliness and ageing policy Leverkusens’ position is a very good one. There are a lot of offers and attractions for old inhabitants: a high quality of life, a good health-related quality of life and a comprehensive health care system enable the older residents predominantly to enjoy a good and comfortable life.

Thus the performance sectors state and third sector take care and ensure that this situation will last as long as possible. This is particularly based on the recommended pillars: municipality of Leverkusen and charity organisations, voluntary engagement of seniors themselves. But this voluntary engagement of seniors is not just engagement from seniors for seniors; it also has an in-

tergenerative aspect. Because most of this voluntary work is directed at younger people, families and children and hence contributes to the solidarity among the generations.

The contribution of the third performance sector – the market – to the improvement and ensuring of the quality of life of the elderly people in Leverkusen is considerably low. On one hand it is not a recent problem, but it will be, if the financial latitude of the municipality and the charity organisations decrease and the long-term assurance of good life conditions for seniors are questionable. The question is: who will assure the good life conditions for seniors in the long run? For this, strategic considerations should be targeted on the recent status but should also search for possibilities of refinancing through private actors with less or even without subsidization.

On the other hand the discovery of the seniors market is not the focal point of the private enterprises' strategies yet, although there are reasons to look for inherent impulses for economic growth and employment. The increasing number of seniors, their still increasing buying power, the older consumers' sensitivity to the quality and advisory performance and the age specific change in the consumption requirements show the necessity of looking at the seniors market in order to meet future requirements.

In this spirit silver economy is meant to put an expected win-win effect on both sides into practice: an enhancement of the quality of life for the senior citizens and the mobilisation of growth and the creation of jobs and innovations for the economic actors on the other side. The city of Leverkusen provides many opportunities in this area of silver economy, but they are still in an early stage of progress and a lot of work is still to be done. Especially the economic lacks in openness to the seniors market and in sensitivity to the needs of elderly customers.

Therefore a lot of the following recommendations take the issues of sensitivity and qualification related to the development of the silver economy into consideration. Summing up the recommended steps could be characterised as follows:

- Raising awareness

Although almost every part of the society is affected by the demographic change in these times, predominantly knowledge and increased awareness of the needs and consequences of this process and its protagonists is found in the social sector. Therefore suggestions have to be made for the private sector as well as for the employees in many municipality departments. The chances of the demographic change, the silver economy, the needs of older people and products and services focused on the needs and lifestyle factors of this target group have to be taken into consideration.

- Mobilization and activation

But it's not information only. The private economy actors need to be mobilized, so they take care of these chances and set adequate strategic objectives. Services and products for more quality of life are a growing future market. Thus it is necessary to promote the silver economy and give examples of good practice in different economic segments, as the seniors economy is not consid-

ered as an own economic sector but rather as a cross-section market which consists of several areas like: housing, trading, IT, mobility, sports, leisure and recreation, home services, clothing etc..

- Qualification

The adaptation of the seniors market requires explicit knowledge about the target groups of the seniors market, their quality notions and demands and their (age-based) health impairments and characteristics. While most enterprises and their industrial, business and trade associations have not discovered the silver market yet, there is a need of more qualification opportunities for the employees and the managerial staff.

- Customer orientation

For a long time, the providers of consumer goods and service markets have paid little attention to older people as consumers. They focused on lucrative target groups in the age of 19 to 49. A closer differentiation of the older target groups was not an objective. But the elderly are an increasingly lucrative as well as heterogeneous population group and hence have different consumption wishes and needs. They have become more demanding and more critical regarding quality, service and price. Enduring success in seniors economy can only be accomplished by a unique addressing of these heterogeneous target groups. This should be done as individual and differentiated as possible.

In order to give impulses for products and services which meet consumer demands, there are several action fields to work in, e.g. in

- senior-orientated crafts, trading and resale services,
- senior-orientated and barrier-free product innovations,
- attempts to enable older people to stay in their own apartments for as long as possible e.g. through, the development of services close to home,
- the enhancement of sports, wellness and recreation offers,
- supporting the handling of new media.