

Project: let's go to the kindergarten! small kindergartens in lower silesia (south-west Poland)

The idea of establishing Small Kindergartens in Lower Silesia is connected with huge necessity especially on rural areas in Poland. At the start time of our project (2006/2007) only 15,3% children attended kindergartens. That means more than 80% children in the age between 3-5 were excluded from pre-school education. Children who do not attend any educational practises have much less chance in school. It also means lack of compensation by specialists of childrens' disadvantages like for example dyslexia and many others.

The project was financed by ESF (European Social Found). We helped to establish 35 Small Kindergartens on rural areas. The main goal of the project was to give children a possibility of attending pre-school education in a place where they live. We took a chance to use common space already available in the village: local libraries, local fire brigade stations, local small schools etc. They were supposed to be refreshed by parents; we bought all the furnishings and equipment. It was also on our side to pay teachers' wages, but it was local society which had to find and choose the teacher.

The model of Small Kindergarten is based on 3 main presumptions:

- In a group there are no more than 15 children in the age of 3-5 (mixed groups)
- A teacher is supported by parents, local society members (they are with children in a kindergarten – at least one person per day)
- There are no less than 15 hours of education activities per week

The realization of the project 'Let's go to the kindergarten! Small Kindergartens in Lower Silesia' was not only the possibility to establish kindergartens at village level but also to activate parents and local society. In our model there are parents and local society members who were supposed to take over a small kindergarten. Our project lasted 16 months. After that period people were to establish an association which would lead the kindergarten. During this time we met people at the villages, spoke to them, helped them to make decisions as well as go through all the formal aspects of establishing an associate. At the same time we were a part of a lobbying group, who tried to change the Polish law as to make possible for this special form of kindergarten to be financed by local government. And now they can be financed although it is still very complicated.

We succeeded in most cases. Now Small Kindergarten can became a local center of an alternative education as well as a center of local social activity. And we try to help them to do so.

The project was realized by Kalos kai Agathos Foundation from Wrocław. Association "Education and Development" is one of the partners which took over one of the small kindergartens. Now the idea of Small Kindergartens is continued by Foundation of Pre-school Education (Fundacja Edukacji Przedszkolnej), which was especially established last year for the reason of spreading out the model by the leaders of the project.

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