

III. The local level

Youth migration services (JMD) at Rotenburg(Wuemme), Germany

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Who we are

Youth migration services (JMD – www.jmd-portal.de) at Rotenburg (Wuemme), in northern Germany between Bremen and Hamburg, is part of the network of 370 JMD all over Germany. The federal network for protestant youth social work (BAG EJSA – www.bagejsa.de) runs 140 JMD. It is mainly federal funded. Youth migration services are – if necessary - independent from local youth welfare departments, thus catering to the youngsters' best interests and needs. JMD provides services for young immigrants between 12 and 27 with counselling, facilitating and promoting.

Rotenburg's JMD is renowned for the Sports-and Fitness-Project (founded by the youngsters themselves), the work with spontaneous theatre against violence and its community networking.

Please contact JMDRotenburg@aol.com or write to: JMD, Am Kirchhof 12, 27356 Rotenburg, Germany, for further information.

How we work

The life situation of children and youngsters suffering poverty, living-at-risk and/ or with migration background is often expressed as: **I am not part of it** ("normal" society)

Getting in contact and working together towards active participation and involvement focuses on **becoming a part of it** with the goal of **being part of it!** - In your own way!

From our experiences, getting in contact and promoting participation, yields best results with youngsters with migration background when it follows this path:

1. Forget paper – find key persons and become part of the informal communication; learn about body-language
2. Use pictures (DVD), internet and do not forget to use illustrative language yourself
3. Ask and collect answers, share results and make collective decisions
4. Promote collective decisions together, use your network and find supporters
5. Start immediately on practical level on the spot where youngsters and problems are and process No 3

An Example! "Fit and on the ball – power without violence" (since 2005)

A sentence "Nothing to do – and no place to go" (Mark Harrison) reflects a typical situation for young male migrants in one of Rotenburg's neighbourhoods. This often results in the following dynamic: Violence, destruction – police – escalation. In response, following cooperation between with mayor, chief police inspector and street worker, we tried something different. We asked the youngsters about the use of their schools' sports- and playgrounds in the afternoon and evening. As a result of our inquiries into the youngsters' needs, outdoor and indoor (in winter) sports grounds have been made available to them since 2004 within time limits, i.e. they are open for all between 12 & 27. Labelled "Open Sports Project", involving ~100 youngsters.

We have also supported fitness and free-weight training. A room in the school's cellar was adapted by the youngsters with advice from their key-persons. We labelled the project: "Fit and on the ball – power without violence" and it has been running since 2005/06. In response to a growing demand from a diverse population, the project has now expanded to include girls, mothers with Muslim background, and mothers and daughters working out together. In the end, the project now runs 5 days/week and is available free of charge. Instead of payment, all participants contribute to the project in other ways.

Apart from contributing to the health of the participants, the project has had a wider social significance. The police are amazed because they have reported a significant decrease in violence and destruction in the neighbourhood since the project started.