

***Developmental support and violence prevention for young  
people: Prerequisites for success and sustainability***

**Wolfgang Kahl**

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## **Developmental support and violence prevention for young people: Prerequisites for success and sustainability**

**Perspectives for a systematic development and dissemination of effective violence prevention programmes in Germany**

### **1. Introduction: ... the question of designing projects sustainable (?)**

This article explains the approach of complementary developmental support and violence prevention for young people and describes the efforts of the Foundation German Forum for Crime Prevention (DFK) and its partners as well as the involvement of staff of its office, aimed at improving the quality of developmental support and violence prevention work in the relevant fields of activity of social policy (such as youth, family, social affairs, education, interior affairs, judicial affairs) and at strengthening it in the long term. “Gelingensbedingungen für die Prävention von interpersonaler Gewalt im Kindes- und Jugendalter” [Prerequisites for the successful prevention of interpersonal violence among children and young people] (2008/2012) and “Impulse zur Entwicklungsförderung und Gewaltprävention für junge Menschen“ [Impulses on developmental support and violence prevention for young people] (2013) are two booklets that have given practitioners specialised principles for a developmental understanding of support and prevention. In these works, experts in the field have compiled scientific and practice-related findings and make recommendations for educational work. In spring 2014, the DFK and the Lower Saxony Crime Prevention Council presented their joint web portal “Wegweiser Entwicklungsförderung und Gewaltprävention“ [directory on developmental support and violence prevention], an interactive range of information that links programme recommendations of Lower Saxony’s “Green List Prevention” with information and advice on implementing prevention concepts. In a further step, training courses are to be developed that support those in positions of responsibility in educational institutions to successfully design sustainable processes of change and implementation.

### **2. Conceptual approach: To support the positive development of young people**

Nearly one young person in five in Germany temporarily exhibits problematic experience and behaviour. As well as introverted forms, such as fears and depression, aggression, delinquency, violence, criminality and substance abuse in particular are widespread. Many such behavioural problems are not very serious and are overcome through a stabilising social environment and other positive influences as well as through developmental support. That applies, for example, in the case of so-called typical juvenile delinquency and violence. However, a small proportion of each year group develops serious, long-term problems from childhood that can last into adulthood. Among young people who have behavioural problems only later, these

problems often do not disappear by themselves. As a result of serious behavioural problems in particular, victims, the family and the social environment suffer. It is not infrequently the case that offenders themselves are also victims, e.g. as a result of abuse, family neglect or adverse life circumstances. Social behavioural problems are also associated with greater difficulties in education, gaining vocational qualifications, health and social integration. Considerable costs are incurred to society, which can amount to more than a million euro in individual cases.

Both with regard to victims and offenders and to society as a whole, it is therefore necessary to take counter-action through preventive measures as early and as effectively as possible. This takes place within the context of prevention that is related to and supports development.

Developmental violence prevention is based on the assumption that dissocial behavioural problems and serious forms of criminality are often manifestations of a development history. Particularly when serious problems occur at an early stage, it is not infrequent for problematic long-term careers to continue into adulthood. Extensive research into the causes in recent years has shown that many biological, psychological and social factors are responsible for problems of violence and criminality.

The approach of developmental violence and crime prevention is based on the understanding that it is worth promoting the healthy social development of children and youngsters and to nip in the bud any imminent negative developments. Prevention measures that are related to or support development are based on systematic forms of social training and education in the context of the family, school and local community and are directed at different target groups (children, young people, parents, teachers, the social environment and entire municipalities) with a view to reducing the risk factors that cause adverse developments and to strengthening protective factors.

The developmental approach is not in competition with other measures (e.g. situation-related crime prevention), but is a central consistent part of integrated, cross-cutting prevention concepts. Priority is to be given to its development, without devaluing or neglecting other prevention concepts. Developmental support in general social contexts overlaps with work in the field of primary prevention and the effects are mutually supplementary.

The major individual, family and social risk factors for behavioural problems among young people are known, whereas less research has been done into the influence of protective factors. The development risks can have differing effects in individual cases and also vary according to the person's age and stage of development. The respective prevention programmes should be designed accordingly. In Germany, there are now many approaches that aim to prevent behavioural problems among children arising in the first place and establishing themselves, and to support positive develop-

ment. These include early social and cognitive support, social competence training, parenting advice, courses in child education, home visits by family helpers, all-day childcare, anti-mobbing programmes in schools, measures to prevent school failure, parent meetings in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, integration programmes for migrants, neighbourhood help and youth delinquency treatment measures.

International research indicates that developmental prevention is promising and that effective programmes are also worthwhile from the point of view of their cost-benefit ratio. It is therefore necessary that this area be developed in Germany as a matter of urgency, not only in terms of quantity, but above all also with regard to the quality of interventions. The work of the German Forum for Crime Prevention and the resulting knowledge base serve this end. They contain basic considerations and criteria for the successful development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of development-related prevention programmes. The information can help practitioners, politicians, administrators and other interested persons to appropriately judge the relevance and quality of existing prevention programmes and to take well-founded decisions. The available knowledge base, which is continually expanding, also serves to support the sustainable dissemination of effective and practicable approaches to prevention.

A review of the DFK's work to date shows a continual process of compiling and transferring scientific expertise for social and pedagogical fields of activity for children and young people.

### **3. Impulses of the DFK for the further development of violence prevention in Germany in the period from 2001 to 2011**

From its beginnings in 2001, the DFK's work has focused on the question of how violence prevention can be systematically and sustainably designed. The following presentation shows the thread running through its activities to date.

#### **3.1 Project "Primary prevention of violence towards group members" (2001-2006)**

In August 2001, the Federal Ministry of Justice commissioned the Foundation to discuss the criminological concept of "hate crimes" developed in the USA with a view to the German situation and to draw conclusions for prevention.

The manifestation of violence stemming from prejudice is characterised by the motive of humiliating, intimidating and violently attacking people on account of their group-related characteristics, such as skin colour, nationality, religion, political attitudes, disabilities, lifestyle, social status or sexual orientation. Brute force is often involved, whereby offenders select the particular victim facelessly at random in order to symbolically hit an entire population group.

The main result of this work, which was carried out over several years, was to make recommendations on the primary prevention of "violence towards group members".

The final report, published in 2006, drew the following conclusions concerning the general criteria contributing to the effectiveness of primary prevention: *“The earlier social standards and behaviour are learned and the more intensive personal relationships and attentiveness in the process are, the more effective prevention is. Thus, in addition to basic socialisation within the family, kindergarten and school have an important role to play. The aim is to form or change the person’s inner attitude to dealing with “differentness”. Constantly addressing the issue of violent actions and isolating and sanctioning offenders are antidotes to a general willingness to use violence and foster prejudice.”*

### **3.2 Information of the Conference of State Premiers and the Federal Chancellor on the situation concerning violence prevention and on central needs to take action to ensure its sustainable design (2003-2006)**

In a decision of 26 June 2003, a year after the shooting at Gutenberg Grammar School in Erfurt, the *Conference of the 16 State Premiers and the Federal Chancellor (PM-Conference)* underlined that the alliance of the whole of society to outlaw violence and its glorification had to be supported at a high political level.

In this decision, the PM-Conference made reference to the report by the working group on violence prevention it commissioned immediately after the Erfurt killings in spring 2002, which was submitted to it in March 2003, *“Proscription of violence and enhancement of the pedagogical competence in families and schools – The need for political action in relation to the emergence, use and spread of violence in various areas of our society”*.

The *Heads of State-Government (PM-Conference)* called for close cooperation and coordination between all relevant facilities and institutions; in particular, the *German Youth Institute (DJI)* and the corporate *Police Crime Prevention Programme (ProPK)* were to be comprehensively involved. The *German Forum for Crime Prevention (DFK)* was asked to liaise as necessary and to initiate and coordinate networks and the pooling of resources (the further-reaching organisational proposal by the working group on violence prevention of March 2003 that the DFK be used as the central networking and coordination centre for violence prevention was not followed, however).

In spring 2004, the DFK sent a questionnaire to all the relevant Federal departments and conferences of specialist ministers, all the umbrella organisations of independent welfare organisations, and other central organisations. The evaluation of this questionnaire revealed a remarkably wide variety of projects, measures and programmes. Some of these were nation-wide or region-wide programmes, and some were regional or local initiatives. Some projects were connected only to individual institutions. Reference was made to model programmes and to further developments of regular practice.

In summer 2006, the *Federal Chancellor and the PM-Conference* were informed in a report for which the DFK had primary responsibility on the findings concerning the situation regarding violence prevention in Germany and on central requirements for

action for its ongoing organisation. The developments in specialist practice described should not obscure the fact *“that knowledge concerning the sustainability, transferability of procedures and experiences and the conditions required for the strategies to be successful is currently extremely sparse. Thus, reinforced efforts are required in the field of evaluation, particularly in the form of follow-up studies in the field of violence prevention among children and young people. It would be helpful and a relief for all concerned to pursue realistic objectives and not to hold excessively high expectations (e.g. in the form of simple, universally applicable “recipes”)”*.

Concerning the necessary social framework conditions, the report states that *“All efforts for the further development of violence prevention among children and young people would be ineffectual if they were not embedded in appropriate institutional conditions and social-policy endeavours. Conflict mediation efforts are soon made ad absurdum unless there is a correspondingly supportive atmosphere in the immediate environment of those involved, e.g. kindergartens, schools, youth groups and districts. [...] In addition, as opposed to orientation to spectacular acts of violence, there should be more conscious appreciation of and support for those who are not violent. For adults, children and youngsters alike, there should be an ethic and culture of non-violence and pro-social interaction and this should be made into a political and social maxim. Reference should be made more frequently to positive examples and successes in dealing with violence rather than repeatedly referring to shortcomings. In general, families and schools are not hotbeds of violence, but in the overwhelming majority of cases fulfil social tasks of education and integration which are what make civil society possible in the first place. [...] In order for violence prevention to be successful, it has to be accompanied and backed by social policies that are effective in the long term. Thus, enabling children and youngsters to have real opportunities for the future, supporting their education and qualification, opening up opportunities for them to have a stake and participate, and countering the increasing social divide in the cities and between the regions remain essential challenges, also in connection with preventing violence among children and young people.”*

### **3.3 Report by the German Youth Institute (DJI): Strategies for violence prevention among children and young people – An interim evaluation in six areas of activity (2007)**

In order to be able to obtain in-depth statements on the situation concerning violence prevention in view of the diversity highlighted by the DFK questionnaire, the DJI was commissioned with preparing an extensive report with the participation of the DFK and the *Police Crime Prevention Programme (ProPK)*.

The further work concentrated on six areas of activity: the family, children’s day-care, extra-curricular provision by youth welfare, schools, the police and the judiciary. If relevant in the individual fields of activity, the issues of migration and gender were pursued as cross-cutting issues.

In compiling the report, experts in the field were asked to describe the current state of the discussion in the relevant fields of activity in accordance with comparable parameters and to identify challenges. In mid-2007, the German Youth Institute (DJI) published a comprehensive report on violence prevention strategies among children and young people, entitled “*Strategien der Gewaltprävention in Kindes- und Jugendalter*”, in which it gave a detailed presentation of the challenges involved in further developing specialised professional practice and the necessary supporting framework conditions.

The report focuses on violence prevention strategies on which the many practical on-site projects, measures and programmes are based. This provides an overview of the situation concerning the conceptual and methodological bases and likely challenges in the field of violence prevention among children and young people, regardless of whether they have been realised in specific projects, measures or programmes.

As a result of taking stock of the current situation, a very broad spectrum has developed in Germany, ranging from formalised, extremely standardised programmes to very open, rather general concepts. Many mixed forms may be found between these poles. Only a few programmes appear to have been evaluated on the basis of verifiable criteria, and in particular, little appears to be known about long-term successes. Reference was also made to a problematic tendency to declare individual projects or programmes to be “best practice” or “good practice”: *“Usually, what is behind such labels is little more than the experience that participants believed that the programmes had been successful in practice. In the overwhelming majority of cases, these programmes would not stand up to hard criteria of cross-examination from other fields of activity, e.g. sustained success over a lengthy period, the existence of measurable results, programmes’ innovative character, observability of recognised positive effects, such as outcome, repeatability, a sufficiently large area of application and independence from regional or other conditions.”*

Finally, the report summarises the state of development of violence prevention in Germany as follows:

*“The overall picture gained by this summary of violence prevention strategies is a pleasing one. This positive impression of specialist practitioners in the field of violence prevention has to be relativised, however; firstly, when one looks at the dissemination of these strategies in specialised professional practice. It cannot be assumed that the approaches and concepts required are always known wherever there is a corresponding need, let alone that they are available and can be implemented. Secondly, time and again, there is a lack of willingness among policy-makers, the public and specialised professional practitioners to perceive the relevant problems objectively, to address them proactively and to understand them constructively as a task on which they themselves need to take action. In many cases that would mean admitting, at least to themselves and to those directly involved, that previously effective means are no*

*longer sufficient to control violence among children and young people. Thirdly, it has been shown that in some places, only insufficient institutional conditions and cooperative structures exist, have been developed or are desired. It is also evident that the necessary specialist competence is only available to a limited extent and the necessary human and financial resources are not available, e.g. because licences have to be obtained or expensive course units completed, or because insufficient staff are available for additional activities. To sum up, it may be stated that in view of the presented overall view of specialised professional practice in the field of violence prevention, the primary central challenge, with certain provisos, is to secure existing strategies and give them a broader base through improved qualification, and to disseminate and further develop them rather than to develop entirely new approaches.“*

### **3.4 Expert report on “Prerequisites for the successful prevention of interpersonal violence among children and young people” (2008)**

The realisation that only insufficient criteria exist for describing the likelihood of success of work in the field of violence prevention prompted the DFK to commission Professor Scheithauer and his team at the Free University of Berlin (FUB) to carry out a systematic review, drawing on current international research, to ascertain the prerequisites for successful violence prevention which constitute a measure for evaluating the effectiveness of prevention programmes. The expert report, published in 2008, presented as its starting point for an improvement in the range of services on offer a developmental understanding of prevention that not only comes into play when children and youngsters already have manifest problems. Rather, it promotes children and young people, on the one hand supporting them systematically in their psychosocial and emotional development and on the other hand helping to balance out possible deficits before starting new stages of life and during the transition to new environments (for example, the transition from kindergarten to primary school or from school to job training). In this spirit, particular emphasis is to be given to the importance of universal measures aimed at supporting emotional and social competences at an early age and specifically not directed at individualisable delinquency risks or dangers. Positive effects in the sense of supporting general competence and development are also of benefit to all participants in universal measures and do not cause stigmatisation. Some violent phenomena only arise in groups (e.g. bullying/mobbing in school classes) and can be explained through group phenomena (e.g. according to the social roles approach, according to which there are not only offenders and victims of violence, but also other involved parties who need to be taken into account when carrying out prevention) and interactions so that effective prevention work should also take place in the groups and not only with (possible) offenders and victims.

The effect of developmental prevention is to prevent violence among children and young people who indicate a specific risk of becoming violent later on unless they receive supportive assistance. But effects relating to other risks (e.g. manifest psy-



chological problems, addiction, depression) can also be achieved by means of such prevention. There is a clear connection between the lack of important social-emotional competences and aggressive behaviour, violence and delinquency/dissociality. Selective measures are required for high-risk groups in the course of their further development, and children/youngsters who are already violent require help in the form of special, indicated prevention and intervention.

A comprehensive implementation approach addresses primarily the fields of activity of the family, institutional care (e.g. kindergarten) school and the social environment, if only on account of the existing comprehensive accessibility of the target groups; the actors in these groups should cooperate better with a joint understanding of developmental support. The effects of changing one's perspective from an approach based on deficits to an understanding based on strengths, without disregarding deficits, are already evident in some tested and evaluated programmes to improve competences, self-confidence and the ability to empathise. These measures are available in manualised form and have been supplemented by further training formats for parents and school and kindergarten teachers, and are offered in particular to childcare institutions and schools at primary and lower secondary level.

**Prerequisites for successful violence prevention – a brief survey**

Following systematic research into the literature on meta-analyses and reviews on aggression and violence, Scheithauer and his team were able to identify conditions that increase and decrease risk. Constituent parts of prevention programmes were also identified which have proved to be effective in reducing and preventing violence. Thus, successful programmes may be described as follows: They (are)

- theoretically well-founded,
- centred on the individual and the environment,
- address resources and deficits, development tasks/transitions,
- cross-setting (e.g. school and home),
- often multi-component programmes,
- culturally adaptable, and take into account age and gender differences,
- highly structured (e.g. manualised) and nevertheless
- variable in their didactics (tailoring),
- carried out by trained leaders,
- whereby programmes carried out regularly over a longer period (at least 9 months) in particular appear to be useful.
- Set store by cultivating relationships and by stakeholders' willingness to implement the programmes,
- are highly implementable and
- ideally both universal and selective/indicated.

As well as being efficient and effective, programmes' quality, and thus success, is also reflected in their implementation. As well as the professionalism/competence of the users/trainers, the following implementation aspects gain significance:

- duration and intensity of the measures
- sustainability
- support, further training, supervision

Ultimately, the quality and the success of a violence prevention measure, including its scientifically-based development, taking implementation structures into account, lies both in the hands of programme developers, trainers and supporters and in the hands of users and implementers, to whom continuation in keeping with the programme is recommended, particularly after introduction of the measure is complete, in order to guarantee the sustainable success of the applied measure.

### **3.5 Promoting the evaluation of violence-prevention programmes (since 2009)**

A special form of supporting violence prevention, which began in 2009, is financial support for evaluations of the implementation of violence prevention programmes in municipal fields of work (childcare institutions, schools, family welfare, youth welfare) and of the resocialisation of extremist violent offenders. Examples are “*Miteinander an Kita und Schule-EFFEKT / Antibullying*” [Together against bullying in child-

care facilities and schools] in the rural district of Ostprignitz-Ruppin, “*Prävention im Team - PiT – Hessen*” [Teaming up to prevent violence in the Federal Land of Hesse], “*Familien optimal stärken – famos*” [Optimally strengthening families] in Paderborn, “*buddy - Übergänge Kita-Grundschule*” [Transitions from childcare facilities to primary school] in Detmold and Paderborn, “*Violence Prevention Network: Abschied von Hass und Gewalt*” [Goodbye to hatred and violence] and “*PARTS - Programm zur Förderung von Akzeptanz, Respekt, Toleranz und Sozialer Kompetenz*” [Programme to promote acceptance, respect, tolerance and social competence]. The results of the evaluations of the process and effect, some of which have been completed, will be assessed for transferability within the context of knowledge transfer and the findings on the DFK’s different transfer formats will be made available.

### **3.6 Cooperation project of Deutsche Bahn AG (DB), the DFK and the Free University of Berlin on the dissemination of developmental programmes (since 2010)**

The realisation that the comprehensive implementation of effective developmental programmes in Germany is only just beginning and in particular that there is a lack of the financial resources required to guarantee a sustainable process of dovetailed modules led the DFK, Deutsche Bahn AG (DB), a member of the DFK’s Board of Trustees, and the Free University of Berlin (FUB) to enter into a cooperation in order to start to consolidate developmental prevention work that has proved to be effective, beginning with a prevention programme.

DB earmarked basic financing, initially for five years, for disseminating throughout Germany the anti-mobbing programme *fairplayer.manual*, which was presented with the *European Crime Prevention Award 2011*.

### **3.7 Knowledge management on developmental support and violence prevention (since 2008)**

The DFK provides knowledge for transfer in order to make both the findings gained through its own initiative and through other initiatives researchable and usable by researchers and practitioners. Specialist articles in the journal *forum kriminalprävention* present current criminological and prevention-related research results, discuss strategic and conceptual questions, and present and put up for discussion experiences from specialist practice. The *DFK Newsletter* also refers to new findings and available knowledge. The *DFK Website* brings its own formats together in “*Wissen gegen Gewalt*” (Knowledge against violence) and pools the collections of information and research formats of various institutions and actors in its “*Prävention im Überblick*” [Prevention Survey] portal ([www.kriminapraevention.de](http://www.kriminapraevention.de)).

#### **4. DFK project “Developmental support and violence prevention for young people” (since 2011)**

The needs for support in dealing with issues such as disruption, mobbing, violent phenomena, addictive behaviour and psychological disorders continue to be articulated in the regular education and training systems. In spite of, or perhaps because of the significant variety of the range of services on offer, the DFK’s starting situation was as follows:

*Firstly*, it is evident that the need to strengthen training competences in childcare institutions, social child and youth work facilities and schools is only taken up systematically to a (very) limited extent by their responsible agencies and administrations.

That is to say that adjustments in basic and further training as well as in organisational development, regarded as necessary by practitioners and experts, are not being introduced, or are being introduced only hesitantly.

*Secondly*, it has to be stated that the quality of the majority of violence prevention services is problematic, as it is usually unclear.

That is to say that users of violence prevention measures frequently experiment with unassessed or ineffectual programmes.

*Thirdly*, a great deal of knowledge about effective approaches to preventing violence and the prerequisites for their implementation have existed for a number of years, but these are not sufficiently well known in practice, let alone available to users in the long term and in a quality-assured way.

That is to say that effective approaches are not disseminated systematically and thus long-term.

*Fourthly*: A variety of efforts to improve, disseminate and assure the quality of programmes (such as project management tools, programme databases, scientific reviews and expert reports) have shown little effect to date.

That is to say that knowledge transfer is not effective and/or there is a lack of will or ability to take up perceived findings.

##### **4.1 DFK Advisory Council and guidelines on “Developmental support and violence prevention for young people” (2012/2013)**

In autumn 2012, the DFK convened an Advisory Council, consisting of 13 expert academics and practitioners, to further clarify the problems raised (inadequate system adaptation, dissemination of ineffectual programmes, lack of consolidation of effective approaches, limited effect of previous steering instruments). The Council has been working since then, focusing in particular on the following:

- creating greater transparency concerning effective and practicable programmes and their implementation,
- improving dissemination and interlinking of effective and practicable programmes,
- gaining more knowledge about as yet untested programmes, programme implementation and linking/dovetailing programmes.

<b>DFK Advisory Council on “Developmental Support and Violence Prevention for Young People“:</b>	
Professor Dr. Britta Bannenberg: Justus-Liebig-University Giessen	Professor Dr. Siegfried Preiser: University of Psychology Berlin;
Professor Dr. Andreas Beelmann: Friedrich Schiller University Jena;	Professor Dr. Herbert Scheithauer: Free University of Berlin;
Dr. Christian Böhm: <i>Land</i> Institute for Teacher Training and Schools Development Hamburg;	Professor Dr. Dr. Christiane Spiel: University of Vienna;
Professor Dr. Thomas Görgen: German Police University Münster;	Elmar Undorf: Schools Psychological Service, Rhine-Sieg District;
Professor Dr. Nina Heinrichs, Braunschweig University of Technology	Professor Dr. Ulrich Wagner: Philipp University of Marburg;
Professor Dr. Dr. Friedrich Lösel: University of Cambridge;	Professor Dr. Andreas Zick: University of Bielefeld.
Erich Marks: Lower Saxony Crime Prevention Council;	

The Council's first result is *“Entwicklungsförderung und Gewaltprävention für junge Menschen (E&G)”* [developmental support and violence prevention for young people], guidelines that were presented and discussed at the *18th German Congress on Crime Prevention* in Bielefeld in 2013. It follows on from the expert opinion *“Prerequisites for the successful prevention of interpersonal violence among children and young people”*, extending the perspective of support and prevention, particularly regarding aspects of effectiveness, measuring effects, implementation quality and implementation in childcare institutions and schools. Finally, questions of transfer and the further dissemination of effective, practicable prevention programmes are discussed. Further impulses are provided by a quality criteria catalogue that helps to judge the quality of prevention and inter-

vention measures or programmes. It can be used as an aid for decision-making in selecting, using and supporting measures. It helps programme providers in optimising the programmes they offer. The guidelines are addressed at professional practitioners but also at those responsible for taking decisions in institutions, administration and, not least, politics.

#### **4.2 Further perspectives: Memorandum on “Promoting quality, structure and cooperation” (2013)**

The DFK and the experts were well aware that further steps are required to develop prevention work for young people, for example to improve knowledge transfer and practical implementation: *How can the findings presented in the guidelines be even more successfully disseminated and structurally tangible progress be made in preventive work in all fields of activity, particularly in pedagogical institutions?*

The *DFK Advisory Council* discusses these questions on an ongoing basis and will continue to work on promoting the quality and dissemination of developmental prevention. It recommends that the Foundation and its cooperation partners take the following aspects into account (*Memorandum of the DFK Advisory Council*, situation as of October 2013, with the motto “*Promoting quality, structure and cooperation*“, cf. [www.wegweiser-praevention.de](http://www.wegweiser-praevention.de)):

- *Knowledge transfer instruments are to be further developed. For example, information and assistance that may be useful for the various needs of institutions, administrative offices and organisations carrying out social work can be provided on a web portal. High-quality information that is already available should be integrated.*
- *The information provided by a needs-based web portal should not concentrate only on explicitly recommending effective programmes, but should put these in the context of central aspects such as their scientific basis, selection of target groups, setting, timing, intensity, methods, didactics and special framework conditions.*
- *The findings and programme recommendations on the “Green List Prevention“ of the Lower Saxony Crime Prevention Council should be taken up and linked with the web portal. Before that is done, its structure, procedures and results should be constructively examined and modifications recommended if necessary.*
- *It is particularly important to announce the conditions and prerequisites for supporting successful implementation of prevention concepts and programmes in the areas of activity of the pedagogical institutions and social assistance system. The provision of supplementary personal advice and services is just as desirable as the creation of relevant further training programmes for professionals, for example in childcare institutions and schools and also for their steering levels.*

- *Relevant standards and framework conditions should enable implementation processes to be examined and the implementation quality to be secured long-term.*

### **4.3 Project continuation and the “www.wegweiser-praevention.de” [prevention directory] web portal (2014)**

The DFK office’s project team took up the Advisory Council’s recommendations and has already launched further partial projects:

One group, headed by Professor Andreas Beelmann (Jena), is working on systematising, collecting and assessing German-language evaluation studies on prevention programmes and is preparing them for knowledge transfer. The task of a second working group, with the involvement of Professor Christiane Spiel (Vienna), is to create transparency on the theory and practice of implementing preventive services.

With financial support from the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, the design and technical implementation of the recommended internet portal “*Wegweiser Entwicklungsförderung und Gewaltprävention*” [directory on developmental support and violence prevention] have been carried out in coordination with the Lower Saxony Crime Prevention Council. The portal has been available since 12 May 2014 at [www.wegweiser-praevention.de](http://www.wegweiser-praevention.de) and on the websites of its cooperation partners, the DFK and the Lower Saxony Crime Prevention Council, and may be linked with the websites of other actors in the field of prevention, education servers etc. in the future.

The “*prevention directory*” is a comprehensive information portal on “*developmental support and violence prevention for young people*” in cooperation with the “*Prevention Green List*”. It provides information about prevention programmes that have been tested for effectiveness and practicability and are thus recommended by reputed researchers.

This orientation guide is recommended in particular for anyone responsible for or working in childcare institutions and schools who wants to develop their institution and use professional support to that end. As well as making basic recommendations on working with prevention programmes, one finds targeted information on the objectives, quality, dissemination and availability of specific programmes as well as on their implementation. The information is placed in useful categories headed by questions (Why do we need developmental support and violence prevention? Which programmes can be recommended? Where does the information on programme quality come from? Where in Germany have the programmes been distributed? How are the programmes implemented?).

#### *Why do we need developmental support and violence prevention?*

Development-orientated prevention measures are based on systematic forms of social education and training in the context of the family, schools and municipalities and

are directed at different target groups (children, young people, parents, teachers, the social environment and entire municipalities). The approach aims at the healthy social development of children and young people, aiming to support this and nip in the bud any imminent negative developments. Developmental support in general social contexts overlaps with work in the field of primary prevention and the effects are mutually supplementary.

A selection of texts explains the scientific basis and logic of the approach. The guidelines, prerequisites for success and quality criteria are available for downloading. The strategic considerations for systematic preventive work and the framework conditions they require, as concluded from these, are also presented.

#### *Which programmes can be recommended?*

Social learning can be supported through different pedagogical approaches, methods and training that have a good theoretical foundation and have proven their practical effectiveness.

Recommended programmes on “*developmental support and violence prevention*“ combine principles and methods in a useful *programme of action* with manuals, materials and other aids in order to be able to achieve the positive effects aimed for among the target groups in a way that is appropriate for their age and taking the respective learning context into account (e.g. childcare institution).

Programmes are not “blueprints“ that can be implemented without thought; they rather support and facilitate pedagogical or social work because not every procedural or learning step has to be thought from scratch in each case and use can be made of what has been successful in the past. Work with programmes should be integrated into an overarching pedagogical concept, however, which takes into account the principles explained in the “developmental support and violence prevention” guidelines, chapters 3 and 4 and in the guidelines for effective prevention programmes of the “Green List Prevention”.

Starting early and working continuously are important principles of prevention work, but it should be noted that it is neither recommended that as many programmes as possible be included in a concept at the same time, nor that a mere succession of programmes be planned. Combinations are possible, however, for example linking programmes in different learning and life contexts (school, family) or for example in the temporal sequence of childcare facilities and primary school. An indication of such programme compatibility is in preparation.

A *survey of recommendable programmes* leads to individual *programme profiles*. You click on the relevant field of activity and information on the corresponding programme appears. The relevant logo takes you the basic data and more detailed information.



The naming of the programmes is based on the categorisation of the “Green List Prevention” into the following categories: effectiveness proven (level 3) and effectiveness probable (level 2). Information on the significance of most of the evaluations on which these categorisations are based are summarised in a separate evaluation profile.

Additional aspects for inclusion in the survey are as follows: The aims should be related to supporting the development of young people and achieving violence prevention behavioural targets. The recommended programmes in Germany also offer a support service, for example through their own trainers, multiplier training programmes and various advice formats. This makes them particularly practicable, distinguishing them from programmes that can only be implemented autodidactically, for example using a guide book. The survey cannot currently claim to be exhaustive. It is being extended on an ongoing basis as permitted by the DFK office’s working capacities. Applications for inclusion in the survey cannot be made directly, but are possible indirectly by making a proposal for inclusion in the “*Green List Prevention*”.

#### *Where does the information on programme quality come from?*

Before their dissemination, prevention programmes have to be evaluated, i.e. examined using scientifically recognised methods with regard to their target achievement and effectiveness. In addition, statements on the quality of a measure’s implementation are required in order to be able to make programme recommendations. *Programme evaluations* are carried out in methodically different ways and their results are difficult to compare. There are no binding standards.

In the *evaluation profiles*, the design and method of German-language studies are described, their individual characteristics are evaluated in detail and then a summary assessment is made. Finally, records of the results describe the strength and sustainability of the measured effects. The evaluation profiles are not yet available. Access will be given to these in 2014.

#### *Where in Germany have the programmes been distributed?*

The *distribution and availability* of effective and practicable developmental support and violence prevention programmes varies greatly in different parts of Germany. The question of the availability of specialist and organisational service provision may play an important role in making a selection decision. A map with pop-up windows gives an idea of the availability of the programmes in Germany.

#### *How are the programmes implemented?*

The *implementation* of pedagogical and prevention programmes is a complex and difficult process which involves going beyond individual personal commitment to carry out regular adaptations at system, organisational and practical levels. *Implementation* means adapting a selected programme conceptually to the respective institutional context, e.g. of a school or childcare institution, so that it can achieve the desired effects.

Often, specialist discussions concentrate on questions of the general effectiveness of prevention programmes without sufficiently taking into account the logic of the contexts of application or sufficiently considering the conditions required for pedagogical work to be successful.

The knowledge offered in this section is devoted to the German and international situation in *research into implementation* and presents key findings, a summary of American scientific studies and concepts as well as *abstracts* of the individual publications to which reference is made. Following on from that, specific assistance is provided in the form of checklists, templates and online tools for practical use.

The “Beccaria Steps” of Lower Saxony Crime Prevention Council are already available. This interactive online tool provides support with step-by-step programme planning, implementation and monitoring (cf. also [www.beccaria.de](http://www.beccaria.de)).

Further modules are under preparation and are being continually supplemented.

### **5. Summary: ... and finishing with sustainable answers (?)**

The “*directory on developmental support and violence prevention*” project is first of all a good example which shows that cooperation between actors at Federal and State level is possible if the partners have a common understanding of prevention and common objectives, can build trust and share tasks and responsibility within the project. The DFK and the Lower Saxony Crime Prevention Council will continue down this road.

The information portal on crime prevention ([www.wegweiser-praevention.de](http://www.wegweiser-praevention.de)) was activated on 12 May 2014 but was unable to offer all the services planned at that stage. An unplanned advantage is that users’ feedback and experiences can be taken into account in further developing the website and its concept. Lengthy work in progress also underlines, however, that professionally substantiated, comprehensive and speedy continuation requires better human and financial resources, which the DFK has been unable to achieve to date.

In a letter of autumn 2013 from the DFK’s spokesman, Professor Beelmann, to the Bundestag parliamentary groups in the government, the *DFK’s Advisory Council on Developmental Support and Violence Prevention* drew attention to the significance of developmental education / prevention and demanded new political initiatives including “*improving the framework conditions for preventive action and to that end setting up a central agency at Federal level with its own staff and budget.*”

As is shown by scientific findings, DFK project work and the positive response from specialist professional practice, significant effects can be achieved with relatively limited, but only with sufficient, funding. Comparison with the resources used for repressive concepts need not be shunned.

It is to be hoped that the constructive dialogue within the Federal Government will be continued and that the *National Prevention Centre* proposed by an expert commission deployed by the Federal Chancellor can be realised with the inclusion of the resources and expertise of the DFK office – particularly with the objective of earmarking appropriate resources for the work already begun on “*developmental support and violence prevention for young people*“. Only then can the further impulses, for example in the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the States in Germany and the competent Federal and State departments, succeed, for example in establishing a further-training programme on the implementation of prevention programmes.

“*Developmental support and violence prevention*” is a concept based on long-term effectiveness which has a good theoretical basis, has been frequently successfully tested in practice and is increasingly attracting attention and gaining relevance in Germany. A corresponding knowledge and support service has been created at State and Federal level in recent years – as shown in this article - and it can largely satisfy the diverse information needs. To what extent the efforts to transfer knowledge can have any major impact on the qualification and long-term dissemination of the approaches and services of “*developmental support and violence prevention*“ is not yet foreseeable. Clearer political support at all levels of action is just as necessary as creating further training formats that supplement knowledge transfer as practised to date, particularly for pedagogical fields of work.

We cannot tell at the moment whether this development will ultimately lead to a “National Strategy“ such as that in Austria, Switzerland or Scandinavian countries, but it should be kept in mind and demanded as a strategic objective. After extending, completing and improving knowledge transfer services, ways should thus be found for entering into a specialist policy discussion in the competent political departments and their conferences.

The standard of prevention work in Germany to be aspired to here should be as follows (comparable with the *International Standards for the Prevention of Drug Abuse* published by the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*):

- support from policy-makers and legal framework conditions
- scientifically-based decision-making
- cooperation within and/or coordination of the different fields of activity (vertical and horizontal)
- qualification of decision-makers and practitioners
- political understanding that appropriate resources are provided and secured in the long term.

In view of the urgent challenges, also in other fields of policy, these principles are unavoidable and *cooperation* is a central paradigm.

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