

Establishment of a Youth Advisory Board at *JUGEND für Europa* – National Agency for the EU Programmes Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport, and European Solidarity Corps

Concept paper

Background and context

Core objective

JUGEND für Europa has been appointed by Germany's Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*BMFSFJ*) and mandated by the EU Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture, to implement the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth (2021-2027)¹ and European Solidarity Corps (2021-2027)² in accordance with the applicable directives in its capacity as Germany's National Agency.

As part of its work to implement the two EU funding programmes in the field of youth, *JUGEND für Europa* has set itself the core objective of expanding and enhancing young people's involvement in the implementation of the programmes and of establishing a Youth Advisory Board to this end.

The board can be considered a model project in two respects. First, it serves as a model for National Agencies' activities to implement the aims set out in the "Engage" section of the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027)³ in the context of the EU programmes. Second, it provides a model for youth participation in activities under the German government's *Jugendstrategie* (Youth Strategy) (2019)⁴, aimed at facilitating consultative participation by young people in policy and administration decision-making at the national level.

¹ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

² https://youth.europa.eu/solidarity_en

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0269&from=en>

⁴ <https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/160416/b2573425304d974ee9903d12d2427217/en-jugendstrategie-federal-government-s-youth-strategy-data.pdf>

Youth policy context

Youth participation has been a priority issue in European cooperation in the youth policy field for decades. Since the adoption of the current EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027), in which one of the three main sections deals with youth engagement, young people's participation in political and societal processes has gained even more significance. Moreover, the European Youth Goals, which were drawn up by young people themselves in a participatory process and incorporated into the EU Youth Strategy, serve to encourage all levels of policymaking and administration to formulate policies in line with young people's interests. During Germany's presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2020, the *BMFSFJ* provided further stimulus for more youth participation at the European level and in the Member States by placing a focus on "fostering democratic awareness and engagement among young people in Europe"⁵.

Enhancing young people's participation and advising activity in policy formulation and implementation is a priority issue at the national level in Germany, too. The goals defined in the government's *Jugendstrategie* (2019) include raising awareness in policymaking and administration of matters of importance to young people and strengthening formats that facilitate youth participation.

What makes the *Jugendstrategie* special is its cross-cutting approach, in which policymaking for, with and by young people is seen as a key task for all federal ministries. 163 measures and projects were initiated to implement the strategy, and they have since been conducted and evolved further by all ministries. In the area of youth participation, they include promoting and increasing youth parliaments, establishing the *jugend.beteiligen.jetzt* platform (aimed at fostering digital youth participation) and continuing the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection youth study on environment and climate issues, which young people helped design. A further key part of measures to implement the *Jugendstrategie* was the *JugendPolitikBeratung* project, which was one of the factors that led to the establishment of the Youth Advisory Board at *JUGEND für Europa*.

Since the adoption of the *Jugendstrategie*, the 16th *Kinder- und Jugendbericht der Bundesregierung* (Federal Government Children and Youth Report)⁶ and several *Bundesjugendkuratorium* (Federal Youth Advisory Board) statements⁷ have called for youth participation to be boosted further. The German government has acted on this call and developed a National Action Plan for Child and Youth Participation with the *BMFSFJ* as the lead ministry. The plan was presented in November 2022 and led to an increase in the significance afforded to youth participation by politics and society.

⁵ <https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/162746/34437cdded247a3354ad799e4a4da63e/20203011-schlussfolgerungen-rat-der-eu-demokratiebewusstsein-data.pdf> (in German)

⁶ Summarised in the following brochure: [BMFSFJ - Promoting democratic education from childhood to early adulthood](#)

⁷ <https://bundesjugendkuratorium.de/presse/> (in German)

Participation of young people in the EU youth programmes

Participation has played a key role in the history of EU youth programmes since the start of the first “Youth for Europe” programme in 1988 and the first European Voluntary Service pilot project in 1996. The various generations of programmes have defined different priorities in terms of funding possibilities and formats and the importance attached to participation.

“Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement” is one of four horizontal funding priorities in the current Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps programmes (2021-2027) and thus a core objective in both programmes. In addition, the European Solidarity Corps “Solidarity Projects” and the Erasmus+ Youth “Youth Participation Projects” funding formats offer young people the opportunity to implement their own project ideas and apply to the funding programmes themselves and to contribute to their local communities and democratic processes through their projects.

In September 2020, the SALTO Participation & Information Resource Centre⁸ published the “Strategy for enhancing youth participation in democratic life through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes”⁹ to provide more specific guidance on how youth participation can be facilitated in the context of EU youth programme implementation. The overall ambition and scope of this informal guide is to develop a joint vision and conduct joint activities concerning opportunities for youth participation in the context of the EU youth programmes. The strategy is primarily aimed at key stakeholders (such as the National Agencies) in the implementation of the EU youth programmes. One of its goals is to involve young people more in the management and implementation of the programmes by means of consultation processes (“Aim 5 – Involvement: Encourage National Agencies and other actors to involve young people when making decisions about the management and implementation of the programmes and to take a quality approach to youth participation when doing so.”).

To implement the strategy within the network of National Agencies, a Strategic National Agency Cooperation (SNAC) project entitled “New Power in Youth” has been initiated, of which *JUGEND für Europa* is part. The series of activities defined for this project also includes consultation of young people on the implementation of the EU youth programmes in the participating National Agencies.

Youth participation at *JUGEND für Europa*

In view of the importance of youth participation in the youth policy context and the EU youth programmes, *JUGEND für Europa* has long been advocating for more participation by young people. It has done this, first, by providing (potential) applicants with specific advice on how to involve young people in the application process and project implementation and on how to incorporate the issue into the content of funded projects. Second, *JUGEND für Europa* has for years organised numerous national and European seminars and courses on youth participation for youth work experts and young people in the network of National Agencies.

⁸ <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/participation/>

⁹ [Youth Participation Strategy - SALTO \(participationpool.eu\)](#)

In 2005, *JUGEND für Europa* joined forces with young people to set up the EuroPeers¹⁰ network. The network brings together alumni from funding formats under the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ Youth programmes with the aim of passing on to their peers what they learned from their experiences.

Furthermore, internal training for staff and analysis of the current participation debate play a major role within *JUGEND für Europa*. There is an internal working group, made up of members from all teams, especially for this topic. At the structural level, representatives from youth organisations and youth associations are members of the National Advisory Council for the EU Programmes Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps at the *BMFSFJ*.

Building on the activities to date and in view of the relevance of the topic in European and German youth policy and in the EU youth programmes, *JUGEND für Europa* is now seeking to take youth participation in programme implementation to a new level. A Youth Advisory Board is to be established, with the purpose of examining the programmes more closely through a youth-specific lens and aligning them more with young people's interests, needs, and concerns.

The aspect that makes the advising process via the Youth Advisory Board so distinct is thus the inclusion of young people's perspective in the following three dimensions:

1. primarily as participants and thus individual end users of the EU youth programmes,
2. equally, as the target group of the applicants and users of various formats under the EU youth programmes,
3. and, finally, as parties with an interest in youth policy or as an (expert) community actively involved in youth policy.

Potential offered by the Youth Advisory Board

The aim of establishing a Youth Advisory Board is to promote the following developments:

1. *JUGEND für Europa* is better informed about the needs, concerns, interests, and ideas of young people regarding the implementation of the EU youth programmes. This knowledge can be harnessed to align *JUGEND für Europa's* information and support services more with the target group's interests as well as informing the National Agencies' network at the European level.
2. The *BMFSFJ* is better informed about young people's attitudes and opinions concerning youth policy issues in the context of the EU youth programmes. This enables it to work towards ensuring European youth policy and the EU youth programmes are designed with young people's interests in mind.
3. Young people's voice on the National Advisory Council is amplified by representatives of the Youth Advisory Board and supplemented by the youth perspective in three

¹⁰ <https://europeers.org/>

dimensions (as participants and applicants in the EU youth programmes and as participants in the political process).

4. By acting on the Youth Advisory Board's recommendations, the EU youth programmes are shaped more for, with and by young people and thus improved.
5. With programmes and services more aligned with young people's interests, *JUGEND für Europa* can reach, inform, advise, and support them better and help them apply for funding for and conduct high-quality youth projects under the EU youth programmes.
6. Through the Youth Advisory Board, *JUGEND für Europa* helps implement European and German youth policy and thus serves as a model for enhancing youth participation in organisations and government authorities in Germany and Europe.
7. Through their work on the Youth Advisory Board, the young people gain deeper insight into how the EU youth programmes and youth policy cooperation in Germany and Europe work, thereby strengthening their democratic skills.

Inclusion and diversity on the Youth Advisory Board

Besides participation by young people, another priority of the EU youth programmes is inclusion and diversity. To ensure the perspectives of the various target groups and users of the programmes are reflected in the Youth Advisory Board, an appropriate framework will have to be put into place and measures taken to actively promote and support participation by young people with fewer opportunities. *JUGEND für Europa* will draw on the "Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy"¹¹ and the "Commission Implementing Decision on the framework of inclusion measures of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps 2021-27"¹² for guidance in this regard.

To be specific, this means that the Youth Advisory Board's membership, range of topics covered, work procedures and the educational support it receives must be based on a diversity-sensitive approach. In addition, obstacles to participation by young people with fewer opportunities must be removed and individual support offered for them.

Opportunities and limitations for youth participation at *JUGEND für Europa*

Opportunities

The purpose of the Youth Advisory Board is to advise *JUGEND für Europa* and the *BMFSFJ* from a youth-specific perspective (see the three dimensions described above) on all questions concerning the implementation of the EU youth programmes. This advice is to cover all current funding formats under the EU youth programmes. The Youth Advisory Board can also provide advice on future versions of the EU youth programmes or revised funding formats. This will be done at the appropriate point in time, e. g. as part of an interim evaluation or the development of new programme generations.

¹¹ [SALTO-YOUTH - Inclusion & Diversity Strategy](#)

¹² [Commission Implementation Decision \(EU\)2021/1877 \(europa.eu\)](#)

Possible areas for which the Youth Advisory Board could issue recommendations are:

- Formulation of programme practice from the perspective of young people as end users, applicants, and parties with an interest/actively involved in youth policy,
- Definition of priority topics and action areas for the EU youth programmes,
- Measures to raise awareness and the appeal of Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps,
- Measures to ensure optimum involvement of all target groups,
- Removal of obstacles/establishment of low-threshold access so that young people can use the programmes,
- Visibility of project results and thus of the impact and effectiveness of the programmes, especially projects implemented by young people,
- Improvement of *JUGEND für Europa* services, e. g. advice, training, and networking for organisations and individuals that wish to use or already use the programmes,
- Allocation of funds from the EU youth programmes. This will require one or more members of the Youth Advisory Board to be appointed to the evaluation committee.

The Youth Advisory Board will also be able to issue recommendations relating to areas for which only the European Commission is responsible, not *JUGEND für Europa* or the *BMFSFJ*. *JUGEND für Europa* and the *BMFSFJ* will be able to forward the board's recommendations to the European Commission through the feedback mechanisms in place.

Possible areas for which the Youth Advisory Board could issue recommendations are:

- The processes involved in using the programme, e. g. application, reporting, and rejection processes as well as the tools supporting them,
- Further development of the funding formats in the programme manuals,
- Basic requirements regarding information, communication, and dissemination of project results,
- Underlying parameters of the training and networking opportunities provided by the National Agencies,
- Design and delivery of seminars for the European Voluntary Service

Limitations

Since the advice provided by the Youth Advisory Board is only to concern the implementation of the EU youth programmes, the following areas are not to be included:

- *JUGEND für Europa's* internal structure
- Other areas of activity at the *BMFSFJ*

Establishment of the Youth Advisory Board – Procedure

The Youth Advisory Board is to be formed and established in accordance with the latest scientifically derived standards pertaining to consultative youth participation in the advising

process for policymakers and organisations. To this end, the *JugendPolitikBeratung* project is advising *JUGEND für Europa* and providing scientific oversight. The scientific part of the *JugendPolitikBeratung* project is based at Leuphana University Lüneburg, with a project team headed by Professor Waldemar Stange¹³. The project is funded by the *BMFSFJ* under the German government's *Jugendstrategie*¹⁴. For the implementation part of the establishment process, *JUGEND für Europa* is working with the *Institut für Jugendhilfe und Kommunalberatung* (institute for youth welfare and consultancy for local government), the practical arm of the *JugendPolitikBeratung* project.

When drafting this concept paper and the Youth Advisory Board's constitution, *JUGEND für Europa* engaged the services of *JugendPolitikBeratung* to provide advice. *JugendPolitikBeratung* also helped *JUGEND für Europa* run two workshops with young people to identify their requirements and expectations concerning the idea of a youth advisory board and its constitution. In addition, the establishment process underwent a scientific evaluation by Youth Policy Labs *gGmbH*.

The *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board as a model project

The *JUGEND für Europa* model in the context of the EU youth programmes

JUGEND für Europa is not the only organisation endeavouring to create more opportunities for young people to be involved in the implementation of the EU youth programmes. The participating National Agencies in SNAC "New Power in Youth" are working to implement Aim 5 of the European Youth Participation Strategy, i. e. "involve young people when making decisions about the management and implementation of the programmes and to take a quality approach to youth participation when doing so"¹⁵ and have chosen a variety of routes to achieve this aim.

Although all National Agencies have the same mandate, there are differences among them in terms of their size, financial resources, organisational form and structure, connections to government ministries, and ultimately organisational culture and other country-specific social factors. It therefore makes absolute sense to identify, test, and apply specific and diverse routes to more youth participation in the European network. The lessons learnt should be shared, discussed, and evaluated both within the European network of National Agencies and with the European Commission as the entity responsible at the EU level and the national authorities as the entities responsible in the Member States so that all sides can learn from one another.

JUGEND für Europa's aim in having the Youth Advisory Board establishment process monitored by a team of scientists and documenting it in detail is to contribute to these deliberations and

¹³ [YouthPoliticsConsultation | Leuphana](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/service/archive/jugendstrategie-1703608>

¹⁵ Aim 5, [Youth Participation Strategy - SALTO \(participationpool.eu\)](#)

discussions. Its model of a Youth Advisory Board as a permanent advisory structure for the National Agency and the *BMFSFJ* (as the ministry responsible for youth matters) is the first of its kind in Europe. Considering the differing situations, it would be neither beneficial nor possible to transfer the *JUGEND für Europa* youth participation model wholesale to other organisations. However, there are aspects of *JUGEND für Europa*'s approach that could inspire, supplement, and enhance developments in other National Agencies. They include:

- Implementing and testing a model specifically designed to promote young people's participation in the design and implementation of the EU youth programmes,
- Developing the Youth Advisory Board in cooperation with young people as part of a participatory process,
- Ensuring the Youth Advisory Board membership is as diverse as possible,
- Codifying rights and obligations, e. g. by drawing up a constitution for the Youth Advisory Board,
- Providing clarity on what a youth advisory board can and cannot do,
- Scientific monitoring, support, and evaluation of the Youth Advisory Board establishment process,
- Embedding the Youth Advisory Board into existing structures and processes in a context-sensitive manner

The *JUGEND für Europa* model in the national context

Germany's national *Jugendstrategie* specifically sets out to promote youth participation and facilitate young people's participation in policymaking and implementation, and these are priority topics in the national youth policy context. Various youth representative bodies, such as the ten-strong youth advisory board at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection for the *Zukunft? Jugend fragen!* youth study (the content of which was partly designed by the board), the youth advisory board at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development or the youth advisory board at Plan International e. V., open opportunities for young people to participate in various ways.

JUGEND für Europa's aim in documenting the Youth Advisory Board establishment process and having it monitored by a team of scientists is to be able to share at the national level as well as the European level the lessons it learns. What makes this board a particularly valid model is the constitution, which was drawn up with the involvement of young people, thus securing the board against any conflict of interest and incorporating it firmly into the organisation's structure. Other factors are the extensive internal and external shareholder consultation and the strong political mandate within *JUGEND für Europa*. Certain aspects of the *JUGEND für Europa* approach could therefore enhance and supplement developments and discussions concerning this topic.

Formal and practical aspects

The Youth Advisory Board's legal basis: the constitution

A formal framework, in the shape of a constitution¹⁶, is to be provided for the Youth Advisory Board, setting out its role and how it is to perform that role. The constitution was developed and negotiated with young people in 2022 in a process lasting several months. It sets out the selection process for the board, how it is to be composed and what its tasks and powers are. It provides a binding framework for how the Youth Advisory Board members, *JUGEND für Europa*, and the *BMFSFJ* work together, thus ensuring the board's long-term viability, efficiency, and compliance with the limitations defined for it.

Formal integration of the Youth Advisory Board within *JUGEND für Europa*

The Youth Advisory Board will be integrated within *JUGEND für Europa*, which is therefore responsible for appointing, selecting members for, financing, and supporting the board. As such, *JUGEND für Europa* is the main point of contact both for board members' and for external queries.

A member of the *JUGEND für Europa* management team may attend the Youth Advisory Board's ordinary meetings. This will ensure that the board members have a direct contact person from the management level and that meeting outcomes feed back directly to the management team.

Interaction between the Youth Advisory Board and the *BMFSFJ*

Political responsibility for implementing and evolving the EU youth programmes in Germany lies with the *BMFSFJ* in its capacity as the national authority. In particular, this applies to the implementation of the current and the shaping of future EU youth programmes. In addition, the *BMFSFJ*, working with the ministries responsible in other EU states, draws up the guidelines for European youth policy cooperation. The EU youth programmes serve as instruments with which to implement the resulting European youth policy.

To be able to influence the development and modification of the EU youth programmes, it is therefore crucial that advice provided by young people includes the political level in Germany and that the latter feeds young people's recommendations into the European political discourse. This enables the EU youth programmes to be aligned more with young people's interests, needs and concerns.

Consequently, the Youth Advisory Board will advise not only *JUGEND für Europa* but also the *BMFSFJ*, with advice for the latter primary being related to the points mentioned above. The *BMFSFJ* will be invited to and receive the minutes of the board meetings. The *BMFSFJ* will also

¹⁶ See Youth Advisory Board constitution: http://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/downloads/4-20-4491/20240116_Youth-Advisory-Board_Constitution.pdf

appoint a direct contact for the Youth Advisory Board's spokespeople. Further details of this cooperation are set out in Section 9 of the Youth Advisory Board's constitution.

Interaction between the Youth Advisory Board and the National Advisory Council

The Youth Advisory Board is a body in its own right. It is neither subordinate to the National Advisory Council, nor must its positions or recommendations be authorised by the National Advisory Council. Two Youth Advisory Board members will be appointed to the National Advisory Council with the aim of ensuring that the board's perspectives are included in the council's discussions, positions, and recommendations. The Youth Advisory Board will be able to address the National Advisory Council's executive committee directly to discuss any issues it wishes to raise.

The National Advisory Council is also responsible for nominating members to the evaluation committee. This allows the council to strengthen young people's power over how funding is allocated in another step towards ensuring that the EU youth programmes are implemented by, with, and for young people.

Coordination team at JUGEND für Europa

The Youth Advisory Board will have a coordination team, based at *JUGEND für Europa*. In accordance with Section 10 of the board's constitution, the coordination team will provide support to the board and its working groups in terms of organisation, specialist knowledge, educational input, and methodology. To perform its tasks, the coordination team must work closely with Department 504 of the *BMFSFJ* and *JUGEND für Europa*'s various departments, particularly the programme teams for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps, *Fachthemen* (now *Europäische Jugendarbeit und Jugendpolitik* (European Youth Work and Youth Policies)), Communications, Education Management, and the directors.

The coordination team's tasks include the following:

- Coordination of the processes involved in issuing a call for members, applications, and selecting members for the Youth Advisory board,
- Content and practicalities management before and after meetings, including production of the minutes,
- Communication with the board members, e. g. issuing invitations to meetings,
- Educational support for the board,
- Paying particular attention to ensuring a diversity-sensitive approach and to the needs of young people with fewer opportunities,
- Compliance with the board members' rights as per the constitution, e. g. ensuring provision of the necessary (technical) equipment and rooms and insurance for the board members,
- Securing sufficient funds for the board,

- Provision of digital equipment, e. g. a virtual cloud for file storage and collaborative work, plus a virtual communication platform,
- Where necessary, communication and facilitation of collaboration between the board and relevant departments and people at *JUGEND für Europa* and the *BMFSFJ*; this includes, for example, the Programme Officers and the Communications team at *JUGEND für Europa*,
- If necessary, communication and facilitation of collaboration with external actors and individuals, e. g. when seeking external expertise.

Funding

The Youth Advisory Board will be financed through *JUGEND für Europa* funds. Its budget will be drawn up as part of the annual work planning activities.

Meetings

As far as possible, the Youth Advisory Board meetings shall be held shortly before the National Advisory Council meetings so that matters raised by the board members can be discussed at the board meetings before being forwarded to the council for discussion.

PR

JUGEND für Europa's Communications team is responsible for public relations for the Youth Advisory Board. This will primarily be done through the www.jugendfuereuropa.de website, where profiles of the board members will be presented and the meeting minutes published. The board and its work will also be promoted on *JUGEND für Europa's* social media channels. Where necessary, the board can support these PR activities by contributing its own material, e. g. member profiles. It will also have its own e-mail address for contact purposes.

Quality assurance

The Youth Advisory Board establishment process is being monitored and evaluated by a team of scientists. Their first report will be presented by the end of 2022. Scientific monitoring and evaluation will also be conducted for the board's first period of office at least. *JUGEND für Europa* will use the findings of these evaluation processes mainly to optimise the management of the board and, if required, to modify structural aspects. The key findings of the scientists' research are also presented to the members of the National Advisory Council, discussed in the National Agencies' network, communicated to relevant stakeholders at the German and European level, and used for broader research projects in the EU youth programme context.