

Looking away is no solution - Germany

Project origin

The project Looking away is no solution is a regional project in the Southwest of that has been running since the year 2000. Of the 32 municipalities in the region Karlsruhe, 20 municipalities participate voluntarily in the project, meaning that the mayor has acknowledged the need for tackling youth drinking and that the municipality applies the guidelines and interventions of the project. This rural region has about 430.000 inhabitants. The city of Karlsruhe itself is not part of the region.

The project was initiated by the current project coordinator who worked as a health and youth consultant for the regional administration office. He observed a trend in increased risky drug and alcohol related behaviour at a young age, of which we will only focus on the problem of youth drinking excessively at a young age, and increased costs of damage through vandalism. His observations were supported by newspaper articles about accidents and youth behaviour and by scientific research. The project coordinator collected reports of concerned parents, who needed help to keep their children safe, and presented these to the regional administration office. They acknowledged the need for the project and instated the project leader and funded him to make



materials and enlist municipalities to participate in the project as well. All activities and interventions that the project designs are to become the responsibility of the regular tasks of stakeholder organizations and the municipality administration.

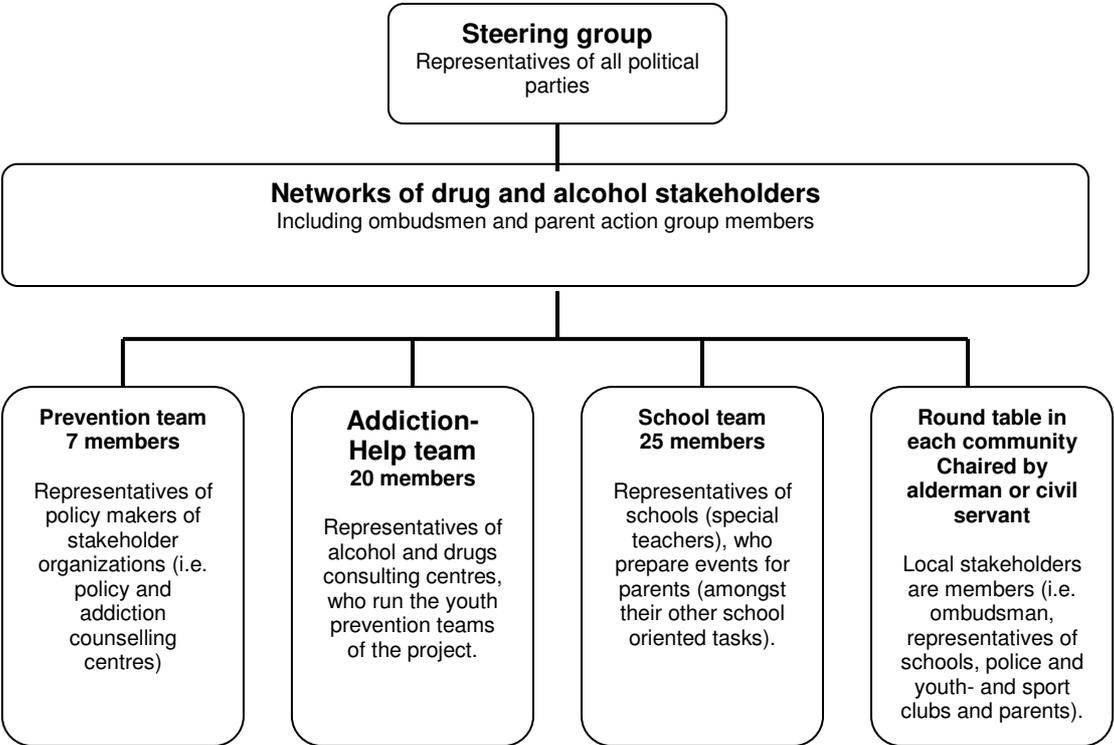
Participation of the municipalities in the project is voluntary, since municipalities have no obligation by law to make and execute prevention policy or activities. Municipalities receive guidelines on how to build a network of local experts and stakeholders, how to reach and work with the target group, how to execute project interventions and a budget to train staff, print materials and carry out interventions. This budget is allocated to trigger the interest of the municipality for participation in the project, although the money is reserved for the municipality, it is not deposited into the municipalities account.

Project organization and funding

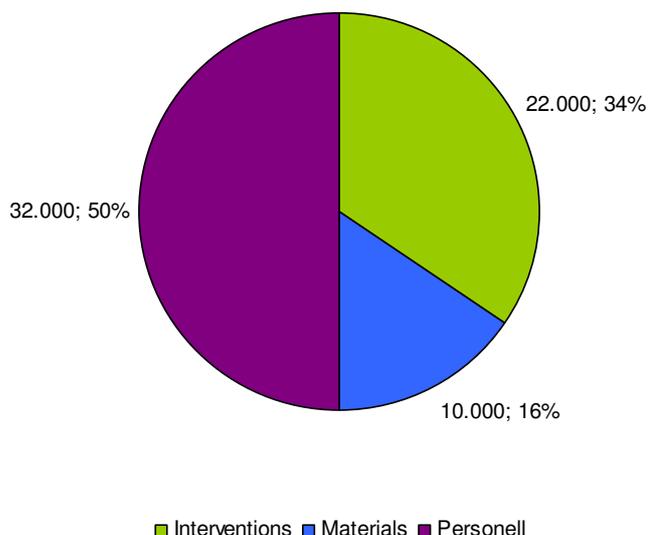
Local stakeholders that actively participate in the project are (among others) the police, schools, emergency services, addiction counselling centres and the city council. The participation of stakeholders in the project is paid by the regular budget of these stakeholder organizations, who in

return, are usually funded by the regional administration office. Alcohol sellers are not an active part of the workgroups, although on the local level they are a discussion partner for the ombudsman. Every municipality has an ombudsman that is instated by the project. This ombudsman is the ears and eyes of the project coordinator, observes and creates liaisons with local stakeholders. The ombudsman is a voluntary function, although they get compensation for expenses (€500) and financial equipment to carry out events and activities (i.e. organize a meeting or print materials).

The project is guided by a steering group, in which representatives of all political parties in the regional administration are represented. The vision of the project is established in the networks of drug and alcohol stakeholders, which already existed before the start of the project. There are two networks, one for the municipality of Karlsruhe and one for the surrounding rural municipalities. In the prevention team policy makers of several stakeholder organizations work together to create policy outlines and protocols, which are implemented in these stakeholder organizations and through these organization in the community. Furthermore there is a help and a school team, which both prepare and execute interventions for the project. Finally most municipalities have a round table group, in which all local stakeholders are represented.



A fulltime project leader has been appointed whose role it is to initiate and organize project activities, monitor results, inform municipalities and chair work groups. The total budget for the project is €64.000 a year; €22.000 is spend on interventions, €10.000 on materials and €32.000 on personnel. The research that is carried out in the project is paid from these budgets, there is no research budget specified.



The regional administration office provides most of the yearly budget for the project (€38.000), the health insurances fund contributes €17.000 and there are incidental donations by the public or organizations. About half of the budget is used to pay for the project leaders position, who is also the one carrying out the research elements in the project. Furthermore €10.000 is spend on information materials and €22.000 on interventions (seminars, youth and parent peer to peer interventions, youth protection teams, ombudsman and events).

Project goals and achievements

The project aims to reduce youth drinking and binge drinking, by influencing the surroundings of youth, instead of addressing youth itself. Therefore parents, teachers, municipality services, shop owners and staff, police and emergency services, sports clubs and other societies with teenage members are the target population of the project. The project is not focused on alcohol consumption alone, it also aims to reduce drug consumption, but this part of the project will not be described here.

The project has three main goals:

1. *Developing a culture of youth protection.* Parents are encouraged to talk with their children and to set rules about alcohol use and alcohol related problems. Parents are supported with information that is dispersed through flyers and folders, but also through media attention for problems and possible solutions.
2. *Reducing teenage alcohol abuse and binge drinking, the availability of alcohol for teenagers and teenage vandalism.* There is no representative local or regional data available about youth drinking behaviour to objectively determine the scope of the problems and the effects of the project initiatives, but the costs of repairs due to vandalism is collected yearly from the communities, as are the number of accidents where alcohol was involved and youth hospitalizations for alcohol intoxication from hospitals. In the future mysteryshopping research will be used to measure the availability of alcohol for youth.
3. *Enforcing youth protection laws.* Youth protection teams exist of 18 year old youth, police officers and rescue service members, who actively detect violations of youth protection laws and inform peers (youth, parents, alcohol sales persons, et cetera) during public events while wearing a distinctive jackets and handing out flyers and gift bags. Intoxicated youth is brought home to the responsibility of their parents or to the hospital if they are in need of medical care

due to alcohol intoxication. As is the rule in the whole project, the youth protection team wants to bring a positive message, not to punish anyone. Therefore they offer a small give away to youth that respects the rules.



Before a project starts in a municipality, key stakeholders and parents are interviewed to define the local alcohol problems that are most urgent and the existing structure of youth prevention. The outcomes of this survey results in a local alcohol problem profile, which is used to get support from the city council for the initiative. Every year local stakeholders receive a questionnaire to monitor the process of the project and every four years the level of public support among parents is measured with a questionnaire (it is too expensive to do this more often).

An effective integral alcohol policy approach

Before the project started examples of effective project strategies and activities have been collected by way of literature review and invited lecturers from similar projects. The principal thought behind the project is that youth protection laws are not upheld, because the content of these laws are unknown. Therefore giving information to the public and creating public awareness is the main focus of the project. The first main activity of the project was therefore to put advertisements on public transport vehicles, but the project has grown much since (although these advertisements are still in use).



1. Improvements of local alcohol policy

- a. Based on the survey results of the initial and repeated surveys among stakeholders and parents, reports are written for the local council and presented by a person related to the project. In these reports the local alcohol related problems are specified, as are the solutions the project offers. These reports become political agenda points, in which the mayor plays an important role. Usually about 50% of local councils member actively support the local initiatives.

Some mayors are already on the path of community action projects and therefore embrace the idea, while others need to see that the project works in other municipalities before they come on board or a personal meeting with the director of the regional administration office can also be very persuading. It is important that a mayor always regards the project as a positive influence to his image and that is never put in a difficult situation because of the projects activities or results.

- b. To aid the process of developing, organizing and implementing local alcohol policy, the mayor receives a series of printed guideline (about 10-15 pages each) on how to support the local council, civil servants, schools, retailers, et cetera in this process.

- c. Information about existing laws for youth protection is distributed to stakeholders in the municipality, by the civil servant contact person for drug and alcohol problems. This was an existing function and therefore the project coordinator has assigned this task to these persons. However, the degree of active involvement and the quality of the information given differs greatly per municipality.
- d. Municipalities are encouraged to make an amendment to their local laws, in which they can regulate alcohol use, for example by prohibit the use of alcohol in certain areas in town at certain hours.

2. *Enforcement actions of regulations*

- a. Youth- and sports clubs play an important role in German society, but unfortunately the social norm is to drink together when meeting. Since the start of the project the yearly budget that the mayor allocates to these clubs is given only if the club meets certain standards: they need to have received the project documentation and to have a consultation with a member of the project about how to handle alcohol in the club, and a club member needs to follow a one day training in which the different aspects of alcohol use, alcohol harm and social norms that stimulate (under aged) drinking are discussed (also by using role play). These trainings are valued highly by sport clubs, also because they receive a certificate that indicates that they are following the proper rules for alcohol control as a precondition for licensing.
- b. Whenever there is a public event in which teenagers are present, youth protection teams are present as well to observe and to actively declare the projects message 'thank you for respecting youth prevention laws'. They talk to young people about their alcohol use and youth that is acting properly receive a giveaway (a blue bag with candy). On occasion these youth protection teams will also speak at public meetings or parental meetings at schools about youth alcohol use.



3. *Public support actions*

- a. In many municipalities an ombudsman is appointed to be responsible for the local communication between all involved groups. This person is someone with status in the local community, who has been advocating for youth prevention before the project started (i.e. a teacher, doctor or police man). The ombudsman facilitates the process on the local level by motivating people, organizing events, among which the round table meetings and being the voice for the project in the local news papers. Since the ombudsman has such an important role (also in reporting back to the project coordinator and the regional network of stakeholders), the mayor must put his trust in the local ombudsman and they should meet regularly.
- b. There is a regional parental committee of about 10-12 parents that voluntarily work to actively participate in tackling youth drinking. It is difficult to find parents that want to be active for this cause, as a comparison 40 parents are involved in tackling drug use, and also to keep them involved once their own child becomes older than 20. The general tasks of the parental committee are to participate in the regional network of stakeholders, to follow the progress and changes in the project and youths' behaviour, to write articles in newspapers, to give awards to local champions in the cause of tackling youth alcohol use and finally to write to school administrators to raise attention for youth alcohol and harm.

- c. Educational programmes for parents consist of practical information for parents with children in the age of 12 and 13, on what risky behaviour to expect in their child and how to respond. This information is offered in a two day seminar, Friday night seminars and during school parental meetings. Although beneficial to all, the parents that would benefit the most from these meetings are usually not interested. Finally there are also course to train parents to give peer education through schools.
 - d. All schools in the region of Karlsruhe are invited to participate in an adventure park outing in which pupils spend time having fun in the park after they have attended classes about the dangers of alcohol use. Although expensive, these outings are very valuable since youth for the youth protection teams are often selected here and schools repay the project by hosting school parental meetings, setting rules about alcohol consumption at school grounds, et cetera.
4. *Brief interventions*
- a. Information materials for police, hospitals, parents, general practitioners and such are available on how to act when youth is drunk or going into an alcohol induced coma. A youngster that has come to the attention of officials for being drunk is referred to the youth protection agency. The youngster and his parents will receive an offer for a care package (i.e. treatment or seminar).
5. *Media advocacy*
- a. The project aims to get media coverage once a month in each municipality, to highlight the accomplishments of the initiatives. Usually this is easily realized, also because the mayor's official statements are published every week. But it is not as easy to get coverage for the whole project, or for certain elements that the newspapers are not interested in. Generally drug use gets more coverage than the problems surrounding alcohol use.
 - b. There are advertisements (stickers with the projects logo and message) on over 180 official vehicles and on public transport vehicles.
 - c. The positive effects of the project are communicated in reports and presentations to the mayors, politicians, stakeholders and the public by the project coordinator and the ombudsman. Since most professionals, and especially the mayor, gets a lot of mail, a personal face to face approach is the most effective for communicating results, to rise the level of enthusiasm and for building relations. Perhaps in the future a digital newsletter can be used as well.

National and local alcohol policies

In Germany laws concerning youth protection are national laws (i.e. cheapest drink in a bar needs to be non-alcoholic and minimum age of buying alcohol), therefore municipalities have no possibilities to adapt these to the local situation. Municipalities are obliged to enforce the national laws though. There have been efforts to regulate the number of alcohol outlets or hours of alcohol sales on the local level, but these have been gravely restricted by court mandates and political offences.