

Presentation at the workshop “Networking European Citizenship Education”
October 28-30, 2005 in Copenhagen
Held by Dieter Galinski (Germany)

Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear colleagues,

Thank you for the invitation to this workshop and the opportunity to present to you the project “Streetsoccer League Hamburg”. In the four years of its existence the project has reached more than 2.600 children and young people so far and has developed to the largest Hamburg wide youth sport project outside of the sport in established sports clubs

At the beginning I would like to point out that the concept of this youth project is violence-preventive. Perhaps we may discuss later, in which way the learning objectives of this project such as practicing tolerance, assuming or bearing responsibility and keeping rules are also transferable to citizenship education

I structure my presentation into four parts: Firstly I want to give you some data of the social demographic background of our target group. Secondly I am going to outline, what Streetsoccer actually is. Then I would like to tell you something about the learning objectives of our project. And finally I want to report about some experience made so far.

The target group and the area, where it comes from

The city of Hamburg is – as some of you may well know – a so-called city state. That means: Hamburg is both: a large city and one of the federal states of Germany. Hamburg has a little more than 1.6 million inhabitants and is divided into seven districts.

Our project is geographically addressed to the district Hamburg Centre (Hamburg-Mitte). The area extends from the western to the eastern federal state border. Approximately 230,000 people live in this district, an area of about 106 square kilometres. From its size the district is comparable with other German large cities such as Augsburg, Aachen, Kiel or Braunschweig.

The well known quarters St. Pauli and St. Georg with their specific drug and prostitution problems are part of this district. Furthermore there are densely populated quarters named Billstedt and Mümmelmannsberg with classical large housing estates of the council housing programs of the past decades as well as smaller, less well known quarters such as Rothenburgsort and Veddel. Over the last decades the latter have developed to enclaves of foreign fellow citizens. In contrast to that Hamburg Mitte also shows an active business life such as retail trade, banks and offices in the city centre, the largest part of the port as well as some agriculturally used areas in Finkenwerder and Billstedt.

In Hamburg Mitte the number of unemployed people as well as those who live on social welfare is above the average rate of Hamburg. To fight these social problems on the one hand and to integrate the higher-than-average number of foreign fellow

citizens on the other is a large challenge for the district government. Spectacular xenophobic or right-extremist assaults are rare in this traditionally tolerant and open-minded metropolitan city. However the crime statistics and especially the public awareness register a readiness or tendency to use force or violence among young people, which can not be neglected..

The target group of our project are young people aged 12 to 16 years. 90 per cent of them come from the above mentioned quarters with a low social background. 30 per cent are ready to use physical violence in controversy situations.

Although girls may take part in our project, too, the predominant number of the participants is male. They all come from socially weak and mostly uneducated families, the predominant part with migration background. That means: 80 per cent of the participants are not Germans. Usually they are informed about our project and attracted to it by child and youth institutions of the district or by notes or posters in schools as well as publications in the media.

To sum things up: our target group are young people with an overall bad or at least limited life perspective and resulting from that with an individually often problematic curriculum vitae.

What is meant by Streetsoccer?

Now I want to explain what is streetsoccer all about.

The streetsoccer idea was born in Colombia's second largest town Medellin approximately eight years ago. "Futbol por la paz" ("football or soccer for peace") that's the slogan of the project there. In this city - troubled by drug and gang criminality – the lives of young people are certainly much rougher or harder than in Hamburg. But nevertheless: this idea also came to Germany. Meanwhile similar projects have been established in Brandenburg, Munich and Dortmund and for four years we have been working on that in Hamburg now.

What is Streetsoccer? Certainly I do not need to explain soccer. Probably everyone of you has his or her favourite club or watches soccer matches on television occasionally, when your national team is playing.

Well, a lot is different with Streetsoccer, compared to "normal" soccer. Not only the team but also the field or pitch is smaller. The single team always consists of four players and they play on a field of 10 by 15 metres without a goalkeeper. Each team has up to four substitutes, so that a team consists of not more than eight people. The goals are 1.20 m broad and 80 cm high. And finally a match does not take ninety but only ten minutes, without changing the sides.

Those who slam or play really hard or even foul don't have a chance. In this kind of soccer technical competence or proficiency and interaction is what counts or asked for. You can win only or succeed, if you do not only accept your own rules, but also those of your fellow players.

The most important fact however is: There is no referee.

We train older young people as mediators, who care for several matches. But nevertheless: the kids have to decide themselves, if a ball is out or how a foul is to be judged. Self responsibility, public spirit and conflict ability are demanded, so that the game can continue.

Normally the players handle that actually completely on their own. But if they can't reach an agreement, the mediator will intervene. Because there is no extra time. You might discuss or play for ten minutes.

The learning objectives of the project

It appears to be evident: Streetsoccer is more than just playing soccer. It is preventive youth social work. The objectives of the project - set from this view- are:

- **Commitment and reliability**

In our view these skills are central conditions for social action and responsibility, Characteristics which are not often given to our target group by their parents. Commitment and reliability are central educational categories for all partners involved in this project.

Even the fact that the young people voluntarily take part in the league, each Friday at a determined time for three months, is already a big achievement for many of them, because league does not mean to appear only for a singular tournament, but to play many soccer matches for weeks. If there are 20 teams in a relay or group (we usually play in 5 relays) we get 380 matches all together on twelve Fridays (so we play 1,900 matches in 5 relays), because each team has to play against all the others. You can only manage that, if a number of matches are played on the playground of the stadium simultaneously.

- **Assumption of responsibility**

Older young people participate in the preparation, organization and realization of the league and thereby assume responsibility.

We train them— as mentioned above – as mediators.

We have installed a players' council or board, which decides on rule offences. Above that we identify particularly qualified young people and offer them further training or continuing education for example the training as a youth leader or as a sport assistant, courses in first aid etc.

In the long run the objective of our educational efforts is that the young people become independent of the adults. However, regarding our clientele this will still be a long and strenuous way to go.

- **Practicing tolerance and non-violent conflict management**

The key element of the model is that there is no referee. Self responsibility and acting on one's own authority, public spirit and conflict ability are asked for, so that the match can continue. It is common knowledge that the one who cannot

express, what he wants and what is disturbing him, can't change anything. By bringing the children and young people into dialogue situations during the match, basic skills of democratic behaviour and acting should be learned. But if no agreement appears possible, the mediators stand at the side of the field, ready to help.

By playing streetsoccer you can let steam off, without interfering with other people's rights or the law. Streetsoccer offers a valve to diminish or minimize aggressions, it offers the possibility to learn and act in tolerance, to accept rules and to master conflicts in a non-violent way.

Streetsoccer offers the young players an experience of companionship and a sense of community over and above the borders of your own peer group. They socialize with others from other quarters, different nations and ethnic background or provenience.

Next to every field there is not only an older young person (the mediator) but also a staff member of the youth institution involved, who intervenes and makes the regulations clear in case of overstepping the rules of verbal force. Insults are not tolerated and violent clashes not at all.

It is particularly important for us that arising or growing conflicts can be discerned, discussed and solved as soon as possible. In contrast to singular tournaments, which you can also find in Hamburg and other cities, the league has the advantage that the young people are within easy reach after each performance day. So you come to terms with conflicts in the youth institutions or on the next league date, if they cannot be solved immediately.

Linking an attractive sport offer with the - well tried in Hamburg schools - model of mediators, a new path has been taken in social youth work.

- **Readiness or willingness to perform and self-confidence**

The participants in the league are ready to show their abilities, because playing against in each case different teams on a performance day three or four times—in all weather conditions – is really a challenge.

Of course you can't always win. But pitting your strength against the others and, although not always winning a game but only now and then your self-confidence will be developed enormously.

On the field only the sportive performance or achievement counts. Where the young people come from, what clothes they are wearing and what colour of the skin they have, is absolutely unimportant for them.

And at the end of the season the winners get cups and medals, which they proudly show like the professionals.

- **Forward-looking co-operation of the social protagonists**

Apart from the educational objectives the Streetsoccer League Hamburg also represents an organizational network between the Hamburg community foundation, the youth welfare office, the public authority for sport and education with the departments of violence prevention and sport, a sports club and the police. For the social youth work it represents therefore an important and unusual link between school, juvenile welfare service, sport and police work.

The involved protagonists in the district Hamburg Mitte are co-operating in a forward-looking social project. That might perhaps sound very simple. But the reality is that sports clubs, schools, youth institutions, which basically have the same target group are usually not co-operating, but occasionally are even working against each other.

The results of many discussions and the exchange of experiences between all involved people has become a part of the general youth work of the district. So the first step into team work between all the people and institutions, which are involved has been taken not only for the present time but also for the future, for other projects and for the “everyday life”.

We consider this point particularly important. It represents a new kind of work with young people which is more effective from our point of view and might even show a better achievement at a grass-roots level of democratic behaviour.

Due to this team work the supervisors of the project established a non-profit association “Get the Kick” as a registered association. Meanwhile the association has been able to establish two other youth projects because of the co-operation of all people involved in social work in the district, which covers both violence-preventive as well as intercultural and integrative objectives.

What experiences we have already made?

You may imagine that a smoothly going off of our project was standing in the centre of our efforts. So the evaluation of this project has just begun. That is why I can only talk about a few observations we’ve made so far.

With more than 900 participants in 2005 the project has been pushed to its limits. The organization and co-ordination of 1.900 matches can no longer be mastered by volunteers only. Together with the government and some companies in Hamburg we think about how to continue this extremely successful project on a paid management basis.

The substantial argument for a development in this direction is that the quality of the educational support or care threatens to become smaller, if the structure isn’t changed. The involved people “are particularly up-eaten” by the organization and co-ordination tasks. Learning and practicing tolerance and conflict management happens in the everyday life of the performance days. Because of such a large number of participants situations tend to become incalculable, so that conflict situations can no longer be realized adequately.

The objective “assumption of responsibility” or in a wider sense “the readiness to support social affairs or civil duties” can only be carried out under a very long-term perspective. The successful training of mediators and youth leaders warrants the hope of reaching the aim. But it remains an open question to what extent the young people can be integrated into a continuing assumption of responsibility of the project or taken up on their promises.

Financial funds to work on such responsible tasks play an essential role especially for those young people with a socially weak family background. On the one hand there is the legitimate desire to take part in symbols of our modern lifestyle and property (like mobile phone etc.). On the other hand you can also find the temptation to get these desired objects in another not legal way. So the long term commitment or liability stands and falls with the financial funds for the project and the young assistants. You can't expect a long lasting voluntary commitment of them, because they can't afford to do that without payment.

Another point is that the young people of our target group are not used to be asked for their opinion or to co-operate positively and responsibly. Therefore it is very important to take their opinions seriously, which usually are expressed spontaneously and to give them the feeling of achieving quite a lot.

The absence of referees has led to irritations among the young people again and again. Almost all matches have been played fair and the young people have been able to solve their problems by themselves. But in cases of problems they still turn their attention to an older young person or an adult standing at the side of the field. Especially younger players rather expected a decision than a “discussion offer”.

None of us has expected that violent young people changed into well-behaved children after playing these Streetsoccer matches. For the participating young people first of all the sporty offer was and is the centre of attention of course and more than that. The predominant number of participants wants to win above all.

The fact that from this motivation conflicts develop inside and outside the field is evident. For the involved staff members and mediators new discussion situations were the results of that. Again and again these occasions were taken to make the regulations clear and in addition, to point out non-violent conflict strategies. The quality of these discussions naturally depends substantially on the professionalism of the responsible people.

In concrete situations the involved children and young people have understood that conflicts belong to life, that solutions of conflicts however have to take place in a non-violent way if you want to achieve a common aim. The articulation of one's own interests and desires in confrontation with the interests and desires of others and the non-violent attempt to solve these contrasts or differences can positively affect the democratic behaviours of young people as well in totally different situations of their lives.

All in all it can be said that with this project we have succeeded in creating an educational environment in which values and virtues such as assumption of responsibility, practicing tolerance, commitment and reliability can develop.

Further consultations and discussions together with the University of Hamburg lead in this direction. The issue is how we can use the enthusiasm of the target group for an extended more intense violence-preventive youth work in the everyday life of the youth institutions. A question, which is also transferable to citizenship education, from my point of view.

As far as the target group of hard-to-reach-learners is concerned it can be said as a result: we have reached the learners. However it still remains to be watched, if they are willing or able to learn.