

# Establishment of a Youth Advisory Board

at *JUGEND für Europa* – National Agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+  
Youth, European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ Sport

**Professor Waldemar Stange**

**Contextualisation and scientific approach**

## 1. Background

The Youth Advisory Board at *JUGEND für Europa* is an attempt to establish *national-level involvement of young people in the policy advice process* in Germany in the form of *consultative youth participation*. It was therefore necessary to begin by defining the constructs of “involvement of young people in the policy advice process” and “consultative youth participation”, both being special applications of the *general form of youth participation*.

The definitions were partly drawn up with the help of the *JugendPolitikBeratung* (literally “youth policy advising”) project, which was funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). Professor Waldemar Stange’s team at Leuphana University Lüneburg has been advising the federal ministries on the development of consultative participation formats for youth-related activities and projects since July 2020. The project investigates the underlying factors required for *participation by young people in the policy advice process*. In other words, it explores how young people can be included in the preparation of policy-making processes and how the matters they raise can be considered for policy in the best way possible.

The aim is to plan and implement innovative youth participation processes in the ministries’ projects and activities. To this end, the *JugendPolitikBeratung* team is developing tailor-made strategies and new methods which young people can use to advise and assist the federal ministries in their opinion-forming and policymaking. The *JugendPolitikBeratung* project implements and evaluates these methods.

By developing and implementing this aim, the *JugendPolitikBeratung* project is contributing to participatory communication by the federal ministries with young people. The reason this is so important is that the decisions made by the ministries have very real repercussions for young people’s day-to-day lives and life situations.

The creation of this project was a key measure in the implementation of the *German government’s Jugendstrategie* (Youth Strategy) as outlined in the 2018 Coalition Agreement: “Development of the joint strategy of the Federal Government and the principles of independent youth policy”, “cross-sectional policy” and “far-reaching and joint strategy of the relevant policy fields”. Additional detail was added by a crucial *Cabinet decision on the implementation of the Jugendstrategie* in November 2019 (see the BMFSFJ brochure: “Shared responsibility: a policy for, with and by young people. The Federal Government’s Youth Strategy. Berlin 2019”).



The subject matter of the project, *involvement of young people in the policy advice process* (in the form of consultative youth participation in the policy advice process), is a very undeveloped field and first came to the broader public's attention in November 2019 when the *Bundesjugendkuratorium* (Federal Youth Advisory Board) issued a statement entitled "*Junge Menschen in der Politikberatung – Empfehlungen für mehr Beteiligung der jungen Generation auf Bundesebene*" (Young People in the Policy Advice Process – Recommendations for Ensuring Greater Participation by the Younger Generation at the Federal Level in Germany).

The *JugendPolitikBeratung* project was thus created to develop the field further. It is special in that, rather than concentrating on the *local government level* (or *Land* level), which is the usual focus of the participation debate, it concentrates on young people's voice at the far more difficult and complicated *national level*. This sometimes prompts the suspicion that young people do not actually have any real opportunities to exert an influence and even that such participation could be claimed to be more of a token gesture.

In the *JugendPolitikBeratung* project, the team from Leuphana University embarked upon a study of what was in effect a little developed area of political activity. On the other hand, a basis for the theoretical and practical aspects was available in the form of past projects that at least took a similar approach regarding child and youth participation and clearly specified advisory components at the municipal and district level.

One such project was the *Jugend-Demografie-Dialog* (literally "youth demography dialogue") conducted as part of the German government's demographic strategy during the 18th legislative term (by a working group entitled *Jugend gestaltet Zukunft* – literally "young people shaping the future"). Adolescents and young adults contributed significantly to all the dialogue's processes for shaping regional development in pilot districts (brainstorming, problem-solving, concept development, realisation, presentation, evaluation, and sustainability strategies).

Another source of inspiration was the *Starke Kinder- und Jugendparlamente* ("Strong children's and youth parliaments") project, which examines the concept of representative bodies in youth participation. Launched in 2018 and still ongoing, the project uses quantitative empirical research for the German government's report to the UN under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as qualitative interviews, group discussions, local-government case studies and advisory projects that are still underway.

Building on this, the team conducted systematic development work to create innovative formats for consultative youth participation – tested on real advisory projects in the ministries. This was combined with scientific oversight for the entire process, based on the *action research paradigm*. Integrated in this action research were systematic *case studies and case comparisons* on newly conceived participation formats and on quantitative and qualitative *evaluation* methods. This included gradually developing an understanding of the field-specific and scientific principles underlying the *involvement of young people in the policy advice process* as an area of activity (research, document analysis, structuring, establishing a connection to related disciplines).

In terms of subject matter classification, this is a project in the field of social education and youth welfare (as defined in Sections 11 and 12 of Volume VIII of Germany's Social Code) and youth policy, with



links to educational sciences (by virtue of the educational processes) and political science (involvement of young people in the policy advice process as a sub-segment of policy advice and the area of national youth policy).

## 2. Involvement of young people in the policy advice process in the form of consultative youth participation – Definition

### Definition

Youth policy advice is about the participation of youth people in the field of policy advice! The character of “*Consultative youth participation*” means that young people engage in the preparation of decision-making processes, that they are taken seriously, that they are listened to, and their suggestions are taken on board!

*Involvement of young people in the policy advice process* is one of the most important forms of participation at the national level in Germany. In policy-advising activity, participation offers particular opportunities but also comes with limitations. Different principles apply at the national level than at the local level. And *JUGEND für Europa* operates at the national – and even the EU – level, not the local or *Land* level.

The *JugendPolitikBeratung* project has its own, advanced portfolio of methods to add to the familiar range of general participation methods. There are now impressive examples of good practice that prove that involving young people in the policy advice process works and is effective.

Policy advice from members of civil society (in their capacity as the persons affected and experts in matters concerning themselves) differs from that from adult experts in specific fields – but not necessarily in terms of substance or quality. The point is not that one is more important/better or worse than the other, only that they are different and offer different, specific potential. The two should not be pitted against each other. We need both!

### Why is it important to involve young people in the policy advice process?

Young people want to have a voice in decisions and developments as experts in matters that concern them. They want to contribute their perspectives and experience to political processes. They want to be able to influence political negotiation processes, be taken seriously and be involved in the consultative preparation of policymaking processes. They are extremely keen to have the issues that concern them mainstreamed into policymaking processes.

Consequently, they seek political influence and improved access to policymakers. But they also have something to offer. They provide information that can help identify and act on latest trends. They provide feedback, opinions, and assessments on planned and conducted measures (acting as a youth version of policy impact measurement). They help ensure decisions are considered in a manner that reflects the interests of young people and all generations and they help improve the measures taken.

### 3. Summary of scientific models and levels of youth participation: the three participation dimensions and the “participation cube”

#### 3.1 The “participation cube” – an overview

At both the local level and the national government level, the Leuphana University Lüneburg

*JugendPolitikBeratung* project team follow a strict logical system and structure, as consolidated in the scientifically derived **“participation cube”** model (Stange 2022)<sup>1</sup>, in their development of participation models and youth participation projects (including the special case of the design of youth representation bodies).

In accordance with the model, each specific application situation and each context for a participation model require assertions to be made in the following **three dimensions**:

1. Classification, delimitation, and determination in the **range dimension**
2. Determination of the **level of autonomy** and the desired degree of influence (“participation ladder”)
3. Determination of the degree of **structural embeddedness and bindingness** (particularly by virtue of the law but also of guaranteed resources or expansion of networks), political/social/cultural embeddedness (in a mission statement, for instance) and psychological/individual embeddedness (e. g. by means of promotion of motivation processes and development of attitudes etc.).

These three dimensions form the three sides of the participation cube described below.

In their initial stages, the three participation dimensions presented in the following were inspired and informed by the ever-broadening basis of reflexive practical experience in youth participation. In their more developed form, however, they stem more from scientific strategies such as systematic, integrated, qualitative **local case studies** and, in particular, the evaluation of the now extensive **representative empirical research** on child and youth participation, which endeavour to determine the factors that actually play a role in participation processes and ultimately result in successful child and youth participation.

There is now sufficient empirical knowledge on this point (cf. e. g. Fatke/Schneider 2007, Bertelsmann Stiftung 2008, Schneider/Stange/Roth 2009, Groß/Schilling/Badeda 2017, LBS/PROKIDS 2016 and 2018, Roth/Stange 2020, Weigel 2020).

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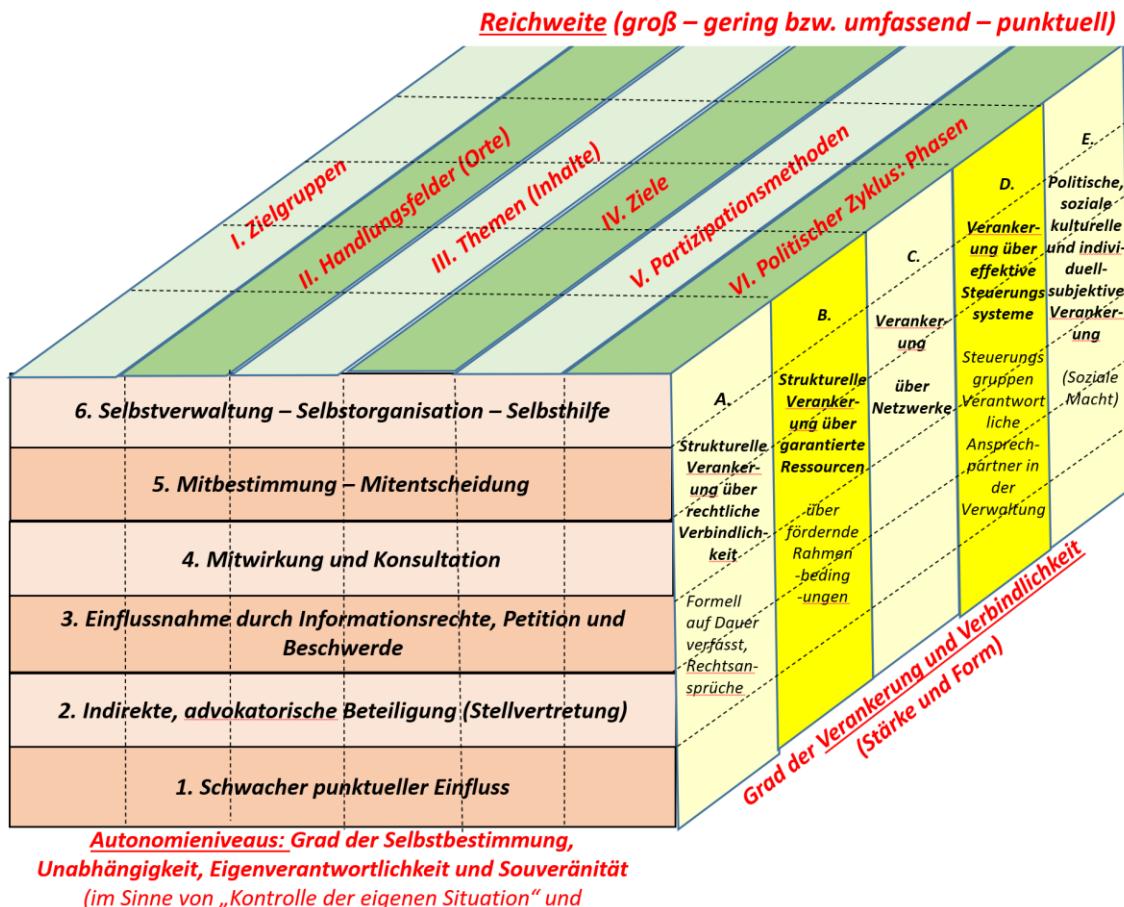
<sup>1</sup> See for the original documents on the „participation cube“:

Kommission für den 4. Kinder- und Jugendbericht Rheinland-Pfalz (2023): (Re-)Konzeptualisierung von Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung im Rahmen der Kinder- und Jugendberichtserstattung. Mainz. S. 48-55. Available for download at: [https://jugendberichtrp.de/media/pages/home/4976d035f9-1699272095/reihe\\_kommission\\_nr1\\_07\\_2023neu.pdf](https://jugendberichtrp.de/media/pages/home/4976d035f9-1699272095/reihe_kommission_nr1_07_2023neu.pdf)

And:

[https://jugendpolitikberatung.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/1.-Wuerfel\\_Niveaustuf-u-Typen-Strkt-Verank-kurz-3-2023.pdf](https://jugendpolitikberatung.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/1.-Wuerfel_Niveaustuf-u-Typen-Strkt-Verank-kurz-3-2023.pdf)

Illustration: The participation cube – an instrument for analysis and dialogue



## 2. Indirect, advocacy participation (representation)

### 1. Weak, limited influence

**Level of autonomy:** Degree of self-determination, independence, self-responsibility, and control (in the sense of “control of one’s own situation” and “degree of influence on one’s own situation”)

#### Degree of embeddedness and bindingness

(extent and form)

- A. **Structural embeddedness by virtue of legal bindingness**  
Formally documented in permanent form, legal entitlements
- B. **Structural embeddedness by virtue of guaranteed resources**  
By means of supporting factors
- C. **Embeddedness by virtue of networks**
- D. **Embeddedness by virtue of effective steering systems**  
Steering groups  
Responsible contacts at management level
- E. **Political, social, cultural, and individually subjective embeddedness**  
(Social power)

#### What is the participation cube?

The participation cube is a structuring model with which to arrange and systematise participation activities and opportunities. The advantage of the cube model is that the three dimensions and their sub-dimensions (the “layers”) can be related to one another and combined with one another.

The participation cube is, therefore, an **analysis and planning instrument** that attempts to correlate the three central dimensions of participation models in such a way that hasty judgements are avoided, and the **complexity** and varied nature of participation are represented in a clearer manner.

The participation cube endeavours to *avoid curtailed analyses and to prevent participation activities being labelled too hastily and superficially*. The intention is to avoid *premature assessment and classification* in a “better”, “more important” or “higher” level in one of the three dimensions (the cube’s sides). This happens if the analysis is restricted to one dimension of participation, e. g. if it only considers the “participation ladder” to derive the quality and extent of influence of a participation model.

The level in this second dimension, the autonomy dimension (represented in the revised “ladder”), does not automatically signal higher quality. For instance, in combination with specific aspects in the range dimension (e. g. particularly challenging or controversial topics/content combined with ambitious goals) and a clear structural embeddedness (by virtue of legal entitlements or a particularly well-developed network and strong political and cultural embeddedness (“social power”) etc.), an initial low or average value on the “autonomy ladder” (e. g. a simple information right) *can* develop a high degree of significance, which would not be visible in a merely one-dimensional assessment.



Having said that, the participation cube is not a precise gauge. It is an analysis and dialogue instrument, a tool for interpretation and assessment. Ultimately and overall, it is a **heuristic** instrument...

- ...for evaluating the **social significance** and determining the weight and **importance** of a participation activity and the significance of the participation model in question (e. g. via the range) in a social sub-system (local government, nursery, school, club, youth association, etc.)
- ...for estimating the **potential extent of influence, chances of effectiveness** and **intensity** of a participation model's processes for the social sub-system in question (e. g. via the levels and type of embeddedness).

Together, the three dimensions of the cube show the participation potential: ultimately, the **degree of influence and the “proportional power”** in the respective sub-system (although additional factors usually play a role regarding “power”).

In principle, the cube can be used both **for individual projects** and for local governments' or organisations' **strategies** (for **retrospective analysis** as well as for **planning**).

It is important to note that the individual sub-dimensions and levels must not, under any circumstances, be interpreted as indicating “better” or “worse”! Often, high values in one dimension coincide with lower ones in the second or third dimension (and vice versa). This then leads to completely different assessments in many cases. The context and objective must always be considered. It is important to be aware that any assessment is always only for one specific situation and objective.

### 3.2 Scientific background

The categories in the three dimensions have not been defined randomly: they are empirically well-founded. Where did they come from?

- The **range categories** (e. g. concerning children's and young people's participation in the phases of the political cycle) have been the subject of considerable empirical research in recent years and are well-grounded in theory (Fatke/Schneider 2007, Bertelsmann Stiftung 2008, Schneider/Stange/Roth 2009, Groß/Schilling/Badeda 2017, Sturzenhecker 2016, Kersting 2008 and 2016, Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg 2018, LBS/PROKIDS 2016 and 2018, Roth/Stange 2020, Weigel 2020).
- The **new participation ladder** was originally based on the frequently cited ladder models, the original model by Roger Hart (Florence 1992) and the adapted models by Wolfgang Gernert 1993, Richard Schröder 1995 or Goźdik-Ormel 2015 and Lardener 2012, but the revised version mainly stems from research on local constitutions conducted in the area of law and from case studies.
- The dimension of **structural embeddedness and bindingness** has been well described by empirical research (e. g. Roth/Stange 2020, Weigel 2020) and local-government case studies.

## 4. Classification of the consultative format of the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board in the three participation dimensions

### 4.1 The first dimension: example classification, delimitation, and determination in the range dimensions

A systematic approach, moving along the participation cube, would entail beginning with the *range dimension* as follows:

#### I. Target groups

Which target groups are included in the scope? All groups, a selection (number), only one specific one? What are the unique features of the target groups? Type of target group, specific requirements, etc.

Implementation for the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board:

The target group is limited to participants in and applicants for the *JUGEND für Europa* programmes (not exclusively). One unique feature is the requirement that the membership be adequately diverse and that, as a key requirement set out in the concept of *JUGEND für Europa*, explicit measures are to be taken to remove obstacles to access and to promote diversity.

#### II. Fields of action (places)

Which fields of action are included in the scope? All of them? A selection or just one specific one? Type of field of action (unique features), requirements and degree of adoption

Implementation for the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board:

The range of fields of action is certainly very broad. They include not only the Youth Advisory Board but also all specific fields of action covered by the funding from the EU youth programmes or where *JUGEND für Europa* provides project funding, or the fields from which the young people themselves come. Because any suggestions, feedback, criticism, etc. is generated from within these fields of action (and forwarded to the Youth Advisory Board).

#### III. Range of topics

Which topics are included in the scope? All of them? Are there any limitations? Which topics specifically? Unique features: type of topics, complexity, degree of difficulty (adoption)

Implementation for the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board:

The range of topics to be dealt with by the Youth Advisory Board is very large and demanding.

The intention is that the Youth Advisory Board will advise *JUGEND für Europa* and the BMFSFJ from a youth-specific perspective on all issues concerning the implementation of the EU youth programmes. This advisory activity is to include all current funding formats for the EU youth programmes as well as any future iterations of the programmes or revised funding formats. The following areas are examples of areas for which the Youth Advisory Board could issue recommendations: priority topics and priority action areas in the EU youth programmes; promotion of awareness and the appeal of Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps; ensuring the best possible involvement of all target groups; dismantling of

barriers/creation of low-threshold access to use of the programmes by young people; visibility of project results and thus of the impact and effectiveness of the programmes; particularly of projects that are implemented by young people; improvement of *JUGEND für Europa*'s services, such as advice, training and networking for organisations and individuals that wish to use or already use the programmes.

#### IV. Goals

Which goals are included in the scope?

Are there any limitations? Are all of them included? Which goals specifically?

What are the unique features of the goals?

E. g. degree of difficulty and achievability (requirements and degree of adoption)

Implementation for the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board:

Although the range of methods has a certain focus and limitation (to the “consultative bodies” approach), the goals to be achieved are certainly very ambitious, e. g.

“Enhance youth participation in democratic life through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes”

“Expand and enhance young people’s involvement in the implementation of the programmes and establish a Youth Advisory Board to this end”

“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 in the programmes, and to take a quality approach to youth participation when doing so.)”

“Raise awareness in policymaking and administration of matters of importance to young people and strengthen formats that facilitate youth participation”

“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”

(Cf. Concept paper, Establishment of a Youth Advisory Board at *JUGEND für Europa*, p. 1 f.)

## V. Participation methods<sup>2</sup>

Which methods are included in the scope? Are there numerous methods (participation mix)? Are there any limitations? Which methods are they specifically? What are their unique features? (E. g. degree of difficulty/adoption, motivation potential, accessibility/low threshold)

The twelve basic method forms:

1. Forms of interest representation by proxy
2. Participation through surveys and feedback systems
3. Co-production (3.1 Participation in adult's representative bodies: proportional or equal, 3.2. Structured negotiation, 3.3 Assumption of responsibility in cooperative settings, 3.4 Formats for consultative involvement of young people in the policy advice process)
4. Representative bodies: Autonomous child and youth representative bodies (e. g. youth parliaments)
5. Youth budget – Youth fund
6. Direct democracy
7. Self-organisation and self-administration of young people in their own organisations
8. Self-organised movements and initiatives
9. Ad hoc actions and protest forms
10. Collaborative work
11. Project-based approach
12. Informal participation in day-to-day life and lifeworlds

<sup>2</sup> Given the wide range of methods, the methods should be categorised in "basic forms". In practice and in a number of publications, the three basic forms usually cited are "*representative formats*", "*direct democracy in open forms of assembly*" and the "*project method*". It should be borne in mind that these categories were primarily defined based on experience in child and youth participation practice.

If the perspective is expanded to take in the scientific level – both empirical research with its numerous statistical surveys and case studies (Groß/Schilling/Badeda 2017: 16 ff.; Roth & Stange 2020, p. 16) and theory (cf. e. g. Kersting 2008, p. 23 ff.; Decker/Lewandowsky/Solar 2013: 36 ff.; Kersting 2016: 255 ff.) – the picture becomes much more varied than in the conventional classification.

Empirically, these considerations also confirm the three conventional methods mentioned above, but do not result in a limitation to them. Empirical data and theory show that there are many more methods of child and youth participation, which has consequences for the development of participation approaches, especially systems of child and youth participation at the local or organisation level. For instance, a democratic overall system always requires special precautions to protect minorities. This can be done particularly well via "advocatory participation" formats, which do not occur at all in the standard trio of methods. It is therefore worthwhile looking at the research findings on what is now a much wider range of methods.

Based on the empirical studies – supplemented by real-world case studies – the resulting system is more sophisticated, with well-structured categories, and consists of twelve basic forms (cf. re. the following Groß/Schilling/Badeda 2017: 16; Roth & Stange 2020: 20; Bertelsmann Stiftung 2005; 17 f.).

Implementation for the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board:

This sub-dimension is of particular analytical interest as this is where the strength of the participation cube becomes apparent. At first glance, it seems as if a participation mix has been eschewed, i. e. only one of the possible twelve basic method forms (involvement of young people in the policy advice process by means of a representative body with a purely consultative character and no decision-making power within the organisation) is applied. And that could lead to the hasty assumption that not all opportunities for participation have been embraced here.

However, if the second dimension (fourth level of autonomy: involvement and consultation) and the third dimension (structural legal embeddedness and bindingness by virtue of a constitution and use of extremely well-developed network structures – see 4.3) are taken into consideration as well, it actually becomes clear that young people's chances to exert influence increase significantly. A hasty categorisation would have resulted in a huge misjudgement. This example analysis based on the structuring of the Youth Advisory Board thus illustrates the erroneousness of the frequent impression that a consultative representative body approach – as with *JUGEND für Europa* – would offer little participation potential.

**VI. Political cycle: phase range**

In which phases of the classical political cycle is participation to be made possible? – In all phases (definition of problem and aim, brainstorming, planning, decision-making, implementation, evaluation) or just in one specific main phase?

Unique features: degree of difficulty (adoption) and political importance attached to the phases

Implementation for the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board:

It becomes particularly apparent here – despite the methods being limited to the consultative representative body approach – that *JUGEND für Europa* actually requires young people's input in all phases of the political cycle: ideas and suggestions, information about planning, comments and advice on decisions, permanent monitoring of the implementation of plans through to information on the evaluation of individual programmes.

In practice, all *representative body formats* of youth participation (participation in the adult representative bodies, advisory councils in consultative inclusion in the policy advice process, children and youth parliaments, etc.) play a key role in the portfolio of the twelve basic forms. A considerable amount of research has been done on the empirical proliferation of representative body forms at the local level. On average, the rate for youth advisory boards is between around 17 % (Groß/Schilling/Badeda 2017: 15) and 28 % (Roth & Stange 2020: 22). Stange and Roth (2020: 22) determined a rate of 21 % for participation in district conferences (*Stadtteilkonferenzen*) and 17 % for involvement in local advisory councils (*Ortsbeiräte*). Although these figures are lower than for the project method, they are still incredibly high, leading to the conclusion that this participation format certainly has proven its worth over the course of time.

It should be borne in mind, however, that a representative body format entails completely different powers on the autonomy ladder (in the second dimension). Regarding participation in adult



representative bodies, for example, young people either only have reduced decision-making rights or fully equal rights (as with the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth or some of Germany's children's commissions). The "youth parliament" form of representative body often has sole decision-making power on matters within the areas for which it is responsible but only consultative power in matters for which it shares responsibility with the adult parliament. Representative bodies such as the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board essentially have a consultative function and are thus in the middle of the autonomy ladder (second dimension) at level 4, "Autonomy and consultation"). This classification is not automatically linked to a particularly large or small amount of power or influence. This aspect can only be assessed in conjunction with the second dimension, "Range", (e. g. in combination with the range of the goals, content, target groups, etc.) and the third dimension (structural embeddedness). When these perspectives are considered together, the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board certainly can be said to have a high degree of significance.

#### **4.2 The second dimension: classification of the level of autonomy and the desired degree of influence ("participation ladder")**

Regarding the second main dimension of the participation cube, the desired level of autonomy and the degree of influence to be granted to the young people must be stated openly and honestly. This can entail a blanket decision to establish a certain level or a decision to assign various levels of autonomy for different areas:

The level classification for a specific participation activity must not be interpreted as "higher = better". The level can only be meaningfully interpreted in conjunction with the two other dimensions and the specific context of the activity.

##### **Levels of autonomy and degrees of influence**

6. *Self-administration – Self-organisation – Self-help*
5. *Co-determination – Co-decision-making*
4. *Involvement and consultation*
3. *Exertion of influence by means of information rights, petitions, and complaints*
2. *Indirect, advocacy participation (representation)*
1. *Weak, limited influence*

It can be clearly stated then that the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board can essentially be classified as being at the middle level of autonomy, 4, "Consultation and involvement". It is not at all the case that the young people will make *real* decisions on behalf of *JUGEND für Europa* or the ministry in the core areas of the organisation's management and implementation of EU youth programmes. This is by no means a case of decisions to be taken by bodies with responsibility for these issues being replaced by decisions taken by a new representative body.

The Youth Advisory Board will work in a purely *consultative* capacity, but it will have considerable *influence* and be effective in its own right. This aspect therefore requires the "*decision*" and "*influence*" categories to be seen as distinctly separate. Consultation can result in influence irrespective of decision-making rights. This is even more true since, as has been stated, the de facto link between this level of



autonomy and the challenging *goals* and *content* in the range dimension must be considered. This is even more the case in view of the Youth Advisory Board's strong position in terms of the degree of *bindingness* and *embeddedness* in the third dimension of the cube.

#### 4.3 The third dimension: determination of the degree of bindingness and embeddedness

The strong structural embeddedness of the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board opens further possibilities for exerting influence with the chosen approach and underlines the fact that the participation rights are genuine and display none of the tokenism evident in many other participation bodies.

The most essential element of the *structural embeddedness* is definitely the granting of *codified rights* by means of an officially adopted constitution. But the codified granting of a *supporting framework* (by means of provision of human resources and reliable *support* from *JUGEND für Europa*, the provision of *financial resources*, inclusion in information and communication flows, support from relevant stakeholders, etc.) also results in stronger structural embeddedness.

The fact that the Youth Advisory Board is to be incorporated into *JUGEND für Europa*'s very well-developed network structures is likely to be of particular value, especially in terms of enhancing the degree of embeddedness. The additional strong *political, social, and cultural embeddedness* of the Youth Advisory Board within the organisation and the ministry (very strong mandate) lends it even more significance.

The possibility of continuing professional development through the board's own workshops and courses and of empowerment (development of self-efficacy and self-awareness) through positive self-experiences in the representative bodies due to systematic support from and the proven strong participatory stance of *JUGEND für Europa* points to an additional aspect of a *strong psychological/individual embeddedness* of the board on the part of the young people.

### 5. Limitations to involvement of young people in the policy advice process in general and in the context of the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board

The area of involvement of young people in the policy advice process is entitled to leverage its potential. But it must also make its limitations transparent and be genuine. It must not raise any false hopes. In other words, it must ensure the young people's real chances of exerting influence and the limitations of their effectiveness and self-efficacy are transparent. This is also true of the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board.

The area of involvement of young people in the policy advice process must not give the impression that the young people play a part in the actual decision-making. Rather, it should make clear that their role is to *prepare* and *influence* decision-making processes. The focus is therefore on the *consultative* character, which does, however, still make a very significant contribution to democratic planning and



policy-shaping. This is why young people must be empowered to make active use of the influencing possibilities that they do indeed have.

As already mentioned, the Youth Advisory Board is by no means a case of decisions to be taken by bodies with responsibility for these issues being replaced by decisions taken by a new representative body. Though the Youth Advisory Board works in a purely *consultative* capacity, it does have considerable influence, and its actions have an *impact*.

## 6. Conclusion: How does the *JUGEND für Europa* participation model fit into the national context – Constitution and terms of reference

Overall, the multi-perspective nature of an examination based on the three participation dimensions (which has only been rudimentarily demonstrated here) shows very clearly that the concentration on the *consultative model of a Youth Advisory Board* certainly does result in a participation strategy that, when all three dimensions are considered in combination, indicates demonstrably *high participation potential* and a considerable *extent of influence (intensity)*.

The significance of this participation model in the overall *JUGEND für Europa* system, the opportunities this participation activity offers in terms of effectiveness and the degree of influence – in other words, the *degree of “proportional power”* the young people have – should not be underestimated even though there are *limitations* that need to be taken into account realistically. Overall, the scientific “dimension check” detailed above points to a high degree of justification for this participation model.

The main element that distinguishes the *JUGEND für Europa* model from other youth representation bodies at the national level is that it has a binding constitution. Other bodies of a similar nature (such as the ten-member *youth advisory board at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV)* 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 (BMZ)* or the *youth advisory board at Plan International e. V.*) do not have such a constitution as their basis.

This means that the members of these three bodies are not really able to assert their rights vis-à-vis the institutions to which they report. If the two sides have a good working relationship, it may not seem necessary to have this ability (limitation to sociocultural and psychological/individual mobilisation). However, in the event of a conflict or differing interests, a constitution provides a safeguard for the young people by codifying their rights and duties.

Plan International e. V.’s constitution at least specifies that the members must include at least two youth representatives, thus ensuring their right to attend the members’ meeting. In addition, both the BMZ and the Plan International youth advisory boards have a volunteer agreement or internal terms of reference, describing the aims and tasks of the board, its composition and working methods/organisation, how it works with the institution to which it reports and the member recruitment process (focus on the sociocultural and psychological/individual embeddedness).



These documents can certainly help create a shared understanding of the boards' structure, rights, and powers. However, unlike a constitution, they are not really a binding set of rules. Furthermore, the BMUV youth advisory board differs from the others – including *JUGEND für Europa*'s – in that the subject matter is considerably more restricted (as the board was only responsible for the youth study).

One unique aspect of the *JUGEND für Europa* Youth Advisory Board is the fact that young people from *JUGEND für Europa* contexts engaged in the design and development of the format from the very beginning. The fact that, rather than simply being imposed on the young people, this format was developed and planned in detail *by them*, is remarkable.

It is truly extraordinary that *JUGEND für Europa* provided not only the funding for this development process but also sufficient time and methodical expertise – including scientific monitoring. The development of a constitution and a paper with terms of reference by the young people themselves in two extensive workshops is unprecedented. The strong political mandate within the organisation for this approach is also remarkable, as is the extensive stakeholder consultation that *JUGEND für Europa* conducted both internally and externally. All these points together show that this Youth Advisory Board truly can serve as a model for others.

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