



## **The Campus Rütli pilot project – situating “One Square Kilometer of Education” in the educational landscape of the Reuter neighbourhood in the north of Berlin’s Neukölln district**

### **Integration through education**

The north of the Neukölln district, known throughout Germany as a troubled neighbourhood, is undergoing a transformation that has garnered a great deal of media attention. The northern Neukölln Reuterplatz neighbourhood management began preparations for a local educational association in 2005. The project “Intercultural Moderation as a Strategy of Intervention” was developed in autumn 2005, and introduced intercultural moderators to four schools, including the Rütli Schule, in March 2006.

The well-known Mayor of Neukölln, Heinz Buschkowsky, and the foundation “Stiftung Zukunft Berlin” have since May 2007 pursued the concept of the Campus Rütli as a pilot project to be organized within the community and communicated to the public, consciously and decisively. The project aims not only to grapple with pressing current problems but also to help develop transferable problem-solving strategies. With patron Christina Rau and Mayor Heinz Buschkowsky at the helm, all of the parties active in the neighbourhood agreed in September 2007 on a draft concept for the Campus Rütli project, CR<sup>2</sup>. The project seeks primarily to put in place a new and sustainable educational concept which includes the creation of a collective social space and could serve as a model. Two secondary schools, the Heinrich Heine Realschule and the Rütli Hauptschule, as well as a primary school, the Franz Schubert Grundschule, combined at the beginning of the 2008-09 school year to form the Campus Rütli comprehensive school. Two child care centres and a youth centre on the Rütlistraße have also merged with the Campus Rütli, which has a shared responsibility for overseeing all of these institutions and has begun to develop its own structure as additional components are added to it. With support from the Freudenberg Foundation’s programme “One Square Kilometer of Education”, Campus Rütli is giving rise to a unified place of learning which enables young people to pursue their entire school careers from preschool to vocational training within a single space, while also offering all school completion qualifications, including A levels. Parents and neighbours are also included.

Campus Rütli means that the entire spectrum of care, guidance and educational institutions for young people are for the first time collaborating and jointly shouldering responsibility. The coordinated action of the different educators, teachers and counsellors generates the highest possible level of support for parents, children and young people, who are invited to participate in shaping this process. Children from the catchment area, nearly 90 per cent of whom hail from immigrant families, receive optimal support here, with their parents also included. Cultural diversity and multilingualism are treated opportunities and are nurtured.

By compensating for the disadvantages in many of the children’s backgrounds, the educational institutions also become more attractive to parents who place a high value on



education. This in turn sparks a counter-trend to the long-observed phenomenon that these parents move out of the neighbourhood when their children reach school age.

On site, all those working in the three schools, the day care centres, the afterschool activity centres, the adult education centre and the music school are helping to turn the Campus Rütli vision into a reality, as are all of the child and youth services workers and social workers involved in the project. Through the steady and dependable support of the project's initiators, the Stiftung Zukunft Berlin and the Neukölln District Authority, as well as the Berlin Senate Departments for Urban Development and Education, Science and Research, their work is leading to the expected success. The Campus has attracted attention in the German media, which have dubbed it "avant garde", "an excellence initiative", and "the Neukölln miracle", thus adding momentum to its success.

After Senators Ingeborg Junge-Reyer and Jürgen Zöllner joined Christina Rau, Mayor Buschkowsky and Wolfgang Schimmang, the Senior District Official for Education, Culture and Sport, in introducing the Campus Rütli project to the public in January 2008, the Senate Departments for Urban Development and Education, Science and Research praised the project as groundbreaking and repeatedly emphasized their commitment to its success.

As the internal cohesion among the project components increases, the many individual institutions slowly grow together into a unified whole, and a structure is developed with the aim of a single overarching campus administration. The architectural planning of the overall project has been completed to the extent that construction of the neighbourhood centre is about to start; a design competition will soon begin for the buildings needed to expand the schools and complete the campus.

Campus Rütli has enjoyed a great deal of media attention. Though it is currently only an individual project, the Campus is regarded as a sort of pilot project. It is a part of the educational landscape of the Reuter neighbourhood; however, it may serve as a beacon for other neighbourhoods. In some regards it anticipates future developments. It is not a solitary project, but rather is broadly rooted in the neighbourhood, in keeping with the Freudenberg Foundation's long-term project "One Square Kilometer of Education". The actors can rest assured that the holistic approach to education and socialization and the multiple cross-linkages at the Campus will create a place of learning where integration succeeds through education and young people's potentials are tapped. This interplay provides the basis for a self-determined life for every individual of the younger generation, for whom both individual social mobility and active participation in society are made possible.

Claims that socially disadvantaged pupils are unwilling to learn are being refuted by evidence of their capacity to be motivated. After a mere two years, there are visible signs of the success yielded by cultivating a welcoming atmosphere and a climate of recognition and appreciation. The task now is to continue on the same path: seizing multilingualism as an opportunity; intensively cultivating arts education; and not least, discovering, encouraging and developing untapped potential. The completion of construction for the pilot project Campus Rütli is all the more urgently awaited.

Campus Rütli is already playing a role in improving Neukölln's image: German and European experts from the fields of higher education, politics, educational administration and urban planning have visited the campus to learn about the concept and the progress being made in realizing it.

Through the Campus Rütli model, the "troubled" district of Neukölln offers a promising problem-solving strategy, shifting perceptions so that the district is increasingly viewed as an attractive site of modern heterogeneity.

