



## **2<sup>nd</sup> Statement of PREVENT**

**Munich, June 2014**

*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.*

*The following Statement has been prepared by doing a synthesis of contributions given by partners at this step of the project and also some elements coming from the Good-Practices Sourcebook (GPS) we produced in April 2014.*

### **Early School Leaving: a complex European problem**

The Europe 2020 strategy includes a reduction of early school leaving 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 early school leaving 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 early school leaving.

### **Parental involvement in early school leaving**

Many experts and policy advisors have already recommended to involve parents in the early school leaving - 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 early school leaving-prevention programmes can be carried out in workable and sustainable ways. In many countries there is still no nation-wide 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 early school leaving, 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**

One of the major activities of the first project phase of the PREVENT network has been the ***mapping and sharing of good practices related to parental involvement in measures and processes to prevent early school leaving***. The mapping done by cities has been underpinned by a serious ambition to find and disseminate actions, projects and policies that first and foremost are considered useful in the context of where they are or have been running.

In parallel with the mapping process, two transnational meetings have been used to disseminate and assess the good examples given – a kind of “good practice shops” where each city has been able to learn more about the most interesting examples – according to diverse city needs and contextual situations.

We produced a ***Good Practices Sourcebook***.

This guide of course offers ***a comprehensive section (appendix) on good practices*** related to the involvement of parents in preventing early school leaving. But it also offers some useful information, tools and recommendations related to:

- what early school leaving is about
- what good practice in general is about
- how good practice can be easily mapped
- how bilateral meetings could be prepared and assessed for good learning
- the ecology of the “PREVENT good practices collection”

This guide also touches on the ***PREVENT network learning process***; how cities respond to the good practice mapping and dissemination process and what it means in terms of continuation. One part is that cities are encouraged to set up and manage bilateral exchange activities – where of course the good practices play an important role in the visits designs and learning outcomes.

This Guide has one part dedicated to ***analysis and reflection***, where thoughts on how the good practices delivered by the PREVENT network cities fit into an ecology of preventive measures, involving parents and aimed at fighting early school leaving. The discussion uses the latest insight and recommendations from the European Union and the European Commission as a framework for the ecology way of thinking; after all, early school leaving is a process in a young person's life, meaning that there are many opportunities to act and react along the way!

Last but not least the Guide introduces ***the concept of Structural Indicators (SI)***; a set of indicators to raise cities' awareness on the actions and strategies on different levels needed to prevent early school leaving in general, and promoting parental involvement more

specifically. The ambition is to support a more holistic approach when planning for actions and policies needed to address all dimensions in the prevention of early school leaving, not least the systemic and structural ones. We believe that promoting a stronger focus on structural indicators could help in shifting focus from dysfunctional individuals to holistic and flexible systems and structures.

The structural indicators concept is now being tested and discussed within the network cities, and we are looking forward to analysing the answers. Hopefully, the concept could be used as a quite innovative approach to formulate policy recommendations on how cities can work to invite and involve parents and carers, as well as other relevant stakeholders, to promote educational success for all children.

We, as "Preventologists" know that parents are an unused resource and that investing time in parents is investing time in children. But we also know that we need to share these ideas with more and more people at each level (local/ national/ international).

We now all need to be ambitious also at our local level in producing local action plans.

We need to show things which are not only "decorative manners". It is clearly a "developing process", an important challenge to get real developments started. We also need to say in which way structural indicators can be useful at our local level.

## **The Cities' Perspective**

### **Recent Situation**

It has been proven that well-educated parents have accepted the challenges of social competition, whereas parents from lower social environments often do not have clear educational targets and leave their children to their own devices at very early ages. Furthermore, all kinds of better ways of talking together between parents, teachers and students have to be encouraged.

In this context, the local support groups work as a forum for discussion and are currently carrying out the local action plans favouring positive parenthood, i.e. a preventive intervention in families. This means that parents are informed about, have raised awareness for and are involved in the school career of their children.

So, we translate the lessons from PREVENT to concrete measures in which parents play a fundamental role in the prevention or addressing of early school leaving. The local action plans are documents that help us in the implementation of our cities' educational and parental involvement ambitions for the next years.

### **The Follow-Up Process**

It is important to acknowledge parents in their individual situation in life and to support them with dedicated projects. This is only possible through close cooperation between all parties

involved in the entire socio-spatial environment, i.e. child day-care centres, schools, family education centres and education guidance centres. To facilitate mutual approaches and to make it possible to share ideas between stakeholders, we have engaged all actors that are relevant for the successful implementation of the measures proposed in our local action plans from the very beginning, which ensures broad support.

However, efforts between municipal agencies and NGOs have to be coordinated in order to achieve the desired results. Taking that into consideration, the local action plan can act as some kind of 'roadmap' for schools and organizations to realize parental involvement. Promoting the cooperation between school and parents means to organize training seminars for the parents by schools, and giving families the opportunity to receive competent support related to the educational questions of raising their children. Moreover, heads of educational institutions have to be motivated to involve parents by emphasising joint values and goal orientation.

We have to make use of modern ways of communication, but at the same time keep human and personalized ways using testimonies or intermediated approaches. Information points for parents in some districts have to be more identified as living areas, and/ or special events for parents need to be organized in a more coherent approach.

Important is that the lessons learned from PREVENT and the outcome of the local action plan become embedded in a structural way as well as in our cities' local policies, because initiatives on micro-level might not be able to leverage system changes on their own. Only then we can ensure a sustainable approach to tackle early school leaving through parental involvement. Additionally, the question of early school leaving and parental involvement needs to be prioritized at the policy level to ensure initiatives are not competing with other state/ municipal duties or local initiatives.

We are aware of the fact that structural indicators are not necessarily only quantitative ones and consequences will not give immediate and direct connected results. Thus, a local policy concerning the issue of involving parents to prevent early school leaving has to be seen as a continuing process based on confidence during which it is never too early nor too late to interfere.

### **Message to the European Commission**

The social welfare of our citizens promotes their social participation in our cities' development. As our citizens' educational level is one key issue in the social welfare of our cities, awareness-raising on how important it is to keep students within the school system and have those dropped-out return to the classroom is crucial.

On that condition it is essential to not only recognise the significance of parents' influence in the school career of their children, but also to consider parents as serious partners when developing educational approaches and methods in school.

Educational opportunities strongly depend on a child's social background and the issue of early school leaving is strongly linked to the socio-economic status of the parents/ families.

Therefore it is necessary to provide parents with more experience and knowledge as far as the basic needs of children and adolescents are concerned, regardless of their social or migration background and their personal competences.

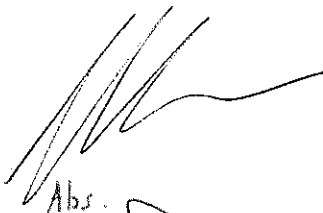
This can best be achieved by implementing integrated, low-threshold and targeted programs of parent education in the respective urban district, taking into account the various requirements and transitions in the education chain. In addition it is indispensable to promote the opening up of educational institutions on an intercultural and district-related level and to implement a holistic concept of education which takes into account the different places of lifelong and integrated learning.

Finally we know that while a big concern is with universal approaches, targeted approaches are also of importance.

Considering the above, we, as Deputy Mayors, commit ourselves to the successful completion of the PREVENT project, thus renewing and deepening our commitments expressed in the Statement of PREVENT signed in The Hague on 21 November 2013.

On behalf of:

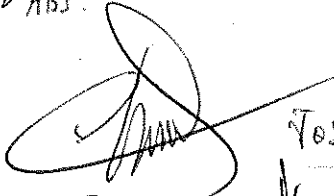
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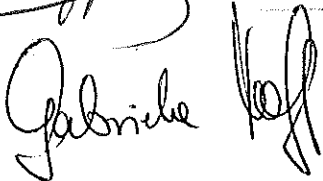
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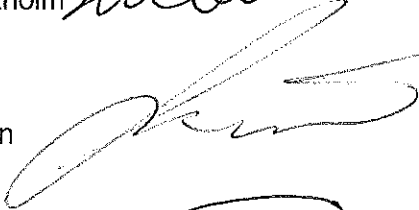
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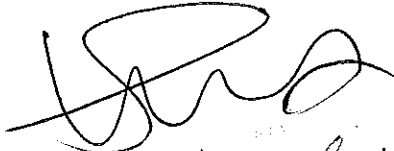
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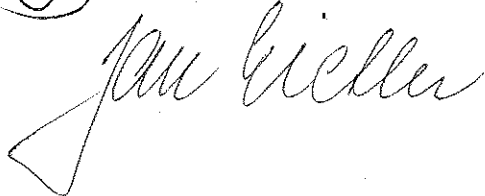
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Munich, 02 June 2014



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Building successes

