

## Case study

### “Round Table for Business and Youth”



#### Overview

<b>Driver</b>	UPJ supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Federal State of Brandenburg, the State Chancellery and the state body for youth welfare (Landesjugendamt Brandenburg (LJA))
<b>Country</b>	Brandenburg Region, Germany
<b>Societal issue addressed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ respond to the many societal challenges in Germany (such as unemployment, missing or insufficient cultural life and social infrastructure)</li> <li>▪ improve future opportunities in community for young people in the German Federal State of Brandenburg (formerly part of the GDR) by involving companies in corporate citizenship activities</li> </ul>
<b>Partners</b>	Businesses; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Federal State of Brandenburg; state bodies for youth welfare; Secretary for volunteering and active citizenship in the office of the Prime Minister of Brandenburg in the State Chancellery; Ministry for Economy
<b>Status</b>	Initiated in 2003, still ongoing
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Spin off” projects on regional and local basis throughout the region</li> <li>▪ Growing number of member-companies</li> <li>▪ Growing involvement of NPOs and local authorities (special working group of 15-20 organisations)</li> <li>▪ Growing support by state government</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Back up time effort in the start-up phase for configuration, development and proving of the Round Table</li> <li>▪ Balancing businesses’ high requirements on the Round Table’s work with the project’s workaday life, in which all the involved businesses (can) only bring in limited resources</li> </ul>

#### Executive Summary

The “Round Table for Business and Youth” is a growing network of 25 SMEs and large enterprises engaging in certain aspects of CSR with a focus on community investment. The network is supported and coordinated by UPJ. Its aim is to respond to the many societal challenges in Germany, in some cases especially in the new federal states, such as unemployment, missing or insufficient cultural life and social infrastructure with few perspectives for young people, and to improve future opportunities. On the basis of two meetings a year, participants agree on projects to be developed by the whole network or by some members in their sectors, regions or the whole federal state according to their objectives and possibilities. The prime minister of Brandenburg is the patron of the Round Table.

The initiative relies on the cooperation of enterprises of different sizes and sectors, and benefits from the participation of an experienced intermediary organisation (UPJ), which can provide sufficient resources, push the initiative forward and act as a facilitator. Anchored in the local community, concrete actions are decided and implemented through a step-by-step approach, which involves SMEs closely in the process. Finally, awareness that social cohesion and strong communities are important factors for the local development of business and that CSR / business engagement in the community can have a strong impact on that is raised through the initiatives of the Round Table, not only among the members but also among other businesses in the region. By offering an opportunity for companies to get involved collectively in CSR, this project also has the potential to improve their competitiveness in the longer term.

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The project is supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Federal State of Brandenburg.

## 1. Situation and societal issue

Developing “good” conditions for the next generation has become an important issue for a company’s site. Demographic Change, (youth) unemployment, tendencies of violence and intolerance, employability and education, self-entrepreneurship and community engagement, a good social infrastructure and cultural environment – these topics mark substantial challenges for regional development in general as well as in the region of Brandenburg.

These challenges cannot be solved neither by government and administration nor by companies or civil society organisations alone. It requires efforts and engagement by all actors in the community to come up with innovative solutions – solutions that could only be borne by co-operation between companies, public administration and civil sector organisations who together take responsibility and co-operative action for a positive development of their community.

## 2. Partners

The Round Table was initiated by UPJ together with three companies, the regional Chamber of Commerce and two state bodies for youth welfare (Landesjugendhilfeausschuss (LJHA) and Landesjugendamt Brandenburg (LJA)). An over the years lightly growing funding comes up to now from the Brandenburg ministry of education. In strong interdependence with the growing number of projects and members and the step-by-step cooperation with the Brandenburg Ministry of Economy as well as the Secretary for Volunteering and Active Citizenship in the Prime Minister’s Office, the Prime Minister (incumbent Mr. Matthias Platzeck) joined as official patron.

Starting as a result of the first conference in Brandenburg on possible impacts of business engagement in the community together with NPO and local authorities “Ein Gewinn für alle” (benefits for all) in 2001, the Round Table was established, putting UPJ in the role of the facilitator. No civic organisations are involved directly, but they are represented by the LJHA and are organised in a special working group on Corporate Citizenship, which is as well coordinated by UPJ. Engaging in a consensual policy, new businesses are invited as members of the Round Table directly by existing members.

## a. Driver

Funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Federal State of Brandenburg and supported by the LJA UPJ facilitates the meetings and the organisation of the framework. UPJ acts as intermediary between NPOs of various sizes in the region and the Round Table and facilitates the involvement of new businesses as partners and the co-operation between participants.

The particular projects carried out by the Round Table are driven by businesses involved in the framework. No project will begin or is rolled out without one company-representative taking over responsibility and acting as central player in the implementation. Acting as driver for tangible ideas, they procure manpower and means for the realisation. UPJ as facilitator provides organisational aid in particular questions and helps in the self-control of goal-achievement.

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## b. Businesses

The set-up of the Round Table lays the sole responsibility onto the businesses. The Round Table was set up together with businesses, every single company has to give a strong personal commitment when coming up to the table. Every meeting is prepared by a small group of members, every project has to be owned by one or more companies at the Round Table, developed by their own, together with others or with the broker. The companies have to take responsibility for the projects, provide manpower and organisational resources. Many of them – even the bigger ones – cannot take much financial spending. At the Round Table they find partners for joint programmes on various levels and include other members as participants or facilitators for projects.

The businesses come from various industries and all areas in Brandenburg, membership encompasses small and medium businesses as well as global players' local branches.

Members, amongst others, are: AOK Brandenburg, ArcelorMittal, Berliner Volksbank, Bosch Siemens Hausgeräte, E.ON Edis, GSE PROTECT, Heidelberger Druckmaschinen, Manpower Berlin-Brandenburg, SIK-Holz and many more; some of them being members of the German Corporate Citizenship and CSR Network run by UPJ.

## c. Community organizations

Community partners such as Nonprofit Organisations, local volunteer agencies, schools, youth clubs, headmasters' associations, sporting facilities and local authorities etc. are involved in the executive phase of concrete projects or UPJ brings in ideas developed in the special working group of NPO on Corporate Citizenship. They have three different possibilities to get connected with the businesses: as a partner within a company's project, in a project developed in co-operation with some companies or by initiating their own project, for UPJ is looking for business partners at the Round Table.

The strategy of the Round Table incorporates the idea of a separate platform for businesses in the region. UPJ acts as broker between the Round Table and community partners not to lose balance in numbers of stakeholders due to the relatively small

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scale of the project. The community organisations are themselves organised in a workgroup for business co-operation. UPJ acts as a intermediary and makes contact for businesses with projects or for community organisations that have ideas for projects and brings them together.

As one of the exemplary projects spun out of the Round Table, Local Community Marketplaces and Local Business Action Days for Community Engagement were installed annually in all the big cities. These “catalysing projects” bring Corporate Citizenship / community engagement to the local level and involve local charities, companies, municipal bodies and regional development agencies.

#### **d. Broker/ intermediary organisations**

The set-up of the Round Table allows for the businesses to be involved as equals amongst each other. It is crucial to the success of this approach to have an interested but “neutral” facilitator to ensure the fair and full involvement of the businesses. The broker takes the burden of organisational issues from the participants and ensures the sustained quality of the projects.

As there are no third-sector organisations directly involved in the meetings, the broker (UPJ) can stimulate the discussion by introducing the point of view and experiences of charities.

UPJ played an important role in setting up the Round Table, laid out the general design of the project and provides general organisation. Together with a small preparatory group, that changes from meeting to meeting, UPJ as broker sets up the agenda, looks for new possible initiatives or projects of companies and provides moderation of the meetings and the organisational framework, such as communication and invitations to meetings. Together with the participating businesses and public bodies, they developed a mutual obligating negotiated agreement, all involved businesses sign upon entering the circle. These negotiated guidelines encompass commitments to

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- Support social learning
- Invest time and engagement at professional standards
- Work reliably, goal-driven, as partners and in a team
- Provide transparency to the interested public
- Advance possibilities for young people to improve their personal development

UPJ provides central services such as negotiating with prospective members upon suggestion by the Round Table, following up current projects, providing documentation of other CSR projects, involving external partners, evaluation and public relations.

UPJ acts as intermediary between the Round Table, the workgroup of Nonprofit Organisations and local authorities in Brandenburg. Although the ideas and commitments for projects are developed by the businesses, this interconnectivity provides input and inspiration, links to relevant partners and public bodies.

The members of the Round Table invite other relevant businesses to join them. Through this way, businesses are not approached by an unknown body, but through established business connections. This procedure facilitates the individual involvement, as business partners can identify the relevant players within the prospective member organisations. At the same time,

this joining routine limits the growth of the Round Table. Members hesitate to invite too many new partners at one time and show contentedness with the number of businesses involved at the moment.

#### **e. Public administration and government**

The state bodies for youth welfare (Landesjugendhilfeausschuss (LJHA) and Landesjugendamt (LJA)) are involved but without playing a central role. Furthermore, the Brandenburg ministry of education and the State Ministry of Economy take part in the meetings and sometimes provide support. Situated in the office of the Prime Minister of Brandenburg in the State Chancellery the Secretary for volunteering and active citizenship connects all activities of the Round Table with official policy in that field in Brandenburg. With a growing CSR-debate in Germany and a growing number of projects of the Round Table the Chamber of Commerce Potsdam as one of the founding members takes a more and more active role.

Further public bodies, such as municipalities are incorporated in concrete projects.

### **3. Programme Description**

#### **a. Initiation**

The project initiators closed ranks between state bodies, local administration, businesses and civic organisations. They wanted to improve future opportunities in community for young people in the German Federal State of Brandenburg (formerly part of the GDR) by involving companies in corporate citizenship activities. Especially the absence of future perspectives and less possibilities for individual development (vocational training, further education, job security and founding a family, to name a few) of good qualified young people in a non-attractive region concerning work, culture, diversity and infrastructure was identified as the big issue being addressed within the Round Table.

UPJ acts as facilitator and organises semi-annual meetings, takes over the chore of inviting the participants, laying out the framework of the meetings, bringing good practise from other parts of Germany to the Round Table, initiating and follow up individual projects.

#### **b. Process**

A. Every meeting follows the same general agenda:

- Report about the project's status
- Input to new topics, forms of engagement or projects
- Working phase and short report on the agreement of new activities
- Creation of the preparatory group, agreement on host and date of the next meeting

B: Implementing the agreed activities, if needed with support from UPJ

C: At the same time

- Online communication through UPJ about the Round Table and its activities, the working-group NPO
- Information for further actors
- Attracting new member companies

Important progress: In the beginning businesses in the Round Table were mainly represented by committed individuals out of a company – in small and medium sized businesses this often was the director or owner, in larger companies an executive manager. Since the individuals from bigger member companies were often not provided with special tasks or resources for Corporate Social Responsibility or Corporate Citizenship they neither had the possibilities to decide upon several projects nor to implement them. For this reason directors of the bigger companies were also invited to set up a strategic framework and decide main issues for the next year. Now they join the regular Round Table meetings once a year.

### **c. Resources**

Central organisation for the Round Table meetings is provided by UPJ. UPJ shares its experience in community projects and provide vital functions such as meeting moderation, evaluation, public relation and internal communication. This work is funded by the Brandenburg ministry of education.

Resources for specific projects, such as manpower, communication, PR, venues, financial means are provided by the involved companies and their community-partners.

A public conference of the Round Table – involving also some members of the working-group of Nonprofit Organisations – was funded by businesses, the chamber of commerce Potsdam, the state government and UPJ for the first time as a joint project.

### **d. Activities**

Since the first meeting of the Round Table various projects in the region of Brandenburg were run, partly by single members of the group, partly in joint effort. Some of these projects in themselves cover multiple installments, repetitions, branching off to other locations etc.

To illustrate the variety and diversity of the scope of projects, some are briefly named here.

- Application Training for Disadvantaged Youths
- “Cool ans Ziel” – Driving instruction for young beginners
- Work-Life Balance Initiatives
- Inclusion of Social Learning in community-projects in Vocational Training Curricula
- “Cooperation between Business and School” Series of Events
- “Community Market Place Meetings for Business and Community” – Series of Events e.g. in Potsdam, City of Brandenburg, Frankfurt (Oder), Teltow, Fürstenwalde to involve companies and NPOs in concrete community projects and bring Corporate Citizenship to the local level. All of these local market place events are organized by a small local group of companies, NPOs and local authorities, set up by one of the Round Table members.
- Corporate Volunteering projects
- Mentoring of school headmasters by executive managers of bigger companies

## **4. Programme Evaluation**

The limited funding of the project does not allow for detailed evaluation reports on regular basis. An annual report of the proceedings is provided for the perusal of the Brandenburg ministry of education and a one-off study of the project was funded by the OECD.

## 5. Impact

### a. Benefits to the local/ regional community

- The local community and community organizations benefit through the projects carried out.
- Raised awareness that social cohesion and strong communities are important factors for the local development of business, not only among the members but also among other businesses, chambers of commerce, local authorities, politics and government in the region.

### b. Benefits to the companies

- By offering an opportunity for companies to get involved collectively in CSR, the project has the potential to improve their competitiveness in the longer term – especially for instance in the fields of human resources, marketing, etc.
- Raised awareness that social cohesion and strong communities are important factors for the local development of business, not only among the members but also among other businesses, chambers of commerce, local authorities, politics and government in the region.

### c. Further Impact

- An increased community engagement in the region through the projects being initiated within the Round Table and implemented by several companies
- As a result of the work of the Round Table Local Community Marketplaces and Local Action Days for Corporate Citizenship were installed annually in all the big cities in Brandenburg that activated more than 400 new co-operational projects at local level and involved new companies as well as NPO, Chambers of Commerce and local authorities.
- The Round Table was the first platform for Corporate Citizenship and CSR in the federal state of Brandenburg being created. It leads to a raised attention for Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility in chambers, federal state government, several municipalities and businesses.

## 6. Challenges

Challenge today as the Round Table is fairly situated:

- Bring in the CEOs/directors of the bigger companies
- Create cooperative focus-projects that really make a difference
- Find resources for spreading out communication about the Round Table and its success-stories
- Helping NPOs to create good concepts and bringing them together with the Round Table – to stimulate and motivate more Corporate Citizenship and CSR activities in Brandenburg

Critical success factors:

Back up time effort for configuration, development and proving of the Round Table. This was challenging, especially in the start-up period of such a network, as hardly any apparent

achievements and outcomes are due to be expected and as grant makers often commit their support to those achievements.

In order to stress the action- and result-oriented approach and therewith the seriousness of goals and self-conception, UPJ together with the founder members agreed on implementing first projects as “show-cases” at an early stage.

Especially in the Round Table’s start-up phase the involved businesses demanded a great deal of the Round Table’s work that still in today’s meetings sometimes results in debates concerning the self-conception. This requirement sometimes conflicts in the project’s workaday life of a still young network, in which all the involved businesses (can) only bring in limited resources. In order to prevent that this results in poor motivation, new impulses are always placed step by step and – with regard to the businesses’ limited (time) resources – the development of realistic projects is ensured.

When initiating a network through a third party like UPJ it is crucial, that the involved businesses by and by assume ownership for the project. This process was supported by involving important businesses in a core group that initiated and significantly formed the development of operations and the idea of what to achieve. Hence a paper was developed that contains the Round Table’s basic goals, guiding principles and operations and that was signed by all participants.

The agreement on new activities is an important issue. The activities have to be proposed by a company that has a particular interest in a project and that can assert, if and which further companies also plan to engage in this activity. This round then has to fix and minute the intended project, the responsible person, the involved businesses and the next steps. This is crucial for a successful realization. If there is not any business that assumes ownership for a single project – then better leave it.

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Lessons learned:

- Ownership is of particular importance for the consolidation of the Round Table, this is only possible through a step by step approach.
- Also the establishments and subsidiaries of big member companies with CSR-divisions in their head office have to learn what, why and how to handle CSR and make capacities available
- Importance of government on federal as well as on the local level to find its role, concepts and framework and open platforms for this new subject

## 7. Contact & Further Information

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## INCLUDE – Pathways to Community Investment

The European project INCLUDE provides local intermediaries like civil society organisations, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce and public authorities with support that will help them to engage businesses in innovative cross-sectoral partnerships. INCLUDE identifies on a worldwide scale good examples of collaborative business initiatives as well as business engagement in cross-sectoral partnerships, which contribute towards skills development and employability of disadvantaged groups, towards social inclusion and innovation in addressing societal challenges and communicates them.

INCLUDE builds upon the results of the CSR-Laboratory “Skills for Employability enhanced through Employee Engagement” which was carried out as part of the European Alliance for CSR and is run jointly by UPJ and the ENGAGE initiative coordinated by Business in the Community (BITC). Partners of the project are the German Federal Department of Labour and Social Affairs, Citi-Group, Asociata pentru Relatii Comunitare (Romania), Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (Hungary), SMartKolektiv (Serbia), Pontis Foundation (Slovakia) and Özel Sektör Gönüllüler Derneği (Turkey).

The project is supported by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities).

Further information about the project is available at  
[www.bitc.org.uk/global/include.html](http://www.bitc.org.uk/global/include.html) (in English)  
[www.upj.de/include](http://www.upj.de/include) (in German)

### UPJ

UPJ is the German national network of engaged businesses and local non-profit intermediary organizations. Its projects and programmes create new connections between businesses, civil society organizations and public authorities thus contributing to solve societal challenges and to shape sustainable communities. UPJ, a registered charity under German law, provides organizations from the business, community and public sectors with information and consultancy to improve their Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility activities.  
[www.upj.de](http://www.upj.de)



### ENGAGE

ENGAGE is an international programme that brings together businesses and community organisations around the globe to increase the quality and amount of employee community engagement in their local communities. Its mission is twofold: To inspire, mobilise and support companies to develop sustainable community investment programmes, and to provide community organisations with a network, tools and support that will help them work more effectively with business partners.  
[www.engageyouremployees.org](http://www.engageyouremployees.org)



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