



## APPEAL

# KEY POINTS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPING YOUTH PARTICIPATION FORMATS AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

In recent years, the aim of more actively involving young people in policy consultation has gained increasing traction at the federal level. Various formats, such as advisory boards composed entirely of young people (e.g. BMZ Youth Advisory Board), committees with youth participation (e.g. Youth Policy Advisory Board of the BMFSFJ), exchange forums (e.g. Youth Policy Days) and specific coordination offices (e.g. Coordination Office for Youth Participation in Climate Issues at the BMWK), demonstrate a political will to improve young people's participation in policy consultation. These initial steps are to be welcomed, especially in view of young people's basic political right to contribute both their current concerns and their visions for the future to the political process. The 20th Federal Government implemented the National Action Plan (NAP) on Child and Youth Participation with the goal of strengthening participation by children and young people and further developing youth strategy at the federal level. It is important to now build on these results.

Based on feedback reports from young people who took part in participation formats during the 20th parliamentary term, as well as the BJK's long-standing engagement with the topic of young people in policy consultation, the Federal Youth Advisory Board also sees an urgent need for youth participation at the federal level to be made more transparent, consistent and better anchored in sustainable structures. To this end, the BJK proposes the following key points.

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION REQUIRES CLEAR RESPONSIBILITY

Youth participation in policy consultation should be established as a fundamental and mandatory component of consultation during legislative processes and in the

shaping of political initiatives at the ministerial level across the federal government.

To ensure that youth participation in policy consultation does not depend on the interest or commitment of individual staff members or departments, a fixed remit for this topic is required in every federal ministry as a shared responsibility across the federal government in addition to the remit held by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). Each participation format must also be underpinned by a transparent concept that defines the processes, implementation strategies and the purposes or objectives of participation.

## RECOMMENDATION

The BJK considers it necessary that at the start of each parliamentary term, not only the BMFSFJ but every federal ministry and the Federal Chancellery establishes a fixed remit for involving young people in policy consultation. Suitable concepts for potential participation formats should be developed together with young people from the outset.

## GOOD YOUTH PARTICIPATION REQUIRES OVERARCHING STANDARDS

The experiences of young people involved in youth participation formats at the federal level show how widely the conditions for their engagement vary. Both the extent of substantive and organisational support and guidance provided to young participants, but also the possibility of receiving compensation for their time and effort, differ greatly across formats.

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While diversity in format and flexibility in design are important due to the heterogeneity of political issues, standards must be upheld.

These include, for example, transparency about the purpose of the participation process, addressing young people in a way that is appropriate to their age and life situation, a fair and transparent selection process and a sustainable infrastructure – criteria that have also been set out in discussion papers and guidelines issued by the Federal Youth Advisory Board (2019), the German Federal Youth Council (Deutscher Bundesjugendring) and the BMFSFJ (2022), and the Federal Competence Centre for Child and Youth Participation (Stiftung SPI, 2024). Adhering to these quality standards helps ensure that effective child and youth participation can be achieved at the federal level.

## RECOMMENDATION

The BJK identifies an urgent need to guarantee that fundamental standards in child and youth participation are met across all participation formats.

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION REQUIRES SUSTAINABLE AND TRANSPARENT DESIGN

In addition to individual projects or one-off participation events, effective child and youth participation urgently requires sustainable and securely anchored structures. Structural forms of participation that are not purely project-oriented lead to participation becoming a matter of course. Sustainable participation structures are evident, for example, in established feedback processes.

From the BJK's perspective, young people's expectations about the possibilities of policy consultation are realistic, for example, in that not all of the concerns they express can be reflected in actual political action and decisions. However, there is a strong desire for their contributions to be heard with an open mind and young people would like to be informed about whether and to what extent their input has been incorporated into political discussions – or, if not, why it could not be taken into account. Such transparency also signals respect for their expertise.

## RECOMMENDATION

In the BJK's view, participation should be designed to be sustainable and must be structurally anchored. As part of

every participation process, all young people involved must receive, within a reasonable time frame, an age-appropriate, transparent and process- and topic-related response on the impact of their advisory input.

Contact persons for this appeal: Marie Borst, Daniela Broda, Baro Vicenta Ra Gabbert, Nikolas Karanikolas und Wolfgang Schröer

## REFERENCES

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### Contact persons for this paper:

Marie Borst, Daniela Broda, Baro Vicenta Ra Gabbert, Nikolas Karanikolas und Wolfgang Schröer

## 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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Daniela Broda

Baro Vicenta Ra Gabbert

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---

Dr. Pia Jaeger

Team Lead

The Child and Youth Policy Unit

Dr. Max Reinhardt

Scientific Research Associate

Sofie Jokerst

Scientific Research Associate