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PREVENTION RESEARCH

## European cross-national study

The research accompanying the “Leave no child behind! Municipalities providing opportunities” project examines the key factors contributing to successful outcomes in local prevention efforts.

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During the trial phase of the “Leave no child behind!” project, the Bertelsmann Stiftung conducted research on the local conditions required to enable coordinated preventive action.

## The key findings include

Effective prevention at the municipal level depends on the political will of decision-makers as well as the skills and capacities of the actors involved. In addition, strained municipal budgets often go hand-in-hand with a high

percentage of underprivileged families. Chains of prevention that are supported by binding structures or offerings provided throughout the course of a child's life strengthen prevention activities, even in poverty-stricken neighborhoods.

## European cross-national study on prevention

In order to determine the extent to which and how local chains of prevention are organized in other European countries, the study examines governance structures in the areas of health, social affairs, education and vocational training in twelve European countries. Because the system of actors and institutions operating in Germany cannot be directly transferred to other countries, the study also identifies and explores those offerings that are accessible to disadvantaged families and children in need. The Stiftung partnered with the German Research Institute for Public Administration (<https://www.foev-speyer.de/en/>) in Speyer for this study.

## “Making Prevention Work” – Preventive Structures and Policies For Children, Youth and Families

This **Comprehensive Report** compares prevention efforts and structures in Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England (UK), Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.

Individual **case studies** for **France**, the **Netherlands** and **Austria** offer an in-depth analysis of the systems in each country. These case studies highlight the details of prevention efforts in the context of each country's social welfare system and existing regional and/or municipal initiatives.

## What can we learn from each other to advance prevention across Europe?

A careful consideration of public administration and governance arrangements is essential to the effective integration of new concepts of social investment and prevention into existing welfare structures. Examining a welfare system through the prism of public administration thus provides an important supplement to existing research on welfare regimes.

## Findings:

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**Clarify prevention:**

A shared understanding of prevention across the different sectors and administrative levels/units is absent virtually everywhere. In order to clarify things, we need to combine universally applicable national inputs and targets (guidance) with local government networks and other actors providing services.

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**Breathe life into coordination mechanisms:**

Both formal structures and administrative practice matter. Although Nordic countries provide better opportunity environments than their more fragmented administrative western and continental European counterparts, there are gaps in coordination and a diversity of measures at the local level. This suggests that local administrative practices are at least as important as their surrounding formal architecture.

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**Bring services to the public:**

Community-based care and support services are difficult to establish. A key factor to consider in targeting community-based integrative services is the scale of community. If the community targeted is too small, those responsible for service delivery will find it difficult to integrate specific services that are less-frequently used. If the community targeted is too large, potential clients may find it difficult to access services.

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**Strengthen clients' and professionals' administrative literacy:**

Many countries feature several preventive offerings, but they are often fragmented and lack visibility. Enhancing the visibility of offerings while developing clients' competencies can promote early-on participation in prevention. Furthermore, professionals often also lack a comprehensive overview of services, so strengthening the visibility addresses a tricky problem twice.

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**Manage tradeoffs in enforcement versus adapting to local needs:**

Whereas centralized steering mechanisms strengthen the uniformity of services and effective targeting, they often frustrate efforts to adapt to local needs. What is needed is a balanced approach integrating centralized aims and standards and local discretion and knowledge.

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### **Insufficient resources for measures not easily included in established sectoral funding lines:**

Funding lines that cut across policy issues are essential to prevention. This includes funding for shared facilities, promotion efforts and continuing education. Financial limitations in most countries often result in underfunded prevention measures as resources are allocated for other measures deemed to be more urgent.

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### **Realize a non-silo financing:**

States can foster improved integrated services by providing additional funding, as the lack of financial resources is the main difficulty in establishing intersectoral institutions. Integrated services also involve integrating staff from different institutions into teams and avoid burden-shifters who try to shift responsibilities onto other actors in an effort to protect their own resources.

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### **Insufficient use of evidence-based arguments and underdeveloped performance measurement:**

While the Nordic states as well as England and Ireland do a better job of leveraging evidence-based research in this regard, Europe as a whole lacks an overarching evidence base, although the vast majority of policymakers and administrative actors want more information.

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## **EU-level actions**

In order to mitigate future problems, the EU should promote a more consistent conception of prevention as an aspect of social investment and enhance integrated programs taking a universal approach for children and young people. Although the European Commission's "[Investing in Children: Breaking the circle of disadvantages](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H0112&from=EN)" recommendation was introduced in 2013 with funding at the European level, the prevention paradigm has yet to become an integral part of the current EU strategy. Social policies are, however, gaining rhetorical momentum. Embedding principle eleven of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf) into ESF+ programming and European Semester recommendations is one possible way forward in realizing improved environments for disadvantaged children and youth. Drawing on the findings of

the study presented here, the “Leave no child behind” project supports all efforts to rapidly implement the [Child Guarantee](#) ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/638429/IPOL\\_BRI\(2019\)638429\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/638429/IPOL_BRI(2019)638429_EN.pdf)) linked to proposed ESF+ funding.

### Making Prevention Work With The Child Guarantee

)) *“Childcare and support to children:  
Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality.  
Children have the right to protection from poverty.  
Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.”*

Principle 11, European Pillar of Social Rights

 Share

## European networks

As part of the “Making Prevention Work” study, the organizers of the “Leave no child behind!” project have been in regular dialogue with actors engaged in prevention across Europe. This includes the [European Social Network](#) (<https://www.esn-eu.org/>), [EUROCHILD](#) (<https://www.eurochild.org/>) and the [European Group for Public Administration \(EGPA\)](#) (<https://egpa.iias-iiisa.org/>), which have followed the study carefully and discussed the project’s progress with members of their respective organizations in individual countries. Experts on each country surveyed have also provided valuable insights and comments regarding the study. The findings provided by the project will contribute to European efforts targeting the Child Guarantee.

This study was conducted with support from the ESF.

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### Downloads

- [Making Prevention Work with the Child Guarantee](#)
- [Making prevention work - Preventive structures and policies for children, youth and families - Comprehensive report](#)
- [Case Study Austria](#)
- [Case Studie France](#)

- [Case Study The Netherlands](#)
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