



INFORMATION

Selected international good practices in youth participation at the local level

Katrin Schauer, Susanne Klinzing

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Switzerland

Jugend Mit Wirkung. Partizipation in der Gemeinde



<http://www.jugendmitwirkung.ch/>

Jugend Mit Wirkung focuses on the needs of young people aged 13 to 16, lets them influence the decision on what measures are implemented, and helps to realise the selected activities at the local level with the young community members' active involvement and assistance. More than 100 communities have signed up to the initiative. The method: A committee composed of young people and adults organises a youth participation day. The young members motivate their peers to come along while the adults take care of the logistics (meeting rooms, catering) and encourage representatives from politics, the local authorities and local businesses to attend. The young participants set the agenda. All participants draw up plans for projects that are then implemented with input from everyone present. For examples of past projects, click here:

<http://www.infoklick.ch/jugendmitwirkung/projekte>

Inquiries: Markus Gander (Director), markus.gander@infoklick.ch



Finland

Political/legal background:

Unlike in Germany, youth participation is mandatory under Finnish law. Since 2006, according to Section 8 of Finland's Youth Act *"the opportunity to participate in the handling of issues relating to local and regional youth work and policy must be provided for young people. Additionally, young people must be heard during the handling of issues concerning them."*

2011 youth elections



<http://www.alli.fi/etusivu/>

Allianssi, the umbrella organisation of Finland's youth organisations, organised youth elections to coincide with the 2011 parliamentary elections during which young people were allowed to vote for the actual parliamentary candidates. The results of these shadow elections were compiled at the national level. Youth elections familiarise young people with democratic processes, allow them to deal in depth with youth policy issues, and provide first-time voters with information and preparatory material.

Inquiries: Kirsi Alasaari, kirsi.alasaari@alli.fi

Initiative Channel

<http://www.aloitkanava.fi/>

To implement Section 8 of Finland's Youth Act (see above), the Koordinatti Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Work and Ponsi Interactive Ltd. set up the Initiative Channel with support from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. This online service is already integrated into existing local online channels. By December 2011, 145 local communities had signed up. It is maintained and moderated by youth workers and local authority representatives.

The Initiative Channel gives young people an opportunity to make their voices heard and contribute ideas. Local authorities, local decision-makers and organisations can ask young people for their opinions and consult them. Their ideas are commented and can then be put to a vote. Promising ideas are turned into initiatives that are then put forward to the local authorities for consideration. Interested parties can monitor their implementation via the Initiative Channel.

Inquiries: Merja-Maaria Oinas, merja-maaria.oinas@ouka.fi

>> Netherlands

Political/legal background:

The Ministry responsible for youth affairs in the Netherlands required that by the end of 2011, all municipalities had to introduce youth participation structures and provide all young people aged 12 to 25 with an opportunity to influence local youth policy decisions. No fixed rules were imposed, however, leaving it up to each local authority how it wished to implement such structures.

Jong Lokaal Bokaal



<http://www.jonglokaalbokaal.nl/>

Since 2008 the Dutch National Youth Council has organised an annual nationwide youth participation competition that awards prizes for the best participatory initiatives and decisions involving young people at the local level. Young people, child and youth services organisations and local authorities can submit their best practices and projects to the competition. Small groups of specially trained young people visit the short-listed communities, verify the entries' worthiness using a checklist, and prepare a report for the expert jury which then selects the winner. A short film is produced about the three best nominated communities. The Bokaal (cup) is awarded to the winner by the Youth Policy Department of the Dutch ministry responsible for youth affairs. The award ceremony is also an ideal opportunity for people to meet, learn about other best practices and network. Jong Lokaal Bokaal is a major competition that attracts strong media attention and helps to establish, improve and encourage youth participation at the local level.

Inquiries: Ms. Gonnie van Eerden, GonnievanderEerden@njr.nl

Children's Research Group

<http://www.icdi.nl/>

The Children's Research Group was a pilot project initiated by the International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and the Alexander Foundation, a research and advisory group for youth participation (<http://www.st-alexander.nl/>). It was implemented between February and April 2010 in the Dutch city of Leiden. Eight children between 11 and 12

undertook research on children's rights and their effectiveness.

The project began with an introduction to children's rights which were discussed together with the children, who then selected a list of research topics they wanted to focus on. The children researched information, analysed what they had found, and drew conclusions, with supervision from the adults. After the project the results were presented to the public.

The evaluation of the project showed that besides learning more about children's rights, the children also learned about research and presentation methods and trained their ability to think critically and analytically. They engaged in an active, in-depth discussion of children's rights, during which they realised that they actually have rights – including the right to be heard – which they subsequently exercised. The approach taken by the group has emerged as an effective way to allow children to exercise their codecision rights and engage in policy decisions.



UK

Political/legal background:

After the UK government signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 it adopted further legislation that reflected the political intention to strengthen young people's participation in social decision-making at all levels. In 2000 the UK government set up a Children and Young People's Unit (later absorbed into the Department for Education (<http://www.education.gov.uk/>)) which served to encourage and manage children's and young people's participation in areas relevant to them and to review the quality of participation on an ongoing basis. At the regional level, independent units were set up as part of local child and youth services to encourage greater child and youth participation. In its 2003 Green Paper "Every Child Matters" the government pledged to enable children and young people to participate in all areas of child and youth policy. It backed up its commitment by appointing a Children's Commissioner (currently Dr. Maggie Atkinson) under the 2004 Children Act). The task of the Children's Commissioner is to represent the opinions of children and young people in public and towards decision-makers. The Commissioner is also responsible for the annual Takeover Day, when children work together with adults for one day and

are involved in decision-making

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/takeover_day.

In recent years UK child and youth policy has undergone structural change, a process that resulted in the government's publication of the policy document "Positive for Youth: A new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19" on 19 December 2011

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/positive%20for%20youth.pdf>.

The philosophy behind this new approach to UK youth policy involves paying greater attention to the views of young people and to involve them to a greater extent in decisions concerning local services. To encourage more youth participation the government makes particularly strong use of existing youth participation structures, which are detailed in the following.

Hear by Right

<http://hbr.nya.org.uk/files/1-Hear%20By%20Right%202008.pdf>

<http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right>

Hear by Right is a set of mandatory national standards that were developed by the National Youth Agency and the Local Government Association. They are used by organisations and local authorities to review and improve the methods and practices they employ in connection with child and youth participation. Hear by Right expressly calls for allowing as many young people as possible, of all ages and backgrounds, to participate. To meet the quality requirements imposed by Hear By Right on participation, the NYA has developed a self-assessment system and offers training courses, workshops and the Hear by Right Award scheme

<http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right/hear-by-right-award> .

Hear by Right standards are widely known and are applied by organisations, schools, authorities, public institutions, the service sector, and volunteer and municipal organisations. Successful instances of applying Hear by Right are published in a briefing document. Examples:

from a museum:

http://nya.org.uk/dynamic_files/hbr/hbr%20museums.pdf,

from the health sector:

<http://www.participationworks.org.uk/files/webfm/files/resources/k-items/nya/Hear%20by%20Right%20in%20Health%20Services.pdf>

and from the Third Sector:

http://www.participationworks.org.uk/files/webfm/files/event_files/hearbyright/HBR%20Third%20sector%20briefing%20paper%20Dec%202007.pdf.

YouthBank UK



<http://www.youthbank.org.uk/>

YouthBanks awards grants to local youth groups and projects via an elected body composed exclusively of young people. They operate locally and set their own award criteria. They are funded by various sponsors and by the public sector. YouthBank representatives receive assistance from full-time coordinators and are given training. YouthBanks are part of a national network. Regular meetings for representatives are held at the regional and national level. Common to all YouthBanks is that

- they, as well as the projects receiving YouthBank funding, may only be led by young people;
- they are open to all young people;
- the projects they fund and the elected bodies that award the grants should respect the differences and talents of all young people;
- their award decisions have to be accountable and transparent for young people;
- their activities must add to the skills, knowledge and experience of young people.

Inquiries: Norman Leet (Director), norman@youthbank.org.uk

UK Youth Parliament

<http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/>

The UK Youth Parliament was formed in 2000 and has more than 500 elected members. The Youth Parliament's activities take place at the local, regional and national levels and receive support through child and youth services. The Parliament aims to provide young people aged 11 to 18 with an opportunity to voice their opinions and influence decisions. Its statements are made public and considered by the UK government and by all relevant institutions that are interested in what young people have to say. Each year the Parliament creates a Manifesto containing members' statements and policies on all significant social issues such as education and employment, the environment, international policy and so forth. The government department responsible for child and youth policy ensures that the Manifesto is considered at all political levels and that a response is forthcoming from the government.

Young Advisors



<http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk/>

Young Advisors are young people aged 15 to 21 who demonstrate to local authority executives and decision-makers how young people can be allowed to participate in civil society and influence local decision-making.

For examples of their work, click here:

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=25743439>

Inquiries: Gary Buxton (Chief Executive Officer), gary@youngadvisors.org.uk

Young Mayors

<http://ymn.org.uk/>

A Young Mayor is a young person aged between 11 and 18 who is directly elected by other young people to represent them. Young Mayors are authorised to allocate the funding earmarked in the local budget for youth projects and to influence local youth policy decisions.

Inquiries: David Clark, david.clark@byc.org.uk

Youth 4U – The Young Inspectors Programme (2009-2011)

<http://www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/young-inspectors>

<http://www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/young-inspectors/youth4u-young-inspectors-2009-2011>

The Young Inspectors pilot programme ran from 2009 to 2011. It aimed to give disadvantaged and marginalised young people greater influence over child and youth services in their local area. Under the programme, 1,459 young people were trained so they could investigate and assess the effectiveness of local child and youth services and help them improve where necessary. The Young Inspectors evaluated more than 750 services across England. In one quarter of cases follow-up inspections took place that

revealed that, thanks to the Young Inspectors' recommendations, matters had improved. Towards the end of its term a Final Evaluation Report was prepared with the involvement of specially trained Young Evaluators aged between 11 and 17.

<http://www.participationworks.org.uk/files/webfm/files/rooms/young-inspectors/Youth4U%20-%20Young%20Inspectors%20FINAL.pdf>.

A summary of good practices and case studies drawn from the pilot programme was prepared in which youth workers and participating organisations talk about their experiences and learning processes as well as the changes inspired by the Young Inspectors:

<http://www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/young-inspectors/best-practice-examples> .

The insights gained during this two-year programme were used to prepare training courses for 2012 entitled "How to Improve Local Services through Youth Inspection"

<http://www.participationworks.org.uk/events-training/products/how-to-improve-local-services-through-youth-inspection> , and also produced the Young Inspectors Package, a suite of resources, training and advisory services for organisations planning to set up their own Young Inspectors programme.

Inquiries: Francis Mercer, fmercerc@ncb.org.uk

Dialogue Youth (Scotland)



<http://www.dialogueyouth.org/>

Dialogue Youth was created as a partnership by Young Scot (the National Youth Information Agency for Scotland), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), and the Scottish Executive. The initiative was introduced in all 32 Scottish local authorities to support them in sensitising services to the needs of young people, empowering young people to have a voice in the development of local projects, and putting into practice projects that are put forward by young people. Dialogue Youth supports the implementation of various activities and participation formats in the local authorities. Examples include The Big Shout, <http://www.thebigshout.com/>, the organisation of surveys, text messaging and film projects that help young people to propose improvements, online polls and projects such as Inspector8: <http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4107>.

Inquiries: Sarah-Jane Turnbull, sarahjt@youngscot.org



France

French youth parliaments

<http://anacej.asso.fr/lanacej>

A historic milestone in child and youth participation was the child and youth parliament that was established in 1979 in Schiltigheim in Alsace, France. It became a role model for France and indeed for Europe as a whole – today there are child and youth parliaments in Germany, Finland, Austria, Poland, Italy, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Hungary, Denmark, the UK, Switzerland and the Netherlands. In France a large number of child and youth parliaments (conseils d'enfants et de jeunes) were formed from 1984 onwards. They are part of the Association Nationale des Conseils d'Enfants et de Jeunes (ANACEJ), an umbrella organisation formed in 1991. According to ANACEJ there are currently some two thousand child and youth parliaments in France. The establishment and structure of these parliaments are not governed by law, so formal conditions vary. Each town, département and region is free to decide its own terms of reference. While the members are generally all voted into office, the youth parliaments vary in terms of the number and age of their members, thematic focus and budget, and especially in terms of their codetermination rights and decision-making powers.

Editorial team

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Godesberger Allee 142-148

53175 Bonn, Germany

T: +49 (0)228 9506-0

F: +49 (0)228 9506-199

E: info@ijab.de

I: www.ijab.de

Editor-in-chief:

Reinhard Schwalbach, schwalbach@ijab.de

Editorial team:

Katrin Schauer, schauer@ijab.de

Susanne Klinzing, klinzing@ijab.de

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