

## The district driving regional economic policy – Learning from Steglitz-Zehlendorf

*Written interview with Mr MICHAEL PAWLIK, Head of Economic Development in Steglitz-Zehlendorf, Steglitz-Zehlendorf District Office of Berlin*



The Economic Development Department of the Berlin district of Steglitz-Zehlendorf partners with enterprises from formation through management to corporate succession and advises on issues, such as permits between companies and the administration. Moreover, the activities strengthen Berlin-Southwest as a business location. In the written interview on 'Economic Development', Michael Pawlik, Head of Economic Development, explains the responsibilities and the approach of his department in the District Office.

### Let's start with some key data: How would you describe the district Steglitz-Zehlendorf? What makes it interesting for entrepreneurs?

Steglitz-Zehlendorf has grown to more than 300,000 residents and is known as the Berlin district with the highest quality of life. Forests and lakes set the stage, mansions and wealthy citizens shape the image. Yet, the region is rarely considered an attractive business location and this misconception may well prove far-reaching. Strong purchasing power is not the only thing that makes Steglitz-Zehlendorf a great location.

In particular, the science location with the Free University of Berlin in the district of Dahlem can look back on almost 150 business start-ups since 1998, greatly contributing to the continued growth of Steglitz-Zehlendorf. The primary focus areas are life sciences (biosciences), medicine, biotechnology, IT, software and optics, as well as materials and substances. Especially life sciences is experiencing continuous growth in the district. The region boasts 29 institutes and research facilities, as well as more than 40 production and development companies in the fields of medical technology, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology. In addition, a remarkable 19 clinics are based within the district limits, including a specialist clinic for minimally invasive surgery and the Benjamin Franklin der Charité campus of the Berlin University Hospital.

### How would you describe your department's work? Could you give us a specific example to explain how you attract companies and encourage them to set up base in your district or to get involved in projects?

I am personally responsible for managing the economic development in the Berlin district of Steglitz-Zehlendorf. My responsibilities include policy development and evaluation of economic development measures, accountability for project supervision and management of subsidised projects financed from third-party funds. In my role, I advise the competent district mayor in economic matters and participate in committees of political bodies. Furthermore, I act as contact for business organisations across Berlin.

The Economic Development Department of Steglitz-Zehlendorf strongly focusses on the realisation of publicly funded projects supported by various funding sources.

For example, we launched a project to support the local infrastructure Onkel Toms Hütte in Zehlendorf from the European Regional Development Fund (“Support for SMEs”), and initiated the sign-posted cycle route in Dahlem as a touristic measure from funds of the Joint Federal/Länder Task for the Improvement of Regional Economic Structures (GRW). In 2019, we will focus on the largest business and industry location in south-west Berlin, right by the Teltow Canal. One pathway is to attract founders and start-ups through appealing work and development areas.

In addition, we join forces with the Free University of Berlin and state-owned WISTA Management GmbH to support FUBIC. The “Business and Innovation Center next to Freie Universität Berlin Campus – FUBIC” is a technology centre and business incubator currently in development in south-west Berlin. It will offer space for technology-oriented start-ups and young enterprises. The thematic focus is on the areas of life sciences, healthcare and information and communication technologies.

FUBIC is part of a 50,000 m<sup>2</sup> campus which also reserves floor space for accommodating established high-tech companies. Business start-ups and cooperations between science and industry will be supported and funded. In total, up to 1,000 jobs will be created here. Thanks to the high density of institutes and technology-oriented companies, the location is already considered a future-proof Berlin location.

### **How is your work different from the work of the big agencies that promote economic development across all of Berlin?**

We are able to focus on south-west Berlin. Since our range of contacts has grown over the years, we are very much in tune with how developments affect the enterprises. As mentioned above, we are able to initiate targeted projects that are precisely geared to support resident enterprises. Moreover, we cooperate with the key local players – such as the FU Berlin start-up initiative “Profund Innovation” and “Berlin South-West” regional management – to realise targeted location marketing. The big agencies cannot sustain that with such local intensity.

### **What competences does the district have in terms of binding decision-making in economic development issues? How does that align with good governance?**

Let’s start by looking at the definition: Good governance means good, responsible government leadership. However, a thorough understanding of good governance goes further: Governance comprises the processes and means by which processes a state makes decisions, and formulates and implements political contents. Good governance is transparent, effective and accountable. It engages all of its people and takes account of the opinions and needs of minorities and weaker members of society. All citizens are supplied with the necessary public goods and social services. In our projects, we ensure that virtually everyone can benefit economically from their realisation. We support cooperations and networks that allow participation from all sections of the population. Citizen participation is also hugely important to us. For example, we hold regular resident information events for the FUBIC project, where local residents can contribute to the project plan.

In particular, we ensure that contract award decisions are transparent and according to criteria specified in advance. The State of Berlin has a public tender platform for this purpose that is accessible to anyone and can be used by any company. All public expenditures are regularly audited by elected representatives in audit committees, making the subject to public control. The above examples underpin our primary concern for the creation and maintenance of constitutional and transparent relations between the public and private sector.

Die vorgenannten Beispiele unterlegen unser oberstes Anliegen zur Errichtung und Erhalt rechtsstaatlicher und transparenter Beziehungen zwischen öffentlichem und privatem Sektor.

## How can public bodies effectively work towards thriving economic development? What should the cooperation between enterprises and the administration look like?

In the first instance, all public economic development institutions have to act in concert and align their planned activities with each other. I would say, we are rather successful in this regard. As Economic Development Department for the district, we collaborate with the senate administration and the state-owned firm Berlin Partner, and jointly develop concerted strategies for action. Of course, there is still room for improvement. We are working on that! We are also in constant contact with business organisations, such as the Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the German Association of SMEs (BVMW), to organise effective cooperation.

## Which strategies have proven particularly expedient for successful regional economic policy in Steglitz-Zehlendorf?

I believe the answer is straightforward: form networks, make connections and publicly advertise the strengths of the location. South-west Berlin stands for science and life sciences. We have the highest density of institutes with scientific facilities. Quite rightly, we have been selected as a future-proof Berlin location in the marketing strategy of the State of Berlin, and will drive the strategy together with the administrative office.

## How can other districts or municipalities learn from you?

We can all learn from each other. We have extensive experience in initiating and realising project and building effective networks. We are happy to share our knowledge with any interested colleagues. On the other hand, other districts and municipalities will have experiences that would benefit us. At this point, I would like to highlight that we are in regular exchange with other districts. Specifically, in Steglitz-Zehlendorf, we have good contact with the surrounding communities, and will soon realise a joint project with the State Capital of Potsdam.

© Europäische Akademie Berlin e.V., 2018  
Der Artikel gibt die Auffassung des Autors wieder.

### Kontakt

Europäische Akademie Berlin e.V.  
Bismarckallee 46/48  
14193 Berlin  
+49 30 8959510  
[eab@eab-berlin.eu](mailto:eab@eab-berlin.eu)  
[www.eab-berlin.eu](http://www.eab-berlin.eu)