



## Compact Cities: Berlin's focus urban medicine

As the world's first capital city to join the UN Global Compact, Berlin is working to shape a framework for urban development which is just, and socially and ecologically responsible. Accordingly, Berlin joined the UN Global Compact Cities Programme (Cities Programme) in 2005, seeking to learn from other local contexts and to work closely with companies and other figures in civil society to solve urban problems.

### A focus on urban medicine

As its first project under the Cities Programme, Berlin is concentrating on the issue of "urban medicine". Large numbers of people of different origins living in close quarters in a restricted geographical area pose particular challenges for medical care. Urban medicine deals with patterns of disease that are found more often in major metropolitan areas than elsewhere. HIV/AIDS, other infectious diseases, psychiatric illnesses, and the specific health needs of immigrant residents, as well as children and teenagers, all require special treatment options. Demographic change in urban populations is also an issue for urban medicine.

In connection with Berlin's involvement in the Cities Programme, the Berlin Senate joined health care providers Vivantes and Charité in holding a conference at the Berlin Town Hall in September 2007 on the subject of urban medicine.

The experience acquired by Berlin and other international metropolises in urban health care – especially in the area of health care for immigrants, epidemiology, and the medical impact of environmental pollution – was made available to interested partner cities. By helping to identify and establish best-practice models in the area of sustainable public health care, disease prevention, and aftercare, the cosmopolitan city of Berlin also hopes to contribute to creating a socially engaged and responsible framework for urban development.

### Active Health Project – Improving immigrants' access to health care



"Active Health – Strategies to improve immigrants' access to health care by promoting awareness and empowerment" is a continuation of Berlin's commitment to the Cities Programme. This project is being realized under

the supervision of BGZ (Berlin International Cooperation Agency), a joint public-private institution funded by the federal state of Berlin and the Berlin Chamber of Skilled Trades in cooperation with Berlin's Senate Department for Health, the Environment and Consumer Protection and the organization Gesundheit Berlin. It was funded during the pilot phase by the European Commission as part of the "Community Action Program to Combat Social Exclusion (2002-2006)".

"Active Health" addresses two core issues of metropolitan health at the same time: (1) specific health problems experienced by immigrants and (2) the health care policy challenges triggered by demographic

#### About the UNGC Cities Programme

The UNGC Cities Programme is an urban-focused component of the UN Global Compact. The programme provides a unique model for cities across the globe to develop innovative and practical solutions to intractable social, economic or environmental challenges. The Cities Programme offers a framework for building constructive, all-sector collaborations between business, government, and civil society, to tackle deeply rooted urban challenges – for example, slums, transport, pollution and sanitation. It is open to metropolises around the world that are ready to adopt an alternative governance approach that harnesses the ideas, knowledge, experience and resources across these sectors, to improve the quality of urban life. To join the programme, a city's most senior representative (e.g., mayor) sends a letter to the UN Secretary-General committing to undertake a pilot project, which aims to deliver concrete outcomes to a particular urban issue.

More information: [www.citiesprogramme.org](http://www.citiesprogramme.org)

change in metropolitan areas. The project is geared towards Global Compact Principles 1 and 6: "supporting and respecting human rights within one's own sphere of influence" and "eliminating discrimination in hiring and employment".

"Active Health" is aimed at increasing immigrant involvement in shaping the health care system and at promoting awareness of interculturalism among stakeholders in politics, the administration, business, education, civil society, and immigrant organizations themselves. Immigrants in particular still experience significant social disadvantage when it comes to health care access. The "empowerment" aspect of the project is based on the insight that immigrants' access to the health care system is best when they themselves are part of the system. As a result, "Active Health" aims to attract immigrants to the health professions and, in the medium term, to increase the percentage of immigrants working in the health care sector. There are already a number of concepts and good-practice examples of interculturalism in this sector.

### **Active Health – Key Activities**

BGZ carried out many different pilot activities last year aimed at getting stakeholders on board including network meetings, roundtable discussions, seminars for opinion leaders, workshops and media campaigns. The "Active Health" network supports these activities as a platform for strategy development, exchanges on good-practice examples, and assistance with getting new services included in regular public services. From the outset, one fundamental aspect was the active involvement of immigrants' organizations, which have concentrated experience with specific cultures and access to Berlin's diverse cultural communities.



The heart of "Active Health" is the work with immigrants themselves – especially with young people facing the challenge of choosing a profession. BGZ and Gesundheit Berlin are supplying extensive informational materials on the health professions (e.g., posters, flyers, website). The volunteer "career advisor" campaign started in September 2007. These volunteers are health professionals who have a migration background themselves. They go into schools, youth centres, and family centres to talk to young people about job prospects, to introduce them to various professions, and to answer questions. This volunteer "career advisor" model has proven to be an excellent way of creating interest in professions with which immigrants tended to be unfamiliar.

### **Active Health – Next Steps**

The activities initiated by "Active Health" will be continued in 2008, despite the fact that funding from the European Commission has come to an end. BGZ and Gesundheit Berlin will be concentrating on the work being done with the volunteer "career advisors" and on maintaining the stakeholders network. Negotiations with the federal state of Berlin on long-term financial support for the project are underway.

With these and other projects, institutions in Berlin will continue to bring important new aspects that contribute to and help advance our urban medicine focus.

*More information on "Active Health" is available at [www.activehealth.gesundheitberlin.de](http://www.activehealth.gesundheitberlin.de) (for stakeholders), [www.gesunde-perspektive.de](http://www.gesunde-perspektive.de) (for young people), and [www.bgz-berlin.de](http://www.bgz-berlin.de).*