



YouthPartnership

QUESTIONNAIRE

“PARTICIPATION”

GERMANY



YouthPartnership
Council of Europe
European Commission



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1 Context of youth participation in the country

Legislation

Young people's participation has a long tradition in the Federal Republic of Germany and has a sound legal basis. The relevant standards of the Child and Youth Service Act (Social Code Volume Eight, SGB VIII), of family law and of the requirements stipulated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was also ratified by Germany, provide the framework for the manifold possibilities for participation of the young generation.

The Social Code Volume Eight (SGB VIII), Child & Youth Services, Chapter 1, § 8 states that children and young people are to be involved in all decisions of statutory youth services concerning them in accordance with personal maturity and development.

In regard to the participation of children and young people at the local level more detailed regulations can be found in communal constitutions implementing SGB VIII. Examples of local participation instruments are:

- setup of local youth councils or youth committees;
- petition, hearing, speaking and proposal rights;
- children's offices as contact points for the specific interests of children and youth;
- children's lawyers.

Besides the regulations of SGB VIII laws like i.e. the German Federal Building Code (*Baugesetzbuch*) prescribe to consider the needs of children and young people. Moreover school laws and work constitution acts foresee the participation of young people in fields affecting them.

Structures

Participation forms part of a sustainable policy for young people in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Federal Government regards young people's participation and involvement in decision-making processes as fundamental elements in society and politics, and a primary instrument to foster democratic beliefs. Therefore, the Federal Government's youth policy encourages participation and social commitment; that is one of its top priorities.

The "participation scene" in Germany is extremely diverse and characterised by a wide range of participation possibilities which include representative participation such as children's and young people's councils, student representatives and open forms such as neighbourhood meetings, office

hours and meetings of the municipal council with young people, youth forums, and project-related participation such as workshops and decision-making processes.

2. Structures of participation at the local, regional or national level

2.1 Youth councils

2.1.1 National youth councils

The **German Federal Youth Council** (Deutscher Bundesjugendring, DBJR) was founded in 1949 as a working group of youth organisations and regional youth councils active throughout Germany. Its current membership includes 24 youth organisations, 16 regional youth councils and 5 affiliated organisations. The 5 affiliated organisations have an advisory vote. The youth organisations united in the DBJR are diverse in both aims and orientation. The variety of member organisations spans from religiously oriented associations, scouts, ecological, cultural and humanitarian organisations to worker's youth federations.

In its work the DBJR focuses on three priorities:

- to represent youth interests and common aims of its member organisations - to public, to parliament and to government;
- to ensure an ongoing information flow between its member organisations and to enable them to achieve common positions on youth policy;
- to cooperate with youth organisations and national youth councils outside Germany.

>> Contact: info[at]dbjr.de, www.dbjr.de

Due to historical reasons the party political youth organisations are not members of the DBJR. They form their own council: the **Council of Political Youth Organisations** (Ring Politischer Jugend, RPJ).

The RPJ was founded in 1950 and is a working group of the youth organisations of the five most important political parties in Germany. Its current membership encompasses five organisations.

>> Contact: The management and secretary of the RPJ changes regularly. In 2008 it rested with the Young Democrats – Young Left, info[at]jdjl.org, www.idjl.org

The DBJR does either not represent German youth sports organisations on federal level. They are united in the **German Sports Youth** (Deutsche Sportjugend, dsj) which was founded in 1950 and represents the members of the 16 Länder Sports Youth (Landessportjugenden), 53 Youth Organisations of the Sports Associations (Jugendorganisationen der Spitzenverbände) and 10 Youth

Organisations of the Associations with Special Tasks (Jugendorganisationen von Verbänden mit besonderen Aufgabenstellungen).

>> Contact: info[at]dsj.de, www.dsj.de

For the representation of German youth organisations on the multilateral level (.i.e. in the European Youth Forum or at the UN) the German Federal Youth Council, the Council of Political Youth Organisations and the German Sports Youth form the **German National Committee for international Youth Work** (Deutsches Nationalkomitee für internationale Jugendarbeit, DNK).

>> Contact: dnk[at]dbjr.de

2.1.2 Regional youth councils

Each of the 16 federal states (*Bundesländer*) has its own regional youth council (*Landesjugendring*) representing regional youth organisations and local youth councils. Their role in decision-making processes differs from federal state to federal state. The 16 regional youth councils are:

- Bavarian Youth Council, www.bjr.de
- Children and Youth Council of Saxony, www.jugendinfo.net
- Children and Youth Council of Saxony-Anhalt, www.kjr-lsa.de
- Regional Youth Council of Baden-Wuerttemberg, www.ljrbw.de
- Regional Youth Council of Berlin, www.ljrberlin.de
- Regional Youth Council of Brandenburg, www.ljr-brandenburg.de
- Regional Youth Council of Hamburg, www.ljr-hh.de
- Regional Youth Council of Lower Saxony, www.ljr.de
- Regional Youth Council of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, www.jugend.inmv.de
- Regional Youth Council of North Rhine-Westfalia, www.ljr-nrw.de
- Regional Youth Council of Rhineland-Palatinate, www.ljr-rlp.de
- Regional Youth Council Saar, www.landesjugendring-saar.de
- Regional Youth Council of Schleswig-Holstein, www.ljrsh.de
- Regional Youth Council of Thuringia, www.ljrt.de
- Youth Council of Bremen, www.bremerjugendring.de
- Youth Council of Hessen, www.hessischer-jugendring.de

2.1.3 Local youth councils

There is a great number of local youth councils. Local youth councils are self-organised amalgamations of local youth associations, youth organisations and youth initiatives.* Their aim is

- to represent children's and young people's interests towards public, politics and administration,
- to help shape and back the general framework of youth (associative) work and
- to take a stand with regard to socio-political questions and questions relevant to youth.

Youth councils represent the youth associations' demands to the committees and institutions responsible for youth issues on local level, especially in the so called Committees for Youth Services (*Jugendhilfeausschuss*) of the urban districts and the counties.

Local youth councils exist in about four of five youth administrative districts (*Jugendamtsbezirk*). This means in about 450 to 500 of the 600 youth administrative districts in Germany. To provide an example, there are currently 134 local youth councils in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the biggest federal state according to population (<http://p25847.typo3server.info/index.php?id=stadt-undkreisjugendringe>).

A study of the German Youth Institute published in 2006 describes the structure and the functioning of as well as the future challenges for local youth councils in Germany.

Download: http://www.dji.de/bibs/64_5609_JugendringeimVisier.pdf (in German)

* Due to the special role that has been given to the local youth councils in the post-war period the structure and the functions of youth councils in Bavaria differ from those in the other federal states.

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

Local level

There is no uniform structure or definition for youth parliaments in Germany. Instead you find a broad variation of different forms and models including both formal structures (including the election of youth representatives, regular sessions and formal links to local authorities) as well as youth forums and similar events that are open to all young people (non-formal structures, no elections, no binding decisions).

An overview of the work of different local youth parliaments can be found at [http://www.japla.de/projektsuche/ps_org_liste.php?search\[art\]=Jugendparlament](http://www.japla.de/projektsuche/ps_org_liste.php?search[art]=Jugendparlament) (in German).

Regional level

As for local youth parliaments there is no uniform structure or definition for regional youth parliaments. Activities aiming at creating regional youth parliaments were started in North Rhine-Westphalia and

Baden-Wuerttemberg but the involvement of the youth parliaments in decision-making processes was quite low.

National level

There is no national youth parliament so far.

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

About 230 000 young people

Comment: As the data provided by the party political youth organisations covers several age groups it is not possible to give the percentage.

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

About 3%

Comment: Based on data provided by the youth organisation of the Federation of German Trade Unions (*Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund-Jugend*).

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.

About 20%

Comment: The percentage refers to the total number of children and young people between the age of 0 and 30 living in Germany. The number is based on data provided by the German Federal Youth Council and the youth organisation of the Federation of German Trade Unions (*Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund-Jugend*). Due to the diverse and complex structure of German non-governmental youth organisations the number contains multiple memberships.

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

National level

Party political and non-governmental youth organisations are seen as central actors to foster participation among children and youth people. According to certain criteria the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth grants annual subsidies to these national youth organisations.

Central funding instrument is the Child and Youth Plan of the Federation (*Kinder- und Jugendplan des Bundes*) by which the government funds child and youth services. For 2008 the Child and Youth Plan provided about 132 million Euros of which about 11.3% went directly to non-governmental youth organisations. (Source: Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget 2008,

<http://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/bundeshaushalt2008/pdf/epl17/s1702101.pdf>)

Apart from the direct grants to youth structures the Child and Youth Plan provides further financial support for youth participation activities like i.e. the national Action Programme for More Youth Participation (*Aktionsprogramm für mehr Jugendbeteiligung*, www.du-machst.de) or projects in the field of civic education.

Regional and local level

Besides the federation each federal state (*Land*) provides funding for youth organisations on the regional level and for regional participation structures and projects in an own Regional Youth Plan. The same stands for the local level.

Due to the diverse character of the German federalism it is not easily possible to provide a concrete number of the funding the regional and local levels allocate to the regional and local youth participation structures and activities. But as the municipalities are the main donors for child and youth services in Germany the aggregated budget surely exceeds the budget provided by the federal level.

Examples for private funding

Funds for participation projects are also provided by the German Children's Aid Association (*Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk*, DKHW), the German Youth Stamp Foundation (*Stiftung Deutsche Jugendmarke*) and other associations or foundations.

As in other countries Germany has a system of Youth Banks which allows young people to participate directly in funding decisions on local youth activities. The Youth Banks provide money to projects led by young people (between 15 and 25). The subsidy per project amounts from 50 to 400 Euros. The Youth Banks in Germany were created by the German Children and Youth Foundation (*Deutsche Kinder- und Jugendstiftung*) and jointly realised with the Resource Centre Youth Participation (*Servicestelle Jugendbeteiligung*). They receive support from the Deutsche Bank Foundation. More information: www.youthbank.de.

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

The Action Programme for More Youth Participation (*Aktionsprogramm für mehr Jugendbeteiligung*) sponsors manifold projects under the slogan "Only those who take action will make a difference". It is a joint initiative by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Federal Agency for Civic Education and the German Federal Youth Council aiming at young people between 6 and 24. Some of the projects in the framework of the action programme are targeted at specific groups such as children and young people with a migration background or children and adolescents from underprivileged families (www.du-machst.de).

Examples of projects:

- Ideenwettbewerb - Competition addressing young migrants and less-educated young people in order to encourage them to play a more active role in democratic society organised by the Federal Agency of Civic Education. The thirteen projects which won the competition were realised in 2008.
- "5 x Deutschland" – Video clips in which young people living in social hot spots report about their life, their living circumstances and their anxieties.

5 The vote

5.1 Is voting obligatory?

No.

5.2 Age of the right to vote

18 years

Comment: The voting age for local elections in the federal states (*Länder*) of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein is 16 years.

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

National and regional elections:

Every German has the right to vote, if they are 18 years of age or older and if

- they have been resident in the Federal Republic of Germany for at least three months,
- or are a soldier, civil servant or public service worker had been sent abroad by the employer (including family members);
- or they live in an EU state;

Local elections:

Every German has the right to vote, if they are 16*/18 years of age or older and if

- they have been resident in the Federal Republic of Germany for at least three months,
- or are a soldier, civil servant or public service worker had been sent abroad by the employer (including family members);
- or they live in an EU state;

Every EU citizens has the right to vote, if they are 16*/18 years of age or older and if

- Germany is their country of residence and
- they are registered in the electoral roll.

*The voting age for local elections in the federal states (*Länder*) of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westfalia, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein is 16 years.

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

Eligible is, who has the right to vote.

Comment: For elections to the federal parliament of Hessen candidates have to be 21 years and older.

Local elections:

Eligible is, who has the right to vote.

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)**

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6.1.2 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population voting

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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)

No elections in 2008.

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

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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

Regional elections 2008:

- Regional Parliament of Hessen (27th January 2008):
18-21 years: 54.2%
21-25 years: 45.3%
25-30 years: 46.4%*
- Regional Parliament of Lower Saxony (27th January 2008): 33.5%
- Regional Parliament of Hamburg (24th February 2008):
18-24 years: 38.2%
25-34 years: 53.9%*
- Regional Parliament of Bavaria (28th September 2008):
18-25 years: 40.0%
25-35 years: 43.4%*

* No other data available due to the instruments of data ascertainment.

Local elections 2008

In 2008 local elections were held in Hamburg (24th February), Bavaria (2nd March), Saxony-Anhalt (25th May), Saxony (9th June) and Brandenburg (28th September). But as the authorities are not obliged to provide representative election statistics for local elections there is **no data available** regarding the participation of young voters in these elections.

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

Regional elections 2008

- Regional Parliament of Hessen (27th January 2008): No data available.*
- Regional Parliament of Lower Saxony (27th January 2008): 14,9 %
- Regional Parliament of Hamburg (24th February 2008): No data available.*
- Regional Parliament of Bavaria (28th September 2008): No data available.*

* Due to the instruments of data ascertainment.

Local elections 2008

In 2008 local elections were held in Hamburg (24th February), Bavaria (2nd March), Saxony-Anhalt (25th May), Saxony (9th June) and Brandenburg (28th September). But as the authorities are not obliged to provide representative election statistics for local elections there is **no data available** regarding the participation of young voters in these elections.

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

Female members of national parliament born after 1st January 1978: 5

Male members of national parliament born after 1st January 1978: 4

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?

In addition to the educational system political parties, their youth organisations and political foundations as well as youth organisations, regional youth councils, youth centres and youth education centres play a central role in the promotion and support of young people's participation in the system of representative democracy. They offer a very broad range of activities aiming at fostering young people's active participation in democracy.

The Federal Agency for Civic Education and the regional Agencies for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale und Landeszentralen für politische Bildung*) provide background information on the political system, elections, citizenship etc. targeting in particular at young people and offer manifold youth activities on these topics.

In the run-up to elections often youth campaigns are organised aiming in particular at first voters. Material is provided explaining the election process and the programmes of the political parties in a simple and youth friendly way.

In the last years the Wahl-O-Mat, an online tool offered by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (and partly realised in cooperation with agencies of civic education on regional level), has become a very successful web project increasing political participation and communication before elections on the federal and the regional level (www.wahl-o-mat.de). The Wahl-O-Mat presents internet users with 30 propositions on relevant political questions asking them to take a stand on them ('agree', 'disagree' or 'neutral'). The Wahl-O-Mat compares the voter's positions with the positions of the political parties and calculates the distance between both. The aim is

- to raise young people's awareness that differences between parties do matter,
- to mobilize citizenship activities and debates on relevant political topics among young people and
- to try to boil down complex, diffuse and tedious political debates to concrete questions directly understandable and relevant to young people.

One of the central goals of the Action Programme for More Youth Participation (*Aktionsprogramm für mehr Jugendbeteiligung*), a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Federal Agency for Civic Education and the German Federal Youth Council, is to foster young people's participation in society and in democracy. One of the programmes run by the German Federal Youth Council in 2007/2008 aimed at bringing young people into direct contact with political representatives of every level. "Come in Cont(r)act" funded 121 projects in which children and young people discussed and negotiated agreements with decision-makers based on their needs (<http://www.dbjr.de/index.php?m=12&id=130>).

Furthermore the German Federal Parliament (*Bundestag*) runs an online youth portal (www.mitmischen.de) with offers chats with deputies, discussion forums, news and background information on current political topics and the parliament. At the regional level most parliaments provide a special part for young people on their websites.

The online forum www.abgeordnetenwatch.de gives citizens the possibility to get into direct contact with their elected deputies on the regional, national and European level. The same applies for candidates running for a mandate at www.kandidatenwatch.de. Both forums are neutral and non-party political (non-public initiatives). Although these online forums do not exclusively address young people they of course offer them an opportunity to get in direct contact with deputies and candidates.

8 Learning to participate

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

Citizenship education in formal education

Citizenship education is firmly integrated in the German system of formal education. As it falls under the cultural authority of the German federal states, its importance as a subject varies from federal state to federal state. However, citizenship education exists as a pedagogical principle at all of Germany's varied educational facilities, at every level of education either as part of the general curriculum or as own subject under different names.

Citizen education in Germany in general aims at

- teaching the ideas of freedom and democracy;
- bringing young people up as tolerant people who respect other people and their convictions;
- fostering the belief in international understanding;
- strengthening social commitment and political responsibility and
- enabling young people to assume their own rights and duties.

Due to the complex structure of the German educational system a broad variety and huge number of actions, guidelines, training programmes etc. on citizenship education exist. Educational facilities are for example supported by the Agencies for Civic Education (one at federal level, 16 at the level of the federal states) which provide information material, funding, toolkits, teacher training programmes or methods.

Student councils

The active participation of students in school and at university is an integral part of the formal educational system in Germany. As educational issues fall in the authority of the German federal states the laws regarding the role and the function of the student councils differ from federal state to federal state. In general the laws prescribe the students' active participation in different decision-making processes in their school/university.

The student councils form associations on the local, district, regional and national level in order to represent the interests of students in education politics on the different political levels.

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.

Alongside school-related activities it is an important aspect of citizenship education in Germany to engage young people in a variety of pursuits funded by state and social authorities. State-sponsored activities include civil and army service, working in adult education or in cultural centres, at memorial sites etc.

In addition important areas of non-formal citizenship education exist. They focus i.e. on

- right-wing extremism/racism,
- learning democracy,
- migration/integration,
- violence prevention/conflict resolution and
- gender mainstreaming

These non-formal activities are organised or supported by a broad variety of organisations and associations such as political parties, trade unions, foundations, religious and spiritual communities, the media, academies, independent institutions, and initiatives which pursue citizenship education out of a commitment to its ideals. As public institutions are withdrawing more and more from the field, private funding for citizenship education has noticeably increased in importance in the last few years, although it still does not replace the state-sponsored, non-partisan educational support provided by public agencies.*

The nature of the actions offered in the field of civic education is very broad and ranges from seminars and workshops to campaigns and competitions as well as to counselling and trainings.

Examples of good practise

- “Berlin 08 – The festival for young politics” – In June 2008 the festival, which was part of the national Action Programme for More Youth Participation, gathered several thousand young people from all over Germany in Berlin. In about 400 workshops and numerous other activities offered by young people, youth organisations, youth initiatives and others the participants got the opportunity to discuss, to debate, to learn about politics and other issues and to take action (www.du-machst.de/index.php?id=berlin08&no_cache=1).

- “VIELFALT TUT GUT. – Young People Advocating Tolerance and Democracy” – The government’s prevention programme aims at fighting right-wing extremism, xenophobia and anti-semitism. It focuses on supporting local action plans under municipal responsibility and outstanding exemplary measures (www.vielfalt-tut-gut.de).
- “Competition of ideas – Projects for migrant young people” - The competition was run by the Federal Agency for Civic Education in 2008 and aimed at creating participation projects especially for young people with a migration background. The project ideas which won were realised. Their variety spanned from a theatre project for primary school students to as story telling and choir project for Afro-German youngsters and to an anti-discrimination project with young migrants.

* The text was taken from “Citizenship Education in Germany” by Dirk Lange, in: Viola B. Georgi (Ed.): The Making of Citizens in Europe: New Perspectives on Citizenship Education, Bonn 2008, pp. 89-95.

8.3 Do some of the existing or planned actions aim at certain specific groups of young people?

Public authorities and non-governmental organisations working in the field of civic education aim to reach specific target groups by offering special activities. These target groups are for example first voters, socially disadvantaged young people, young migrants or young people being exposed to right-wing extremism but also young political leaders or multipliers in youth organisations.

9. Informal ways young people choose to participate in the country.

According to a study on child and youth participation in municipalities conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation young people (12 to 18 years) choose the following informal forms of participation:

- take part in (approved) manifestations
- collect signatures
- take actively part in discussions/debates
- participate in a youth conference
- take part in forbidden manifestations
- go to the consultation hours of the local child and youth ombudsman/ombudswoman
- take part in a social or political project

The study was conducted in 42 cities and municipalities all over Germany and more than 12,000 young people were involved. More information: <http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-0A000F0A-1CDA80C0/bst/hs.xsl/16538.htm> (in German)