

Opstapje (Opstapje Deutschland e.V., Germany; a:primo, Switzerland)

Opstapje is a preventive parent education program which has been developed about 20 years ago in the Netherlands (Nederlands Jeuginstituut) for parents with toddlers aged 2 to 4 years. It aims at facilitating the transition from home to the elementary school for children from disadvantaged, less educated backgrounds. It is conceptualized as empowerment program and aims at fostering parents' existing educational competencies and resources and at strengthening families' self-reliance. To achieve this, the program aims at stimulating certain aspects of mother-child interaction. The most important goal for the mother is to stimulate the mother-child interaction by broadening the responsive instruction behavior of the mother. For the child the program aims at enhancing the skills and knowledge that the elementary school assumes it to have. Developmental areas, such as language development, fine motor and sensory development, are encouraged by providing and carrying out various types of play activities with the child. By thus promoting the mother's responsive instruction behavior, a range of the child's own skills are stimulated, such as perseverance, problem-solving, task-orientation and the ability to plan and carry out activities. The program is primarily home-based and the parent is given an active and responsible role. It consists of home visits, group meetings for the mother and participating in a playgroup for the children. Home sessions are led by the paraprofessional aide, responsible for supplying the program materials, carrying out play activities with mother and child, and for transferring information.

In Germany *Opstapje* has been first implemented in Nürnberg (see above) and Bremen. In Bremen the program focuses on disadvantaged families with and without migrant background which are not reached by any other parent education programs. In order to ensure the program's quality, dissemination and further development, the association *Opstapje Deutschland e.V.* was founded in 2005. It offers advice to operators implementing the program, trains program coordinators, and disseminates program details and brochures.

In Switzerland the association *a:primo*, founded in 2006, has adapted the program and is offering it to parishes, cities and organizations for implementation. *a:primo* accompanies and supports program operators during the implementation phase with advice, information events, program materials and other services.

The award will be bestowed in each case upon the organization, recipient would be on behalf of *Opstapje Deutschland e.V.* **Dr. Heidemarie Rose**, president; and on behalf of *a:primo* **Erika Dähler**, managing director

The first Swiss city to successfully implement the program was Berne in 2007. The city of Berne's *Direktion für Bildung Soziales und Sport (BSS)* initiated the program under the name *PRIMANO* to offer those children with the greatest social disadvantages a continuum of support services right through to kindergarten entry. The pilot project is limited to the 4 neighbourhoods in the city of Berne exhibiting the greatest need. The coordination of the services is via community platforms, which are set up in already existing community centers.