



Statement of Prevent

Early school leaving is a complex phenomenon and reducing the number of early school leavers requires strong political commitment and a cross-sectorial approach on local level. The URBACT Prevent programme offers an important platform for European cities to cooperate and reach the goal of the Europe 2020 strategy together.

Early School Leaving: a complex European problem

The Europe 2020 strategy includes a reduction of early school leaving (ESL) to less than 10 per cent by the end of 2020. High rates of early school leavers mean a tremendous waste of potential and, as a consequence, a major barrier to individual, social and economic development for those involved. Member states have undertaken to establish national targets, taking into account their relative starting positions and national circumstances.

The causes for ESL are complex and interrelated. We have to work with challenges that touch at the individual, social, school and systemic levels. Preventive measures must be taken early. Also, they should address the visible as well as the underlying factors that cause a youngster to decide to leave school without a diploma. Because of this, parental involvement is essential when fighting ESL.

Parental involvement in ESL

Many experts and policy advisors have already recommended to involve parents in the ESL-process. This has led to an increase in local initiatives that aim to establish and/or improve the relationship between schools and parents. However, regardless of these projects, there are few concrete examples that show how parental involvement in ESL-prevention programmes can be carried out in workable and sustainable ways. In many countries there is still no nationwide tradition of involving parents in either school activities or in the educational development of the child.

In order to change this and ensure sustainable parental involvement in ESL, an innovative and realistic approach needs to be developed: one that builds trust, respect, motivation and collaboration between schools, families, children and other relevant stakeholders. Both parents and schools are important actors in the learning and educational processes of children; an effective partnership is thus essential. While parents need to be encouraged to actively approach and question schools about their children's progress, schools should include parental involvement in their educational programmes.

The Prevent project

We stress the importance of realising parental involvement in ESL. Through the partnership and active collaboration of our cities in the Prevent project we are working together to get parents involved in a sustainable way. In the first phase of the Prevent project we exchanged and assessed good practices of local parental involvement initiatives between our partner cities. The production of the 'Guidelines of Good practices', which is due at the end of 2013, is a result of this exchange and will complete the first part of our partnership. In the phase that follows the production of these guidelines we will focus on 'transferability': the translation of phase one's best practices to partner cities' local realities. Each city's URBACT Local Support Group will help with the realisation of this translation. The upcoming bilateral meetings between partner cities serve to assist in the local implementation of the international best practices as well.

Considering the above, we, as Deputy Mayors, commit ourselves to the successful completion of the Prevent project.

The Hague, 21 November 2013

On behalf of:

Stockholm

Sofia

Gijon

Antwerp

Nantes

Ústí nad Labem

Munich

Catania

Talinn

The Hague

The Hague, 21 November 2013