

Jugendpolitik/ -youth-policy

Resolution- demands to national governments and European Union

Finnish and German Youth Councils met in Bad Urach from 13th of May until the 18th of May 2008 to discuss common issues arising from our work as youth councillors. We exchanged best practice examples, discussed mutual problems, talked about how youth councils in both countries work and explored areas of further cooperation.

Youth Participation

What is a youth council?

For us a youth council is a democratically legitimated body compromised of people aged mostly between 13 and 21 years, that works on a regular, continuous bases and has influence on local policy.

Therefore it is necessary to have the following characteristics:

- It should have an internal structure, e.g. a chairperson, press-secretary, representatives in the various committees of the city council.
- to speak in the city council
- to propose motions and bills for the city councils
- the ability to elect it's chairpersons (some councils choose to elect their local mayor)
- to have a own room or office
- to have an appropriate legal framework made by themselves and the city council in cooperation
- to control the own budget (within the legal framework and due accounting)
- to have a appropriate budget
- to have one or more defined partners in the city administration; at least a part-time person that does administrative work for the youth council, the Youth Council should be involved in the decision concerning employing staff
- it should be represented at least in the committees that deal with youth, education, culture, free-time, sport, health, urban development, finances...
- it should have the power to control it's agenda, meeting times and structure
- the city government should consult the council automatically with all youth related decisions, including those that are not only concerning young people

In our discussions we found the following examples of good practice:

- The city of Biberach, where it is municipal law to consult the youth council on all youth related actions
- The city of Freiburg, which explores new ways of involving young people in the Budget Process through special actions in its participatory budget
- The city of Weingarten which was the first youth council in Germany and where 97 % of youth vote in the youth council elections
- The youth council of Esslingen demanded to introduce a night taxi, which the youth council was able to introduce after long discussions with city councils and administration. The "Nacht-Taxi" takes young people after the last bus home and costs only 2,50 Euros
- In Nokia the youth council activated an annual forum for all the young people of Nokia where they can ask questions and their opinions to the city councillors, the local administration and other decision makers. After the event half a year or one year later there's another forum and there's a report what was done with the demands of the forum. And then there are made new demands / questions.
- The Finnish umbrella organisation had an "unruly youngsters? - tour". This was a tour of 5 meetings for the youth law in the province. They presented the youth law with a presentation and after that there were workshops that experiences of the participants with the youth law and compared the differences in the cities of the participants and the chances of a youth council would have because of the law. It was a free conversation what is done in the different youth councils and the possibilities of the youth law and their experiences with the youth law. After the Youth law discussion, there was presentation about the developing program for the youth politics.
- In Espoo the youth council supports youngster to get summer jobs with "summer job notes".

In order to further advance the spirit of participation and foster the involvement of youth in local politics, we urge young people, youth councillors, Politicians to:

- form national and local associations of youth councils
- form European / national umbrella organisations of the youth councils, *starting from a loose and non formal group, a kind of cooperation between national umbrella organizations*
- Youth councils have to be founded in every city with the rights and abilities to be consulted at each political level
- Regional Groups or town councils have to hear young people on youth-related topics *e.g. § 8 Finnish youth law*
- A youth Council would be a good framework to implement this
- Money/fundings for better connections between youth councils in Europe

Further Cooperation in order to strengthen the work of Youth Councils in Europe, we will:

- Continue to exchange and meet regularly
- Inform each other about best practise examples of our work
- Try to lobby for better exchanges of young people in our countries
- Make information available in English (and other languages)
- Try to involve youth councils from other countries in the exchange
- Invite delegation of other umbrella organisation to annual meetings

We have not only dealt with the questions of youth councils work. From our daily work we have come across many issues posed to today's society, therefore we would like to raise the following topics:

Political lessons

In our opinion there are too few lessons concerning society or politics at school. This is why we demand more political knowledge to be shared in European schools. The youth need to experience politics and how it works. This goal can be achieved by simulation games, excursions, workshops, more discussions about current affairs and debating with decision makers.

When a young person understands his/her environment better, she/he will have more motivation to influence on decisions concerning them. We want politics to be clear, understandable and interesting for a young person. Decision making should be transparent. By adding the number of lessons and focusing more on the contents, the young would be more active when it comes to politics.

More practical help for life after school and university:

- We want more practical help for life after school and university, e.g. how is the living situation in the city, how to manage living alone and to keep a household, where to find a plumber...
- Information should be provided in which you can inform yourself how to start an independent life after school and university
- Advice and guidance should be given about personal economic wellbeing and how to manage your personal finances
- The schools should show more responsibility in this field

Integration:

- Locals pupils should learn about each others cultural backgrounds from the local people with immigration background and their participation in local life
- We want that handicapped citizen are respected and treated better, thus making their life easier and become fully integrated members of society

Education System

We want an equal schoolingsystem to be created in which all human beings enter as equals and are given the same level of education, no matter what their social status happens to be.

An equal schooling system should also include a healthcare system that takes care of the needs of every student both physically and mentally. To achieve this a school nurse and psychiatrist or a social worker would be required.

This system should also teach youth to tolerate each other by letting them learn about each others different cultures, thus easing integration.

Youth should also be given the opportunity to cooperate with the elderly and handicapped in order to ease their role as members of the society.

To take us forward towards a more united Europe youth should also be given the opportunity to participate in international cooperation and youth exchange.