

Netzwerk mehr Sprache (More Language Network) - Cooperation platform for an equitable access to education in municipalities



Netzwerk mehr Sprache (Multilingual Buttons)

Copyright: Graz Education Research Institute für Zuwanderung und Integration

Location

State of Vorarlberg: cities of Bludenz and Feldkirch, market towns of Frastanz, Hard, Lauterach, Rankweil, Wolfurt

Country

Austria

Short summarizing description

Reinforcing the language skills of children regardless of their social background as a basis for education constitutes for municipalities a concrete means of promoting equal opportunities. The first years of a child's life are a crucial "window" for its language development. All players (parent-child centers, parenting education, child care institutions, nursery schools, schools, parents' associations, libraries, societies etc.) that are present in the children's and their parents' everyday environment in a specific municipality are connected with each other in one overarching network. The players thus have a common goal, shared knowledge and standards as well as coordinated methods and procedures. Synchronizing the individual activities and measures ensures that the maximum effect is obtained. In the inter-municipal cooperation platform the participating municipalities and cities draw mutual benefit from their experience with best practice.

Key Terms

Equal opportunities, multilingualism, language support

Context and background, Which problems/challenges does your measure try to solve/cope with?

Depending on their family background children have different starting positions and resources for their educational path at their disposal. The Austrian education system cannot be relied on to balance these disadvantages. Accordingly, a part of the pupils are prevented from developing their potential. Socially vulnerable groups less likely to access education are particularly affected. For children of families with a migration background the challenge of growing up multilingually frequently constitutes an additional obstacle instead of a potential. In the field of language support many individual measures at municipal level are not coordinated and have no shared goals, standards or methods. Coordination maximizes the effect of individual measures.

Which are the key objectives of your measure?

- Establishing networks on the municipal and regional level to promote equitable access to education through continuous, integral language support both within and outside the education system. - Cooperation and coordination of the individual players in the area of early language support to increase the effectiveness of measures for all children, regardless of their social and ethnic background.

Who are the main target groups and beneficiaries of your measure?

The project's target group comprises everyone in the municipalities and cities present in the children's everyday environment and interacting with them and their parents. The focus is not exclusively on the institutional players but on all players on the municipal level (parenting education, family services, associations, child care, playgroups, nursery schools, schools, libraries ...). Connecting the players enables an integral language support that benefits all children and their parents.

Which actions have already been implemented and which results have been achieved so far?

Around 30 3h workgroup sessions were held per municipality, with 160 to 300 participants, depending on the size of the municipality. The implementation of the measures chosen by the workgroups are organized by steering groups in the resp. municipalities. The attached "best practice profiles" provide examples of the implementation in the areas of action: "Begin early", parent cooperation, parenting education (early support from age 0 to 3); multilingualism in the public realm and public relations -language support in educational facilities; vertical networking, cooperation structure and cooperation culture. Effects: building knowledge and skills in the areas of multilingualism, language development and support through exchange, continuous education and public relations; establishing a (vertical and horizontal) network of institutions (e.g. for new target groups); governance and monitoring in policymaking and public administration (lines of responsibility and clear points of contact).

Which were the main problems and challenges you were/are facing when implementing the project and how did/do you (try to) overcome them?

The players participating in the network are varied and have different goals and interests. However, the goal of promoting equal opportunities through good and continuous language support creates a common point of focus that in practice de-emphasizes the differences and instead becomes a connective element. This enables common implementations and the creation of shared perspectives.

Link to website

<http://www.okay-line.at/okay-programme/netzwerk-mehr-sprache/>

Starting date

2011-01-01

Duration

84

Regional scale

3 - big region (Bundesland, Region, Département/Province, Kanton etc.)

Other involved partners

Cities of Bludenz and Feldkirch, market towns of Frastanz, Hard, Lauterach, Rankweil, Wolfurt

Contact person

okay.zusammen leben - Projektstelle für Zuwanderung und Integration

Eva Grabherr

office@okay-line.at

Category 1, Managing social change

The central idea of the project is the promotion of equal opportunities in education through the engagement of all kinds of actors at the local level. Everyone dealing with children and their parents in everyday life can contribute to this community of responsibility for equal opportunities. In the municipalities participating in the network the municipality and the individual players see themselves as a community of responsibility that has set itself the goal to provide parents and their children from the date of birth with the best possible advice and support in their language development and in this way contribute to promoting equal opportunities. By focusing on multilingual language support, children from multilingual families can develop their linguistic potential. Multilingualism thus also becomes experienceable for children of German-speaking families and as such a resource of language development. This creates an added value for all children.

Category 5, PR impact and awareness raising

Public relations work is a key element of the project. In all municipalities there is continuous reporting on network activities and individual projects. The local public is regularly kept abreast of current projects and is in this way offered the opportunity to concern itself with the issues of language promotion, multilingualism and equal opportunities. Players active in the network can increase their expertise and can use their enhanced competence for the implementation of further projects in the municipality.

Category 6, Innovative dimension

The project focuses on all children in the municipality regardless of their social and ethnic background. It enables vulnerable groups to access resources of other social groups or actors that are relevant for educational success. Therefore the project contributes to equal opportunities in education. The encounter and exchange between players from different social groups encourages social mix and mutual understanding. Diversity is experienced in a positive way by developing additional resources and ideas. Focusing on the village as the place where the child grows up and the village community's common responsibility for its development creates a shared goal that enables contact across groups. Everyone can contribute to this goal and can feel as part of the community of responsibility. This helps to surmount group boundaries and enables outsider groups to become, via their involvement, a part of the community.

Category 7, Transferability

The initiative has been in operation since 2011 in 7 municipalities. Its procedures, governance structures, principles and standards, methods, best practice and effects are documented in detail in the procedures manual (<http://www.okay-line.at/file/656/Dokumentation%20Netzwerk%20mehr%20Sprache%202011-2013.pdf>), in the documentation including a survey on the effects (see attached document) and the profiles of already implemented "best practice projects" in the municipalities participating in the network (see attached document). On this basis, the experiences, results and methods are wholly transferable to other regions and municipalities.

Further Information



Netzwerk mehr Sprache (Municipality Logos)

Copyright: okay.zusammenleben.at, Projektselle für Zuwanderung und Integration

[wirkungen-netzwerk-mehr-sprache.pdf](#) — 141Kb

Wirkungen Netzwerk mehr Sprache (Survey on the effects)

[steckbriefe-gute-praxis-projekte.pdf](#) — 1968Kb

Gute Praxis Projekte (Best Practice Projects)