

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



COUNTRY SHEET ON YOUTH WORK IN GERMANY



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By: IJAB
Susanne Klinzing

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1. Context of youth work

Public and voluntary child and youth service providers and organisations have a long tradition that dates back to the 19th century. During the German Empire and in the Weimar Republic they maintained and offered urban youth centres and youth clubs: open youth houses developed later. In the beginning, both public youth services and voluntary social welfare services (churches, organisations) tried to reach out mainly to male youth from the lower social scale (unemployed, poor, criminals) of urban cities. These were attempts, later regulated by law (Prussian Youth Welfare Edict 1901, Reich Youth Welfare Act 1922/1924), to integrate these young people into a well-regulated society. Later they would also address young people that were already members of an association or attached to a religious group.¹

Early offers also included nature excursions and hiking, as for example in the “Wandervogel movement”, but also saw the rise of a young workers’ movement and its youth organisations and initiatives before the First World War. In the Third Reich organised youth organisations were forbidden or subject to “Nazifizierung”, that is, to bring them into line with Nazi ideological principles. After the Second World War a lot of new youth organisations emerged and were founded, for example, the German Federal Youth Council (1949), the Federation of Protestant Youth in Germany (1949), the Association of German Catholic Youth (1947), the German Federation of Rural Youth (1949), the German Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Association (1948), the German Sports Youth (1950). Newly created youth committees in local communities started to offer and co-ordinate assistance and care to young people. Newly formed civic organisations, the churches, sports associations and trade unions got involved. Open youth work in “houses of youth” and youth clubs began to grow. A variety of youth work opportunities were established. In the Western occupation zones and later the Federal Republic of Germany, youth work was integrated into the system of child and youth services that had developed. In the Soviet occupation

¹ Deinet U. and Sturzenbecker B. (eds) (2013), *Handbuch Offene Kinder- und Jugendarbeit* (4th rev. edn), Springer VS, Wiesbaden.

zone and later the German Democratic Republic, youth work was an area dominated by the state-controlled Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend, FDJ) organisation.²

After the reunification of the two German states in 1990, the Reich Youth Welfare Act was replaced by a new legal basis for child and youth welfare: the Social Code Book VIII – Child and Youth Services. It came into force on 1 January 1991 in the newly formed German federal states after the reunification on 3 October 1990.

Research on the tradition and developments of youth work has been carried out and published, for example:

- Ulrich Deinet and Benedikt Sturzenhecker (2013), *Handbuch Offene Kinder- und Jugendarbeit* (4th rev. edn), Wiesbaden.
- Werner Lindner [1964-2004] (2006), *Vierzig Jahre Kinder- und Jugendarbeit in Deutschland: Aufbruch, Aufstieg und neue Ungewissheit*, Wiesbaden.
- Benno Hafeneger (1992), *Jugendarbeit als Beruf: Geschichte Einer Profession in Deutschland*, Wiesbaden.
Hermann Giesecke (1981), *Vom Wandervogel bis zur Hitlerjugend. Jugendarbeit zwischen Politik und Pädagogik*, München.
- Hermann Giesecke (1980), *Die Jugendarbeit* (5th rev. edn), München.

Today's plurality of child and youth work providers and organisations is the result of a process of historical development. From the very beginning, the providers' activities and the public interest, as well as the involvement of young people and the negotiation processes of local providers, played their roles. Though for historical reasons the youth services provided by local public authorities as the roots of open

² German Federal Youth Council (2003), *Gesellschaftliches Engagement und politische Interessenvertretung – Jugendverbände in der Verantwortung. 50 Jahre Deutscher Bundesjugendring*, German Federal Youth Council, Berlin.

child and youth work can be distinguished from the youth organisations' work, this dividing line cannot be drawn so clearly anymore today.³

Youth work, especially open youth work, is based on the principles of voluntariness, participation, low-threshold offers, openness and flexibility. Different approaches are applied in terms of concepts of youth work: gender-specific, anti-racist, intercultural, media- or culture-related, subject- or group-oriented. There is peer-group education and adventure pedagogy and democracy education.

Current issues that affect young people and youth policy are, for example, demographic change, digitalisation, migration/young refugees, children's rights and protection, radicalisation/extremism, limited time frames of young people, global developments.

³ Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend) (2017), "Report on the living conditions of young people and child and youth services in Germany – 15th child and youth report", (Bericht über die Lebenssituation junger Menschen und die Leistungen der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe in Deutschland – 15. Kinder- und Jugendbericht), p. 370, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Berlin (last accessed 22 November 2017).

2. Strategic and legislative framework of youth work

The legislative framework for youth work in Germany is the Social Code Book Eight – Child and youth services (Sozialgesetzbuch - Achtes Buch - Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, SGB VIII). It is also called the Child and Youth Services Act (Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz (KJHG)). It came into force on 1 January 1991 (in the newly formed German federal states on 3 October 1990). In the federal states, there are implementation acts pertaining to the Child and Youth Services Act which are the basis for the work of the local authorities.

Several sections of SGB VIII are of importance regarding youth work:

- Section 11 defines the scope, key aspects and providers of youth work. It is an own field of work within the field of child and youth services. It is a field of social learning. Youth work is based on the principle of “voluntariness” and is focusing on the needs and interests of young people. Key aspects of youth work include for example extracurricular political, cultural, health, social, scientific and technical education, youth work in sports, related youth work that takes place in schools (co-operation school-youth work), international youth work, child and youth recreation, youth counselling. See also Infosystem “Child and Youth Services in Germany”.
- Section 12 covers the support of youth associations according to the provisions set in section 74 (Support of voluntary youth service providers). Youth work, carried out by young people, in youth associations and youth groups is based on self-organisation, co-operation and joint responsibility.
- Section 13 deals with youth social work. It is about the provision of support and help to young people from underprivileged social backgrounds or with individual handicaps. See also Infosystem “Child and Youth Services in Germany”.

In contrast to the European level, where youth work and youth social work “are subsumed under the ... term ‘youth work’”,⁴ in Germany the more general initiatives for the support of young people are being considered as youth work. Services that include social education assistance for the promotion of school and vocational training fall under youth social work.⁵ According to Christoph Honisch, youth work is a “practice-oriented field of action”. It provides many opportunities to pick up self-determined topics and is the place for independent learning.⁶

There is no legal definition for the profession of youth work. Youth workers have mostly studied subjects such as social work, (social) pedagogy or educational sciences.

The portal for specialists in child and youth services (Fachkräfteportal der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe) provides a space for networking and a communication platform for experts and specialists in child and youth services.

⁴ Thimmel A. (2017), “Youth work and youth social work in German”, in Council of Europe and European Commission, THINKING SERIOUSLY ABOUT YOUTH WORK. And how to prepare people to do it, Council of Europe, Strasbourg (last accessed 22 November 2017).

⁵ IJAB (2008), Child and Youth Policy, Child and Youth Services in the Federal Republic of Germany. Structures, Institutions, Organisations, IJAB, Bonn (last accessed 23 November 2017).

⁶ Honisch C. (2016), Input at the conference on child and youth work 2016 “Back to the future. The educational concept in child and youth work: the education-oriented field of action” (... Zurück in die Zukunft! Bildungsbegriff in der Kinder- und Jugendarbeit: Das Bildungsorientierte Handlungsfeld) (last accessed 23 November 2017).

3. Recognition

Youth work and the work of youth workers is to a certain extent lacking social and political recognition. Other fields such as socio-educational support services and child day care have gained more recognition. Youth work is often carried out by volunteers or youth workers who often have temporary contracts. Compared to graduates in medicine, psychology, social sciences or teachers, graduates in educational sciences and social pedagogy earn considerably less.⁷ Basically, social workers earn more than kindergarten teachers or social pedagogues, also depending on several factors, for example the federal state you work and live in, the institution you work with, the professional experience you have.⁸

There is no general formal validation system of non-formal education and learning in youth work implemented in Germany. There are several concepts and procedures to recognise non-formal education and learning in youth work. These include, for example, certificates of participation, commitment and competences obtained, reflection in dialogue processes, tests or assessments.⁹

There is no legal definition or comprehensive description for the profession of youth work or respectively a youth worker. Youth work as a study course is mostly included in social work or social pedagogy programmes.

Germany is involved in many European initiatives supporting youth work. It is implementing the Erasmus+ programme including the Youthpass as the instrument for recognition of non-formal and informal learning within the Youth in Action section of the Erasmus+ programme. The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio is open to youth workers from Germany.

⁷ StepStone (2016), GEHALTSREPORT 2016 FÜR FACH- UND FÜHRUNGSKRÄFTE (last accessed 22 November 2017).

⁸ Information on salaries at gehalt.de (last accessed 22 November 2017).

⁹ Baumbast S., Hofmann-van de Poll F. and Lüders C. (2014), Non-formale und informelle Lernprozesse in der Kinder- und Jugendarbeit und ihre Nachweise, Deutsches Jugendinstitut, München (last accessed 22 November 2017).

4. Funding youth work

Youth work is funded through so-called funding plans and project funding on national, regional and local levels, but also through foundations and private sponsors. The biggest funding instrument on a national level is the Child and Youth Plan of the Federation (Kinder- und Jugendplan des Bundes, KJP). In the federal states, it is the regional child and youth plans that provide funding for projects and activities.

KJP is part of the federal budget (total federal budget 2017: €329 100 000 000).¹⁰ There it belongs to section 17, the budget administrated by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. Total budget “child and youth policy” (Section 17) 2017: €1 100 099 000; thereof KJP projection: approximately €177 600 000. This corresponds to approximately 0.054% of the total federal budget. Budget allocated in 2017 for the support of specific groups:

- €79 350 000 (2016: €79 350 000) for actions fostering the integration of young people with migration backgrounds including
- €7 863 000 (2016: €7 000 000) for actions fostering social and professional integration
- €4 546 000 (2016: €4 000 000) for support measures to help young people and families¹¹

Guiding principles in allocating funding at national level are outlined in the directives of the Child and Youth Plan of the Federation ([Richtlinien des Kinder- und Jugendplan des Bundes](#)). Funding can be provided wherever child and youth services carry supraregional significance and where, by their nature, they cannot be effectively supported by a federal state alone. The autonomy of the organisations receiving funding is preserved.

¹⁰ Federal Budget 2017 ([Bundshaushalt 2017](#)) (last accessed 22 November 2017).

¹¹ Federal Budget 2017, Section 17 ([Bundshaushaltsplan 2017, Einzelplan 17](#)) (last accessed 22 November 2017).

Numbers for national or local budgetary allocation for youth work are difficult to provide. On the basis of official financial statistics, the financial report on education displays the financial means spent on child and youth work: in 2012, €1.9 billion was spent. According to the budget estimate, this sum rose to €2.1 billion by 2015. Unlike statistics on child and youth services, official financial statistics provide the opportunity to look at the public financial contributions to child and youth work. It is mainly the municipalities that bear the costs for child and youth work initiatives. Local authorities provided 67% of the financial means, federal states provided 16% and the Federation provided 17%. By 2015, the share for the local authorities had risen to 69%: 17% was covered by the federal states and 14% by the Federation.¹²

Youth work activities are also funded through European sources. Germany is implementing the Erasmus+ programme. German youth organisations can also apply for funds from the European Youth Foundation.

The bilateral offices Franco-German Youth Office (Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk) and German-Polish Youth Office (Deutsch-Polnisches Jugendwerk) hold a special place in bilateral youth policy cooperation. They are autonomous and funded in equal parts by contributions from the German and respectively the French and Polish governments. They provide funding, for example, for youth encounters, exchanges between youth organisations and specialist programmes.

¹² Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend) (2017), "Report on the living conditions of young people and child and youth services in Germany – 15th child and youth report" ([Bericht über die Lebenssituation junger Menschen und die Leistungen der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe in Deutschland - 15. Kinder- und Jugendbericht](#)), p. 380, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Berlin (last accessed 22 November 2017).

5. Structures, actors and levels in youth work provision

There are big regional differences in the implementation of youth work as tendencies on a national level might differ from developments, opportunities and activities on a local level.¹³

5.1 State structures/public authorities deciding on or providing youth work

Youth work as part of youth policy is a competence of the federal states, with the national government framing broader goals and ensuring coherence. Local authorities deliver youth work at their level. The structures responsible for youth work on a national level include a ministry responsible for youth: Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, BMFSFJ). It initiates and supports youth work activities. In the federal states (*Länder*), the responsible ministries for youth affairs and *Länder* youth offices initiate and support youth work activities. On a local level, statutory (youth offices) and voluntary (youth associations, social (welfare) services, local initiatives and organisations) run local facilities and plan, support and deliver youth work.

5.2 National or local youth councils

Germany has a national youth council: the German Federal Youth Council (Deutscher Bundesjugendring, DBJR), founded in 1949. Members are: 29 youth organisations, 16 regional youth councils, 6 affiliated organisations. The German national committee for international youth work (DNK) represents the German youth organisations in multilateral contexts. It is the “gateway for the ‘import and export’ of youth work”. DNK comprises DBJR, the German Sports Youth (DSJ) and the Council of Political Youth Organisations (RPJ).

There are 16 regional youth councils (Landesjugendringe) in Germany. Those regional youth councils are associations of youth organisations actively working at regional level. They are made up of

¹³ Ibid., p. 399.

independent youth associations with a total membership of about 5 million people whose activities are accessible to about 70% of all children and young people. All relevant youth organisations are represented here: ecclesiastical organisations, trade union associations, those with humanitarian or socialist orientations, ecologically active ones, fostering traditions or committed to sexual orientation equality.

Local youth councils are self-organised amalgamations of local youth associations, organisations and initiatives. Their goal is to represent children's and young people's interests before public, policy and administration, to help shape and back the general framework of youth (associative) work and, on behalf of the children and young people, to take a stand with regard to sociopolitical questions and questions relevant to youth. Youth councils represent the youth associations' demands before the committees and institutions responsible for youth issues on local level, especially in the so-called Committees for Youth Services of the urban districts and the counties. Example: North Rhine-Westphalia (biggest federal state according to population) with approximately 114 local youth councils (Stadt-/Kreisjugendringe).

5.3 Youth and youth work NGOs

You'll find an overview of relevant youth organisations in Child and Youth Policy, Child and Youth Services in the Federal Republic of Germany. Structures, Institutions, Organisations (p. 307 seq.).

5.4 Other relevant actors

The Child and Youth Welfare Association (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, AGJ) unites central German unions, organisations and institutions of private and public youth services. They work and act together and form different member groups: youth associations and regional youth councils, umbrella organisations of non-public welfare providers, specialist organisations for youth services, the Highest *Länder* Youth and Family Authorities, the Federal Association for *Länder* Youth Offices, associations and organisations in the fields of staff and qualifications.

6. Forms and examples of youth work in your country

Youth work is offered by associations, youth groups and initiatives, youth work institutions and public youth support organisations. Priorities of youth work are extracurricular education including general, political, social, health, cultural, natural history and technical education, youth work in sports games and team spirit, work-, school- and family-related youth work, international youth work, child and youth recreation and youth counselling (as set up by section 11 of the Social Code Book VIII – Child and youth services).

Youth work takes place in open houses offered by statutory and non-statutory organisations. Youth work in youth organisations as value-oriented communities is another type of youth work. Youth work is both carried out by paid staff and by volunteers.

Youth work is a central, educational, publicly organised and community-based field of socialisation in society. It gives young people the opportunity to organise learning and activities for themselves. They can try out and experience active participation in society and are given an opportunity to shape their environment and future themselves.¹⁴

Youth work is targeted at ALL young people in Germany. It takes place at federal level as well as in a federal state (*Land*) or a municipality. Support might come from the relevant authorities according to the level where the initiative or activity takes place (national, regional (federal state) or local level). Youth work targeting specifically young people with fewer opportunities is often carried out by organisations and its members that concentrate on social work, occupational support and vocational services for young people and migration issues. See Child and Youth Policy, Child and Youth Services in the Federal Republic of Germany. Structures, Institutions, Organisations (p. 705 seq.) for examples.

¹⁴ Child and Youth Policy, [Child and Youth Services in the Federal Republic of Germany](#) (IJAB), last updated 2008, p. 138).

Examples of successful youth work:

1. Schlesische27 – Kunst und Bildung Berlin has worked for more than 30 years in the field of cultural education of young people, co-operates with Berlin-based schools and local and international partners, also addresses young refugees.
2. Annual campaign by the German Catholic Scout Organisation (Deutsche Pfadfinderschaft Sankt Georg, DPSG). Project running for a full year in which all groups and sections participate. Meant to express commitment to justice and support for the disadvantaged. Local groups raise awareness and funds to support a specific project. The topic of the annual campaign changes each year. 2017: Be a star! Together for Europe.
3. Open youth work in cities and municipalities including (open door) youth centres, child and youth clubs, mobile play busses, adventure playgrounds, for example the North Rhine-Westphalian state government supports more than 2 200 institutions and places. These offerings are open to each young person, free of charge, and not linked to any membership.

Examples of digital/online youth work:

- Heroes instead of trolls (Helden statt Trolle) – On- and offline work and training on how to handle hate speech (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania);
- jup! Berlin – information and participation portal for young people in Berlin;
- VAJA Bremen (Streetwork, acceptance-oriented youth work in Bremen) – run an app (VAJA app) with information on the association, a quiz for young people and street-related practical information;
- Project Mobile at the Museum (Mobil im Museum) by JFF (Institut für Medienpädagogik in Forschung und Praxis München) – uses smartphones and tablets to do creative work and make short films or clips on the topic “Home (country)”.

7. Quality standards

SGB VIII includes general statements and objectives on quality, but does not set out specific requirements or quality standards. Specific quality requirements can be derived from Article 11 on youth work. It says that youth work services should reflect the interests of young people, who should also have a say in their design, and that services should help to teach young people self-determination skills and motivate them to take social responsibility and get involved in social issues.

Youth-led participation is the central quality aspect of child and youth organisation work. Youth group leaders play a particularly important role in this regard. Their training has an impact on their work and thus the quality of participation. Training is completed in line with set standards. In 2009, the conference of ministers for youth of the federal states¹⁵ adopted a catalogue of minimum requirements across Germany. The federal states also set supplementary quality standards on aspects such as the duration of training (nationwide: at least 30 hours, in some states up to 50 hours). Anyone who has completed training in line with the applicable standards can apply for the youth leader card (Jugendleiter/In-Card, Juleica). Juleica is a national standardised card for voluntary youth workers. It serves as a proof of qualification for the bearer. Additionally, Juleica expresses the social recognition of the voluntary work. It is a document that is recognised by the youth offices. Juleica card holders are thus certified as meeting the quality and qualification requirements for voluntary youth work. The card can also be used as authentication to public bodies such as information and advice centres, youth institutions, the police and consulates.¹⁶

¹⁵ Memorandum of understanding by the highest state youth authorities on the use of a card for youth leaders (Vereinbarung der Obersten Landesjugendbehörden zur Anwendung einer Card für Jugendleiterinnen und Jugendleiter). Annex to agenda item 4.7.1 of the meeting of the association of highest state youth and family authorities (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Obersten Landesjugend- und Familienbehörden, AGJF) dated 17/18 September 2009 (last accessed 16 August 2017).

¹⁶ Website: juleica.de – online portal with information about the youth leader card (last accessed 16 August 2017).

Safeguarding the quality of participatory processes in youth work means regularly taking a critical look at and reflecting on certain aspects, such as democratic decision-making structures (decision-making flexibility for young people, influence, low-threshold offers, opportunities to gain participatory experience) or the framework for shaping participatory processes.¹⁷

No general quality assurance system exists in the non-formal sector. Many organisations in the non-formal sector have developed their own quality standards. Different quality management/quality assurance systems apply depending on how a project or programme is funded, as different guidelines apply in each case. This relates mainly to national and international youth work and the various formats in which it takes place. In the field of international youth work, a range of quality systems and tools are in place for the following formats: youth exchanges, expert dialogue, volunteer programmes, au pairs, seminars/training and placements. See also “Innovation Forum Global Youth: Quality in formats of international youth work (Innovationsforum Jugend global: Qualität in Formaten der Internationalen Jugendarbeit) as at 2015.

¹⁷ Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (2015), “Quality standards for child and youth participation” (Qualitätsstandards für Beteiligung von Kindern und Jugendlichen), Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Berlin.

8. Knowledge and data on youth work

There is quite a variety of research on youth work available. The recent national child and youth report 2017 (Kinder- und Jugendbericht 2017) contains an extensive section on youth work (pp. 365-426).

Several institutions carry out research on youth work and youth-work-related issues, among them:

- the German Youth Institute (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, DJI)
- the Dortmund Office for Children and Youth Services Statistics (Dortmunder Arbeitsstelle Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik) as part of the Research Alliance of DJI and Dortmund University (Forschungsverbund Deutsches Jugendinstitut/Technische Universität Dortmund)
- the Research Group Youth and Europe at the Centre for Applied Policy Research (Forschungsgruppe Jugend und Europa (FGJE) am Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung (CAP)) and
- the JFF – Institute for Media Research and Media Education (JFF – Institut für Medienpädagogik in Forschung und Praxis)

The National Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt) collects data on child and youth services, including youth work.

Information on research on international youth work can be found in the IJAB Research Database (information in German).

The existing data provide only a limited picture of who is taking part in youth work initiatives. According to a statistical review on youth work initiatives in 2015, a total of 249 905 young people (14 years and

older) took part in group-related activities; 1 205 813 (14 years and older) took part in events and projects.¹⁸ Total youth population 2015 (15-29 years): 13 819 942.¹⁹

The number of paid staff in child and youth work across the country has dropped from 44 560 in 1998 to 29 126 in 2014. Comparing public and non-public organisations, it is mainly the non-public organisations that suffer a higher decrease of personnel. About 20% of the employees have a temporary contract.²⁰

Information on youth work can be found at:

- Portal for specialists in child and youth services > Youth work (Fachkräfteportal der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe > Jugendarbeit)
- Portal for specialists in child and youth services > Youth research (Fachkräfteportal der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe > Jugendforschung)
- kinder-jugendhilfe.info – Information on child and youth services in Germany

Journals with information on youth work, for example:

- deutsche jugend (German youth)
- Offene Jugendarbeit (Open youth work)
- FORUM für Kinder- und Jugendarbeit (Forum for child and youth work)
- DREIZEHN – Zeitschrift für Jugendsozialarbeit (THIRTEEN – Journal for youth social work)

¹⁸ National Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt) (last accessed 28 November 2017).

¹⁹ Eurostat (last accessed 28 November 2017).

²⁰ Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend) (2017), „Report on the living conditions of young people and child and youth services in Germany – 15th child and youth report“ (Bericht über die Lebenssituation junger Menschen und die Leistungen der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe in Deutschland - 15. Kinder- und Jugendbericht), pp. 375, 377, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Berlin (last accessed 22 November 2017).

- Brochures by the German Federal Youth Council with background information and best practice examples about topics concerning youth work

9. European and international dimension of youth work in the country

International youth work is part of the national youth policy. It plays an important role in contributing to further understanding, intercultural learning and mutual understanding between young people from different countries and cultural backgrounds. It is a field of learning to develop young people's international skills. Germany co-operates in international and multilateral organisations and bodies (United Nations, Council of Europe, European Union).

Germany offers a lot of international youth work opportunities. Each level of government – federal, federal state and local – promotes youth exchange programmes in its own way. The Federal Government's main instrument to youth encounters and international youth work activities is the Child and Youth Plan of the Federation. The Federal Ministry for Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, BMFSFJ) encourages and supports contact and co-operation programmes between young people and also between youth workers. On behalf of BMFSFJ, IJAB – International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany implements various exchange programmes for youth workers and specialists in the field of child and youth services with China, Japan, Turkey and North Africa. These expert programmes and the use of international experience help to develop ideas for and shape national youth policy and practice.

Bilateral youth offices and exchange co-ordination bureaux offer opportunities for exchanges with France, Poland, Russia, the Czech Republic the United Kingdom and Turkey:

- Franco-German Youth Office (Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk)
- Polish-German Youth Office (Deutsch-Polnisches Jugendwerk)
- Foundation for Russian-German Youth Exchange (Stiftung Deutsch-Russischer Jugendaustausch)
- Co-ordination centre Czech-German Youth Exchange Tandem (Koordinationszentrum Deutsch-Tschechischer Jugendaustausch Tandem)
- UK-German-Connection
- German-Turkish Youth Bridge (Deutsch-Türkische Jugendbrücke)
- ConAct – Co-ordination Centre for German-Israeli Youth Exchange (ConAct – Koordinierungszentrum Deutsch-Israelischer Jugendaustausch)

Bilateral and multilateral work camps are a special form of international youth work. They are also supported by BMFSFJ through the Child and Youth Plan of the Federation.

10. Current debates and open questions/policies on youth work

There is an extensive mixture of different expectations, demands, needs and own professional convictions in youth work that need to be readjusted from time to time:

- young people want easy access to offers and places where they can meet peers and find help;
- politics and administration want youth workers to comply with regulations and rules that need to be harmonised with the interests of young people;
- youth work organisations and associations want to keep their priorities, adjusting their offers to young people and stick to their responsibility to their employees but also to young people.

Youth work also has to react when it comes to current and further development in society as, for example, demographic change, digitisation, discussions on education and inclusion, migration/young refugees, children's rights and protection, radicalisation/extremism, limited time frames of young people, global developments and financial restrictions at the local level.

Cross-sectoral co-operation for example takes place with schools. Youth work providers make their offers, for example sports or cultural activities, in schools as they are the place where young people spend a lot of time. School social work is also an example of the co-operation between child and youth services providers and schools. Other fields where youth work blends in are with health promotion (drug prevention), culture, democracy learning, occupational support and vocational services.

The strengths of youth work are its voluntary participation, plurality of organisations and providers, variety of contents, methods and modes of work, participation and self-organisation, open results and processes. It takes account of the life and daily routine of young people and ties in with their interests and needs.

See also "Report on the living conditions of young people and child and youth services in Germany – 15th child and youth report" ([Bericht über die Lebenssituation junger Menschen und die Leistungen der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe in Deutschland - 15. Kinder- und Jugendbericht](#)), p. 399 seq.