



## PREAMBEL

# CHILD AND YOUTH POLICY 2025–2029 | THE FEDERAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INCOMING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

In the context of demographic change in an ageing society, the coming parliamentary term will be a critical juncture for child and youth policy. The next federal government will set the course for the future of young people in Germany and thus also for our country. Child and youth policy should carry greater weight in the political priorities at federal level. Working together with and for the young generation – in contrast to the older majority in the population and thus also in the electorate – the new government should create a political balance between the generations. A child and youth policy in which young people participate and that systematically incorporates their generational and social situation as well as their diverse perspectives is a political necessity at the federal level. In various rulings, particularly regarding climate policy but also in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federal Constitutional Court (BVerfG) has pointed out that the rights of the young generation must be strengthened.

In contrast, the political parties' current election manifestos contain a fragmented, limited and highly selective understanding of child and youth policy – one that does not do justice to the realities of young people's lives nor to the importance of child and youth policy for our society. The next federal government must develop a societally comprehensive, future-oriented perspective on child and youth policy – one that strengthens the rights of young people, is oriented towards their generational and social position as well as their diversity and does not exclude or criminalise any group. The current political positions, by contrast, are leading to uncertainty and division – including among young people in Germany.

A conceptually coherent child and youth policy is essential: It must have a strong position both in the responsible ministry and in the federal government as a whole, also in order to strengthen and further consolidate the necessary cross-departmental cooperation on child and youth policy between ministries.

## CHILD AND YOUTH POLICY INCLUDES INTERGENERATIONALLY EQUITABLE SOCIAL POLICY

Intergenerational equity means strengthening social cohesion between the generations and giving equal political consideration to the interests of different generations. Intergenerational equity does not mean playing younger and older generations off against each other in social and fiscal policy.

### RECOMMENDATION

Intergenerational equity does not mean playing younger and older generations off against each other in social and fiscal policy.

The political instrumentalisation of young people's supposed interests to retain the debt brake, cut pension entitlements or extend working life is not intergenerationally equitable social policy. Rather, the intergenerational social contract needs to be transparently spelled out in a way that addresses the concerns of young people. Social law needs to ensure that the social security systems remain future-proof for the younger generation.

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Improving equality of opportunity for young people is also central to intergenerational equity. Children, youth and young adults remain the group most affected by poverty. Social status, poverty and poorer opportunities in education, healthcare and for participation must not be “inherited” from the previous generation. At present, occupational and social success continue to depend heavily on a young person’s socio-economic background.

Alongside anchoring the rights of young people in the Basic Law, the next federal government should appoint a Future Generations Council made up of young people. This body would broadly review social, fiscal and climate policy initiatives, among other topics, in regard to their sustainability for future generations and have the right to slow down legislative procedures in order to open up space for renewed negotiation and policy development. The existing “Youth Check” could be an important starting point for the Future Generations Council.

## CHILD AND YOUTH POLICY PROMOTES DEMOCRACY

The way in which the next federal government manages young people’s participation, how it addresses them and, through these measures, shapes the political climate is of fundamental importance.

The current debate on migration policy is fuelling fear and uncertainty, creating a sense of threat for young refugees and eroding all young people’s confidence that they can grow up in an open, democratic and diversity-sensitive society.

For young people’s political participation – and for their personal development – it is crucial, as pointed out in the 17th Child and Youth Report (BMFSFJ, 2024), that promises such as those made after the COVID-19 pandemic are kept. In their local schools, child and youth welfare facilities and other institutions where they grow up, young people must be able to feel that they are recognised and supported in their different living conditions and that their diverse needs, situations and voices are being heard and acted on.

Young people’s political participation must not be suspended even in times of crisis or in the face of global crises, because decisions in all policy areas affect young people. Participation must therefore be extended to all policy areas, including defence and fiscal policy for example. Every federal ministry should firmly anchor child and youth participation in its structures and designate contact persons in a transparent fashion.

## CHILD AND YOUTH POLICY MEANS INVESTING IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION

Infrastructure policy must not be limited to physical and digital systems such as railways, roads, bridges, networks and the energy supply. Child and youth policy is also infrastructure policy: In spite of all the successes in expanding the infrastructure for young people, especially in early childhood education and care, there is not only a lack of skilled workers, reliability and quality, but also of comprehensive modernisation of the infrastructure and its adaptation to the very different living conditions of young people.

A well-funded investment programme is needed for the infrastructure that supports children’s and young people’s development, education and participation.

The next federal government will have to answer the question of how the social and educational infrastructure can be maintained and modernised and whether, for example, a special fund for investment in the infrastructure for development, education and participation for young people should be established by law. Federal–state divisions of responsibility must not be used as an excuse for insufficient investment in these infrastructures.

## THE FEDERAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

The Federal Youth Advisory Board (FYAB; in German: Bundesjugendkuratorium/BJK) is an expert panel commissioned by the Federal Government. It advises the Federal Government on fundamental issues of child and youth services and cross-cutting issues in child and youth policy.

FYAB is composed of up to 15 experts from the spheres of politics, administration, associations and research. Its members are appointed by the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth for the duration of the current legislative period.

<https://en.bundesjugendkuratorium.de/>



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