

### **30b. Projekt PDF (englisch)**

Welcome to Life plans a solution for the actual social challenge in relation to heavy burdened young people. Children abused or neglected in their birth family are educated by the public Youth Care because of their hazards. However, according to the actual Austrian Child and Youth Welfare Act they have to be dismissed from the care at the legal age of 18. They are denoted as „Care leavers“.

As the recent 7th Report about Youth in Austria almost in the introduction refers that the social development leads to earlier invitations of children to make autonomous decisions for themselves. However, financially they depend more longer on their parents, live together with them and are not work related secured. The time point of full autonomy now in our society is delayed into the second decade of life. Unfortunately, the public Youth Care has not realized this social development. The new Austrian Child and Youth Welfare Act from 2013 is based on the outdated assumption, that the need of support ends with the legal age. If this is not true for young people growing up in their birth family, then it is much less appropriate for traumatized children, no able to go back to a family. By an abrupt break of support through the Youth Care long lasting and high financial investments (up to some hundred thousand €) are inconsiderately adventured.

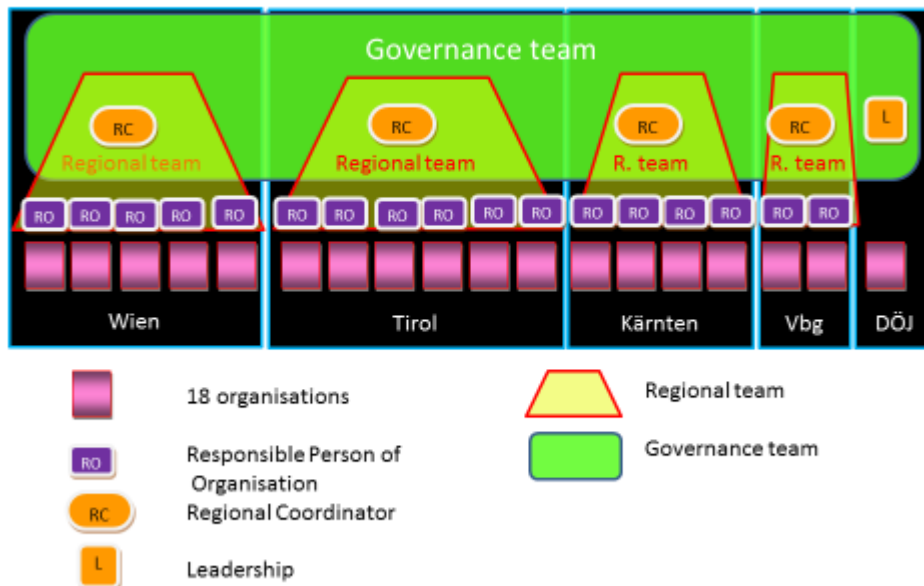
The approach of Welcome to Life shows another way: The Youth Care should not finish its responsibility for the young people at the legal age. In fact, it further should offer the help similar to other children naturally getting further support from their families. The fates of many care leavers show this need. One of them reported during the kick-off event of the project in Klagenfurt, that he lived in the wood for one year after the discharge of the Youth Care. Many of them live in hidden homelessness or slide into petty crime.

On the one hand Welcome to Life takes aim to direct and concrete support of care leavers leaving the care during the last years by individual talks and considerations, through workshops and exercises, and through voluntary mentors made available. On the other hand – and more important - is the networking between care leavers e.g. by social media and established meeting points. The main aim of networking is that care leavers take control of their own matters. They should express themselves to the political level. An Austrian wide meeting between care leavers and policymakers is in preparation.

The public support following the Youth Care is far from meeting the requirements of care leavers. Their inadequacies are currently observed and documented. As the project progresses the provider DÖJ repeatedly draws the attention of politicians to this theme. Together with the care leavers explicit recommendations to policymakers to upgrade their situation will be developed.

The project is organized by the DÖJ. The DÖJ combines about 150 private organizations of Youth Care. 18 of them execute the project in the following four federal states: Vorarlberg, Tirol, Kärnten, Wien. All organizations stationary guide young people within the public Youth Care. They cooperate according the following organigram:

## Organigram: Welcome to Life



The project is funded by the Fonds Gesundes Österreich (FGÖ) with 2/3 of the whole financial requirement. Each of the following sponsors pay 1/12 of costs: Fonds of Diakonie, the Wiener Gesundheitsförderung, the federal state Tirol, the Vorarlberger Gesundheitsförderung. The project lasts from 1. 4. 2016 to the end of 2018. It is accompanied and evaluated by MAPS-Salzburg.

In more detail: kick-off events happened in the four regions during April 2016. Care leavers of the last years are contacted by their organizations and invited to personal talks. In all four regions meeting places for care leavers are implemented for periodically coming together. Workshops about important topics for care leavers like securing one's livelihood, health, living, social connections are organized and will further occur. In three regions online network groups for care leavers are installed to connect them among themselves and with the social workers of their institutions. The setup of a system of mentors started. The up to date in the Youth Care living young people are specially prepared for their future situations. They are also invited to the care leaver meetings and workshops. Some hundred care leavers of the four federal states are involved into the project.

Simultaneously the DÖJ is attempted to reformate the Austrian Child and Youth Welfare Act by lobbying. The concerned parliamentary committees, concerned ministries, offices of Youth Care in the federal states, Child and Youth Advocacy and other support systems for young people are approached.

The submission of the project to Sozialmarie is an additional step to make public relation concerning the improvement of the situation of care leavers.