

Bad Tölz Learning Region Case Study — Biennial Lifelong Learning and Health & Wellbeing Festivals

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The Bad Tölz Learning Network demonstrates what can be achieved in serving the learning needs of a community when driven by quality leadership, high regard for local conditions, cooperative partnerships, and sound systematic management.

Bad Tölz *Landkreis* (District) in the state of Bavaria has a distribution of 110 inhabitants per km², with 21 identified communities¹. Considered the “heart” of the district, Bad Tölz is an historic medieval town with unemployment that was 2.4% (July 2011)/4.4% (January 2013), significantly lower than the national average of 6.5% (August 2011)/7.4% (January 2013) trending downwards to 5.3% (May 2013)².

Expertise in communication combined with well developed management skills, especially in marketing practices, for the development of the Learning Region was recognized by the Ministry of Education and Research which gave this Network the leadership role in related best practice workshops for the whole *Program* nationally, resulting in a number of guides published online.

Attention given to effective communications and business planning is evident in the success of the biennial *Learning Festival (LernFest)* conducted by Bad Tölz at a former monastery – Benediktbeuern. This *Festival* is promoted throughout southern Germany and has attracted 38,000 participants in a single day. The 8th *LernFest* was held in 2012 with pledges in place for 2014. On the intervening year, a *Health and Wellbeing LernFest, (Isarsana)*, is organised.

Structure

Bad Tölz Learning Region operates in a dual way with commercial projects (e.g. workshops, symposia, training, etc.) that bring in revenue, and community oriented non-profit activities. This design is reflected in organisational and financial arrangements. The *Learning Festivals* and *Family Compass* are examples of altruistic, community oriented projects.

The Learning Region has a legal status as a non-profit company with strong representation on its Board from “shareholders”. Support for the *Learning Festival* comes in various ways, including sponsorship from major companies, e.g. Audi, Roche, Sparkasse Bank, Allianz, Sitec Aerospace, Radio Oberland, DB Bahn, Tyczka Energy, Siemens, etc.

Function

The *Learning Festival* initiative has high visibility in the Region, especially with attractive mottos and catchphrases for projects. Transparency and communication are seen as very important influences with the precision of a results orientation (data on outcomes and benefits) important in promotion to partners and for success.

The lifelong learning messages in general programs and through *LernFest* furthers the interests of companies in attracting and retaining young people so that there is common interest in supporting this Learning Region initiative.

Proactive Developments

Projects (products) other than the alternating biennial *LernFests* undertaken by Bad Tölz have included:

- ♦ Vocational guidance entrepreneurship activity for young people, a *Job Compass* aptitude test, “training offensive”, and programs for youth with special needs;

¹ Referenced from www.nationmaster.com/country/gm-germany/geo-geography.

² Referenced from www.ec.europa.eu, www.tradingeconomy.com.

- ◆ Transition management initiative involving all education sectors to solve issues in the movement from school to further training and employment;
- ◆ Conduct of future-oriented Forums, e.g. social and economic challenges for guidance and care organisations, management in turbulent times, etc.;
- ◆ Sustainability Declaration adopted by local organisations and alliances covering economical, environmental and energy sustainability;
- ◆ *Family Compass* (towards family strengthening, school-family-circle interface within community education providers, care facilities, further education for parents with kindergarten age children, active teen opportunities [e.g. Scouts])³;
- ◆ Summer school as part of a national *Girls Technology Talents Congress* to introduce professional development in the fields of mathematics, computer science, natural science and engineering.

The Bad Tölz *Learning Festival (LernFest)* provides a vehicle to focus community attention on emerging themes and issues, supported by a 31-page program download. In the *LernFest*, all ages and populations are catered to, across themes designed to present the assets of the Tölzerland in the need for “active exchanges and ever new impulses”, recent themes have been:

2010	2012
UNI Learning Fair & Bionics Economy Family Children & Youth Bio Products Mall Liveability & Health Services	Youth Need Futures We All Have Great Minds Strong Family Sport as a Cultural Asset Values that Survive History's Turning Points

Set around inspiring participants to know their abilities and build on potential, programming for the 2012 *LernFest* included over 300 “action stations”, with ideas workshops held in November 2011 and February 2012 for stakeholders. All *LearnFests* have the entreaty: *Experience, Learn, Recall*.

The 5th *Isarsana* was held in September 2013, adopting as its motto *Prevention is Better than Cure* (in 2011 it was *Feel Life – Conscious Health Experiences*) with 130 displays providing insights into health care and recreation. Many of the exhibitors arrange interactive and outdoor opportunities with a free, one-day congress preceding *Isarsana* focusing on aspects of the spa town's industry.

Recent themes have been:

2011	2013
Medical Prevention Wellness & Recreation Peaceful Nature Experiences Health at Work Exercise & Sports Specialities Spirituality	Prevention & Cure Feel Life & Enjoy the Region Sports & Fitness for the Family Nutrition, Vitality & Zest for Life Recharge Your Batteries with all Senses

In initiatives such as these, the Bad Tölz Learning Region has demonstrated its ability to reinvent to achieve relevance and value, and so a basis for sustainability. A factor in securing the high visibility and continuity of commitment is in the acknowledgement received from national and state political and civic leaders. The Learning Region initiative is assisting Bad Tölz in making the transition to a knowledge society and economy.

³ Family support initiatives have been a feature of the Bad Tölz Learning Region in collaboration with relevant foundations and organisations.