



Early Childhood Support Services in The Netherlands: What Works and What are the Needs

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Introduction

- Founded in 1991
- With the aim to *improve care for children with special needs in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Iron Curtain.*

SOFT tulip, what does it mean?

- “SOFT” stands for “Help and Protect your Peers with a Disability”
(originating from the Hungarian acronym “Segítsd, Óvd Fogyatékos Társad)
- “tulip” was added for the Dutch branch

Caring for Care: SOFT tulip's network approach

SOFT tulip is a network of Dutch care organizations united to improve care in regions with significant needs.





M•POWER

Knowledge Sharing Partnership for Empowerment of Parents of Children
with Disabilities through Mutual Learning

Parent support in Amsterdam

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Introduction Leontien

- Project manager at Cordaan Youth
- Program for Cooperation and support of parents/policymaker
- Mother of a daughter with mental disabilities and autism
- Former Grief counselor and Spiritual Carer



Introduction Mariette

- Former policy advisor
- 44 years of experience in care of children and adults with mental disability and their family
- Since 2014 training and support to EIC team Odessa
- In 2019 training to parents and professionals EIC in Poltova and Lviv & EIC Summerschool Odessa



Cordaan Youth



- Provides support and care to
 - children with mental disabilities and their parents
 - parents with a mild intellectual disability and their children in Amsterdam
- Services as early intervention, daycare, support at school or at home
- We support parents to take care of their children at home as long and regular as possible. Parents are equal partners in care and we offer customization.

Population of Amsterdam

- Amsterdam has around 180 different nationalities
- 85% of our families have a different cultural background
 - such as Suriname, the Dutch Antilles, Morocco, Turkey and Africa or Ukraine



Basis of the Program Cooperation and Support Parents

Research showed that parents need:

- To normalize their lives
 - Connection with previous *and* new 'world/live'
- Recognition and acknowledgment
- Tips & tricks and practical information
- Gap between professional location and home

Program Cooperation and Support Parents (2)

1. Schoolyard Plus (SchoolpleinPlus)
 - Connecting both worlds
 - Courses for Parents
2. Training Parental Sensitivity
 - For Professionals
 - Both knowledge (chronic sorrow) and attitude
3. Parent Support (Informal networks)
 - research

Parent Support (informal networks)

1. Strength of informal networks
2. In line with development and policy in Dutch healthcare
 - Right to care script -> shared care practice
3. Sustainable
4. Cooperation and connection professional organizations and informal networks strengthens parents and the professionals

Parent Support (informal networks) - 2

Need parents

1. Support in relation to your child
2. Support in relation to your own path in life

Finding and connecting with informal networks

- Redirect
- To bring knowledge
- To gather needs and experiences

Example

- Cordaan Youth helped setting up a Mother network in 2009
- Mariette shares her experiences and tips



The start of the mothernetwork

In 2008: an exchange program with an organization in Marrakech

- On the basis of equality.
- Learn from each other
- Moroccan mothers of special needs children were involved from the start
- Caregiver (Leila Badaoui) worked already with these mothers
 - spoke parents' language
 - created trust and connection
 - organised activities (cooking together)



Lessons learned in Marrakech

- In Marrakech we met several single mothers with children with disabilities.
- A social worker organized a weekly meeting in a park. The children played and their mothers sat under a tree and shared experiences and information.



The start of the mothernetwork



We saw the power of the mothers in Marrakech and wanted to share that power of sharing and exchanging information with the mothers in Amsterdam as well.

We shared our experiences from Marrakech with mothers in Amsterdam. They were enthusiastic and also wanted to establish a mothernetwork in Amsterdam with a broader group of mothers.

How to start a Network



- Start with a core group of motivated parents
- Goals: Emotional support, Sharing information
Increasing network, Empowerment
- Support from an organisation
 - for facilitating (location, information, organisation, counseling, funds, network)
 - for training (discover your own talent, guarding your own boundaries)
 - for communication/ publication
- Organizing meetings

How did we continue

After a few years we felt we needed to take a step back

The power of an informal network is:

- Small-scale
- Not part of professional care
- Mothers own the network

The mothernetwork became a Founding with

- there own place
- in their own neighbourhood
- and there own financing



The network belongs to the mothers

- Today the mothernetwork is a Founding with Leila as project leader
- They are subsidized by the municipality



Thank you

Are there any questions?

What inspired you?

