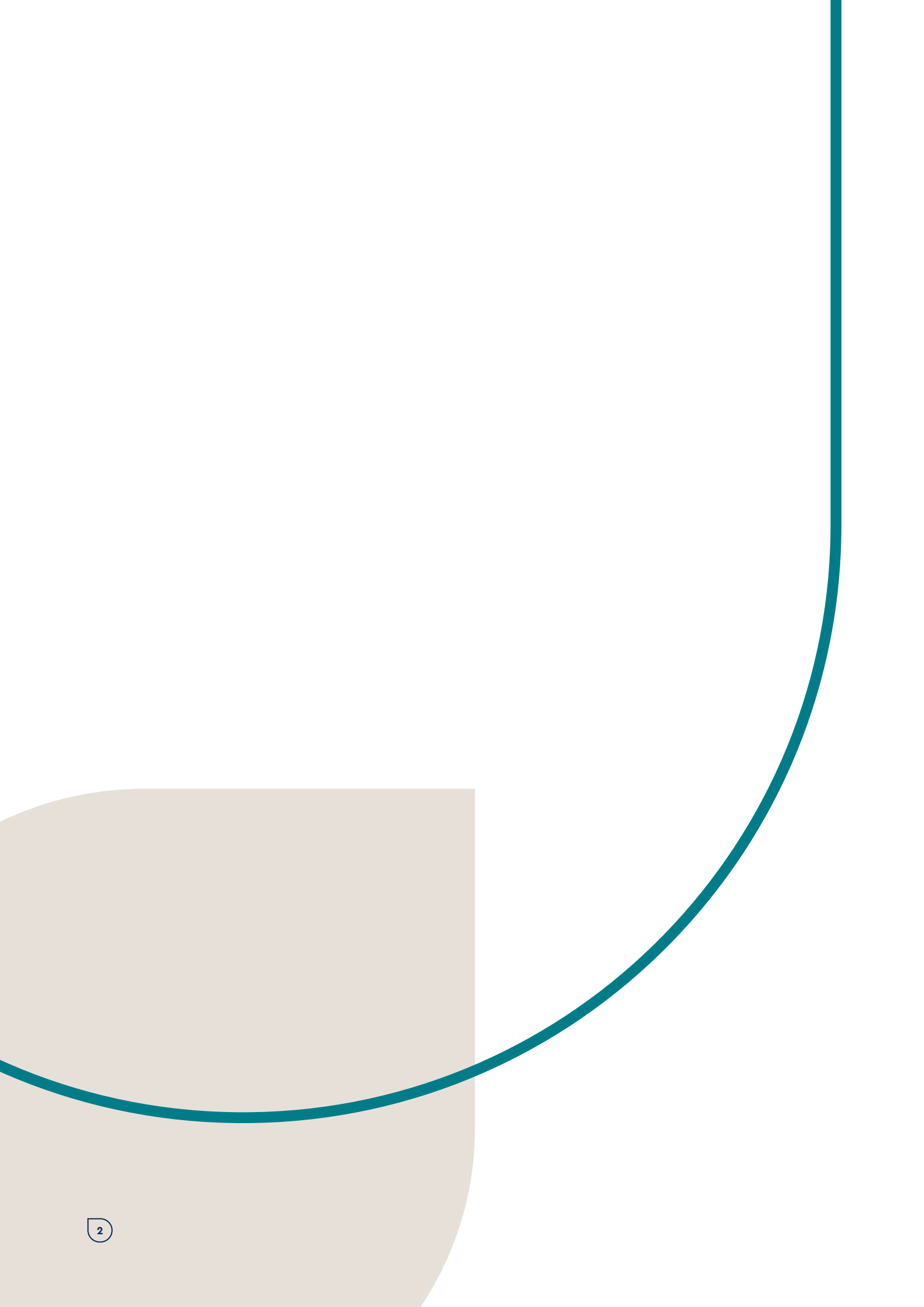


SIXTEEN WAYS TO EQUITY FOR YOUTH

Success factors for local youth strategies



Dear readers and all those committed to youth appropriate municipalities,

“Every municipality is different.” Not only has this sentence accompanied the three-year long *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process, it is also the guiding principle of this brochure. Between 2015 and 2018, sixteen reference municipalities throughout Germany, which differ in terms of size, population, administrative structure, budget, infrastructure and many other factors, committed themselves to a common objective: to become more youth appropriate and place young people centre stage in their work at a local level.

We, the Department for the Independent Youth Policy – jugendgerecht.de, have inherited this brochure from the coordination centre for Taking Action for a Youth Appropriate Society and have decided to make the learning outcomes of the process available to an international audience after receiving much praise for the German edition. “All politics is local”, as the famous saying goes. Therefore taking the Independent Youth Policy to the sixteen reference municipalities was not only insightful for those participating, but also for observers at the national level. We also think that many of the success factors that have been identified can be useful starting points for municipalities all over the world in their own local youth strategies.

We decided to translate this publication verbatim from German to English without revisions other than this foreword. Therefore, the German political system is the reference point for every observation and learning outcome contained on the following pages. We invite you to adapt these to your local situation and to place the interests of young people centre stage.

How can equity for youth succeed? What conditions are required? Which stakeholders need to be on board? How can outcomes be documented and processes optimised? What were the practical solutions implemented by the sixteen reference municipalities and how can the other almost 11,000 municipalities in Germany learn from them, even though no municipality is like another? The success factors for equity for youth which we will present to you in this brochure are not an exhaustive list and we make no claims to completeness. Rather, we aim to illustrate how successes can be achieved beyond lighthouse projects and best practice examples when all stakeholders at a municipal level commit themselves to a single aim: to ensure equity for youth. We hope you enjoy reading this brochure.

Warm regards,

The Team of jugendgerecht.de

Dear readers,

Are you looking for answers to the question about how to make your municipality (more) youth appropriate? This brochure will give you access to an enormous wealth of experience, which was collated as part of a three-year process involving sixteen different municipalities.

We at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) fully support a youth appropriate society – in all parts of society: villages and districts, towns and cities, regions and metropolitan areas. This is why, together with the Taking Action for a Youth Appropriate Society (Handeln für eine jugendgerechte Gesellschaft) coordination centre of the AGJ (*Child and Youth Welfare Association*), we have implemented the nationwide Youth Appropriate Municipalities (Jugendgerechte Kommunen) process. The aim was not to crown “Germany’s most youth appropriate municipality”, but to develop, test and implement strategies that provide solutions appropriate to the various local conditions. What all of the reference municipalities had in common was the aim of creating reliable structures and alliances. Alliances which contribute to ensuring that youth and young adults feel at ease, make the most of educational opportunities, participate in society and contribute to the democratic process. The brochure you are holding in your hands is the result of

Dear readers,

A society that places the interests and needs of young people centre stage can only become reality when all of the social stakeholders see themselves as responsible. On the path to a youth appropriate society, child and youth services can offer young people a multitude of opportunities. They create places to learn life skills, and provide advice, support and assistance.

The Independent Youth Policy considers the age group between 12 and 27 to be a formative stage of life in its own right. It directs both political and public attention towards the concerns and needs of youth and young adults. Between 2011 and 2014, an *Independent Youth Policy* was created as part of a broad dialogue process implemented by the AGJ (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe - Working Group for Children and Youth Welfare Services*). Based on the results of this development phase, the declared interest was to roll out the *Independent Youth Policy* nationwide. This includes focusing on improving the local circumstances for youth and

this process. With the many good examples it contains we are aiming to promote a positive and comprehensive understanding of youth policy at a municipal level.

Youth policy is particularly successful when young people are consistently included and a real culture of participation exists. Over the course of the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process, I had many opportunities to talk with the young people within the reference municipalities and to gain an impression of the work being undertaken locally. The successes of the reference municipalities show that it is worthwhile walking the path to greater equity for youth together. By empowering young people and increasing their level of participation, we are strengthening the foundation for our society and our democracy and are thus making Germany appreciably stronger. At this point, I would like to express my thanks to all those who have supported the process. I would like to pay particular thanks to the team at the coordination centre. I hope you find this an inspiring read full of useful suggestions for a policy for, with and by young people.

Warm regards,

Caren Marks

Parliament State Secretary for the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

young adults and their direct involvement at a local level. The aim of the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process, which began at the end of 2014, is to apply the basic principles and needs for action of the *Independent Youth Policy* throughout the whole country and specifically at a municipal level. This work was supported by the planning committee of the coordination centre, whose members we would like to pay our utmost thanks for their crucial support. The aim of the project was to support the development of strategies for a youth appropriate society and policy at a local level.

Another objective was to bring various regions and municipalities into discussion with each other in order to give stakeholders at a municipal level the chance to learn from one another and for young people to communicate their specific experiences, share these with others and to address new ideas. We would like to take this opportunity as project sponsors to thank all of the local municipal stakeholders who, with great commitment, have participated in this support and peer-lear-

ning process. Municipalities play a central, indispensable role within the context of child and youth services, as it is their mandate to create good conditions in which all young people can grow up and to guarantee prospects for the future. The *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process has illustrated what can be done at the local level and how the interests of young people can be incorporated in municipal policy decisions.

Dear readers,

Right at the start of the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process it was already clear that youth is a key future topic for municipalities – which is precisely why it needs to be addressed today. Sixteen very different municipalities have started out on the path of deciding how they are going to make the framework conditions in their communities tangibly more youth appropriate. The municipal umbrella organisations have been following these developments in the reference municipalities with great interest. Which specific choices and actions are enabling a municipality to do their youth greater justice? Who are the relevant stakeholders? What sustainable approach can be taken towards the changes, and how can the target strategies be anchored in place? This brochure highlights tangible success factors, which could act as helpful references for many other municipalities, be they large towns or rural communities and districts. This publication is a review of the dedicated work of the sixteen participating municipalities. It will be evident that youth policy needs to be imbedded in an overall strategic municipal policy and that municipal decision-making processes should take into full consideration the interests of young people. A youth appropriate policy therefore requires that various policy areas come together at a local level and that goals have to be approached in a more realistic and community-oriented manner.

We are pleased that the knowledge generated within the youth appropriate municipalities will be shared in this publication and hope that it will motivate other municipalities to start out on their journey along the path towards becoming a youth appropriate municipality.

Prof. Dr. Karin Böllert

President of the AGJ

Not only is youth policy a key factor when focusing on the future, it is a core area of action for the needs-based organisation of a municipality in the present. The number of challenges that municipal policy has to address has not decreased in recent years, with issues such as the expansion of child daycare facilities, or migration and integration entering the mix. However, the knowledge gleaned from the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process emphasises why it is necessary to demonstrate to all decision-makers that the topic of youth policy cannot wait.

We wish you a stimulating read!

Stefan Hahn

Deutscher Städtetag

(The German Association of Cities)

Jörg Freese

Deutscher Landkreistag

(The German County Association)

Uwe Lübking

The German Association of Towns and Municipalities

(Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund)

THE NATIONWIDE PROCESS

Youth appropriate municipalities ²⁰¹⁵⁻²⁰¹⁸

Shaping the Independent Youth Policy together

The *Independent Youth Policy* follows the basic principle that the youth phase of life requires particular political attention and that social and political actions and approaches should be aligned with the interests of all young people and young adults. In line with this basic principle, equity for youth must be taken into consideration everywhere, at all levels, in order to take effect politically. One further requirement is the interdepartmental networking with other policy areas. The nationwide *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process was initiated in order to substantiate and strategically test the basic principles of such an Independent Youth Policy at a municipal level.

Sixteen ways to achieve greater equity for youth at a municipal level

Between 2015 and 2018, sixteen reference municipalities throughout the country, supported by the *Taking Action for a Youth Appropriate Society* coordination centre, started out on their paths to greater equity for youth. Each municipality had its own set of framework conditions based on its geographical location, size, political and

social make-up, and other influential factors. Despite the differences in budgetary, structural or personnel requirements for youth policy changes, the sixteen municipalities were united by one conviction – that our society must become more youth appropriate. In the towns and villages, municipalities and rural districts, municipal stakeholders

worked together with young people and policy-makers to develop their own processes with independent objectives. This was based on the basic principle that the municipalities are best placed to shape the day-to-day realities where the young people themselves live, and to improve the local conditions for growing up.

The sixteen reference municipalities

BREMEN

The city of Bremerhaven

NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA

The district of Steinfurt

RHINELAND-PALATINATE

The city of Trier

LOWER SAXONY

State capital Hanover

SAARLAND

The district of Merzig-Wadern

SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

The town of Bad Segeberg

HESSEN

The town of Dreieich

HAMBURG

Barmbek-Nord

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

The “FÜNF G” (five municipalities) sustainability region

SAXONY-ANHALT

The town of Naumburg (Saale)

THURINGIA

The district of Sömmerda

BAVARIA

The city of Fürth

MECKLENBURG-WESTERN POMMERANIA

The Hanseatic city of Rostock

BERLIN

Tempelhof-Schöneberg

BRANDENBURG

The town of Finsterwalde

SAXONY

The city of Leipzig

An insight into the municipal process: *approach and stakeholders*

In order to deal with the enormous variety of challenges and specificities of the participating municipalities, each municipality required its own roadmap. Fundamental to process planning within the municipalities was a status analysis and so the administrations were asked to consult young people and collaborate with other local stakeholders to prepare an overview of the current local situation based on a set of guiding questions. This was used as a basis for the systematic evaluation of the local situation, and needs for action were identified which resulted in the agreement on common objectives, key areas and ultimately a process plan for a three year period. The interrelationship between young people, specialists, policy-makers and public administrators led to the development of certain plans for greater equity for youth, each adapted to the respective local needs and resources. The mix of network stakeholders involved varied enormously from municipality to municipality, but as a rule, the youth welfare office and local youth service providers were re-

presented. In some municipalities, members of municipal assemblies, top-level public administrators, representatives of various specialist areas, the economy and municipal public utilities, employment agency staff, school employees, employees of the youth council umbrella organisations (“Jugendringe”), youth representatives and representatives of clubs and societies, foundations and other stakeholders were also involved from the very start. In addition to being aligned to the interests of young people, the local processes also took into account the structural anchoring of equity for youth in order to make municipal policy youth appropriate over the long term. The coordination centre supported the municipalities in the process planning and local events. The involvement of young people in the implementation process was an essential element of the regional activities from the very beginning.

Exchange of expertise and skills training

In a joint peer-learning process, the municipal stakeholders had the opportunity to learn from one another on a topic-centred basis. The specific work in the municipalities, along with the core topics and particular challenges of the municipalities were made the subject of five seminars, which were intended both as a training opportunity as well as a space in which the participants could exchange ideas. Issues that were dealt with here included e.g. how to establish youth partici-

pation, how to create an everyday participation culture and what is required to anchor youth policy as an interdisciplinary political topic. Youth and adult representatives jointly took part in the skills training on offer. More information on the content of the peer-learning process can be found on the jugendgerecht.de website.

The key needs for action of the reference municipalities

- Youth participation must be created, established and legitimised together with young people – young people should be taken seriously and a general participation culture established

- Youth Policy as an interdisciplinary topic must be firmly anchored in all departments in order to establish a common position and course of action for all stakeholders and departments

- Appreciation and respect: recognition of youth participation, and the promotion of a realistic portrayal and perception of young people in politics and the media and among the public

- Information, communication and transparency: pooling of youth-relevant services, rights and topics, provision in youth appropriate language, creation of new access points and paths of communication, establishment of dialogue between policy-makers and youth

- Alliance for youth – local stakeholder networking: young people, the providers of private and public youth work and welfare services, public administrators, policy-makers, schools, the economy, housing associations, refugee relief, civil society, religious communities, etc.

- Mobility: e.g. development of alternative mobility strategies, which are of particular relevance in thinly populated areas

- Spaces: provision of areas specifically for young people and opportunities to participate

- Living: provision of acceptable housing for young people on low incomes

- Budget: among other things, greater availability of financial and human resources, particularly in the field of youth work

- Networking of local schools, stakeholders in the educational landscape and youth employment agencies

The attributes of youth appropriate municipalities

Many areas that directly affect young people are discussed and decided upon at a municipal level – this applies not only to the leisure options available, but also to construction and infrastructure planning, education and training. The needs of young people and young adults should be taken into consideration in all processes that concern their present and future circumstances.

The key factors for equity for youth were already set out as attributes of youth appropriate municipalities back in 2014 at the end of the development process of the *Independent Youth Policy* upon which guiding questions for the reference municipalities were created. These attributes map out the world of young people across departments and have been assigned to one of four fields of action which promote a broad understanding of equity for youth:

- Being a home for youth: Opening up spaces and channels

- Offer a future: Enabling education and employment

- Support a policy with and by youth: Offering participation, enabling participation, valuing diversity

- Improve structures for youth: Anchoring guidelines, skills training and local alliances for youth.

These attributes provide essential starting points when drafting municipal processes to design equity for youth tailored to local requirements and resources. The reference municipalities used these as a basis for action for their own reflections and development processes.

BE A HOME FOR YOUTH: OPENING UP SPACES AND PATHWAYS



Young people and young adults experience their municipalities in an entirely unique way. They have expectations of the public and private spaces that do not always correspond with the preconceptions of older people. At the same time, they often only have minimal resources of their own to be able to shape their lives as they wish. They are therefore dependent on creativity and the support of the municipality.

- Young people enjoy living in the municipality, they have an identity, continue to live there, or return there upon completion of their formal education.
- The municipality has room for young people. They have their own spaces that meet their needs for free time, play and recreation. These spaces exist in both youth centres as well as self-managed spaces, which are supported by the municipalities as required. These spaces are readily accessible within the municipalities.
- Acceptable housing is also available for young people on low incomes.
- Young people are seen and heard in public, they are respected and valued. There is a vibrant youth culture in the municipality.
- Young people are able to experience different perspectives thanks to cross-border mobility.
- The mobility requirements of young people are taken into consideration in transport planning and local public transport developments. High-speed internet access ensures communication with other young people outside their local area.

OFFER A FUTURE: ENABLING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



Young people need opportunities and services to help them find their own way and follow their interests. They not only learn in school, but also in extracurricular venues in their free time. And they need to have the confidence that they will have a promising (professional) future they will be able to shape themselves.

- All young people have access to educational learning and training opportunities within and outside of schools. In addition to the services on offer from private and public youth welfare service providers and youth organisations, this also includes the offerings of sports clubs and sports associations. This access to education likewise includes the best possible availability of the venues for educational activities. Restricted access due to financial conditions and social backgrounds is compensated for by suitable measures.
- The municipality is committed to keep youth unemployment as low as possible. Schools, enterprises and policy-makers therefore work together. In discussions with experienced professionals and in work experience placements and internships, pupils become familiar with the workplace environment early on and receive advice and support when looking for jobs, training positions and places at university. The schools network with private and public youth welfare service providers, who offer informal and non-formal training.

SUPPORT A POLICY WITH AND BY YOUTH: OFFERING PARTICIPATION, ENABLING PARTICIPATION, RESPECTING DIVERSITY



There is no such thing as *The Youth*. Young people have individual interests and needs, and a wide range of life experiences. They want to be involved in shaping their surroundings. They want to be seen, consulted and heard.

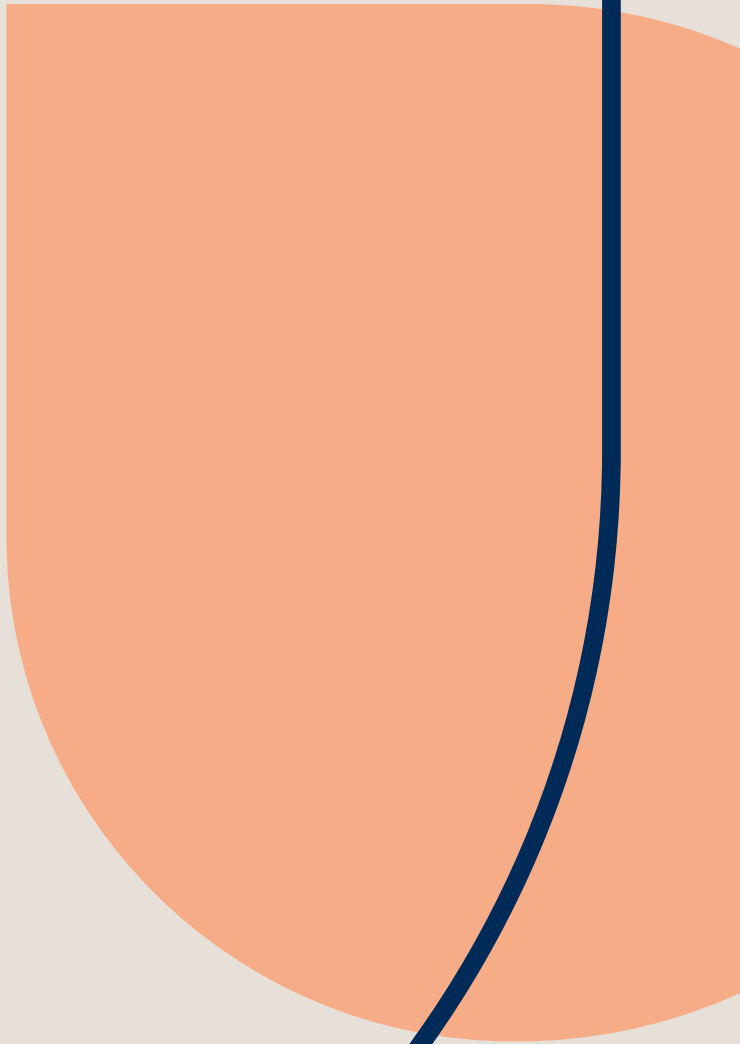
- Young people can and should participate in their municipalities. They know which people are responsible, information is made readily accessible and participation formats for all young people are established and embedded in the local political systems. Young people are a mandatory element of municipal planning, development and decision-making processes. They have power and influence and are taken seriously.
- There is a regulated appeals procedure for young people. They know their rights and are supported in exercising them.
- Diversity among young people is seen, valued and given attention, irrespective of their social background, level of education, physical condition, sexual identity orientation. This applies in particular to cultural diversity as well as to young refugees. Prejudices are broken down through encounters and close, regular contact between policy-makers and young people.

IMPROVE STRUCTURES FOR YOUTH: ANCHORING GUIDELINES, SKILLS TRAINING AND ALLIANCES



Young people expect reliable structures and firm commitments. This is why a youth appropriate municipality needs long-term strategies that guarantee continuity. These include the provision of skills training for policy-makers and public administrators, as well as the creation of a broad alliance for young people that involves civil society and the private economy.

- Youth policy is a key topic in municipalities, and has its own, dedicated budget. The municipality has an *Equity for youth* mission statement, which is regularly reviewed and amended in order to meet any changes in the interests and needs of young people. The degree of equity for youth in a municipality also needs firmly rooted structures and many partners.
- Policy-makers and public administrators receive regular training on youth participation and the experiences of young people.
- Youth welfare planning includes all areas of life of young people. The concerns of young people are also included in other planning processes.
- The concerns of young people and their future interests are taken into consideration with respect to all youth-relevant issues. Youth Policy therefore needs a common strategy among policy-makers.
- All relevant stakeholders (e.g. young people, schools, societies/associations, the economy, local media, policy-makers and public administrators) work together in an alliance for local young people. This alliance needs to be stable, open and capable of acting quickly.



EVERY MUNICIPALITY IS DIFFERENT

Success factors for a youth appropriate municipality

Success factors

Sixteen municipalities – that is sixteen and more perceptions of ways to achieve greater equity for youth. Which means there is no universal model that can be applied to all municipalities. There are many factors that affect how a municipality can be more youth appropriate. Is it a city – or is it a small municipality in a rural area? Is youth participation supported on a more voluntary basis – or does it receive full-time, professional support? Is there a comprehensive alliance of people and institutions standing up together for equity for youth? Is the municipality financially well off – or is it facing economic challenges? What picture of youth is prevalent in the municipality? What basic conditions are present for placing the focus of political action on local youth? The municipalities which participated in the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* project must therefore not be regarded as sixteen model municipalities or lighthouses of excellence. During the selection process in 2015, it was ensured that the broadest possible range of municipal diversity in Germany was included with respect to the variety of structures in the youth sector and beyond. The *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* project was therefore conceived as a peer-learning process in which the municipalities, in spite of all their differences,

could learn from and with one another and develop their own ideas and projects on the foundation of their local situations. Due to their diversity, these sixteen municipalities are potential references for others who want to set out on their own path to greater equity for youth – which is why they are referred to as *reference municipalities*. Their experiences are described here as success factors and reflect the knowledge gleaned from these municipalities. The success factors do not form a comprehensive list, they are rather an inventory of three years of dedicated work within the municipalities and an in-depth exchange as part of the peer-learning process.

1 EQUITY FOR YOUTH IS A MATTER OF ATTITUDE

The success of youth appropriate strategies in a municipality not only depends on cognitive factors, such as the quality of the argument or the brilliance of the idea, but also – and significantly – on the attitude held by the stakeholders involved. The basic attitude with which the policy-makers, public administrators, specialists and even the young people approach challenges shapes their perspectives. Are projects abandoned in the face of problems? Are creative solutions sought? Is a topic tackled with persistence and passion, or is it quickly given up on? A municipality that is shaped by a youth appropriate attitude reacts in an open manner to the concerns of young people, supports them in strengthening

their interests and makes use of their knowledge and expertise to find solutions. The intention is not to uncritically accept the requests of young people. Rather, a youth appropriate public administration is regarded as an approachable, dedicated, informed and solution-oriented partner for young people. This basic attitude is demonstrated through concrete actions, not bald political statements. The good news is that a youth-positive attitude can be developed. Successful encounters of politicians and administrators with young people can help to break down prejudices and stereotypes, and show that youth participation is enriching and useful for the work of the municipality itself.

IN PRACTICE

The reference municipalities covered a broad range of attitudes. Some municipalities already had a specific youth appropriate approach to policy and public administration, which would be reinforced with new experiences during the course of the process, while other municipalities have come across a new approach during the process, which is closer to the needs of young people than at the beginning. However, this was not always the case. One example of a previously existing youth appropriate approach is the town of Dreieich, which already had extensive experience with open youth participation via youth forums in 2015. The town also finances several youth centres for different age groups in order to provide suitable services for as many young people as possible. At the beginning of the process, on the suggestion of the last municipal youth forum, a youth parliament was created as a permanent form of participation. The young people undertook the organisational preparatory steps together with the employees of the town's youth support programme, while the town itself granted the youth parliament the right to speak and the right of petition in the social welfare committee. The youth parliament

is recognised as an independent municipal body in the town and its work is supported by the two full-time employees responsible for youth development. During the process, the youth parliament proved itself to be a committed stakeholder and now operates as a representative organ for young people in municipal policy contexts. It participates in dialogues with policy-makers and public administrators in order to deal with the issues raised by young people. The political willpower of the town council and the mayor to adequately equip and support the participation format requested by the young people without patronising it was very beneficial.

Bad Segeberg used the process to raise renewed awareness among stakeholders involved in policy and public administration for the subject of equity for youth. In this respect, too, the municipality already had many years of experience with youth participation in the form of a youth advisory council. Professional support during the course of the process was used to focus even more intently on the participation of the young people. This led to greater visibility of the interests of young people

and to a more earnest examination of and search for solutions to youth issues, to a revitalisation of the participation structure and to the consolidation of the corresponding human resources in youth work. Another crucial factor for success was the committed support of the process by the leadership of the Social and Cultural Committee, which personally committed itself to introduce the subject at the highest administrative level of the public administration bodies.

Since an approach is also a result of personal experiences, a lack of immediate success in part led to a noticeable feeling of resignation among the participating adults in another municipality, which they subsequently transferred to the young people – “so, it didn't work out in the end yet again”. It was also observed that adult specialists had to some extent suggested to the young people that they should keep their expectations low, as they would not be able to achieve any major changes in any case. This is also an expression of an attitude shaped by experience, which, however, releases less positive energy into a process.



“For me, the most evident effect of the Youth Appropriate Municipality process in Bad Segeberg is the change in awareness of the residents of Bad Segeberg. The youth are now an important partner in the town’s development. It has become apparent to the young people that standing up for their needs makes sense. Policy-makers and public administrators are taking the participation of young people seriously. Youth work is indispensable for the long-term and modern development of Bad Segeberg.”

DIRK GOSCH

OFFICE FOR CULTURE AND RECREATION IN BAD SEGEBERG

IN BRIEF

- The attitudes in the process shape the expectations of success when dealing with youth issues.

- Good, joint experiences of effective participation processes can lead to the creation and anchoring of a youth appropriate approach.

- Policy-makers, public administrators and specialists with negative experiences or attitudes with respect to youth issues can cripple efforts to create a youth appropriate municipal policy.

2 EQUITY FOR YOUTH IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

In every municipality, numerous individuals are involved directly or indirectly with the youth. Often, these people have little or even no contact with one another, and in some instances do not even know that the others exist. When a municipality adopts a youth appropriate approach, this also means that networks are formed whose members can refer to one another with respect to their work, get support from one another and thus align their results more efficiently and effectively to the world of children and young people. However, setting up and maintaining such networks requires

a lot of work, and there needs to be a core group that holds all of the threads together and motivates the network to keep going. Networking also requires the responsible use of time, a resource that is often rather scarce among the majority of stakeholders.

IN PRACTICE

With its Bündnis für Jugend (Alliance for Youth), the Hanseatic city of Rostock has created a large network of public and civic stakeholders and young people which has found a functional format in thematic working groups for discussing the issues before reporting back to the entire network. The city's youth welfare office has the function of connecting the threads and keeping the network going. This is another example of how good interdepartmental cooperation can function at a municipal level. The Office for Urban Development, Urban Planning and Finance is part of the alliance and has turned some specific needs of young people into participation formats in urban areas, e.g. when planning the new city harbour.

The 5G sustainability region is an association of five neighbouring municipalities based in two different districts. The members of the sustainability region joined forces in order to best prepare their municipalities to face the challenges of the future, especially the demographic change. The respective mayors are directly responsible for the region and they pro-actively exchange ideas with their counterparts. Those responsible for youth issues, e.g. the Youth Offices, likewise regularly sit down together with the mayors in order to discuss joint activities and to network. As the number of participating stakeholders is manageable, there is also no need for a heavily formalised structure – the topics are discussed in a

non-formal dialogue with the relevant persons, or the group as a whole. Despite good efforts, in other municipalities including all of the stakeholders has not been a total success. For example, one municipality had several parallel yet entirely separate youth policy and youth work processes. Not all of the relevant stakeholders for a particular field of work were included in decisions in a timely manner, which led to a lack of understanding, frustration and sometimes even to conflicts.



“Making a municipality more youth appropriate means that policy-makers and public administrators must acknowledge that young people are an interest group among the population that must be taken seriously. Having to give greater consideration to an interest group does not make the work of policy-makers and public administrators any easier, but ultimately a municipality will profit from being made more attractive by and with young people.”

PATRICK BESSLER

YOUTH WELFARE WORKER IN DREIEICH

IN BRIEF

- All relevant stakeholders must be identified and, as a minimum, informed about the process, its developments and its objectives.
- Networks must be open, committed and sustainable, and not just project-related.
- Networking means careful management of the resources of all participants.
- Forms of work must be adapted to the local situation.

3 EQUITY FOR YOUTH NEEDS YOUNG PEOPLE, SPECIALISTS, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS AND POLICY-MAKERS

The idea of placing the interests and needs of young people centre stage can start from various places within a municipality – from the youth, who want their voices to be heard, and the specialists that support them, or from the public administrators and policy-makers who regard equity for youth as an opportunity for their municipality. No matter whether it is a bottom-up process, i.e. coming from the local youth, or top-down, i.e. from the town hall, if not all stakeholders from all

four focus groups are involved, the process will lack important perspectives and insights into the town. While it is not vitally important that all of the stakeholders are interested in equity for youth for the same reasons, it is important that all of the stakeholders are involved and that there are overlaps in the approaches taken, with the priority being placed on the interests and needs of the young people.

IN PRACTICE

In the city of Fürth, the youth welfare office coordinates the continuous interaction between members of the city council, youth institutions and young people. All four focus groups were involved in and committed to the process of analysing the status quo, setting goals and subsequently evaluating the outcomes. This required in-depth, informal discussions across the focus groups, supported by meetings such as those in the *Wortwechsel* (verbal exchange) format, in which the aforementioned stakeholders actively participated, also enabling them to get to know and value one another. The youth policy landscape in Fürth is thus very cohesive and supportive of each partner with respect to current challenges. The youth welfare office also plays a key role in the district of Sömmerda, where equity for youth is a theme present and actively supported at all hierarchical levels. Contact between young people, specialists and policy-

makers is pro-actively facilitated and encouraged and very much appreciated by all participants.

In the Hanseatic city of Rostock, numerous stakeholders are involved with the subject of youth. The city recognised at a very early stage that the planned alliance for young people would only succeed if all of the focus groups could be brought into play. This very mixed bunch therefore sits on the various thematic working groups of the alliance so that the diversity of the perspectives enables as comprehensive a picture as possible of the current issues and conceivable solutions.

From the very beginning in Dreieich, there existed both committed young people as well as the political will to participate in the process of making Dreieich more youth appropriate. The youth development programme was able to put its dual role as a provider

of youth institutions and part of the youth welfare office here to good use to bring together the interests of all participants and create practical new partnerships. The short bureaucratic paths in a medium-sized city and the commitment of the young people to participate even in municipal policy meetings have promoted a cooperative approach towards one another. This has allowed confidence to grow, which has then not been damaged in the long term by minor crises. In one county it was not possible to involve all focus groups, and the process remained mainly rooted with the specialists and the youth welfare office. This was detrimental when it came to implementing youth appropriate requests and some ideas simply vanished. There was minimal success in involving young people in anything but surveys and there was no political impetus to bring about change.



“Young people should be able to play a more active role in Rostock as well. Not just because the youth are “the future”, but because young people are already an integral part of (the city’s) society. I’m pleased that we are approaching the matter of a Youth Appropriate Community in Rostock in a cross-issue and interdepartmental manner. The partnership approach to the collaborative ventures by all stakeholders is a core success factor and has shown that all sides are able to grow, learn and profit from one another. It is important that young people are taken seriously and that the dialogues and think tanks also lead to concrete actions and visible results.”

KATRIN SCHANKIN

YOUTH COORDINATOR AT THE ROSTOCK STADTIUGENDRING
(YOUTH ORGANISATION UMBRELLA GROUP)

IN BRIEF

- Public administrators are often required to be the facilitators and coordinators in order to involve, continuously update and, where necessary, activate all focus groups.
- When single focus groups do not participate in the process, it reduces the likelihood of implementation. This applies to each and every one of the four focus groups – policy-makers, public administrators, specialists and young people.
- The views on the municipality differ significantly between the individual focus groups. Each perspective is valid and can enrich the process when a constructive approach to this diversity is found.

4 EQUITY FOR YOUTH MUST BE ANCHORED IN STRUCTURES

Taking a youth appropriate approach as an objective and process often arises as a result of the motivation of individual stakeholders within a municipality who turn the issue into a personal mission. However, such initiatives – as praiseworthy as they may be – are often guided by the stakeholders' own area of responsibility. They are therefore not backed up systematically by job descriptions or strategies. This ultimately weakens strategies for youth appropriate actions and activities are more susceptible to staff turnover. If specific processes and expectations are to be effective for equity for youth in the long term, these processes must be inscribed in the structure of a municipality. There are multiple ways of achieving this. The municipal assembly can decide upon

guiding principles as well as specific measures, and back this up in budgetary law with jobs and funding. The mayor's office can stipulate equity for youth as a component of municipal actions and activities by issuing instructions and redesigning structures and bodies (staff positions, interdepartmental working groups, etc.). The public administrators can use the planning of youth welfare services, community-focused planning or funding guidelines and agreed targets to promote topics and manners of working and thus make them mandatory for all those providers that receive funding from the municipality.

IN PRACTICE

The city of Hanover has incorporated the local activities into the 2030 urban development plan under the title of *Jugend lebt Stadt* and thus anchored this in the long-term strategic framework for action of the city. This fusion gives the process greater political importance and is also backed with budgetary resources.

In the district of Steinfurt, equity for youth is defined and documented bilaterally with the district's communities and district-wide stakeholders in individual agreements with the regional youth office. This form of voluntary undertaking makes each of their objectives in the field of equity for youth transparent for local young people and adults; at the same time, the regional youth office as a partner is in the position to be able to offer support and

advice when required. In order to continue the individual activities, the aim is for the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* project to be anchored by a ruling of the District Youth Welfare Committee (Kreisjugendhilfeausschuss).

In Tempelhof-Schöneberg, youth appropriate criteria have been documented in both the integrated youth welfare plan (which was prepared with the participation of youth and youth workers), as well as the *Youth Work Framework Strategy*. A youth appropriate approach is thus an automatic part of the target agreement process with the specialists, politically endorsed by the Youth Welfare Committee, linked to the young people by the participation of the Child and Youth Parliament, and coordinated and implemented by the public administrators.

In Trier, too, the approach has been taken to make equity for youth an integral part of daily working practices. Youth participation (as an attribute of youth appropriate municipalities) is therefore now a specification in the target and service level agreements the city has with the providers of the private youth welfare services. In the five municipalities that have joined together to form the 5G sustainability region in Baden-Württemberg, resolutions have been passed as part of the process of anchoring equity for youth in all of the municipal councils, which will ensure the continued engagement with young people in the municipalities and thus express the political will of the participants.



“Our participation in the Youth Appropriate Community process was very valuable. The public administrators and municipal council gained new perspectives on the realities of life for the young people in our municipality. On the other hand, the now-established dialogue between equals has strengthened the willingness of young people to become involved in our community.”

RALF ULBRICH

MAYOR OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF DEISSLINGEN (5G)

IN BRIEF

- Anchoring can be implemented both at the political level in the form of new resolutions, as well as by means of adjustments to existing administrative processes.
- Discussions about anchoring provide opportunities to negotiate, substantiate and operationalise a municipality's preconceptions of equity for youth.
- Anchoring reduces the influence of staff turnover and changes in political majorities on youth appropriate processes.

5 EQUITY FOR YOUTH REQUIRES A COHERENT APPROACH

In general, the intention of making a municipality more youth appropriate is not a new idea for local, motivated groups. As a result of how they perceive themselves, youth associations and *Jugendringe* umbrella organisations are not only “forges of democracy”, they are also key actors with respect to civic involvement such as the volunteer fire brigade, church community or music societies. Involvement is experienced in various ways and real self-organisation enabled, with young people being taken seriously as experts in their own matters. Such experiences and expertise actually offer the best conditions for viable collaborative ventures and networks. However, they are affected both by the conflict of allocating financial and human resources, as well as the fact that they are no longer given much youth policy attention. For example, if a municipal alliance for equity for youth is formed, in which the youth associations are not represented, or if this alliance is provided with easier access to funding, political networks and decision-makers than existing youth

associations, this not only complicates the transparent relationship between the individual stakeholders, it also endangers the anchoring of equity for youth. Scenarios in which the youth associations have seen cuts in their staffing and other resources in favour of the youth appropriate municipalities, or cases where youth institutions have been closed and these closures have been drowned out by blanket media and political coverage of project-related forms of youth participation, are no longer a rare occurrence and a result of the constant lack of funds for community youth work and for the youth associations. Wherever youth associations, *Jugendringe* umbrella organisations and privately organised alliances of young people at a municipal level find common types of work that are supported and incorporated by policy-makers and public administrators in equal measure, projects and initiatives for greater equity for youth exhibit a more permanent effect.

IN PRACTICE

In the Hanseatic city of Rostock, the *Stadtjugendring Rostock* youth associations umbrella group has been involved in the steering committee of the youth appropriate municipality from the very beginning. The excellent level of cooperation and the great dedication of all participating stakeholders – not only in this project, but also as part of the *Partnership for Democracy* and the associated youth forum – meant that there were no competitive situations, but rather that major synergy effects could be used to enable the best possible participation and codetermination opportunities for young people. This also had the advantage that the Rostock public administrators, who include the coordinator of the *Youth Appropriate Municipality* process, were able

to implement equity for youth as a key municipal matter in many individual projects and working groups. A coherent approach and political participation by various representative forms of participation on an equal footing is also a current objective in Bad Segeberg. There, the newly created Students’ Council is striving to achieve the right to speak and right of petition in the Town Council, as already stipulated in the municipal constitution for the Child and Youth Advisory Board. The young people of the Students’ Council and of the Child and Youth Advisory Board are likewise reporting back that they would also like to receive more attention from political decision-makers outside of the election campaign period. In Fürth, numerous youth associa-

tions, initiatives and institutions were present during the open *Wortwechsel* (verbal exchange) events. The youth welfare office had listened carefully and ensured that all of the interested parties are borne in mind and that their relationships with one another remain fair and transparent despite scarce financial resources. The *Stadtjugendring* umbrella organisation and Youth Advisory Council were closely involved in managing the *Youth Appropriate Municipality* project.



“The way to a (more) youth appropriate municipality is long, and sometimes the bureaucracy can make it seem never-ending. However, when it is possible to exchange experiences with other reference municipalities and continually develop solutions in seminars, motivate one another and have fun while doing so, it is possible to get the ball rolling and make changes that will hopefully be visible in the future and remain in place.”

SVEN HÜLSKÖTTER

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE DISTRICT OF STEINFURT

IN BRIEF

- Wherever youth associations and private alliances of young people or democratically elected youth parliaments are not in competition with one another, but are able to cooperate and develop common objectives, is where equity for youth succeeds.
- Municipal public administrators and policy-makers are open to all young people and their concerns.
- Political decision-makers must ensure that no financial rivalry occurs among the dedicated initiatives and associations.

6 UNDERSTANDING THE WORLDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth as a discrete phase of life is characterised by specific challenges and therefore requires particular attention and specific knowledge of the multitude of circumstances young people experience between the ages of 12 and 27. The 15th Child and Youth Report of the Federal Government summarises the challenges as follows: in the youth phase of life it is necessary to develop general educational, social and professional capabilities (skills training), accept responsibility for oneself (independence) and find a personal balance between one's own freedom and being part of society (self-positioning). Understanding what motivates young people within the municipality and the perspectives they have of their present and their future within the municipality makes it possible to view equity for youth through the eyes of young people. It is therefore important for specialists and those responsible for municipal policy to familiarise themselves

with the worlds of young people both by means of youth studies and youth reports, and by receiving direct feedback from the young people locally. In some circumstances, such feedback is not always consistent or even comfortable for political decision-makers, but it does help them to make their own actions transparent and target group-oriented. Furthermore, it is also necessary to critically assess one's own view of the youth phase of life. Stating "I was young myself once, too" and "I have children of my own" can only be a first step in the process of gaining a deeper insight, as not only are young people in general in a constant state of change, they are also an extremely diverse group and therefore require just as many approaches in order to make a municipality more youth appropriate.

IN PRACTICE

As part of the *Youth Appropriate Bad Segeberg* project, just under 1,300 young people between the ages of 12 and 27 were surveyed over a four-month period regarding their perspectives of Bad Segeberg, the leisure activities on offer, public transport, appreciation of young people and their voluntary participation in society. The questions were presented and agreed upon by the town's Social and Cultural Committee, the Child and Youth Advisory Board, the Students' Council and the Youth Appropriate Municipality Steering Committee in advance and can be easily expanded upon for future additional surveys to include the perspectives of the public administrators and municipal policy-makers. The results of the online

survey provide a fascinating overall picture, upon which the policy-makers are able to build in a practical manner and thus expand their knowledge of young people in Bad Segeberg.

The same can be said of the youth work stakeholders and policy-makers in Fürth and Dreieich. Here, too, targeted surveys of young people, including pupils, were conducted, with the results being used to create specific needs for action which previously had not been visible to this extent. The district of Sömmerda has used a variety of ways and means to focus on youth and the youth phase of life with its project *Jugend lebt – Jugend bewegt*. In addition to the direct contact between young

people from the various municipalities and schools, public administrators and policy-makers as part of the regular and well-attended project meetings, Sömmerda has also made specific use of the findings of surveys on the topic of participation that were conducted prior to entering into the youth appropriate municipalities process. These experiences were also useful for conducting a new survey of young people in the district concerning the matter of their transition from school to professional life.



“The process certainly had its highs and lows, as some resources, such as funding, were not always immediately available. However, we stuck with it and with the help of various other providers who facilitate participation we managed to accomplish our plan. What particularly impressed me as a young person was that the young people who sat around the table with the steering committee were always taken seriously and often regarded as experts. There was a productive working atmosphere between the various generations and each of us was able to contribute where we were needed!”

IOANA-ADELINA NESCOVICI
TRIER YOUTH PARLIAMENT

IN BRIEF

- Adult stakeholders understand that the youth phase of life is diverse, that youth participation is voluntary and that neither memories of one's own childhood nor having children of one's own nor any generalised perceptions of youth form the benchmark for their political decisions.

- Young people in the municipality must be consulted regarding their own perspectives and interests. The results then form the basis of a municipality's approach to youth policy.

- The ideas of young people are valuable, even if they do not correspond with the professional views of adult stakeholders.

7 EQUITY FOR YOUTH REQUIRES KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A target group-oriented, professional, long-term process that is intended to lead to greater municipal equity for youth requires a particular form of management and the support of all participating stakeholders. For example, reports and transcripts of planning meetings that are distributed to all participants and all those affected by the matter from a professional or task-related perspective, are helpful when agreeing on tasks and sub-tasks. The outcomes and discussions are thus transparent and can be used as the basis for subsequent meetings. Written process descriptions are useful for contextualisation within established administrative processes and provide public administrators with a specific point of reference for their actions. Even if a local planning team or steering committee already has considerable equity for youth skills at its disposal, many municipalities have good

experiences with external process consultants and moderators, who provide their expertise over a longer period of time. They bring with them useful, proven methods and a fresh approach, create the freedom for critical discussions and help to keep the process steps and objectives on the agenda, while taking the pressure off the participating specialists. Young people, specialists, policy-makers and public administrators also profit from this process in terms of both the specialist and the general training and education, and thus sharpen not only the competence profile of a youth appropriate municipality, but also ensure the strengthening of the participating stakeholders as multipliers for equity for youth at all levels.

IN PRACTICE

Since the beginning of 2018, specialists in child and youth work, those interested in the participation of young people on a full-time and voluntary basis, and municipal policy-makers throughout the district of Sömmerda have received training for a series of youth participation qualifications. This is managed by the district's youth welfare office and the five-part course is delivered by an external specialist, who is also successfully supporting the *Jugend lebt – Jugend bewegt* project of the youth appropriate municipality as a process moderator. The synergy effects between practice and theory that have been created not only enable the personal training of the participants, but also the transfer back to the municipalities

and a regular review of the district's strategy for current local needs. Furthermore, the process moderator guarantees documentation of the project's work meetings by working together with the youth welfare office to compile and distribute photographic reports of every meeting with the young people. This allows easy-access documentation of results and agreements which can be referred to in subsequent meetings. Trier, Merzig-Wadern, 5G, Hamburg-Nord, Fürth and Dreieich have also received support from external moderators for their youth participation formats, such as youth conferences, youth forums and future labs, and thus created the conditions for identifying the concerns of young people in

a structured manner and making the needs for action visible.

Bad Segeberg is planning a workshop for multipliers on the topic of *Taking a Youth Appropriate Approach (Jugendgerechtes Handeln)*, Trier has used a network meeting for child and youth work specialists to facilitate the exchange of perspectives of youth participation in collegial discussion, and in Hanover, young people of the *Jugend lebt Stadt* steering committee have provided training for specialists and other interested parties to introduce them to the process and its topics and to inspire them.



“Meeting so many young people over a certain period who come from different backgrounds within the municipalities and campaign in their own way for greater youth participation and equity for youth was very constructive. The exchange among them and support they gave each other considerably enriched the task in hand and the valuable, open and honest support of the coordination centre made the process invaluable for me.”

JUSTIN SUDBRAK

TEMPELHOF-SCHÖNEBERG CHILDREN UND YOUTH PARLIAMENT

IN BRIEF

- Processes, projects and agreements are documented and evaluated and thus made accessible for other interested parties.
- The municipality also profits in the long term from the training and further education of all participating stakeholders.
- Seeking the support and assistance of external consultants helps highlight any needs for action.
- Young people are taken seriously as experts on their own affairs and educate adults on issues relevant in their world.

8 PARTICIPATION FROM START TO FINISH

Without youth participation, equity for youth is inconceivable. However, it is important that within a municipality, deliberate decisions are made regarding who participates, when, why and how. Participation processes must be an element of overall processes. The subject area for participation must also be clarified, as must the way in which the participation results are handled. Participation must not be an end in itself, or a pedagogical simulation of democracy, but have a clearly defined function in the municipal policy system.

Young people are questioned in order to introduce a perspective which only they can present and which has relevance for the implementation of the subject area for participation. The participation is conducted with the help of specialists, who build a bridge between the world of the young people and the world of politics, bringing the two of them into contact with one another.

IN PRACTICE

Youth participation was, without exception, an elementary component of the respective local process in all sixteen of the reference municipalities. In this respect, project-based forms such as youth forums, as well as permanent forms of participation such as youth parliaments and councils were used, and more often than not a combination of multiple forms of participation. Fürth is a good example of the successful utilisation of multiple forms of participation. The *Wortwechsel* (verbal exchange) events brought young people, policy-makers, public administrators and specialists together in dialogue. Not only were topics collected and compiled, but dialogues were also immediately entered into. Political patrons continued to work on topics and with stakeholders, ensuring the manifold implementation of young people's requests. A Youth Advisory Council is in charge of the on-going work on youth appropriate topics and is exercising its responsibility with its own series of events. An online survey and a youth forum in which the schools in the city can participate have also allowed the inclusion of young people from diverse social backgrounds. The fact that policy-makers and public administrators have traditionally almost always been in dialogue with young people means they are aware of youth issues. This co-

operation breaks down barriers. During the process period in Tempelhof-Schöneberg, an integrated youth welfare plan and the current *Youth Work Framework Strategy (Rahmenkonzeption Jugendarbeit)* for the district were comprehensively addressed. Young people were included in these processes alongside numerous other target groups. The district's Kinder- und Jugendparlament (KJP) (Child and Youth Parliament) has not only been a firmly established and well-networked component of district policy for many years; thanks to its composition of young people from all quarters of the district and the policy and administrative structure, it has been easy for the KJP to successfully participate in this long-term process. Educational support also ensured that the KJP received assistance with the challenging work, rather than being overburdened. In Naumburg, youth participation was based on three pillars: the youth parliament as an appointed body, the Child and Youth Office for project-oriented participation, and youth forums with various focal points were specifically used to deal with various objects of participation in the respective appropriate format.

In the district of Merzig-Wadern, the participation format of the "future lab" to encourage participation entitled *Mach mit – mitdenken, mitreden, mitgestalten* held in collaboration with the German Children and Youth Foundation (Deutsche Kinder- und Jugendstiftung (DKJS)) was implemented in all of the seven municipalities in order to identify youth interests and break down mutual reservations between young people and decision-makers. A number of topics and objectives were prepared by the young people at a high, qualitative level, which also went beyond the youth context and included other population groups. This form of project-oriented participation has also proven to be very practicable in the rural structures of the district in the Saarland and it has already been possible to put some of the objectives from the future labs into practice.



“I was impressed by the commitment and creativity of the young people during the youth forum. The participants were passionate about their city district, Barmbek. The proposals and ideas were astonishingly workable and in my opinion, could be easily transferred to the subsequent planning process. The youth forum has shown that it is worthwhile not only wishing to see the participation of young people, but also calling for it.”

TOM OELRICHS

DEPARTMENTAL HEAD OF OPERATIONS AND SERVICE
HAMBURG-NORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

However, in one urban reference municipality this proved to be more difficult. Among the public administrators and policy-makers there was a good deal of reservation with regard to youth participation. The results of a youth forum could therefore only be collated within the youth group itself, without further

processing being already planned or policy-makers and public administrators present to engage in a thorough discussion. The young people continued to work on the topics after the youth conference in working groups, despite not having a specific process or a connection in mind. In one reference

municipality, an offered open format of youth participation did not attract any participants, and the municipality turned to another more easily accessible target group in the rural area instead of examining the discourse or the format.

IN BRIEF

- The framework conditions for effective youth participation must be clarified in advance.
- Youth participation can only work out when the offers of youth participation are able to resonate with the worlds of young people – both geographically as well as in terms of content.
- Youth participation must be embedded in municipal processes, which are capable of building on the results.

9 EQUITY FOR YOUTH REQUIRES BUDGETARY SUPPORT

The best strategies, the most committed young people, the most compassionate political willpower of the policy-makers – none of this is much use if there are no financial or material resources available for implementation on the ground. The youth sector often suffers from tight budgets, additionally hampered by fixed-term contracts and a reliance on third party funding for projects. Such circumstances stifle creativity and motivation, and the third party funding that has been secured is also often linked to specific expectations with respect to actions, which are not always fully aligned with the youth appropriate strategy of a municipality. Yet in the youth sector comparatively little money is necessary to achieve noticeable results – or even to create some space for creativity and to strengthen the self-belief of young people.

IN PRACTICE

In the city of Leipzig, the youth parliament has developed a structured process for authorising funding for youth initiatives in the middling three-figure range. The municipal administration takes care of the organisational side and the payment, while the young people only deal with the content. This takes the burden off those involved in the youth parliament, while allowing them to have an effect on the city within a clearly allocated budget.

In the majority of reference municipalities it has since become possible to use spaces in the town hall or even the council chambers to hold committee and youth parliament meetings. In particular in those places where the indivi-

dual responsible for the overall process is part of the municipal administration, their colleagues, e.g. from technical services, have greater understanding and an open ear for the concerns of the young people, as they associate the work of the young people with a specific department to which they can turn in the event of doubt or conflict.

However, the allocation of resources is not always a blessing. In one municipality, although financial resources have been provided to consolidate the structures of the youth appropriate municipality, other beneficiaries from the youth sector have had to deal with cuts as a result. This complicates joint actions and creates avoidable political

Youth bodies with their own budget responsibility usually prove themselves to be more than capable in this respect and invest the money wisely, while profiting from professional support through funding applications. In addition to the budget, another frequent issue to consider is the opportunity to participate in the infrastructure of a municipal administration. Examples include the free use of spaces for committee meetings, borrowing event equipment, or even the opportunity to participate in office communication, use photocopiers for free or receive support when conducting mailshots, etc. Wherever young people are entrusted to use material resources in a responsible manner, they tend to feel like a part of the municipality – and not supplicants.

resistance, which does not help advance the actual aims of a youth appropriate policy.

Another municipality has had to finance its own youth work for years through numerous projects by a wide range of third party donors. The responsible specialists have since become adept at applying for and managing third party funding. However, this uses valuable working hours and on-going work is hampered by fixed-term contracts and unclear perspectives. Nevertheless, the process has received so much support within the municipality that a new budget position has been earmarked for future budget discussions.



“Secure, permanent and long-term funding of youth appropriate youth work is of considerable importance, as it is very tiring to have to fight for the financing of your own job alongside carrying out your daily duties. It also sends a bad signal to the young people, if their needs are not taken seriously.”

SARA APPELHAGEN
STADTJUGENDRING BREMERHAVEN

IN BRIEF

- The level of support for equity for youth as a municipality's political objective is best judged in terms of whether sufficient resources are made available or whether, as a minimum, access to those resources is supported.

- The provision of funds is also possible in tight budgetary situations – it is a matter of municipal policy priorities.

- The dependence of many municipalities on fixed-term project funding with changing areas of focus is not supportive to a long-term policy that focuses on young people and is usually associated with a lack of human resources.

10 EQUITY FOR YOUTH REQUIRES FULL-TIME STAFF

Equity for youth costs money – or rather: equity for youth requires human resources. In order to be able to make long-term plans, to coordinate, contextualise and anchor processes properly, and to make the venture directly accessible as a project, full-time staff are indispensable. For the young people involved in particular, a full-time contact person is of great importance for their own commitment; they support the networking, act as a contact point with the municipal administration and other partners, provide information on structures and procedures, can be approached when faced with problems or challenges and organise meetings and events. However, a full-time, dedicated person also offers the participating policy-makers and public administrators important knowledge and expertise, as well as acting as a bridge between the worlds of children and young people and the view of the municipal administration and participating

policy-makers. In practice in the municipalities, it can be seen that the specialists responsible for the process can then make a significant contribution to the success of equity for youth if they see themselves as process coordinators or supporters of the open-door youth work, who make use of their knowledge and their competences within the process, and who see themselves as advocates of the interests of young people and stand up for these when liaising with policy-makers and public administrators. What has proven not to be useful is for the process to be regarded as an additional task for an already overloaded full-time specialist. Not only is the limited amount of time a burden to the individual in question, the project itself becomes a burden, and when tasks have to be prioritised the original duties win with little room for flexibility.

IN PRACTICE

In those reference municipalities in which a youth parliament existed as a representative youth participation format before the process began, the youth appropriate municipality as a project was generally also represented by a member of staff in the office. In Leipzig and Tempelhof-Schöneberg, where each of the administrators of the youth parliaments were also responsible for assisting the youth parliament, the young people participating in the process were able to concentrate entirely on the substantive work and thus better lobby on their actual subjects. The fact that the administrators are both employees of the municipal public administration simplified access to other political departments. In Trier, the youth appropriate municipality is run by the youth welfare services planner, who coordinated all of the activities with the administrator of the youth parliament. This scenario proved that making equity for youth the responsibility of a youth welfare services planner is only really practical when the currently very

comprehensive and demanding area of responsibility of childcare facilities is not the responsibility of the same full-time person. In Trier, these are separate operational areas, which frees up time for the subject of equity for youth. The 5G sustainability region demonstrated a characteristic that was a source of approval. The mayors of the five municipalities involved in the process attended the seminars together with a youth advisor and the administrator of the sustainability region. They have therefore made equity for youth a main priority. The 5G sustainability region regards the use of additional full-time specialists for youth work in all five regions as key for anchoring equity for youth in the long term.

Despite the consolidation budget in place for the town, the *Jugendgerechtes Bad Segeberg* process has financed a project manager who coordinates all of the activities, supports the Child and Youth Advisory Board and the Students' Council, acts as a contact person for

all of the involved stakeholders and represents the individual projects on political committees. The presence that the youth appropriate municipality has thus accomplished among policy-makers, public administrators and the public is shown by the fact that the position of project manager will be transferred to the management team of a newly created Youth Office, which will continue the process and firmly anchor it within the image of the town. This case has demonstrated that investing in equity for youth results in other long-term effects in the form of personnel costs, even if the financial framework conditions actually barely allow for it – it is all about the underlying approach.



“In our situation, the level of appreciation mainly depended on having the right intermediary. We had a full-time employee, who adapted their priorities to ours with motivation and enthusiasm and that is exactly where the appreciation began. Their own tasks sometimes had to be put on the side when something was more important for us, the young people.”

SVENJA WERMTER
YOUNG PERSON FROM HANOVER

IN BRIEF

- The investment in full-time specialists responsible for coordinating the activities, organising committee meetings and providing specialist support to the participating stakeholders is key to the success of an equity for youth project.
- If working with the youth phase of life is awarded only a small proportion of the field of work of a youth coordinator or youth welfare services planner, there is a risk of the subject being neglected due to a lack of time.
- If specialists are employed within or have close ties with the municipal administration, it is more likely that they will be consulted about youth issues by their colleagues responsible for policy making and public administration.

11 GREATER EQUITY FOR YOUTH AS A RESULT OF YOUTH APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS

So that especially those about whom the topic of equity for youth is concerned are able to participate in the process, it is necessary to review certain conditions for well-functioning collaboration and commitment. This applies to e.g. the organisation of spaces and times. Are meetings between all of the participating stakeholders arranged so that school pupils can attend despite going to school full time and taking into consideration the working hours of apprentices? Are the locations in which the meetings are held central and easily accessible, even by local public transport? Are the meeting rooms organised so that young people feel at ease – or are they set up for work processes conducted by adults, who do not find

it so difficult to sit quietly for several hours at a time? Is everyone able to participate in drawing up the agenda to an equal extent? Equity for youth therefore also means breaking down adult meeting routines and selecting unusual locations and methods to encourage fun and get things moving. This includes having a variety of event formats and opportunities for dialogue that allow everyone the chance to speak. This is particularly important for young people who are less articulate, but whose perspectives are indispensable for their municipality in order to move the process forward.

IN PRACTICE

In many reference municipalities in rural areas, it is the geographical accessibility with public transport of the potential joint meeting locations in particular which poses a considerable challenge to the participating young people. And even though in these municipalities, mobility had been identified as one of the most urgent needs for action and its improvement included in the goal setting part of the youth appropriate municipality process, by the end of the process, this challenge proved to have undergone improvements in very few of the municipalities. An example of a pragmatic and low-threshold mobility solution is the *Mitfahrbänke* (passenger benches) of the 5G sustainability region – a form of organised hitch-hiking. By sitting on one of the various benches located around the villages, a person indicates that they need a lift and passing drivers are able to take them to the next place. An app is also being developed to support this.

It is in the rural areas in particular that this is regarded as a safe and simple mobility solution – not only due to the

high level of social monitoring, but also as an intergenerational project that will benefit all age groups.

In the municipalities of Trier, Leipzig, Berlin and Dreieich, the full-time support of the respective youth parliaments has ensured that the members are able to concentrate on the subject matter of their work. In other reference municipalities in which full-time staff acted as a direct contact person, the process was identified with to a greater extent than in places where either the responsibilities were not clearly defined or were spread across too many adult shoulders. Good youth work specialists are also important people for adolescents to identify with, and therefore offer points of reference for their own participation, on a personal as well as a professional level. Nevertheless, it was also observed that changing from a meetings-based culture outside of youth participation formats posed the greatest challenge for some reference municipalities. Seating arrangements, meeting documents, agendas, minutes and so forth – all self-evident tools and processes for an orderly meeting

culture among adults – are not only alien to young people, they have also tended to put young people off attending further meetings. This is another reason why it is especially important to highlight that some municipalities have engaged external support and moderation to systematically ensure that the process, along with its necessary meetings and arrangements, were youth appropriate and creative, such as the regular meetings of *Jugend lebt – Jugend bewegt* in the district of Sömmerda.

In some reference municipalities, one element of the objectives involved setting up municipal youth consultations and this has already been implemented in stages. In this case it was also clear how poorly the municipal structures were designed to meet the needs of young people, if the only opportunity to come into direct contact with a mayor was during their opening hours – on a weekday morning.



“Municipal matters, i.e. bureaucracy, often require time, which is something that young people do not always understand.”

JANINE BUS

YOUTH WELFARE WORKER IN BECKINGEN
IN THE DISTRICT OF MERZIG-WADERN

IN BRIEF

- Adult stakeholders review their own meeting culture to allow new and creative methods in order to appeal to all young people and include them in the process.
- Times and locations of events, committee meetings, etc. are aligned to the needs of the participating youth.
- Full-time specialists support young people with articulating and implementing their own topics, without them already falling at the first bureaucratic or organisational hurdles.

12 ALLOWING ENOUGH SCOPE FOR EQUITY FOR YOUTH

The youth phase of life is linked to high societal expectations. According to the 15th Child and Youth Report of the Federal Government, the focus is on leaving the parental home, developing a motivation to learn, becoming financially independent, coping with adolescence, the development of one's sexuality and establishing long-term relationships with one's peers. Yet at the same time, in light of the expansion of full-time education, a highly specialised training and labour market and fewer dedicated youth spaces, e.g. in youth centres, etc., young people have fewer free spaces, free periods of time and even fewer opportunities to try things out and evolve. For equity for youth at a municipal level, this specifically means that young people should be allowed the potential and opportunities to try new things, to experiment – or even sometimes just to hang out and do nothing in particular. Wherever young people are provided with youth spaces that they shape themselves or are even allowed to manage them-

selves, in addition to direct responsibility and self-belief, they also learn that it is their needs that count and not first and foremost their (educational) achievements. Commitment to a youth appropriate municipality also needs freedoms with respect to time, e.g. through acknowledging that this can be enabled on a voluntary basis through schools or employers. In addition to free space and free time, establishing one's own culture of dealing with mistakes is a freedom for young people growing up that should not be underestimated. In those municipalities in which young people, specialists, policy-makers and public administrators not only meet as equals but are also open for experiments and perhaps also the failure of these experiments, the endeavour to achieve equity for youth is regarded as particularly authentic and results in more positive than negative effects in the long term.

IN PRACTICE

For those municipalities that only identified the topic of equity for youth as project that concerns them through the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* programme and have therefore joined a coordinated alliance, the process itself is presumably regarded as an experiment. They have become involved in the topic with all of its associated opportunities and challenges, and within the support seminars, they have reflected on their own experiences and presented the findings – even if something was not successful or an individual project failed. The open and honest exchange between the reference municipalities has led to learning from failures and new, creative ways have been found of prioritising equity for youth locally. That the personnel and/or financial framework conditions did not always exist for this did complicate matters for one or two municipalities; in some municipalities, due to administrative

routines, it is only possible to provide free spaces thanks to the considerable effort of the participating stakeholders. Youth centres are often the dedicated locations for providing these freedoms. While at the beginning of the process in Bad Segeberg the *Jugendzentrum Mühle* youth centre was on the verge of being closed down, it was possible to avert this in time. In Trier, the construction of a new youth centre was planned with the support of young people, as was the case in Hamburg-Nord and one municipality in the 5G sustainability region, which also prompted a large financial investment. The widespread youth club culture in the district of Merzig-Wadern was actively supported by those responsible for the youth appropriate municipality with respect to the challenges concerning self-management in order to maintain this form of free spaces. The self-managed youth budget that the young people of the sixteen

reference municipalities could request with as little red tape as possible for small local projects can also be regarded as a means of creating freedoms. Examples include a concert, hip-hop workshop, skating event or support for the development of an app – this form of micro-financing has given the young stakeholders in the municipalities the opportunity to manage and be responsible for themselves when implementing creative ideas, instead of having to go begging to the municipal administration.

However, despite all of this enthusiasm for experimentation, frictions can occur when existing procedures are simplified for individual stakeholders. In such cases, in-depth communication and the inclusion of all stakeholders is key, e.g. with the view that – should a simplified procedure work out – it will also be used for all other stakeholders.



“Nowadays, it is important that we succeed in providing our children and young people with a sense of home. We have to offer them codetermination and the opportunity to participate, to show them that we value them. This is the only way that we can foster the hope that they will be able to think fondly of their time in Finsterwalde and return when they’ve completed their training or studies. These are all small but very important steps on the way to a generation-appropriate and, above all, a likeable town that is worth living in.”

JÖRG GAMPE
MAYOR OF FINSTERWALDE

IN BRIEF

- Did something not work out as originally planned? A lot can be learned from this if individual failures are flagged up and continue to be worked on.
- Young people need their own freedoms that they can shape themselves, where they do not have to do anything, but are allowed to do a lot.
- Even though youth is a phase of life that focuses on skills training, and formal education in particular plays an important role, it is having free time and space rather than prescribed routes that encourages creative solutions, independence and personal initiative.

13 EQUITY FOR YOUTH MUST BE COMMUNICATED

The traditional communication channels that are often widespread at a municipal level, such as official journals, gazettes and daily newspapers, are not used by the majority of young people, despite playing a role in municipal events. In order for topics and services of relevance to young people to also be noticed, it is necessary to use both suitable paths of communication as well as appropriate language in order to keep language barriers as low as possible. The aim is not only to communicate decisions and resolutions, but also information

regarding pending issues and feedback on on-going processes. This likewise includes specialists who find an authentic, understandable voice, without trying to curry favour by using teenage slang or create a presumed youth aesthetic. Adequate technical and financial resources help to develop the right formats and fill them with relevant content. A pro-active, transparent information policy supports all participants and prevents misunderstandings and frustration.

IN PRACTICE

This topic has also been dealt with in numerous reference municipalities, with the ability to reach young people being a particularly prevalent subject addressed by the peer-learning seminars. The municipalities of Fürth and the 5G sustainability region have recognised the potential of the messaging services in this respect and use them to communicate youth-relevant topics and information to young people. These channels also offer a means for the municipalities to receive feedback. The greatest challenge lies in communicating the respective number of so-called ‘broadcasts’ to the young people and motivating them to subscribe. Opportunities for this are offered by youth forums, but also information desks at concerts, posters and leaflets in youth institutions and schools, etc. They are used to provide information about current developments between events

and to keep the topics at the forefront of people’s minds. The district of Merzig-Wadern uses a Facebook page about the district’s youth work to provide information on the work carried out by the Youth Welfare Committee alongside its own activities. The agendas of upcoming meetings are explained so that young people and other interested parties are not put off simply as a result of the technical language. In Bremerhaven, young people have created their own pocket calendar with important dates and information about the rights of young people. This is the precursor to a permanent overview of events on the internet and the tangible implementation of the outcomes of the Youth Conference in Bremerhaven. The young people involved in the process in the state capital Hanover have decided to go and visit other young people in the places where they spend their free

time. In events at busy locations and on a tour around various youth locations around the city, they spoke with a range of young people and made the case for regular youth forums to encourage the exchange of ideas and formation of opinions. With events such as *Cook&Talk* they also took the chance to talk to policy-makers and public administrators, and the reference municipality of Rostock has now also adopted this event format. However, it is not simply enough for communication to take place between the young people and adults. The Lord Mayor of Hanover used the opportunity of the state capital’s annual New Year celebrations to make those policy-makers, public administrators and members of the public who attended more aware of the *Jugend lebt Stadt* project.



“In order to promote a youth appropriate discourse, it is also necessary to use the communication channels that play a role in the world of young people. This includes social networks and messaging services, such as WhatsApp, Instagram or YouTube. Each platform has its own communication rules, which in turn have to be observed in order to be authentic and credible. Municipal institutions in particular often come across the problem that these channels cannot be used due to municipal rules and regulations. In my opinion, this needs to be reviewed by the public administrators and policy-makers.”

FLORIAN SEIDEL

MANAGER FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESSES AT ECHT FÜRTH

IN BRIEF

- The specific content and topics, issues and opportunities to participate must be pro-actively communicated by the stakeholders to the municipality.
- It is necessary to check whether the selected channels really reach the target groups.
- Young people themselves know best how they can be reached.
- The language used must be aligned to that of the target audience, and yet remain authentic.
- Transparency and information help with participation processes and achieve a partnership approach with all stakeholders.

14 PUBLIC RELATIONS IS ADVOCACY WORK

“Do something good and make it known” – good PR not only offers the opportunity to make projects and ventures visible, it also creates a space for them in the perception of municipal decision-makers. Above all, in those municipalities that have a daily newspaper with a local editorial team or a comprehensive local section in a daily newspaper, it could be possible to include information about current youth campaigns, projects and events, along with appeals for participation in a working group or another committee in addition to the general reporting. It is also clear that for policy-makers, local and regional media play an important role in the positioning of their own issues – consequently, their visit to a youth forum is not only visible to all of the young people present, but also to all of the other inhabitants of a municipality. The internet and web 2.0 applications such as Facebook are now also equally as important. Has the youth appropriate

municipality-process got its own easy-to-find place on the official website of the municipality? Or does it even have its own website, containing content from all of the participating stakeholders? Collating and making information about the process available online also makes the individual stages and projects transparent. Fewer and fewer young people are using Facebook or Twitter, and are turning to messaging services such as WhatsApp and Threema to network and receive up-to-date information. While it is necessary to check the legal conditions and data protection regulations, wherever specialists can tap into the communication habits of young people, it results in a successful feedback and participation culture. It is likewise worth creating printed promotional materials that give an overview of the topics and contact persons in the youth appropriate municipality.

IN PRACTICE

In all of the reference municipalities, it has been shown that having a presence in the local media is of great importance for the public perception of a youth appropriate municipality. Wherever youth conferences and youth forums have taken place in which political decision-makers have participated, the local press has reported on them. Finsterwalde, that at the beginning of 2018 was honoured as a *Family-friendly Municipality (Familienfreundliche Kommune)* by the federal state of Brandenburg, is able to build on the momentum for the future concerns of the youth appropriate municipality through positive reporting about the topic of child and youth participation. The same can be said of the *Jugend lebt – Jugend bewegt* project in Sömmerda, which was awarded the special prize at the 2017 Thuringia Child and Youth Awards. Perceptible municipal reporting motivates decision-makers to examine the youth appropriate municipality. Online services are just as

important. In the district of Sömmerda, one result of the process is the development of an information service about the youth appropriate municipality and its individual ventures on the web: jugendbewegtsoemmerda.wordpress.com. In Bad Segeberg, jugendgerechte-kommune-segeberg.de collates information on projects, events and the participating stakeholders.

Reference municipality Fürth provides information on participation and equity for youth via <http://echtfeuerth.de>, and with just a few clicks guides the user to funding opportunities for youth projects, all key contact points, the youth forum, Youth Advisory Council and the associated social media channels. Fürth likewise manages a WhatsApp group that provides up-to-date information to its subscribers. These methods are also used by other municipalities to update many young people and invite them to events.

In Berlin, Trier and Leipzig, the youth parliaments have taken on some of the public relations work themselves and now use Instagram and Twitter to share images, short posts and links. The social network Instagram in particular plays a very significant role with respect to young people, as photos can be used to raise low-level awareness about activities and establish contacts between the youth parliamentarians and interested parties. In Merzig-Wadern, the distribution of flyers inviting people to events, among other things, has increased the visibility of activities connected to the youth appropriate municipality and thus raised awareness for the future labs held in 2017. Professionals from all of the reference municipalities also report that the personal contact with young people and political decision-makers is crucial for getting other parties interested in the youth appropriate municipality.



“In order to reach young people, it is necessary to recognise the reality of young people’s lives and acknowledge that this de facto takes place on the internet young people keep up to date, talk to one another and participate in things via the internet and all of these three steps come together in social networks. Yet anyone who believes that social media work simply involves creating a Facebook page will be seriously misleading themselves. Not only is it ideal for all types of social media to be used, it is important that interesting content is uploaded on a regular basis.”

MAXIMILIAN PROTZNER
LEIPZIG YOUTH PARLIAMENT

IN BRIEF

- Information on youth appropriate municipalities and their projects is easy to find online and is regularly updated.
- Public relations work is planned, created and implemented jointly by young people and adults. Local media partnerships are important for good, transparent reporting and make the individual activities visible.

15 SCHOOLS AS EQUITY FOR YOUTH PARTNERS

School plays a superior role in the lives of young people. It is where they spend a large amount of their time, meet up with their friends and are prepared for the future and their own life of independence. On the one hand, day school – in all its many forms – is now part of real life for young people and it also has an influence on their relationship with the municipality in which they live. However, this often clashes with the needs for free time and spaces, with voluntary activities and with the desire to participate in shaping the living and learning environment of school itself. On the other hand, the act of cultivating and maintaining contacts and working in partnership with the corresponding schools can be a major (and not always insurmountable) hurdle for creating a youth appropriate municipality and for including young people in the process. This is due to various structural factors. Is the school supported by the municipality or the district? Is the school catchment area just that of the municipality, or the

entire district? Are there school social workers and to whom do they report? Are any successful collaborative ventures with extracurricular youth work and day schools already in existence? There are also success factors based on individual sets of circumstances and conditions. Are the school and the youth appropriate municipality process on an equal footing? Do the contact people know one another personally? Do the teachers acknowledge the youth appropriate municipality as a learning area for political and democratic education in their lessons? Sometimes, very practical factors are also crucial. Do the pupils have enough time to engage in municipal participation formats if they are not actually provided with the opportunity to do so as part of their full-time education? Last but not least, the school-related stakeholders sometimes find it difficult to be open to perspectives of young people that do not place formal education at the heart of all of their actions.

IN PRACTICE

The participation format chosen by Trier for 2018 onwards places an emphasis on close cooperation with schools. Based on the *Herrenberger Model*, all of the general comprehensive schools in the city were invited to send two delegates per Year 9 class to the Youth Conference to work with youth associations from the youth culture scene, from youth centres and youth advocates on issues that affect and motivate them. In close connection with the Trier youth parliament, project teams will be created that will submit their topic-based ideas and plans to the municipal policy-makers, thus actively participating in the shaping of their city. The reference municipality of Fürth has, partly with considerable human resources, been able to motivate the schools in the conurbation to send delegates to the youth forum. While this does not deal with all of the challenges described above, it does show that collaborative ventures with schools do encourage more young people to become interested in questi-

ons on a youth appropriate municipality. That pupils who do not directly live within a municipality but for whom the municipality is very likely the centre of their lives would therefore like to have a say, is something that has been demonstrated in Bad Segeberg, where an Inter-Town School Council has been founded that collaborates closely with the newly elected in 2017 Child and Youth Advisory Board of the town of Bad Segeberg to plan and implement joint events and training. Administrative hurdles with regard to participation in municipal committees are tackled by all stakeholders in a targeted manner and the town provides the young people of the Town School Council with financial resources and rooms, despite its tight municipal budget.

The 5G sustainability region and the town of Finsterwalde have, as part of the municipal process, successfully established child participation projects in primary schools, which both of the

reference municipalities have permanently anchored as sustainable forms of participation outside of school hours. In both municipalities, these projects have received much encouragement among the public and a very good response in the press, and the majority of the demands of the primary school pupils have been directly implemented. One success factor was the governance of the schools by the municipality, which considerably simplified the contact between the policy-makers, public administrators, youth workers and schools.

For the success of the youth forum in Hamburg-Nord, one of the key factors was that young people were excused from lessons in order to participate in the youth forum, thus signalling an acknowledgment of their participation in the *Youth Appropriate Municipality* project. Overall, collaborating with the schools within the city district is regarded as positive, as the school



“Our town, Naumburg, has not appreciably become more youth appropriate. However, setting yourself the challenge of making political decision-makers aware that equity for youth provides benefit for a municipality is important. It is worth continuing with the process for the committed young people alone.”

SUSANNE RIESKE

YOUTH WELFARE WORKER IN NAUMBURG

boards have supported the project and allowed the project managers to visit the schools to update pupils about the concerns of the youth forum. Unfortunately, it was not possible to develop ot-

her types of collaborative venture with schools, which in this case, is down to the dynamics of a large city.

IN BRIEF

- Collaborative ventures with schools on an equal footing from the very start of the process enables a broad spectrum of young people to participate in the youth appropriate municipality project.
- Equity for youth is an aspect of political and democratic education, even if it does not take place in the classroom.
- School and youth work each have different forms of work and learning, from which both partners profit once the initial personal contact has been established.

16 YOUTH APPROPRIATE MUNICIPALITIES ARE A MATTER FOR THE FEDERAL STATES

The spheres of young people are predominantly found in their own municipalities, which is where they are also formed. However, many parameters are controlled by the federal states, e.g. by their bylaws. At the federal state level, there are also regular opportunities to pass on good experiences to other municipalities and to discover new paths to equity for youth together. At the federal state level, it is likewise possible to profit from looking at youth appropriate municipalities more closely and reflecting the local processes in

one's own work. Some federal states are now supporting their municipalities with programmes and strategies for strengthening youth appropriate approaches locally. In particular with respect to topics of municipal relevance that can only be managed by individual municipalities to a certain extent (mobility in rural areas, internet expansion, etc.), having the federal state as a partner is indispensable.

IN PRACTICE

The city of Trier successfully applied to participate in the *Jung. Eigenständig. Stark. (Young. Independent. Strong)* youth strategy of the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate, which supported the development of municipal youth strategies in five municipalities in Rhineland-Palatinate. This allows Trier to link up seamlessly with the work results of the youth appropriate municipalities process. At the same time, Trier is exchanging these experiences with the four other selected municipalities and is itself profiting from the contact with other municipalities and receiving new impetus at a federal state level. The federal state of Schleswig-Holstein has a long tradition of mandatory youth participation at a municipal level (stipulated in Article 47f of the bylaws). From the very beginning, the federal state has therefore shown considerable interest in the process in Bad Segeberg,

and incorporated this in its own reporting on the status of youth participation in the state. For Bad Segeberg on the other hand, it was helpful to have a clearly defined legal mandate and trained contact person with respect to all matters concerning youth participation.

The city of Hanover and the federal state of Lower Saxony have used the process at the national level to organise a joint training day for youth work specialists and the youth welfare offices. This made use of both the experiences of the city of Hanover and the expertise of other municipalities with similar processes, as well as knowledge at the federal state and national level. The process in Hanover thus created benefit for other municipalities in Lower Saxony.

The city of Fürth also shared its experiences and expertise with other municipalities, thus expanding the knowledge base in Bavaria. The Bavarian Youth Council / Jugendring has – together with the municipal umbrella organisations – started its own equity for youth process at the municipal level. This, on the other hand, has given the process in Fürth a tailwind, as stakeholders outside the youth sector were becoming aware of the significance of the topic. Other reference municipalities such as Rostock and Sömmerda were invited to events at a federal state level as experts in youth appropriate municipalities and are thus actively shaping the Independent Youth Policy in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Thuringia.



“In our district, young people are now being consulted on many more points than before. The youth welfare office and other stakeholders meet with us on a regular basis to discuss matters. Everyone is taken seriously. The level of interest in our perspective on projects has also increased, which I’m really pleased about. But the highlight for me was the nomination for the Child and Youth Prize of Die Paritätische BuntStiftung and the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe Hessen-Thüringen, where even the state’s Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow praised our participation.”

JONAS ECKE

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE DISTRICT OF SÖMMERDA

IN BRIEF

- Activities at a federal state and municipal level can have a mutually supportive and strengthening effect with regard to content.
- Networking at a federal state level helps municipalities address problem areas outside of their domains and areas of responsibility.
- The decision at a federal state level to have mandatory youth participation can encourage and support activities within the municipalities.

FOCUS GROUPS

In the youth appropriate municipalities

Focus groups

A municipality is youth appropriate when everyone participates: young people, specialists in youth work and youth welfare services, the responsible municipal public administrators and local policy-makers. However, the unique feature of the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* project is the idea that all of the stakeholders create the process together. The peer-learning seminars not only enabled discussions between the stakeholders of the reference municipalities, but also an exchange between the representatives of various focus groups. While these groups themselves are very heterogeneous and their involvement in equity for youth is shaped by a variety of pre-conditions, it is still worth looking at the specific perspectives and challenges at this point.



YOUNG PEOPLE



Youth is a period of time that is experienced within the local community. This is where children grow into adolescents and then into young adults, where they usually go to school and receive their education, where they participate in their hobbies and where their families and friends live. However, there is no such thing as *The Youth*. Youth covers a broad spectrum, and the

worlds of young people differ from one another as much as the worlds of adults do. Seniors have expectations of youth and their own experiences of being young, and they often judge young people by comparing them to their own memories. Generalisations and certain labels that make it difficult for municipal policy-makers to argue outside the clichés and fixed images of young

people therefore often shape discussions about the youth of today. However, young people themselves also have their own stereotypes of policy-makers, public administrators and youth workers, which have to be addressed by coming into contact with those who are perceived as being responsible for their worlds within the municipality.

LOCAL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

It is the initial stage in particular of the youth phase of life that is strongly influenced by school and education. These institutions give life structure and restrict the freedoms that could still be shaped by the individual. Because of the strong emphasis on formal education at day schools and the reduction in the number of compulsory years for grammar schools that have occurred in recent years, the forms of youth participation have also changed. Instead of being a member of an association and having a connection to permanent structures, thematic and project-related participation has moved centre stage – especially in larger towns and cities. Added to this is the fact that the place of residence is not necessarily within the municipality in which an individual spends most of their time. In rural areas, schools and leisure activities are often no longer available locally, and peer groups are found

within the surrounding municipalities. These parameters require a multi-faceted rethinking on the part of the equity for youth stakeholders. On the one hand, the options for participation must be clearly defined by the providers so that they resonate with the individual respective concerns of the young people. On the other hand, the young people with a justified interest in participation should not necessarily be identified only in terms of their place of residence, but also potentially in terms of the place that is the centre of their life. For municipalities whose young residents spend the majority of their time outside their place of residence, there is also the matter of how to address the target group. It applies equally in all municipalities that the time young people have available is a scarce resource.

DIVERSE YOUTH – DIVERSE PARTICIPATION

When youth participation no longer takes place within youth associations and clubs to the same extent as it did ten to fifteen years ago, it is not surprising that young people are asking where and how they can represent their concerns at a political level, or who is representing them if they are not part of an organised structure. On the one hand, this challenges youth associations to better communicate their demand for representation and improve their own participation structures, while on the other hand, policy-makers will have to also accept young people who are not part of an association as interlocutors on an equal footing. Youth participation is also complicated when faced by adults projecting their own preconceptions and expectations of young people onto

young people. To some extent, young people are overloaded with exaggerated expectations or overblown fears. Whether positive or negative, an overly one-sided awareness of the youth phase of life will lead to misunderstandings and disappointment. This is why it is important that all other focus groups engage with the young people locally and familiarise themselves with the day-to-day realities of their lives and their needs.

EQUALITY AND INFORMATION

Politicians sometimes unfairly assume that young people regard youth participation events as self-serving “pipedream” opportunities. However, experience from the reference municipalities shows that young people arguably have an understanding of the longer processes and procedures of policy-makers and public administrators and that they are open to compromises, provided they are involved in a transparent process and it is explained to them exactly what is going on and what stage the venture is currently at. Young people also understand financial and structural limitations, as long as these are made transparent and are not dictated from “above”. Young people are also able to introduce innovative stimuli to the policy-making process and public administration if there is a willingness to listen to them and include them. Young people are not children, which is why they understandably react with displeasure when adults do not want or are not able to deal with them on an equal basis. However, even

taking into consideration all their understanding for public administration and political processes, young people do very much welcome the rapid processing of their requests. In this extremely dynamic phase of life, waiting for years on end for something to be implemented can lead to the young people themselves no longer being in the position to enjoy the success of their participation. With many participation topics, it has also been observed that young people also very much take the interests of other groups of the population into consideration, and are capable of identifying common interests and making compromises to the benefit of all. Young people likewise have a very keen instinct about when their interests and events are being used for external objectives, e.g. election campaigns, and react to this with rejection and withdrawal. They – just like adults – want politicians to stand by their promises, even after the election is over, and to maintain the dialogue with them.

NETWORKING

The young people who are heavily involved in processes are the best multipliers for appealing to yet more young people. They network closely with one another, understand how to use the popular social media platforms and messaging services, and use a common language. At the same time, they profit from the exchange of ideas with motivated young people in other municipalities, learn from their experiences and network across municipal boundaries regarding the structural and political challenges that they face.

YOUTH
WORK

Specialists in municipal youth work are employed in youth institutions, youth associations and other fields of work. They are in the exclusive position of having access to all other focus groups. Policy-makers and public administrators are in contact with the specialists

as they have to discuss and decide on the youth work within the municipality. Simultaneously, young people search for the offerings of those specialists and in part help shape them. They are therefore a valuable resource for young people and adults and can inform and

explain where the respective other world is not understood. However, this also highlights how difficult it can be within a municipality when youth work is under-resourced.

PROFESSIONALISM AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth work specialists are usually trained to work with a diverse range of groups and bring the professionalism required to modify and shape the constructive dialogue processes among a range of groups and heterogeneous interests. They provide valuable support to the participating stakeholders with respect to preparation, implementation and post-processing. They can advise young people on political and public administration processes and explain which access points are available for expressing their concerns. Policy-makers and public administrators, on the other hand, can access youth work services in order to receive support when dealing with young people's concerns. Youth work specialists also have the opportunity to observe the trends and interests of young people and identify needs for action at a local level. The specialists can then present these youth concerns to the policy-makers and public administrators. Representing the interests of young people makes careful use of the rare resource that

is young people's time. Thanks to their good overview of the various worlds of young people, specialists – particularly when they exchange ideas with other specialists at a local level – bring young people with similar interests into contact with one another and with policy-makers and public administrators in order to give these interests greater legitimacy. In addition to their requests being implemented, young people also discover the significance of interests of other groups and make compromises for the greater good. Finally yet importantly, specialists give young people the freedom to experiment. When specialists deal with the administrative and bureaucratic work, the young people have the opportunity to concentrate on their concerns. Furthermore, the young people learn organisational skills from the specialists and are able to try them out within a safe environment if interested.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AS A FIELD OF YOUTH WORK

Supporting young people in making their voice heard by policy-makers and the rest of society also requires youth work specialists to take a particular approach within their profession. Consequently, the focus of their efforts is not to get young people to adapt to existing circumstances, but to work together with them on an equal footing, in a process-oriented way and based on a humanistic view of the world. On the one hand, this means intervening in specific youth participation processes in an advisory capacity only, rather than taking over and managing it when an implemented venture, e.g. a youth group, is at risk of failing – as this is also part of the learning experience. On the other hand, as a youth work specialist, it also means recognising oneself as a political person with respect to young people and their interests, even if this results in conflicts with policy-makers and public ad-

ministrators. One approach that is not uncommon to open-door child and youth work, but which does pose a particular challenge to those specialists coming into contact with public forms of participation for the first time, is a lack of interest, which should not be taken personally. Experiences from the reference municipalities show that even when specialists advertise their events widely and via many channels, these events have not always been well attended. For the specialist, it is then important to analyse his or her own methods instead of withdrawing from the topic of youth participation, and not to view this as a failure, but to put it down to experience. Good youth work specialists profit from equity for youth and youth participation in terms of their own field of work and in expanding their methodological skills.

ENSURING APPRECIATION AND CONTINUITY

In many municipalities, however, youth work specialists face considerable pressure. Employment is becoming ever more precarious, and youth work structures have been broken down over the course of many years – both in absolute numbers and in relation to the number of young people. Positions are often fixed-term, poorly paid and depend upon project financing. Youth work specialists therefore have an interest in the security of their own job, but also experience a demotivating lack of financial appreciation for that job. The precarious employment conditions also lead to high staff turnover and many vacancies. The immensely important relationship-building work with young people therefore regularly has to start anew. The high level of pressure on specialists can also lead to them projecting their frustration regarding the lack of appreciation of their work at a political level as a general disenchantment with politics and passing it on to *their* young people. The status of youth institutions, sports facilities and schools likewise sends young people a message regarding the appreciation that policy-makers have for young people. It is therefore very much in the own interests of a youth appropriate municipality to offer their youth work specialists appealing employment conditions in order to be able to build a stable bridge to the young people in a municipality.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS



In Germany, municipal public administrators are the first point of contact for all the concerns and matters of a municipality's residents that are regulated by the respective bylaws. Depending on the size of a municipality, the public administrators are divided among various offices, entities and departments, each of which are in charge of different subject areas. Youth welfare offices (and sometimes the Office for Youth and

Social Welfare, or similar) usually sit at a district level, or in independent towns and cities, and work on a two-tier basis, i.e. with public administrators and Youth Welfare Committees working together. In municipalities without their own Youth Welfare Committee, youth issues are not dealt with by any dedicated committee, but often the Social Committee instead. The public administrators are in turn responsible

for implementing the decisions issued by these committees, and to some extent, they are also heavily involved in the preparatory steps for these decisions. This is why, along with the policy-makers, they are a key factor in the interface to youth work specialists and organisations, and subsequently to the specific needs of young people.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT, LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER

For committed young people, their initial contact with the municipal public administrators often shapes the image that they have of their own town/city and their codetermination options at a local level. Are their concerns being heard? Will they be accepted and taken seriously as citizens capable of codetermination? Is time being offered to explain to them how certain administrative processes work? In such cases, the approach of the public administration staff is a key factor. If the public administrators regard themselves as facilitators with respect to the bylaws or the municipal constitution and they make their own processes and approach transparent, they will be more likely to meet with understanding on the part of the young people throughout the decision and communication processes. When they classify young people as unsolicited petitioners and leave them in the dark about subsequent actions, e.g. with respect to the implementation of decisions, young people will turn their backs on the public

administrators – and consequently also their municipality. As this is the case for political decision-makers, in this instance it is also necessary for people who are involved in public administration, but not involved in the youth department themselves, to understand the day-to-day realities of young people. In those reference municipalities in which the young people came into contact with public administrators across departments, or even were able to design and provide skills training for the public administrators, it was possible to better promote and implement youth issues within the administrative structures. It is worthwhile initiating translation processes between the worlds of young people and the language and thinking of public administrators in order to foster mutual understanding and trust, while simultaneously transmitting new stimuli to administrative structures that will be able to improve existing processes.

HAVING AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL APPROACH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Administrative units and individuals involved in public administration usually have clearly defined job descriptions and areas of responsibility, within which they are not only very well versed, but in which they are also able to make decisions. Depending on the organisational structure of a municipal public administration, regular exchanges of ideas take place within a department or division, whereby the employees update one another about on-going developments. In the best-case scenario, synergy effects are created, from which a topic such as equity for youth can benefit immensely. It is

just as essential that the municipal public administration acts across departments, including the youth department, as the common concerns discussed frequently also often affect young people. Interdepartmental thinking and acting are key to the success of local equity for youth. For example, not only do young people have little opportunity to have their say in urban planning projects that are drawn up and implemented by the building authorities, the responsible department does not even have any knowledge of the realms of young people as it has no contact with the youth department. In those refe-

rence municipalities in which the management of the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* project was the responsibility of the public administrators, it was easier to make contact with other departments and administrative units. This applies in particular to smaller municipalities, in which the public administrators know one another personally, or where the official channels are not especially long. This starts with contact to the town hall staff who manage the meeting rooms and continues all the way up to the involvement of multiple departments in steering committees for greater equity for youth. Interdepartmental cooperation can either be decreed and monitored at the highest administrative level, or occur at the operational level through short official channels. In both scenarios, it is important that interdepartmental cooperation is seen by all of the departments involved to be fruitful for their own work. The remit of the youth department is, therefore, to work out and outline the benefit of such cooperation for the young citizens at both the short-term and the long-term strategic level for a municipality.

Be it small or large— one thing is certain for every municipality: if the highest administrative level and/or the political leadership of a municipality supports equity for youth as a field of action and passes this approach on to its administrative employees, they will be more open to new or sometimes even unconventional enquiries by young people.

POLICY-
MAKERS

The peer-learning process has shown that winning over public officials and elected politicians to the youth target group and the topic of youth policy is

not an easy task. This is due to multiple reasons, some of which are down to the structural circumstances of the approximately 11,000 municipalities

throughout Germany, and some of which relate to the ever-decreasing priority placed on equity for youth in daily political tasks.

MUNICIPALITIES IN GERMANY

Depending on the size of the municipality and the federal state it is in, the political and administrative structures will differ significantly. In smaller municipalities, the mayors are placed in charge of municipal and public administration on a voluntary basis, while in larger municipalities they are full-time and have deputies (with different titles, depending on the federal state) with whom they can share the areas of operation. The same applies to the municipal councils, town councils or other representatives within the municipal parliaments. In large municipalities there are (part-time) employees, while in small municipalities there are voluntary municipal council members who represent the citizens on behalf of a party or who are politically independent. The areas of responsibility with respect to young people are also assigned to different bodies and committees according to the federal state and size of the municipality. In view of the enormous variety of topics that motivate people and consequently also policy-makers at a municipal level, *youth* and the topic of equity for youth nevertheless often represent only a very small part of the overall municipal functional area. However, this field is currently dominated by, among other things, policies for children in

the form of the statutory right to childcare facilities and their provision at a municipal level. Those policy-makers engaged in social or youth welfare committees – while also taking into consideration the amount of time available – therefore have to set priorities regarding the most urgent aspects that have to be approved and implemented for the municipalities. For example where a municipality ought to invest financial and human resources, where it has to act from a legal perspective and where it can allow itself freedoms. However, the key activities and degrees of experience of political decision-makers play a major role - and whether they themselves have a personal or professional relationship with the worlds of young people. Under such circumstances, finding dedicated advocates for equity for youth among municipal policy-makers is a challenge that requires targeted lobbying. It is also necessary to convince policy-makers that placing the concerns of young people at the centre of their own actions is worthwhile, even when the constraints do not appear to be as immediately obvious as they do in other municipal fields of action.

YOUNG PEOPLE: INVISIBLE UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS?

It has also been observed that young people often only become the focus of political activities when conflicts between adults and (a few) young people arise – e.g. regarding the use of public open spaces such as parks and squares – and they are subsequently treated as problematic and representative of the youth in a municipality as a whole. Youth participation and equity for youth can then be overshadowed by a poor image of young people and are not recognised as being part of the solution – which in some circumstances could have prevented such conflicts from occurring in the first place. In those reference municipalities in which young people were specifically invited to participate in the design of public

parks, green spaces and other public open spaces, not only were these locations better accepted by the young people themselves, they treated them with greater care. It also became evident that many overlaps and common interests with other social groups such as senior citizens or families with children exist when they all have an equal chance of contributing their ideas and of being heard by the others.

ENABLING DIALOGUE

This type of contact and exchange between policy-makers and young people needs to be developed. Although youth forums, youth conferences and future labs had been held in all sixteen of the reference municipalities – to which policy-makers were also invited – they each used this important platform in a variety of different ways to discuss with the young participants their concerns and specific expectations. While in many municipalities the policy-makers who attended did debate the requests with the young people in detail, implementing some immediately and others at a subsequent date, other policy-makers used the respective forms of participation merely as an electioneering opportunity, or treated participation more like a form of consultation, the results of which were not considered a mandate to act. Whenever young people involved in a participation event were not only heard, but were met with a general openness combined with a commitment to continue to deal with their concerns, and this led to follow-up events and other informal meetings with municipal policy-makers, it was not only the young people who valued the good relationship with the policy-makers. The policy-makers themselves admitted to having learnt

a lot with respect to their own work, and having benefited from a change in perspective and the positive energies of the participation events. Another obstacle to the active participation of political decision-makers in youth forums and youth conferences, or even the regular exchange of ideas with youth parliaments or other groupings of committed young people is that policy-makers worry about not being able to do young people justice due to practical constraints, such as financial reasons or municipal law. Therefore, they tend to act in a somewhat defensive way towards the concerns of young people. However, experience shows that young people do not demand that everything must be implemented immediately and exactly how they want it to be. Rather, they want to have transparency and a good flow of information. They value a frank relationship that indicates the feasible boundaries, but which also attempts to soften these boundaries and dares to improvise. Where can leeway be found in the municipal constitution? Where can pragmatic and innovative solutions be found that go beyond party lines?

HOW POLITICS PROFITS FROM EQUITY FOR YOUTH

In the face of the demographic change and the need for specialists, but also the ever-increasing desire of civil society to have a greater say in the shaping of public life, the needs and circumstances of young people in the municipality cannot be neglected without this having a negative impact on them. When young people feel at home within their municipality, when they are taken seriously by political decision-makers, when they are not only heard but are also able to take part in the decision-making and witness the outcomes of these decisions, this is reflected not only in a positive relationship with their home town, city or village, but also in a positive image of young people within the state and society. In areas that are particularly affected by the demographic change, it has been observed that equity for youth in all of its dimensions must also be regarded as a “demographic retention factor”. This not only means that young people simply decide to remain in their municipality, but also, that after they have moved to another – usually more urban – area to complete their training or studies, they later return home as very welcome professionals and young parents, to shape civil society there. Moreover, young people are not an isolated social group.

Young people – just like children – have parents and relatives who care about them. When a municipality cares about its young people, it also cares about their families. In this intersection between the needs of young people and the fields of action, which challenge the policy-makers, there is an enormous opportunity for a vibrant community in which all generations can happily coexist.

Conclusions

As municipalities throughout Germany are very different, some of the success factors are not as relevant for the respective local contexts as others. Yet despite these dissimilarities, there are challenges that every municipality has to face on its path to greater equity for youth. Questions for reflection help municipalities that want to make their own way along the path to greater equity for youth take stock of their baseline conditions. These assumptions and questions act as a suitable starting point, providing clarity for the following steps and giving the process a potential direction or focus.

Assumptions and questions for reflection



EQUITY FOR YOUTH IS MORE THAN YOUTH PARTICIPATION.

When municipalities address the topic of equity for youth, youth participation is often at the top of the list. This is a good thing, but it is not enough. Equity for youth also means the policy-makers and public administrators have to take a critical look at their own structures and change them where

necessary. If this part of the process is omitted, youth participation will not thrive. The common objectives in the field of equity for youth can only be achieved when all of the groups do their homework and are open to each of the other groups, enabling effective cooperation.



YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MOTIVATED.

In every municipality, there are young people with the will to participate in the shaping of that municipality. They have a relatively clear vision of their concerns and what will improve their quality of life – and even if they are unable to express them directly, they have a sense for them, which they will be able to express with the support of specialists. The challenge is to make the most of this motivation for municipal politics and not to disregard the interests of young people as a

potential disruption and expense. All who show themselves willing to participate in serious dialogue and be creative, and everyone who supports committed young people with a structure, will not only make their own municipality more youth appropriate, they will also foster a sense of belonging to the municipality among both the young people themselves and those closest to them.



SPECIALISTS IN THE YOUTH SECTOR NEED GOOD FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS.

In many municipalities, the job situation in the youth sector (with respect to both private and public providers of youth welfare services) is not very attractive. On the one hand, many jobs are fixed-term and part-time, on the other, implementing the statutory right to day care takes up much of the public administration resources. Against all of this, however, youth policy is easily overlooked by policy-makers and public administrators and given a lower priority due to

the low regulatory density for youth services. When specialist providers of private youth welfare services are employed on a precarious and fixed-term basis, this increases staff turnover and hampers on-going actions as well as the important relationship-building work. This creates difficult framework conditions for the groups of people who have the most to do with the topic of equity for youth.



EQUITY FOR YOUTH MUST BE ESTABLISHED AS A PROFESSIONAL APPROACH.

When a municipality has actually become youth appropriate, it is reflected in the approach of the policy-makers, public administrators and specialists. Are the interests and concerns of young people given consideration? Are young people included in discussions at a local level? Are the paths of commu-

nication between the people who deal with youth concerns apparent? Are the needs of youth being heard? These modes of behaviour express an approach that regards young people as active citizens of a town or city, and which values and supports their commitment.



EQUITY FOR YOUTH IS A LONG-TERM VENTURE WHEREBY EVEN THE SMALLEST OF SUCCESSES NEEDS TO BE CELEBRATED.

The various forms of manifestation of equity for youth cannot be implemented overnight; they must be developed and practiced. Contact across departments and professions for and with young people is also relationship-building work that requires trust and time. Anyone who sets off on the path

to greater equity for youth needs stamina, reliable partners and a considerable willingness to change. It is therefore all the more important to highlight, appreciate and celebrate small successes and advances.



AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL APPROACH REMAINS A CORE CHALLENGE.

Without a doubt, acting across departments is essential for youth policy. This is demonstrated not least by the wording of the municipal constitutions, which stipulate that young people must participate in all relevant topics – either on a compulsory basis as in Schleswig-Holstein and Baden-Württemberg, or as a minimum on an “ought-to” basis as in the majority of the other federal states. In everyday municipal procedures, however, it has been observed that the interests and concerns of young people are seldom given consideration outside of the youth department. It is therefore essential for the development of a youth appropriate municipality to

identify reasons for including other departments and create the necessary connections – either by direct contact or via the highest administrative level. Building on this, systematic rounds of discussion on youth-relevant topics can be set up in various departments in which knowledge about the youth phase of life can also be shared. When this knowledge is also disseminated outside of the youth department, it will be more likely in future that youth-relevant topics will be identified and worked on accordingly.



EVERY MUNICIPALITY IS DIFFERENT. YES, EVEN YOURS.

There is not one particular way or plan for achieving greater equity for youth. There are no checklists to work through. There is no conclusive definition of when exactly a municipality becomes youth appropriate. The concrete expressions of equity for youth are as different as each of the more than 11,000 municipalities in Germany. This is why the experiences of the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process are seen as stimuli and suggestions that can support questions and aspects of a municipality's own handling of the topic of equity for youth. Taking a look at other municipalities helps

identify new methods and arguments. Discussions with other municipalities can help a municipality to better arrange and organise its own work. However, looking at other municipalities can also lead to a municipality comparing itself – and feeling like it has come off worse. In such instances, it is easy to lose sight of how dissimilar the municipal framework conditions are – and that ultimately, each municipality is better of comparing itself with itself. After all, every municipality is different and requires a unique path to greater equity for youth.

Suggestions for your own municipal process

Equity for youth at the municipal level is a worthwhile undertaking. Youth appropriate municipalities take into consideration the needs of what is otherwise a mostly overlooked group of the population and lay the cornerstone

for an active citizenship that identifies with the home community. To get the process started in your own municipality, it helps to first ask and analyse the right questions regarding the current situation. The following list of questi-

ons for reflection has been compiled based on the experiences of the reference municipalities, and with regard to the framework conditions, resources and structures of the stakeholders within a municipality:

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- Which networks and alliances that deal with the topic of youth already exist in the town or city? Who is involved?

- Which stakeholders with regard to policy-makers, public administration and the professional world can be encouraged to embrace the topic of equity for youth? Which young people or youth organisations are responsive and interested in the topic? Which organisations and individuals have to be included?

- Where do young people come into contact with our policy-makers, public administrators and specialists?

- From the point of view of the participating stakeholders (young people, specialists, policy-makers and public administrators), what should have changed once the municipality has become youth appropriate?

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- What do we know about the worlds of young people in our municipality?

- When, where, how and with regard to what can young people participate?

- How are knowledge, skills and outcomes regarding the worlds of young people, participation formats and consultations documented within the municipality?

STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES

- What resources does the municipality make available for the topic of youth? What are these resources used for and where are the decisions regarding the use of these resources made?

- How many and which people are employed full-time to support young people at a local level?

- Which regulations and structures within the municipality strengthen the interests of young people and how they are taken into consideration in the municipality?

- How are events, meetings and participation formats made more attractive to young people?

- What spaces within the municipality can young people use freely and autonomously? Which young people make use of these free spaces?

COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION

- How do we as policy-makers and public administrators communicate with the young residents?

- Which youth policy services and which frameworks are put in place by policies and legislation at a federal state level (e.g. municipal constitution, youth strategy, funding programmes, etc.)?

- What schools exist within the municipality and what contact is there with the youth (welfare) sector?

- How are young people within the municipality portrayed by the media? What do we contribute to this reporting?

These guiding questions can be used as the basis for the process work on the path to a youth appropriate municipality. An ad-

ditional checklist of systematic guiding questions for use as an analytical and planning tool for developing a youth appropriate

municipality is available on the coordination centre's website: werkzeugbox.jugendgerecht.de.

Appendix

Project background

From the Baltic Sea to the Black Forest, from Münsterland to the Elbe-Elster district, the following overview shows the sixteen reference municipalities that took part in the *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process.

BAD SEGEBERG

FEDERAL STATE Schleswig-Holstein
POPULATION Approx. 17,000
www.bad-segeberg.de

TEMPELHOF-SCHÖNEBERG, BERLIN

FEDERAL STATE Berlin
POPULATION 345,024
www.berlin.de

BREMERHAVEN

FEDERAL STATE Bremen
POPULATION 119,709
www.bremerhaven.de

DREIEICH

FEDERAL STATE Hesse
POPULATION 44,000
www.dreieich.de

FINSTERWALDE

FEDERAL STATE Brandenburg
POPULATION 17,175
www.finsterwalde.de

FÜRTH

FEDERAL STATE Bavaria
POPULATION 124,171
www.jugendarbeit.fuerth.de
www.echt-fuerth.de

HANOVER

FEDERAL STATE Lower Saxony
POPULATION 537,738
www.hannover.de (Jugend lebt Stadt)

BARMBEK-NORD, HAMBURG-NORD

FEDERAL STATE Hamburg
POPULATION 40,231
www.hamburg-nord.hamburg.de

LEIPZIG

FEDERAL STATE Saxony
POPULATION 588,621
www.leipzig.de

MERZIG-WADERN DISTRICT

FEDERAL STATE Saarland
POPULATION 103,520
www.merzig-wadern.de/Bildung-Jugend/Jugendarbeit

NAUMBURG

FEDERAL STATE Saxony-Anhalt
POPULATION 33,675
www.naumburg.de

ROSTOCK

FEDERAL STATE Mecklenburg-Western Pommerania
POPULATION 206,000
www.rostock.de

SÖMMERDA DISTRICT

FEDERAL STATE Thuringia
POPULATION 70,600
www.lra-soemmerda.de

STEINFURT DISTRICT

FEDERAL STATE North Rhine-Westphalia
POPULATION 437,127
www.kreis-steinfurt.de

TRIER

FEDERAL STATE Rhineland-Palatinate
POPULATION 113,988
www.trier.de

THE "FÜNF G" (FIVE MUNICIPALITIES)

SUSTAINABILITY REGION

Aldingen, Deisslingen, Denkingen, Frittlingen and Wellendingen

FEDERAL STATE Baden-Württemberg
POPULATION 20,800
www.n-region-5g.de

Background

The *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process is a specific project of the 2015–2018 *Taking Action for a Youth Appropriate Society* youth strategy and hence one of numerous projects with the objective of placing the basic principles of the *Independent Youth Policy* centre stage in various contexts. The aim of the youth strategy of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) was to create a society which includes the young generation in all decisions that affect them and which offers all youth and young adults good conditions for coping with the challenges that face them in the youth phase of life. Youth is a self-contained stage of life. All young people and young adults want a general education and to develop social and professional capabilities (skills training), to accept responsibility for themselves (independence) and to find a balance between their personal freedom and social acceptance and responsibility (self-positioning). The four core fields of action of the youth strategy are:

- effective youth participation,

- free time and (free) spaces,

- opportunities and participation, and

- diverse perceptions of youth.

The youth strategy was intended to make the interests and needs of young people and young adults visible to policy-makers and the public. The aim was to give youth policy a broad forum in which to discuss needs for action and take up specific measures. The BMFSFJ supports an interdepartmental youth appropriate policy and invites municipal, regional, national and European stakeholders to participate. The *Taking Action for a Youth Appropriate Society* coordination centre was a major partner of the BMFSFJ with regard to the implementation of the youth strategy and is located within the *Working Group for Children and Youth Welfare Services (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe (AGJ))*. Its duties and responsibilities are the nationwide roll-out of the Independent Youth Policy, the networking of stakeholders at a federal level and public relations for the youth strategy.

The *Youth Appropriate Municipalities* process has been professionally supported by the planning committee of the *Taking Action for a Youth Appropriate Society* coordination centre, whose members have contributed important stimuli to the on-going work with the municipalities and the resulting youth policy fields of action.

BROAD RANGE OF MATERIALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, SPECIALISTS, POLICY-MAKERS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS:

www.werkzeugbox.jugendgerecht.de

The Doing Youth Justice toolkit

Many guides for achieving the goal of a youth appropriate municipality have already been published. The *Doing Youth Justice (Jugend gerecht werden)* toolkit comprises materials and literature on municipal matters from four different fields of action and is available online for all interested parties. The toolkit contains numerous practical items that could be useful to young people and specialists, as well as policy-makers and public administrators in developing and implementing youth appropriate topics at a local level. Produced by the coordination centre, it presents e.g. good arguments for greater participation and a range of youth participation formats for various levels. Courses of action for policy-makers and public administrators are underpinned with tools, as are the specialist support options for young people. They include, among other things, materials for the fields of self-organisation of

young people, European mobility, inclusion, the participation of child refugees and the implementation of an Independent Youth Policy at a local level. Tools for political education, networking and prospects for the period immediately after having dropped out of university are also included. Among the more than two hundred sources available on the internet there are also methodological suggestions such as how to make youth-relevant locations visible, how young people can participate in urban development and how to develop strategies for a long-term youth welfare plan.

The collection of recommendations with methods, handouts and supporting arguments pools knowledge for all those who campaign for the interests and needs of young people.

A DIGITAL VERSION OF THE TOOLKIT IS AVAILABLE ONLINE:

www.werkzeugbox.jugendgerecht.de

Materials from the Youth Appropriate Municipalities process

The Taking Action for a Youth Appropriate Society coordination centre has also made materials from the Youth Appropriate Municipalities process available for the toolkit in order to support the shaping of municipal equity for youth processes.

Example material:

Checklist of guiding questions as a starting point for developing a youth appropriate municipality

In order to cope with the heterogeneous nature of the challenges and peculiarities of the municipalities, each municipality needs to formulate its own process on the path to equity for youth. This essentially comprises four systematic steps: taking stock, formulation of objectives, implementation and follow-up. An analysis of the current situation is fundamental for determining the needs for action and formulating the objectives. Using the guiding questions provided, the process owners in the municipality, working together with the young

people and other stakeholders, draw up a review of the current situation. The municipalities then develop a process plan based on specific, realistic objectives. These short-term and long-term objectives can be subdivided according to the fields of action of the criteria for youth appropriate municipalities, which can also be found in the toolkit. This is the start of the process towards developing a permanently youth appropriate municipality.

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