



## PRIMOKIZ ZUG

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I immediately understood  
the goals of Primokiz”

**The town of Zug is known for being favorably disposed to business, but it is also very child- and family-friendly. So it was no surprise that town council member Vroni Straub-Müller was a strong supporter of the Primokiz Zug project. Productive discussions while the project was under consideration were able to alleviate some of the concerns raised by skeptics. Despite ongoing cost-cutting measures, the legislature ultimately approved the project.**

“When the Jacobs Foundation invited us to participate in the Primokiz project, we were already taking a number of steps in a similar direction,” says Erwina Winiger, head of the Child-Youth-Family Division of the Education Department in the town of Zug. Zug is located in the canton of the same name and has a population of 30,000. The division had already sought recognition for the city under UNICEF’s “child-friendly city” initiative and launched the “westwärts” urban development project, with the goal of demonstrating that Zug attaches great importance not only to the business community, but also to the town’s families and children. “Primokiz seemed to be a logical next step,” Erwina Winiger recalls.

In conversations with the Child Care Unit, town council member Vroni Straub-Müller (Christian Social Party), who focuses on educational issues, learned of reports from daycare center directors that some children were not being reached, leaving

them at risk of falling through the cracks. She immediately understood that this was an urgent issue. "I'm a midwife, and I have found that for some families, a few weeks of support after the birth of a child are not enough; someone really needs to check on them over a longer period of time. So there was no need for long, drawn-out explanations of the Primokiz concept; as a policymaker, I was immediately on board."

With the help of a Primokiz expert, a situational analysis and a comprehensive early childhood policy were drawn up. Representatives of the Department of Social Affairs and the relevant cantonal authorities, as well as practitioners in the early childhood sector, were brought together to form a project group. "Zug is a relatively small town, so we often work together," says Erwina Winiger. The Child Care Unit was put in charge of drawing up a plan.

The analysis showed that a large and diverse set of programs were already in place in Zug. Some 80 private sponsors and associations, along with cantonal and city experts, provide support, counseling and educational programs for families with young children. What was lacking, however, was information and coordination. It also became clear that playgroup leaders needed more support.

The project group decided that the city's main task was to connect and coordinate these programs. It formulated a two-year plan of action, focusing on networking, information and further training programs, with a particular emphasis on playgroup leaders.

Recalling the policy discussions, city council member Straub-Müller says, "The main problem was reaching agreement on conceptual issues. Some people were opposed to any early childhood policy at all, perceiving it as government interference in family life." However, they were reassured when a statement affirming that the family is "the most important environment for educating and nurturing children" was included as part of the first principle enshrined in the city's ECEC policy. "Ultimately, the discussions were positive," says Vroni Straub-Müller.

The project was no longer controversial among the members of the council's legislative body. There was no need to create a new position, but merely to refocus the Child Care Unit, so costs are manageable and covered under the regular budget. "At the time, the town of Zug was in the red and forced to cut costs; nevertheless, we were able to implement the Primokiz project," Vroni Straub-Müller says proudly.

The support of Primokiz, and thus also of the Jacobs Foundation, has been critically important throughout the process. Erwina Winiger and Vroni Straub-Müller agree: "We never could have done it alone." As Winiger recalls, "The knowledge shared by the Primokiz expert, her outside perspective and her guidance as we launched the process—all of it was very helpful." The name of the Jacobs Foundation played a valuable role in enlisting political support for the project. "It provided a guarantee that Primokiz Zug is not merely a make-work program for administrators; it addresses an issue of importance to all of Switzerland."

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The entire process required considerable personal effort, says Vroni Straub-Müller: "It was definitely a challenge. But we never found ourselves unable to move forward; there was continual progress." Constructive cooperation played a key role. The Child-Youth-Family Division made sure that political leaders were kept informed, and when necessary brought them back to the table.

Erwina Winiger offers a similarly positive assessment, noting that the process has been extremely beneficial for her division. "Today we are no longer perceived as an administrative division in a remote ivory tower. We are recognized as a source of support, encouragement and new opportunities."

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