

Youth – Actor of Social Change

“Parent-child centres”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at

<http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
Title of programme/ practice	Parent-child centres; young and family centres
Location	Whole country
Main theme	Young parenthood; Participation Transition of migrants
Practice/Programme-related keywords	Integrated child and family policy; low threshold; decentralized approach
Summary of programme/ practice	Since the 1990s the government experiments with a better integration of child and family facilities. Partly the centres overlap with the brede school/neighbourhood school (see other formula). The different names of the centres and overlaps between them signify the decentralised approach in initiating new politics which were – paradoxically – meant to further integration of separate welfare institutions for children, youth and families in the area of health (from pregnancy and after-pregnancy support up to the age of 23 of the child), social work in the neighbourhood and in schools, family help and educational support for children and parents.
Target	1) Target area: Whole country
	2) Target groups/issues/problems addressed: Whole population

Objectives of programme/ practice	See above and: Lower threshold for (young) parents to access institutions in case of health and all kinds of educational and/or social-psychic problems. If special help is needed, the personnel of the centres would transfer the applicant to more specialized professionals.
Content of programme/ practice	See above plus an example: A centre in Nijmegen, as middle sized town in the south of NL with 20% migrants. Fatima T. is the mother of 2 children and daily user of the youth and family centre. First she came as a visitor, after a while she became a volunteer and presently she holds a paid job as a child minder. The centre is like a second home for her. Parents just come in and meet other parents of all kinds of different cultures. 60% of visitors are females with various migrant backgrounds. The alderman of youth and family in the city sees the centre as one of the most successful policy measures to promote participation of parents through an integrated policy approach and thereby reactivation of neighbourhoods.
Time scale	Because the centres were introduced in the whole country, they will be sustainable; but they vary greatly in quality and effectivity.
Programme/ practice design	1) Development of programme/practice: Governmental policy
	The centres are governed by professional experts
Resources involved	Through municipalities and provinces who distribute state subsidies
Evaluation	1) Evaluation process: No national evaluation program yet.
	2) Results/ impact of programme: Results depend on the locally based centres; the example above is a very positive one; critical observers and professionals have their doubts if the intended approach of low threshold and effective transfer to specific help will work (danger of over-bureaucratization and overlap – left hand does not know what right hand does; help-seeking parent does not feel taken as a “whole person” but fragmented in different help aspects); difficulty to coordinate all actors involved (schools included).
Lessons to be drawn from programme or practice implemented	Basic idea is convincing but the centres do not seem, up to now, solve the long-standing and well-known problem of fragmentalization in the youth and family policy.
Contact information	Centres can be approached on local level.
Other doc related to the programme/ practice	Abundant online information.