

# Seminar of positive parenting

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Council of Europe Strasbourg

Thank you for inviting me to take part in this convention.

My name is Heribert Rollik. I have been working as the coordinator for national and international family policy in the General Office of the German Red Cross in Berlin for 25 years.

The German Red Cross is a recognized association of liberal welfare and works in many areas of social work.

This includes for example: services for children, adolescents and families, migrants, people with disabilities and elderly people as well as health services.

The Red Cross maintains a number of facilities like kindergartens, family education centres, retirement homes as well as sources of social services.

Apart from my work for the German Red Cross, I am also the president of the Federal Association of Family Education and Consultation, which is an umbrella organization for more than 250 family education institutions funded by a variety of different providers, and which is lobbying on the national level. Furthermore, the organization offers further education for the staff and performs tests of model projects.

Since 6 years, I am a member in the board of the World Family Organization (WFO) and observed the international work for and with families.

The German Government and a variety of Non-Governmental Organizations have taken numerous measures for the protection and promotion of children and their parents.

This is done by laws, regulations and lobbying work, but also by use of a variety of measures at the local level.

All these activities are to enable parents to protect children, be interested in them and promote their development, in the sense of "positive parenting".

Most parents fulfil their parental role with full commitment, but recently, more and more cases of child abuse have been noticed.

This is the reason why "parental education competence" and of how to acquire it has become a more and more important topic in the public debate.

The German Constitution assigns the primary mission of education to the parents. In this context, the Federal Constitutional Court speaks of "parental responsibility" because parents are provided with both legal rights and obligations at the same time.

A special law on the protection of children and young people has been issued, which also contains support for parents.

Article 16 of this law particularly regulates special benefits for "promoting education in the family".

Numerous sources are offering nationwide information sessions and courses. Every year these events reach about 3 million participants.

Unfortunately, the expenditure granted by the Federal Government and the German states amounts to only 0.4% of the total expenditure on help for children and young people in Germany.

As far as experts are concerned, this amount should be increased substantially, so that all the families who need such assistance can be reached.

### **Two examples of successful work in family education:**

Children and families are exposed to many kinds of pressure. These have an impact on the day-to-day upbringing. Parents often complain about minor or major problems with their children. Some children are very restless and show a lack of the ability to concentrate, others are defiant or aggressive. Many parents are looking for support and hints on how to deal with these problems.

At the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, family psychologists have long since been involved in the development and education of children. In a project founded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, children at the kindergarten age were observed over several years. Training sessions aiming at child promotion have also been tested.

### **EFFEKT (German: "EntwicklungsFörderung in Familien: Eltern- und Kinder-Training")**

#### **Development in families: Parent and child training**

EFFEKT consists of a parents' course and a playful children's course which can be attended individually or in combination. The purpose of these courses is to support and promote the social development of children, also with regard to difficulties in behaviour and in upbringing. This scientific investigation is confirmed by the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

### **Parents' course**

The parent education course for promotion is for all parents of children aged between three and ten years. It includes recommendations for the solution of education problems.

The course deals with the following questions:

- How can I influence my child's self-confidence?
- How can I establish definite rules?

- How can I handle difficult situations?
- How can I do better in dealing with stress situations in education?
- How can I do best in supporting the friendships of my child?

In five evening (or afternoon) sessions of 90 to 120 minutes, participants will be provided with information and recommendations. They can also work with other parents to share their experiences. On each event, work papers and detailed summaries are handed out.

### **Children's course**

The children's course "I can solve problems" (**German: "Ich kann Probleme lösen"**; IKPL) consists of games. The course is designed for all children of four to seven years.

The children practice:

- Perceiving feelings for themselves and other children
- Recognizing reasons for the other children's behaviour
- Assessing the consequences of their own behaviour
- Developing solutions for conflicts with other children

In 15 course units of 45 to 60 minutes each, the contents for the children are conveyed playfully. The children are learning by use of hand puppets and pictures, singing and movement games.

The course coordinator was trained by the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

### **Development in Kindergarten**

In the development of children the kindergarten is very important. Here, the children learn many things they need in school and in their further life:

- friendship
- develop relationship with a new reference person (teacher)
- introduce In a new peer group (e.g. sharing toys )
- develop social behaviour
- take responsibility and consideration for younger children
- express their own needs
- bypass with conflicts
- to get used to rituals (e.g. mealtimes)
- to accustom behaviour

**The EFFEKT trainings for parents and children help to cope with these tasks.**

## **Parent Advisor**

### **Parent advice in family-oriented education**

The concept of the “Parent advisor in family education” has been developed from the parents’ needs and the requests by the qualified staff. The aim of this measure is the nationwide qualification of family education staff across all providers.

During the 1990s, a growing differentiation of the various institutions became clear, and the question for the individual institutions’ responsibility became harder and harder to understand for the users. This also resulted clearly in constantly growing numbers of requests for education, advice and therapy, which can be regarded as an expression of uncertainty. As far as family education is concerned, this applies particularly to young families with children in their first years: A tendency towards a growing number of young parents being uncertain after the birth of their first child with respect to their role as parents and partners as well as in questions of bringing up children has been noticed. This was contributed to by the particular requirements of the modern, pluralistic and multi-cultural society as well as the worldwide difficult situation on the employment markets, the resulting demand for flexibility concerning the choice of the place of residence and work, the unselected pedagogic media landscape.

Parents frequently desire low-threshold help and attendance, which have not been offered to a sufficient extent so far, though. The wish for longer-lasting individual consultation thereby inhibits the utilization of the “classic” offers of family education, particularly the birth classes for young parents.

However, not all families have sufficient competences and financial resources for this.

Family education particularly qualifies itself methodically and didactically by addressing young parents with offers that correspond to their individual situation. The predominantly preventative approaches are to be supported and extended by use of suitable qualification of the staff.

Due to this initial position of young parents and their need or wish for longer-lasting individual attendance and advice, it was necessary to integrate conceptional changes and quality standards into the education of qualified staff in the sense of “parent attendance and parent consultation”. People working in family education are increasingly confronted with demands that exceed the aims and also the staff’s qualification.

Additional requirements, qualifications and individual help actions are needed, for instance, in connection with the attendance of families over the first years of life of their children.

Apart from the concrete conveyance of knowledge, the requirements contain the learning of how to convert this knowledge into action, the material education and the acquisition of advisory and medial competences which are to fortify the young families from the beginning and to support them by use of targeted consultation and individual attendance on the difficult way during the first years of life. In particular, this is for increasing parental competences and practicing the deliberate medial

access, which decisively contribute to a non-violent bringing up of children. Moreover, contacts and conversations with all relevant institutions and bodies are intended in order to develop corresponding cooperative network structures.

In accordance, education and consultation modules are linked competently here. The methodology and didactics are adapted to the target groups. The construction of regional networks and contact pools is definitely included in the plan. Apart from their pedagogic and advisory competence, parent advisors are to have an information and contact network at their disposal, which allows direct “access” or to arrange contact to suitable experts.

Apart from a three-week attendance, the certification of parent advisors includes the production and presentation of a final paper.

Up to now, the programme has been carried out successfully as a model in several German states. With regard to subject matters, the individual education modules have been modified in correspondence with the attendants’ level of education. The plans for the further development of the programme include the production of training material, the carrying out of dissemination events, and the evaluation of the project.

## **Contents:**

### **Family-oriented advice techniques**

- The parent advisor’s profile
- Consultation in education work.
- Introduction to the elements of advice techniques
- The advisor’s position
- Communication models and styles in consultation

### **Intervention and Cooperation in consultation**

- Principles of pedagogic parent advice
- Consultation and attendance for parent groups
- Arrangement and course of dialogues with parents/intervention techniques
- Diagnosis in dialogues with parents (perception, identification of problems, naming)
- Limits of parent consultation

## **Family**

- Father/mother role with respect to one's own biography and the multi-generational aspect
- Changes in the couple's relationship
- The family cycle
- Education theories – Basics and applications in parent education

## **Early support in the transition to parenthood and in (early) childhood**

- Children's stages of development (The essentials of analytical interpretation schemes on childhood development, role and learning theory aspects and psychomotor processes)
- Problems in everyday upbringing
- Supporting child-rearing competence – Action-oriented help

## **Structures of violence in families – Non-violent child rearing**

- Structures of violence within the family – Indicators, identification, addressing, and providing contacts
- Early warning systems
- Non-violent child rearing and media
- Prevention and support for parents and children

## **Discussion of values and effectiveness of parent education and parent consultation**

- Findings by science and research
- Best practice

## **Media competence in the work with parent groups**

- Media competence and multi-medial learning – Opportunities for the deployment of media and hints for the didactic dealing with parent groups

## **Methods of working:**

Exercises and case studies; role plays and practise reflection; plenum, group and individual work; presentation techniques

Note:

Apart from a three-week attendance, the certification of parent advisors includes

- the production and presentation of a **final paper**
- **Literature studies**
- Development of a personal **network** in one's own region

In view of the fact that families all over Europe may face similar or even the same problems, it might be useful to intensify and develop the exchange of information with regard to offers and activities on "positive parenting".

The NGOs will be assigned a particular role in putting the offers into practice.

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