


“Cognos products have enabled us to create a new state-of-the-art IT environment based on our existing structure.”

*Dr Roland Kirschenlohr, IT Officer with the ASB-Landesverband Hessen*



“Our mission is to help”. This basic humanitarian goal underpins the work of the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland (Workers’ Samaritan Federation Germany) eV, (ASB), an aid and welfare organisation with a long tradition. Since its foundation in 1888, the ASB has developed from an organisation run by volunteers to become a modern service provider, constantly adjusting and refocusing its activities in response to changing social demands. Today the ASB is active throughout Germany with 16 sub-national and 228 regional and local branches, and its charitable work receives financial support from more than 1.1 million members. The association’s network comprises historical structures with a great deal of local autonomy, making optimal and standardised processes and flows essential — particularly in the IT area.

## Challenges faced

“Today’s charities need to be capable of operating as businesses, encouraging innovation, ensuring the quality of their services, and meeting the requirements of a modern member organisation,” explains Dr Roland Kirschenlohr, IT Officer with the ASB Hessen. “In the past, this was precisely where we ran into problems. We have 26 branches located throughout Hessen. Before the project, each branch had a completely different structure and organisation. In practical terms, this meant that financial accounting in North Hessen was completely different to the processes used in South Hessen, an invoice issued in West Hessen looked completely different to an invoice from East Hessen.”

## Strategy followed

To rectify this situation, the ASB Hessen decided to implement a standardised analysis and planning solution. The objective was to provide all internal areas with timely and relevant business information to support internal decision-making processes. “This wasn’t possible in the past,” he continues. “Nothing was standardised. The 26 sites used different systems and applications.

### Industry:

- Public Sector (aid and welfare organisation)

### Country:

- Germany

### Information needs:

- Standardised analysis and planning platform
- Transparency, simplification, and timely access to data
- Integration of the CRM system

### Platforms:

- SBS Lohn Plus
- SBS Warenwirtschaft
- SBS Rechnungswesen
- Careman Abrechnung Fahrdienste
- ASB Hessen Ware (employee planning, flexible working hours)
- Vivendi (welfare centre control/payroll)

### Solution:

- Cognos 8 BI
- Cognos 8 Planning

### Users:

- 1,200

### Benefits:

- Future-proof
- Improved processes, automated dunning
- Simplification and standardisation of databases to provide a full overview of strategic and operational decision-making
- Cyclical migration of business data across all organisational structures

This made each process an organisational challenge, and a great deal of time and commitment were required to achieve a standard and, most importantly, meaningful database.”

The ASB Hessen used Excel spreadsheets in an attempt to bring all this data together. However, as Dr Kirschenlohr notes, this solution was not sustainable in the long term, as simultaneous access to all key business data was crucial: “We were looking for a solution that would allow us to analyse data from different target applications centrally.”

This prompted the ASB Hessen to review its IT situation and search the market for a sustainable and future-proof solution. The organisation decided to implement an analysis and planning solution to create professional foundations for its decision-making. After creating a standard ERP software platform for its operations throughout Hessen, the ASB launched an internal search for a BI and planning solution capable of providing its employees with the required high-quality data. “We have key users who need to be able to handle complex queries and have a full and complete view of the situation,” explains Dr Kirschenlohr.

ASB managers were looking for an innovative approach that offered an optimal combination of analysis and planning, and was capable of significantly increasing the organisation’s performance. The systems integration company HaPeC was entrusted with the search, and the final decision was made in favour of the Cognos 8 BI and Cognos 8 Planning solutions.

A decisive factor for Dr Kirschenlohr and his team was the flexibility of the Cognos solutions and their rapid integration into the ASB structures — benefits which eliminated competing offers from well-known software houses from the running. “We received competing quotations,” he explains. “However, we opted for Cognos because we didn’t want our company to have to make drastic changes to its structures to meet a software producer’s specifications. The solution had to be capable of providing all the ASB Hessen’s operations with relevant, comprehensive, and up-to-date information, while being seamlessly integrated into the existing IT landscape. The decision in favour of Cognos 8 BI and Cognos 8 Planning was made relatively quickly. Not least because the Cognos analysis and planning solutions offered us flexible technology that could be easily integrated in our operations.”

## Benefits realized

HaPeC implemented the Cognos solutions in the ASB’s existing IT environment, including the association’s CRM system. “We use Cognos 8 BI in our financial controlling to centrally analyse data from different target applications and make it available to support decision-making at ASB units throughout Hessen,” confirms Dr Kirschenlohr. “There are no restrictions in terms of data access, time taken, or the number of employees involved in generating the data, for instance. This allows the ASB Hessen to easily retrieve the required information from a mass of data, almost like delving into a pile of sand, and then use this information to create a meaningful database.”

The ASB Hessen uses its data warehouse inventories to generate electronic dunning letters, and Cognos also supplied additional functionality that has significantly simplified these dunning runs. In addition to a trimmed-down management process internally, for a non-profit making organisation such as the ASB this also creates significant added value externally. “These dunning letters used to be far more difficult to create,” recalls Dr Kirschenlohr. “ASB customers no longer receive multiple dunning letters or uncoordinated enquiries. This represents a significant added value. Thanks to Cognos, in addition to financial credibility — in other words, careful handling of funds — we are also improving our image as a modern aid organisation with forward-looking structures and management.”

Thanks to Cognos 8 BI and Cognos 8 Planning, the ASB Hessen now has a standardised financial controlling solution. Data can be analysed very precisely and prepared for decision-making areas within the ASB. In short, it is an innovative step for the ASB Hessen’s entire management structure. The Cognos 8 BI and Cognos 8 Planning solutions help ASB Hessen employees to provide key data — in dunning, for example — to ensure optimal organisational management. “The added value for us is the certainty that we can control every aspect of our financial data,” concludes Dr Kirschenlohr. “The Cognos products have enabled us to create a new state-of-the-art IT environment based on our existing structures.” Around 1,200 ASB users throughout Hessen are now reaping the benefits of the Cognos solutions, ensuring the professional image of the ASB Hessen both internally and externally.