

Young people – from exclusion to inclusion



OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

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This Operational Guidelines is one of three publications, presenting the results of the URBACT network “Young people – from exclusion to inclusion”. A more thorough and comprehensive presentation of the network and the

results is published in the research report. The case study report contains detailed information on each example, using the same template for all of them. All the three reports are available at the URBACT website.



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A network within the URBACT Programme

The URBACT Programme (2002-2006) is part of URBAN, the Community Initiative that has promoted innovative strategies to regenerate cities and declining urban areas. In total, 210 cities have been assisted by either the Urban Pilot Projects (1989-94), URBAN I (1994-99) or URBAN II (2000-06). URBACT aims at capitalising on all these experiences, as well as others from cities in the new EU member states by developing, amongst other forms of exchange, transnational networks and working groups.

“Young people – from exclusion to inclusion” has been one of several thematic networks in the URBACT programme. Led by the city of Malmö (Sweden), the network has also included Aarhus and Copenhagen (Denmark), Gera (Germany), Gijón (Spain), Velenje (Slovenia), Göteborg (Sweden) and Helsinki (Finland); each one represented by a co-ordinator and a local researcher. Besides, the cities of Lomza (Poland), Strovolos (Cyprus), Tallinn (Estonia) and Ukmerge (Lithuania) have participated as expert cities.

Objectives, strategy and results of the network

1. Informing each other about examples of good practice on how to change young people's situation from exclusion to inclusion.
2. Learning and capitalising from each other's examples.
3. Developing a strategy for how to change young people's situation from exclusion to inclusion.

In order to succeed with the first objective, each partner has been responsible for selecting a number of examples, submitted in local reports. The learning and capitalising has been founded on a renewed view on knowledge and five success criteria, developed as a part of the network. These five success criteria belong to the core of the strategy.



2004

February: Kick-off meeting in Malmö, developing jointly a questionnaire on the basis of Guide to capitalization, issued by the URBACT leadership in Paris.

March-August: First round of work with examples in each city – selecting examples and writing local reports guided by the questionnaire, resulting in 19 reports.

September: International conference in Aarhus, on the basis of the first round of local reports.

October-December: Working with the first draft version of the final report, founded on the first round of local reports and the result of the international conference.

2005

January: International conference in Gera with discussions about the first draft version of the final report. Decision about dividing the final report into a practitioner report and a research report.

February-April: Second round of work with examples in each city – selecting examples and writing local reports guided by the questionnaire, resulting in 17 reports.

May: International conference in Gijón, on the basis of the second round of local reports.

June-November: Working with the second draft version of the final report, founded on the first version, the second round of the local reports and the result of the international conference.

December: International conference in Helsinki with discussions about the second draft version of the final report.

2006

January-March: Completing the practitioner report, the research report and an example report.

April: Final conference in Malmö.



Five success criteria

Each partner has been responsible for the selection of examples of practice within their city. The network hasn't made any further evaluations. Instead, the examples have been used as a basis for developing success criteria. The production of the five success criteria should be regarded as the most important result of the network. The examples have turned out to be good in accordance with one or several of the criteria. As such they will be presented here to enrich our understanding of each criterion.

1 Empowerment

In order to be regarded as good, practices have to strengthen the ability of young people to act by themselves, to think independently, to make choices, to be responsible and to stand up for their rights. Top-down solutions, treating young people as objects, have to be rejected. Empowerment could be defined as a change from being an object to a subject. In contrast to objectifying, empowerment means subjectifying.

A good example of empowerment is AMUCK, run by the Centre of Guidance, part of Copenhagen City Council. AMUCK is aimed at bilingual boys between the ages of 15-20 (mentees), who are at the risk of being excluded from the educational system. The mentors are young people of 19-28, carefully recruited among ones with foreign background and with the capacity to act as role models. The mentors have each been paired with a younger boy. The mentors and the mentees have visited educational institutions, had meetings with guidance councillors and prepared educational plans as well as applications for youth education courses. Moreover, they have held coffee meetings in cafés, visited the family of the mentee, discussed personal problems and engaged in sport activities.

In Gijón, an NGO called Asociación Cultural Llumbre works with the empowerment of younger children. The project aims to stimulate interest for learning, to improve the ability to solve problems and to encourage the children in the search for their own abilities. Llumbre arranges activities linked to school work, such as help with homework, but also with a focus on creating positive spare-time alternatives (workshops, travel, camping). The decisive thing, though, is that the activities are built on the interests of the young people, their commitment and participation. The City Council of Gijón supports the association financially, but a lot of the work is carried out voluntarily.





Collaboration between practitioners and researcher

The URBACT programme has enabled a new kind of collaboration between practitioners and researchers. The researcher engaged has been appointed thematic expert by the URBACT programme and that released a separate funding opportunity, beside the network budget. The existence of that separate funding made it possible to develop a close collaboration between the researcher and the network participants, in particular with the network leader. As an ongoing part of the network process, the researcher had the task to challenge and problemise, but also to suggest alternatives.

On the basis of the agreed view on knowledge, mutual ground has been established for practitioners and researchers to meet, discuss, listen to each other and share an understanding on an equal footing. Also, a special method was created which made it possible for everyone to participate and exchange their views. In particular, the partners have been given opportunities to comment on different draft versions of the final report, divided at the end of the network into a research report and this practitioner report. It's the assessment of the network that the close cooperation between practitioners and a researcher has been a particular success criterion, increasing the quality of work.

2 Strengthen social relations

Learning builds and depends on social relations. For that reason, social relations need to be strengthened in order to favour learning and the social inclusion of young people. That means improving confidence and trust as well as communication in the relation between teachers and young people.



The NGO called the Brewery in Malmö set up an education programme in a favourable social context. The education was organised in the localities of the former brewery; nowadays one of the biggest in-door skate parks in Europe. The former brewery was closed down in the early 1990s but rebuilt a couple of years later by a group of skaters, who together with the youth organization Young Eagles and the YMCA, had formed the Brewery association during the autumn 1997. The skate park was inaugurated in 1998. Two years later, the Brewery started a so-called IV-programme for young people without a pass from compulsory education. Its location in the premises of the Brewery association made it possible to build on the youth culture and the democracy of the associational life. Active members of the association could also serve as role models.

In Malmö, the Nightingale project strengthens social relations between students at Malmö University and pupils aged 8-12 years from schools in areas characterised by exclusion. The project is run by Malmö University in partnership with Malmö City Council. For almost a year, the student and the pupil meet on one afternoon a week. In most cases, the strengthened relationship enables both to learn and grow. The pupil learns about the existence of the university and its possibilities. As one of the children says; "I am also going to study at Malmö University when I grow up, just like my mentor." Correspondingly, the student gets the opportunity to gather many new and different experiences about what it means to grow up in a socially excluded area.





View on knowledge

The network has agreed about a view on knowledge. This has turned out to be decisive in order to bridge the gap between practical and theoretical knowledge, to make comparisons possible, to understand how grading could cause the social exclusion of young people, to promote the emergence of a knowledge-based economy and to enable us to confirm the novelty of the knowledge that has to be created for a sustainable revitalisation of cities. The view on knowledge agreed and represented by this network has four characteristics:

1. Knowledge consists of contexts and thereby differs from information.
2. This context of knowledge has to be created.
3. The creation of knowledge takes place in a social context.
4. Knowledge could exist and be expressed in different forms, for example practical or theoretical, the one not necessarily better than the other.

3 Structural changes of schools

Examples of how to change young people's situation from exclusion to inclusion cannot be hived off to a space of their own, leaving the structures of school intact. School structures are part of the problem and have to be changed as well. Structural changes of schools should tackle the structural causes of exclusion in order to prevent pupils losing faith and opting out. Also, structural changes have to be made in order for schools to capitalise on the potentials of young people.

In Helsinki, the Voice of the Young project aims at improving school democracy. The project has started from the conviction that young people don't have enough chances to influence their own lives. The lack of influence becomes both a major cause as well as consequence of social exclusion. For that reason, the project aims at promoting and encouraging participation of young people in decision-making. Grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the idea is that schools and youth centres have to practice democracy in order for the young people to learn it. The core of the project is to get the pupils involved at the classroom level. A problem-solving method called Future Workshops is used. The ideas and suggestions generated are carried further by elected pupils. Finally, decisions about funding are taken at a meeting with the Mayor. In 2005, the project included 140 schools with altogether 40 000 students, 7-18 years old.



At the Öresundsgymnasiet (upper secondary school) in Malmö, a new role of Integration Coordinators has been created. The aim is to make young people feel appreciated and at ease, regardless of background and preconditions. Two such Integration Coordinators have been employed, both of them social pedagogues with a multi-cultural focus and a master's degree in IMER (International Migration and Ethnic Relations) at the Malmö University. In addition, their foreign background enables them to be particularly understanding. The Integration Coordinators develop individual contacts with pupils as well as parents, set up working groups and give lectures for the school staff. Besides, they make observations and come up with suggestion on further changes, all aimed at getting pupils with socially excluded backgrounds to feel welcome, at home and included. One such change is called the study contract, where the pupil together with the teachers agrees on what both parties must do to improve the study results.

Also in Malmö, the Study Workshop has made it possible for immigrant children to use their mother tongue. Teachers with foreign mother tongues have been employed to normalize bilingualism. The pupils' knowledge in Swedish and other subjects is to be strengthened by education being offered to them in their mother tongues. In this way, the Study Workshop has made it easier for the children to express themselves and their whole personality. It strengthens their self confidence and self esteem. It makes them feel safer. And this has become apparent in an increased belief in the future, broadened minds and higher levels of ambition. The Study Workshop started as a project, but has since been made a permanent and integrated part of the school. Thereby, a structural change has been carried through to the benefit of the school as a whole.



Potential-oriented view on young people

The network has agreed to pursue a potential-oriented view on young people. Contrary to a problem-oriented view, the potential-oriented view takes for granted that young people are capable of acting, taking stands and having an influence. The problem is not the young people,

but the inability of society to highlight and make use of their potentials. Social exclusion of young people often depends on that inability, manifested as barriers. For that reason, solutions to the problems have to build and capitalise on the potentials of young people themselves.

4 Co-operation with local society

Besides changing the school, structural changes have to be carried through in local society as well. For example, labour markets generate barriers for young people and thus cause social exclusion. Barriers of different kinds appear as a border between the social inclusion and social exclusion of society, taking place in the cities, particularly in schools. For that reason, cooperation between schools and local society has been stated as the fourth criterion. It should be made clear that such cooperation deals with something much more profound than the relation between an individual school and its societal context. It deals with shifting the borders between the social inclusion of society and the social exclusion from it.

Such a co-operation has been established at the Frydenlund School in Aarhus, called the School and Home initiative and aimed at parents. Its goal is to create a greater mutual understanding, make the bilingual parents visible, involve all parents in the democratic process, secure the influence of bilingual parents, make special efforts to provide for the needs of bilingual parents, and promote their integration into local society. All the parents are allowed to put themselves forward as candidates to an Integration Council and a general meeting elects the members. The Integration Council hasn't got any formal power in decision-making on school issues, though it produces suggestions, views and takes an active part in the development of the Frydenlund School.



At the Nytorp School in Göteborg, a parental majority has been implemented in the school board, led by a parent as chairman. The school board meets once every month, also with co-opted representatives from the council of pupils. Various issues are dealt with, but the school board doesn't interfere in teaching. The headmaster is still responsible for budget and staff issues. An important issue is to broaden the commitment of parents by arranging meetings for larger linguistic groups separately. Other vital questions are to improve mother tongue education, strengthen the influence of pupils and decrease the number of drop outs among pupils.

In Gera, the project Joint Social Streetwork has shown how schools could be opened up for young people in the afternoons in order to give them a place to be instead of on the street. The activities offered range from shared leisure activities (sports, creative classes) to individual social work. The project builds on a partnership between the Youth Department of the city of Gera, the association Streetwork Gera and the school Ostschule.

In Gijón, schools and other public institutions have opened up to leisure activities at night-time during weekends, organised by the independent youth association Abierto Hasta el Amanecer. Since its start in 1997, Abierto has developed an impressive variety of alternatives. During one single evening and night as many as 50 activities can be run at the same time around the city. Besides sports arrangements, the activities include for example dance, music, sewing, theatre, forging, design, print etc. The financial support from the city council has made it possible to employ 25 young people to work with the arrangements. In this way, Abierto has also created a new labour market for young people, though the activities demand a lot of voluntary work as well. During 2003, altogether 101 835 visitors between the ages 13 and 35 were registered in the night-time leisure activities.



Social exclusion

Social exclusion could be defined as the combination of a lack of having (e.g. poverty) and not taking part in essential processes of society (e.g. employment). The definition revolves around three principles:

- Social exclusion has to be addressed from a multi-dimensional perspective, including among else income, work, family, ethnicity, housing, culture and power.
- Social exclusion has to be related to the social inclusion of society, which means that we need to know about the structures, systems and cultures of society in order to understand the appearance and causes of social exclusion.
- Social exclusion has potentials. In order to achieve sustainable changes, policies have to highlight and capitalise on such potentials.

5

Renewing the view on knowledge

In general, the objectives of the educational systems in Europe have been renewed to catch up with the demands of the knowledge-based economy. The view that takes knowledge for granted and equates learning with a passive digestion of predetermined facts has been replaced by one that put the emphasis on an active and creative relationship to knowledge, enabling young people to learn to solve problems, criticise and take stands. Recognising informal knowledge is another important feature of the renewals. However, the renewals have turned out to be problematic to realise. Hence, there is a need of examples which show what the new view on knowledge means and how it could be put to practice.

The project Success Alternatives at the International School Gårdsten in Göteborg has shown the potentials of a renewed view on knowledge. The pupils have participated in defining knowledge themselves. After an initial phase of brainstorming, the pupils and teachers jointly worked out definitions on multi-cultural competence as well as ability to cooperate, to take responsibility and to solve problems. On the basis of such definitions, ways of assessing the competences were developed. Also, the project work clarified the limitations of the grades. To be able to function in society, the graded knowledge isn't sufficient. Pupils have to learn other competences as well.

The problems and limitations of grading have been the point of departure for the TISUS-group, also in Göteborg. TISUS stands for Test In Swedish University Studies. It aims at students with a foreign background who have finished studying at upper secondary school and who have been graded in their native countries. As their grades don't count in Sweden, they are obliged to start by studying Swedish as a second language during a couple of years and then re-learn a full upper secondary education. TISUS aims at shortening that long education journey and prepare the students for the university by offering them a specially designed course in the Swedish language.

In Velenje, the programme called Youth Day Care Centre, established in 2001, offers opportunities for young people age 15-25 who need additional help and stimulation. Professionals and volunteers work jointly to promote social skills, active participation and inclusion in society of the young people. Young people get the opportunity to talk to an adult, getting help with homework or simply practice their interests. Most important, the centre aims at capitalising on the informal knowledge learnt by the young people themselves from their engagements with music, videos and computers. Sub-cultures like skateboarding and break-dance are regarded as mechanisms promoting the inclusion of young people. Such recognition also helps young people to raise their self-esteem.





Social inclusion

Due to the emergence of barriers, societies have become social inclusions. For example, increased demands on the labour markets, discriminatory mechanisms, grading procedures and rules for benefit eligibility can constitute such barriers and in that way cause social exclusion.

The barriers appear as borders in the cities between the social inclusion of society and the social exclusion from it. For that reason, the stands and actions taken by the cities become very important, not only for the individual city, but for the future of society and indeed Europe.

Checklist

In documenting good examples, the network has developed a questionnaire, structured in a number of sections. Each of these sections contains issues which have turned out to be particularly valid. These issues and the reflections on them generated by the network could be used as a check list which we recommend future initiatives on similar themes to take into consideration:

1. What is the problem? Problems shouldn't be taken for granted, but very carefully defined, preferably in co-operation with those affected by them. The definitions are crucial for which solutions the projects tend to look for. Defining the problems should be regarded as an ongoing process which becomes a part of the solution.
2. What does the context mean? Every problem and way to solve it depends on the context. Often, what appears to be the problem is only the symptom and effect of underlying causes. Such causes could also make solutions difficult and even prevent them.
3. Who and what do the objectives and aims favour? Different stakeholders and young people in particular must be given opportunities to take part in working out objectives and aims. Moreover, the objectives and aims have to be constantly questioned and challenged. There has to be openness to renew them.
4. What kind of partnership does the project rely on? Partnerships between representatives from different parts of society have turned out to be fruitful, not only on a local basis but also internationally in a network like this one promoted by URBACT.
5. How does the process build on the potentials and participation of young people? In order to avoid a problem-oriented treatment of young people and thereby run the risk of aggravating the problems, the potentials of young people have to be used and capitalised in multiple ways.
6. Has the project managed to result in structural changes? Instead of forcing the young people to change, it's important to carry through structural changes, in particular aiming at empowering young people.





Strategy for a sustainable change

The network has agreed about the following content in a strategy for a change of young people's situation from exclusion to inclusion:

- The five success criteria have to be fulfilled.
- The views suggested on young people, social exclusion, social inclusion and knowledge have to be pursued.
- Structural changes of society have to be the ultimate aim in the direction of regulating labour markets on the basis of collective agreements, implementing the renewed view on knowledge in the educational systems and combining efficiency with equity, secured by welfare states.



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