



**Youth**Partnership

# ***QUESTIONNAIRE***

# ***“PARTICIPATION”***

# ***AUSTRIA***



**Youth**Partnership  
Council of Europe  
European Commission



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## 1 Context of youth [participation](#) in the country

The participation of young people (up to 30 years of age) in Austria is granted by law in form of a representative body that is consulted in affairs concerning youth. In the Federal Law on Representation of Youth (NR: GP XXI IA 270/A AB 351 S. 46. BR: 6253 and 6254 AB 6264 S. 670.) from the year 2001 the representation of the concerns of youth (= young people up to 30) in Austria observe the policy makers on national level is granted. The BJV (=representing organisation) is consulted in youth concerning affairs by the ministry in charge of youth.

Austria is the first country in Europe that enables voting on national level for all citizens from the age of 16.

The federal structure of Austria with its 9 *Bundesländer* allows participation of youth on regional level, following the particular laws of the federal states.

Following the Federal Law on Representation of pupils (*Schülervertretungengesetz*, BGBl. Nr. 284/1990) in all Austrian federal states exist a representation of pupils on regional level, as well as for Austria a national representation exists.

The Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH) is based on a federal law - the *HochschülerInnenschaftsgesetz* (HSG). It is the recognised representation of all students at Austrian universities and *Pädagogische Akademien* (Teacher Training Academies).

## 2 Structures of participation at the local regional or national level

### 2.1 [Youth councils](#)

#### 2.1.1 National [youth councils](#)

The Austrian National Youth Council (*Bundesjugendvertretung* - BJV) is consulted by the ministry in charge of youth and the government in affairs concerning young people in Austria and comments laws that have an influence on the Austrian youth. The BJV is the umbrella organisation for youth organisations giving young people a voice. Now 43 youth organisations are members in the BJV.

#### 2.1.2 Regional youth councils

Burgenland - *Landesjugendforum Burgenland*

Lower Austria - *Landesjugendbeirat Niederösterreich*

Salzburg - *Landesjugendbeirat Salzburg*

Styria - *Landesjugendbeirat Steiermark*

Upper Austria – *Landesjugendbeirat Oberösterreich*

Vienna - *Landesjugendbeirat Wien*

Vorarlberg - *Landesjugendbeirat Vorarlberg*

In these youth councils regional youth organisations are represented, in some are also other structures, which are dealing with youth, involved. All regional youth council are consulted by the federal youth departments in youth connected affairs; they also comment on laws in regard of youth compatible participation.

### **2.1.3 Local youth councils**

There is no national obligation for local governments to establish local councils. Nevertheless many Austrian cities and towns established different forms of youth councils. Even on district level youth councils exist.

## **2.2 Youth parliaments on national, regional and local level (if applicable)**

Local level

In Austria many local youth parliaments exist in cities and districts - a list is available on the homepage of [ARGE Partizipation](#), a network consisting of representatives of the federal and national youth departments in Austria [descriptions in German only] One example is the youth parliament in the 23<sup>rd</sup> district of Vienna – [wordup-23](#). In this project every year the pupils in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade secondary schools elect their representatives. These meet to a plenary and elaborate requests and demands for politicians.

Additional to that exist parliamentary structures in many schools. For example: [SchülerInnen - Parlament](#) - Hauptschule Liefering

More projects – also from new forms of participation – can be found on the internet platform: [entscheidend-bist-du](#).

Regional level

In Salzburg exist regional youth parliaments, the descriptions can be found at [Jugendlandtag](#) - Land Salzburg

In all 9 federal states parliamentarian structures for pupil's representation exist. These are committees of elected school representatives, which debate mainly school and education topics and formulate demands on regional and national level. Example: [Wiener SchülerInnenparlament](#), [Salzburger LandsschülerInnenvertretung](#)

National level

There is no existing national youth parliament in Austria.

But for pupils and for students elected parliamentary structures exist on regional and on national level. For further information refer for school pupils to the *BundesschülerInnenvertretung* (BSV - <http://www.bsv.at/>) and for students the Austrian National Union of Students (*Österreichische HochschülerInnenschaft* ÖH - <http://oeh.ac.at/>). The BSV is the committee of elected representatives of the school representatives of the 9 federal states.

The ÖH is elected direct by the university students in Austria every second year.

### **3 Participation in representative democracy**

#### **3.1 Number and percentage of young people who are members of a political party or political youth organisations, if possible by gender**

N/A

#### **3.2 Number and percentage of young people who are members of a trade union**

N/A

#### **3.3 Percentage of young people (in total and by gender) who are members of a youth [non-governmental organisation](#), which are not trade unions, political parties or political youth organisations. If possible give information about the type of organisations.**

N/A

### **4 Explain the existing support measures, of national, regional or local scope, to promote the participation of young people in local life and follow-up mechanisms**

#### **4.1 Financial actions to support the various structures for youth political and NGO participation**

The Federal law on Supportive Measures for the Youth in Austria defines the general outlines for financial support of youth organisations and projects. Youth NGOs receive financial funding according to their members and based on project activities. Due to the focal points of youth policy, youth participation is a prerequisite for funding projects anyway.

Also on regional level projects for participation are supported by the 9 province governments. The regional youth parliaments are funded by the respective federal state.

Local youth councils are supported by the local governments and in some cases also by the federal states.

The structures for participation of pupils on regional (level of federal states: *LandesschülerInnenvertretung*) and on national level (*BundesschülerInnenvertretung*) are financed through the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. The Austrian National Union of Students (*ÖH*) is supported by the

#### **4.2 Which financial actions on national level aimed at certain specific groups of young people exist?**

No financial actions aim to enhance the participation of a certain groups of young people. It is a clear aim to foster the participation of all groups. Youth work in Austria aims to reach all groups of young people, but specific groups are young people with lower education, young women and young people with migration background.

### **5 The vote**

#### **5.1 Is voting obligatory?**

No

#### **5.2 Age of the right to vote**

16

#### **5.3 Please describe who is entitled to vote in national, regional and local elections.**

The National Council is elected in accordance with the principles of equal, direct, secret and personal right to vote. All Austrian citizens who have turned 16 on the Election Day are entitled to vote. Since 2007 it is possible to do postal vote.

Austrians living abroad and Austrians who are not at their permanent residence at the time of elections can submit their votes by polling card. Voting is not compulsory. Citizens lose their right to vote and passive right to vote only if they have been convicted of criminal offences.

On regional level all Austrian citizens, who have turned 16 on the Election Day and have their permanent residence at the time of the election in that federal state, are entitled to vote.

According to EU law, citizens of EU countries who have turned 16 on the Election Day can vote in elections on the local and on European level.

## **5.4 Requirements for being entitled as a candidate in national, regional or local elections (age, nationality, etc.)**

All Austrian citizens who have turned 18 on the day of the election have the passive right to vote, i.e. the right to be elected.

## **6 The elections**

### **6.1 Indicators of participation related to the election of the [European Parliament](#)**

#### **6.1.1 In the election of the European Parliament, the number and percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote (in total and by gender)**

The exact percentage is not available, but exit polls and political market research claim that the percentage was more or less similar to that of the global population. That was: approx. 40% which equals approx. 540.000 young people aged 18 - 30

### **6.2 National indicators of participation in the polls**

#### **6.2.1 In national elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote (in total, by gender and by age groups)**

The last national elections were September 2008, where for the first time all Austrians who turned 16 already were allowed to vote. This number is approx. 1.343.900.

Following [exit polls and political research data](#) the voter participation of the youth was approximately equal to that of the whole Austrian population, which was 78.81 %. For the subgroups (gender and age) this percentage is estimated to be more or less the same.

#### **6.2.2 In national elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population who has voted.**

Since the voter participation of young people is more or less equal to that of the whole population, the ratio of young voters to the population of voters is the same to the age group of 16 to 30 year old in relation to the Austrian older than 16.

### **6.3 Regional and local indicators of participation in the polls**

#### **6.3.1 In regional and local elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote**

The same as on national level holds for the regional. In the last elections in *Niederösterreich* (2008) and Tyrol (2008) the voting age was 16 the participation in the global population was: *Niederösterreich* (74,5%) Tyrol (65,8%)

### **6.3.2 In regional and local elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population voting**

Since the voter participation of young people is more or less equal to that of the whole population, the ratio of young voters to the population of voters is the same to the age group of 16 to 30 year old in relation to the population older than 16.

### **6.4 Number of young people elected at the national, regional and local level: overall and by gender (please specify the age range)**

The number of young women and young men (under the age of 30) who are member of the national parliament is 2 women and 2 men.

## **7 List actions, programmes, and financial or social support that promote the participation in the system of representative democracy, in particular to young people under the age of 30?**

The study group on participation (*ARGE Partizipation*) is a group of representatives of the youth departments in the countries and promotes participation of young people on all levels of public life.

Further information can be found here: [www.jugendbeteiligung.at](http://www.jugendbeteiligung.at)

The initiative of the Federal Government – “*entscheidend bist du*” – wants to foster and promote the participation of young people in the system of representative democracy and the election with 16.

Further information: [www.entscheidend-bist-du.at](http://www.entscheidend-bist-du.at)

Following the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management a strategy group dealing with the topic of participation was created. This expert group is - among other activities - developing a guideline for participation that should help people in the administration to fulfil the requirements of participation.

Normally projects are evaluated, to see the acceptance of the young people but also the effects resulting from the projects.

All young people should participate in public life so no specific groups are highlighted.

## **8 Learning to participate**

*The following section is about the activities that promote active participation to young people in formal and [non-formal education](#).*



**8.1 Please list existing actions and mechanisms within the systems of formal education aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate (citizen's education). Please also list related guidelines and teacher training programmes aiming at integrating citizen's education into the curriculum.**

In Austrian schools exists due to the decree GZ 33.464/6-19a/78 the educational principal "political education". Curricula on this topic exist for every kind of Austrian school with the aim to enable young people to understand and perceive the different forms of democratic participation in Austria. Additionally for secondary higher school (AHS) political education is part of the curriculum of the topic "history".

A collection of all used curricula can be found [here](#) [in German only]

Teachers for history in the higher secondary schools have a special curriculum for political education. Furthermore many web resources (e.g. *forum politische bildung* <http://www.politischebildung.com/>; *Zentrum polis* <http://www.politik-lernen.at/>) offer possibilities for downloading material for the educational principle "political education".

One mechanism of citizens' education in schools is the direct democracy in the institution. In schools representatives of classes and representatives of the school are elected. The representatives of the schools elect on a regional level their representatives. The regional representatives elect the representatives on national level.

Pupils are also involved in the decision finding process in their school through the SGA – *Schulgemeinschaftsausschuss*. This body consists of three representatives of the teachers, the parents and the pupils each.

The "*Donau Universität Krems*" established a master study course (<http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/studium/politischebildung/index.php>) for political education, affecting both the formal and the non-formal curriculum.

The democracy centre (<http://www.demokratiezentrum.org/en/index.html> *Demokratie Zentrum Wien*) provides detailed information and educational material like articles, videos and audio files on the section "knowledge" on their website for download (<http://www.demokratiezentrum.org/en/cms/knowledge/index.html>) .

The "*Forum politische Bildung Steiermark*" (<http://www.gesellschaftspolitik.at/>) offers trainings and seminars for the non-formal education.

**8.2 In which fields, other than formal education, do actions and/or support - of national or regional scope- exist, which aim at promoting learning to participate amongst young people? What is the nature of these actions/this support? Give examples of good practise.**

Federal and national administration support youth organisations, youth initiatives and projects that aim for learning and promoting of participation of young people.

The main approach is to fund projects that deal with participation of young people. In some federal states of Austria local structures of youth participation and representation are legally established and are supported by the federal governments.

Examples

Information on politics with a close connection to elections can be found in the internet on specially designed websites for young people. These webpages do also aim at providing political education in non formal and informal education.

E.g.: The initiative youth project "[refresh politics](#)" in *Niederösterreich* aims at political education outside of school: 4 juveniles designed a brochure to inform other young people about the political system in Austria and the way how democracy works with a special focus on the situation in *Niederösterreich*, where the regional elections took place that year. Furthermore a webpage was set up for information as well as user generated content and exchange.

Also the information platform [www.entscheidend-bist-du.at](http://www.entscheidend-bist-du.at) provides information and allows exchange.

The page [www.wahlkabine.at](http://www.wahlkabine.at) allows informal education about parties via providing help for the decision of which party to vote for.

**9 Describe other, informal ways young people choose to participate in your country.**

Demonstrations:

In the year 2008 demonstrations of pupils (organised by pupils NGOs, but joined also by non-organised pupils) took place to point towards problems in schools like shortage of space.

A group of conservationists demonstrated against a law that allowed the imprisonment on remand of an animal activist.

Media:

Open radio (e.g. *Radio Helsinki* (in Graz) or *Radiofabrik* (Salzburg) ) and television programmes (e.g. *Okto* (Wien) ) are used frequently to point out the personal opinion on political topics and to try to initiate individual actions like consumer protests against certain brands, or responsible living.

In the internet many (young) people use blogs, forums or guestbooks to communicate there political views and interests. (see above)