

Strategy of the European City Network

CITIES FOR CHILDREN

- supported by the Robert Bosch Foundation -

Preamble

The Cities for Children are aware that the demographic changes in Europe constitute an enormous challenge for the long-term viability of our cities. Therefore, by developing more child and youth-friendly city environments, cities place not only the well-being of children, young people and parents in the heart of their actions but these cities also create frameworks in which - as a final outcome of child and youth-friendly policies - family life is facilitated and encouraged. Gender equality of men and women, adults and children should be integrated into every policy.

The necessary changes cannot be achieved by each city alone. Therefore, in parallel to cooperation among cities, Cities for Children need support from governments, partners and patrons at the national, European, and international level. Each of these organizations could contribute to the necessary rise of awareness and the change in perspective concerning the importance of child and youth-friendly environments in our European city communities.

Sustainable children, youth and family policies should not be limited to national entities. Particularly within the context of the European Union, cities have the possibility to exchange and to develop progressive concepts across national

borders: The Network Cities for Children serves as a forum for major European cities pursuing innovative and sustainable policies in these fields.

In view of the rise in pluralism of family forms, the Network takes into account the need for equal opportunity for children, young persons and parents as well as the need of social cohesion within urban societies. Our strategy is connected to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As stated in the Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years. The respect of children's rights as defined by the Convention constitutes a pre-condition for child and youth-friendly societies.

Further, the Cities for Children Network encourages cities to develop from a policy point of view partnership-based services for children, young persons and parents as well as pro-active prevention policies.

1) Tasks:

For children, young persons and families to enjoy living in our cities, the Cities for Children particularly want to promote the following aims:

1. Each child should be supported according to its talents and receive an education providing him/her fair chances in the future.
2. Families with children should be provided with affordable housing and formal and informal public space to play.
3. Health prevention, healthy eating and medical services for parents and children should be implemented at the highest possible level.
4. The compatibility between family and profession, children and career, is to be improved for parents by adapting working conditions of families

and by providing high-quality affordable child care according to the needs of families.

5. A new “local contract between the generations” should support the interaction between old and young with new networks of mutual assistance and aid in a structured way.
6. Participation of children and young persons in decision-making processes and public life should be encouraged. In this context, youth initiatives should be supported and the activities of youth organizations should be promoted. Further, children and young persons should be made aware of the challenges of sustainable development and become actors of sustainable development in cities.
7. Safety of our children in traffic and their protection against crime should be guaranteed.

2) Advantages for the participating cities

- Membership in the Network Cities for Children supports cities to improve their children, youth and family policies conceptually and practically.
- Mutual learning by working on realistic examples facilitates the search for innovative solutions.
- The necessary lobbying by our cities at the national and European level will be more successful by our joint forces.
- The conditions for families, children and young persons are an important locational factor for European cities and companies in global competition.

Cities participating in the Network Cities for Children could take a leading role in developing child, youth and family policies in their countries.

- To all members, the Network offers the opportunity for a continuous exchange of ideas and concepts among experts and political decision makers in European cities.
- Scientific approaches for adjustments to the needs of children and young persons could thus be linked to challenges with the practical implementation.
- Thanks to the support from Robert Bosch Foundation and other partners of the City of Stuttgart, there will be neither costs associated to membership nor annual fees for the participating cities.

3) Patrons and partners

- In order to install the Network Cities for Children at the national and European levels and to link the efforts in our cities to the work of important European and international institutions, we are supported by the following patrons: the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions. Further, a close cooperation has been installed with the EU-Commission and UNICEF.
- Universities, research institutions, non-governmental organizations and economic associations at the national and at the international level are invited to join as associated members.
- The “European Network Child-friendly Cities” is a distinguished associated member. Close cooperation between the two Networks has been installed

to ensure complementary and to achieve multiplying effects for the benefit of children, young persons and parents.

- Moreover, EUROCITIES is invited to establish a close partnership with the Network.
- All patrons and partners have the opportunity to bring their expertise to the Network and thus shape the objectives and tasks of **Cities for Children**.

4) Organization

The office of the Commissioner for Children Affairs of the City of Stuttgart is in charge of the coordination of the Network and all related tasks of information. The Commissioner for Children Affairs directly reports to the mayor.

The European Network Cities for Children has officially been established at the European founding forum which took place in Stuttgart on June 25 to 26, 2007.

- The Network has organized an **internet forum** which presents concepts, initiatives, and best practice examples from cities and organizations. This forum will be linked with the member cities, partners, and patrons.
- Seven **working groups** according to the 7 identified main tasks have been formed during the founding forum. The working groups will meet at least once a year to exchange practical experience and concepts.
- A **European forum Cities for Children** will be held once a year. The next forum will take place in Stuttgart in May 2008. During the meetings, the results of the working groups will be presented and discussed in plenary sessions.

- The Network could serve as a platform for organizing **youth exchanges** for young people to meet their peers in other European cities and to learn from each other.

5) Invitation for participation

The Cities for Children Network, the City of Stuttgart and the Robert Bosch Foundation have the pleasure to invite cities, patrons and partners to work together in the Network to channel the best ideas and concepts for developing and implementing children, youth and family policies in our cities.

We expect active participation from member cities and associated members in order to develop common concepts and to achieve sustainable results to keep our cities prosperous and attractive places to live for the present and future generations.

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This strategy expresses the commitment of the cities undersigned to all the values and principles expressed herein. It defines itself as being open to revision and expansion based on proposals by present and future Cities for Children members, associated members, partners and patrons.