

POSITION PAPER

May 2018

YOUTH-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES IN BAVARIA

Successful Municipal Youth Policy for attractive and viable communities

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Bavarian Youth Council Position Paper

on creating effective youth policy at the municipal level

Youth is a decisive phase in life. Just how successful young people are at mastering the challenges thrown at them by a rapidly changing society also depends on political and social circumstances, as well as a supportive “institutional network for growing up”¹. This local network largely determines what possibilities are open to young people, and also the limitations on opportunities for being a part of society.

“Government at all levels must re-affirm its social responsibility for young people and create the necessary framework to make being young possible”.²

The municipal level – comprising the administrative entities Landkreise (hereinafter: counties), cities, towns and municipalities – is key to improving the quality of life for young people. Here the effects of youth policy are most evident. A youth-friendly society – one in which young people feel welcome and can actively participate – is created at the local level, in communities. This is where children and young people live and shape their own living environment.

“Youth-friendly communities” are those that allow room for being young³. Youth-friendly communities that provide good opportunities, enable youth to participate and offer attractive prospects are viable communities. Effective municipal youth policies – those that are successful – are good politics, both for the future of young people and for the future of the cities, towns, municipalities and counties where they live.

In this position paper, the Bavarian Youth Council invites the counties, cities, towns and municipalities in Bavaria to be politically attentive to the interests and needs of youth in their communities. An active, planned and systematically designed community youth policy with a vision can give all young people the best chance to develop and participate in their communities.

The Bavarian Youth Council has presented this position paper as an additional response to the resolution of the Bavarian Landtag (legislative assembly) titled “Strengthening Bavarian Youth Work and Developing Effective Youth Policy”⁴. In this resolution, the assembly emphasized “the major efforts made locally by municipal youth welfare work”, and asked the Bavarian state government to evaluate “how [...] the concept of strong municipal youth policy and work can be further enhanced and made more transparent through the involvement of youth councils.

This position paper was adopted on 18 March 2018 at the 152nd general meeting of the Bavarian Youth Council.

¹ See also 15. Kinder- und Jugendbericht der Bundesregierung: BMFSFJ (15th Federal Report on Children and Youth: Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2017

² *ibidem*, p. 25

³ The 15th Federal Report on Children and Youth uses the phrase “Make Youth Possible” as a motto to emphasize the sociopolitical policy requirements connected with this term. *Ibidem*, p. 461

⁴ German publication: DRS 17/14997, 17/15494 vom März 2017, https://www.bayern.landtag.de/www/ElanTextAblage_WP17/Drucksachen/Basisdrucksachen/0000009500/0000009603.pdf

1 Effective Municipal Youth Policy

creates successful youth-friendly communities in the municipalities

1.1 Youth policy is created locally

Municipal youth policy is proactive policy, and sees itself as a distinct policy area for the young generation. Youth policy should no longer be perceived as problem and crisis management. “[...] youth and young adulthood is a distinct phase in life that requires specific political attention and suitable concepts and programs”.⁵ This policy has its own specific interests and needs, and is a separate area of government policy. As such, this policy is aimed specifically and exclusively at the needs and interests of young people, at the municipal level as well, and actively uses this special competency to influence other policy areas.

Effective youth policy is important for all of society, successfully balancing the interests, perceptions and concerns of youth with society’s expectations of youth.⁶ Effective youth policy ensures fair and equal opportunity for all young people to take part and become involved.

Given the demographic and structural changes that are also affecting rural areas of Bavaria, as well as issues regarding intergenerational equity, equal participation of young people in society, or ensuring a solid basis for the social system, the task of creating a separate youth policy cannot be limited to the federal government or the states (Länder). To the contrary, the approach must be wide-reaching and include all levels of government and all social institutions.

The justifiable call for a youth policy that is developed and defined as a separate political area is aimed primarily at municipalities. With rare exceptions, youth policy is ultimately implemented at the local level and local authorities have relatively wide discretion.

Successful youth policy is a policy for the future – a significant feature of viable cities and municipalities

Cities, towns and municipalities realize that good infrastructure for children, youth and their families is an important aspect of future local development. That is why many counties, cities, towns and municipalities in Bavaria are already planning good youth-appropriate infrastructure by means of specific and systematically planned municipal youth policies. They use exemplary planning concepts and their own successful ideas to create youth-friendly communities. They are all aware of how successful integration of the next generation can affect the well-being of the community, as well as the role that successful youth policy plays in future development of their municipalities.

The general terms “municipality” and particularly “municipal” (in German: “Kommune” and “kommunal”) refer to independent cities (not part of a county, “kreisfrei”) and counties as

⁵ Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Coordination Unit “Handeln für eine jugendgerechte Gesellschaft” (Creating a Youth-friendly Society), publication “Die Jugendstrategie” (Youth Strategy), p. 7

⁶ See also the efforts of the Bundesprogramm „Handeln für eine jugendgerechte Gesellschaft“ (Federal Coordination Unit Creating a Youth-Oriented Society), publication “Jugendstrategie 2015–2018” (Youth Strategy), BMFSFJ 2016, <https://www.jugendgerecht.de/ueber-uns/jugendstrategie-2015-2018/> (20.07.2016) and <https://www.jugendgerecht.de/jugendgerechte-kommunen/jugendgerecht-vor-ort/> (4 August 2017)

well as cities, towns and the small administrative units “Gemeinden” (referred to specifically as “municipalities”) that are under county administration (“kreisangehörig”). Independent cities have direct responsibility for government youth work. Structures differ in the counties because they bear responsibility for youth work, and have to coordinate their efforts with the cities, towns and municipalities belonging to the county. Municipalities vary with regard to structure, size, tradition and situation, making individualized municipal youth policies necessary. Local services, facilities and events for children and youth are managed individually by each municipality in accordance with the principle of local autonomy.

Youth policy can become municipal youth policy only if it is discussed, planned and developed at the local level. All municipalities have a core task in the context of child and youth welfare work. It is their job to create good conditions for the personal development and transition to adulthood of the young generation, and to assist all participating entities and institutions in ensuring that children and youth have optimal prospects for their lives and their future.⁷ This calls for a competent, distinct and independent municipal youth policy. This policy can be termed “successful” if it is able to create a youth-friendly community in the municipalities.

1.2 Successful municipal youth policy: A task for the municipalities under the auspices of the Youth Welfare Offices

Section 1 of Book VIII of the German Social Code (SGB VIII) stipulates that the core task of youth welfare services is to “maintain or create positive living conditions for young people and their families, as well as a child- and family-friendly environment”.⁸ This task targets both youth and young adults, and aims to create and maintain a youth-friendly environment.

This job is primarily directed at organizations providing public youth welfare services, who are required to work together with their district and city youth welfare offices in the context of their overall responsibility and their quality assurance tasks⁹ to design the infrastructure required for youth work – with the needs of young people in mind. This makes the local youth work organizations the “guardians” of their youth welfare districts, but they are also expected to develop and design youth services, and thereby also a youth-friendly society. This designing job also requires the specific assistance of youth work committees. In the context of dealing with all aspects of youth work, these committees are tasked with providing input and recommendations on trends in youth work, planning youth work and funding voluntary youth work¹⁰. Contemporary and qualitative youth services planning¹¹ is particularly important. It is a statutory tool provided to youth welfare offices for analyzing and developing youth-friendly infrastructures.

Article 28 para. 2 of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) stipulates that, in line with the principle of local autonomy, all municipalities – including cities, towns and municipalities belonging to a county (“county municipalities”) – are responsible in their respective spheres for all matters of the local community. This leads to a legal obligation and, correspondingly, to the responsibility of all cities, towns and municipalities for the social needs of their citizens, including

⁷ Vgl. § 1 SGB VIII

⁸ Section 1 (3) sentence 4 of the German Social Code, Vol. VIII

⁹ Sections 79, 79a and 80 of the German Social Code, Vol. VIII

¹⁰ Section 71 (2) of the German Social Code, Vol. VIII

¹¹ Section 80 of the German Social Code, Vol. VIII

the needs and prospects of young people. Thus, in the context of local social services, there is also a responsibility to ensure the future generation has good job and living prospects.¹²

In addition to the overall responsibility of county youth welfare offices, the county's cities, towns and municipalities also have an obligation. It is their task to assist the municipalities in creating the necessary conditions for all young people. Regardless of origin, gender or place of residence, they should have access to the basic services they need to deal with the "youth" phase of life. The basic requirements for young people and youth-friendly infrastructures are discussed, designed and developed locally, in each individual community.¹³

Only a locally designed youth policy that takes the needs of young people seriously will be successful at the municipal level. This requires each community to provide expertise in planning and conceptualization, as well as a vision. Municipalities must therefore address more than ever before, and with greater professionalism, the subject of social services for the young generation.¹⁴

Successful municipal youth policy therefore relies on professional and supportive municipal decision-making structures and individuals. The latter must be sensitized, motivated and trained for work in the area of youth policy. Successful youth policies will succeed at the municipal level only if municipal policies as a whole find wide acceptance.

1.3 Evening out disparities

Even though Bavarian municipalities are generally becoming more child- and youth-friendly, statistics on youth work infrastructure – such as the number of programs publicly accessible to children and young people ("open programs") and the competence level of individuals working with youth – show a strong discrepancy between urban and rural areas (see Bavarian Youth Council 2017: Statistics on Youth Work in Bavarian Municipalities). For example, there are noticeable differences between the various youth office districts, even in regions with a similar structure and similar demographics.

Neither federal nor Bavarian statistics reveal just how well work with children and youths is tailored to the diverse needs of these areas. The youth welfare offices are called upon to provide impetus and initiative. Youth welfare offices can provide specific advice and active assistance on the basis of professional and state-of-the-art youth services planning. This usually has a positive effect on mid-to-long-range planning for youth-friendly municipalities with successful municipal youth policies.

¹² See also Kühnlein/Klein 2008, p. 175

¹³ For this reason, Section 30 of the Bavarian Introductory Act to the Social Code (AGSG) ascribes county municipalities specific responsibility for developing and carrying out child and youth welfare work.

¹⁴ In recent years, there has been a great deal of discussion in many municipalities concerning family and education policies, for example, or childcare services and youth programs. Municipalities must therefore focus on these topics more than ever before and with more professionalism. Whereas discussions used to revolve around finding a kindergarten for their children, today parents expect regional networks comprising childcare, after-school care, schools and additional all-day programs. Previously, the focus was on individual services provided by a youth center; today, the emphasis is on comprehensive programs provided by the city or municipality together with public, mobile and organized youth work efforts, in coordination with school programs.

And, until recently, efforts were limited to fulfilling the statutory requirements for child and youth services – now specialists in youth welfare offices and especially politicians in cities and municipalities are tasked with ensuring comprehensive planning and provision of services at the interfaces between youth work, youth social work, schools, all-day childcare, job training and family policy (see Pletzer 2012, p. 197 et seq.).

2 Successful Municipal Youth Policy in Bavaria

Youth policy in Bavaria has developed well within the framework of municipal youth policy in recent years. Cooperation between municipalities, municipal umbrella associations in Bavaria, the Bavarian Youth Council and its networks in youth work at the municipal level has created a platform that could certainly be termed a model for successful municipal youth policy in Bavaria.

The value added for young people in Bavaria, for municipalities and for youth welfare work as well is obvious. The outcome of this development is that a large majority of the individual municipalities in Bavaria are fulfilling their tasks in community youth services with enormous effort and motivation.¹⁵ The dynamism found in Bavarian municipalities is unique in Germany.¹⁶

There are several special, supportive aspects of Bavarian youth work that are characteristic of successful municipal youth policy.

2.1 Legal framework

Adopted in 1993, Article 30 of the Bavarian Introductory Act to the Social Code (AGSG) assigns the 2,031 county municipalities in Bavaria a specific obligation in their own spheres of influence and to the extent they are capable “to assure that the necessary facilities, services and activities for youth work are available in their area, at the right time and in sufficient number.”

This legal basis distributed the responsibility in Bavaria for youth and youth work infrastructure widely across all regions, to each individual municipality. Many Bavarian municipalities have since taken on this task with commitment and a high level of professionalism. As early as the 1990s, Bavarian municipalities developed an awareness for the tasks and a profile of municipal youth policy.

2.2 Youth coordinators in the municipalities

Bavaria has the biggest network in Germany with over 2,000 youth coordinators¹⁷, who function as contact persons for youth policy in their municipalities. The Bavarian Youth Council started an initiative to establish youth coordinators in the 1990s. Today, almost all municipal and city councils in Bavaria designate one of their members to be a youth coordinator. These volunteers represent, assist with and promote child and youth matters, municipal youth policies, and thus also child and youth welfare work in their respective communities. They are usually the most important interface between youth work and councils, and play a central role in local youth policy. Youth coordinators make sure that the local councils pay adequate attention to the concerns of young people. Successful efforts of youth coordinators are often a guarantee for active municipal youth policy.

¹⁵ A comprehensive description of these developments is documented in: Lindner (2012a): Political (Re)Turn? Impulse zu einem neuen Verhältnis von Jugendarbeit und Jugendpolitik, Wiesbaden

¹⁶ See also the article Gelingende Kommunale Jugendpolitik in Bayern, deutsche jugend (dj) 2/2015 (www.beltz.de/fachmedien/sozialpaedagogik_soziale_arbeit/zeitschriften/deutsche_jugend/show/Journal/ausgabe/15164-deutsche_jugend_22015.html)

¹⁷ Depending on the municipality, they may also be called youth representatives (Jugendreferent_innen) or youth spokesmen or -women (Jugendsprecher_innen)

2.3 Counties make youth assistance a high priority

Section 30 of the AGSG helped give counties the impetus to strengthen cooperation with cities and municipalities located in their youth welfare districts as part of their municipal youth work obligations. Advising and cooperating with county municipalities in matters of youth policy is the main job of municipal youth welfare workers in youth welfare offices or in the district youth councils. They provide county-administered cities, towns and municipalities with important suggestions on how to create youth-friendly structures.

2.4 Municipal partnerships

In various regions of Bavaria, partnerships between municipalities and counties have achieved significant improvements in infrastructure to the benefit of young people. Small municipalities in particular profit from these partnerships, which help them create and expand local services and infrastructure for young people.

2.5 Strong involvement of autonomous county and city youth councils

The county and city youth councils are trusted and reliable partners for Bavarian municipalities, assisting them with youth work and more. Like the level of local sponsors of public youth welfare work, the district level with its seven district youth councils is a major sponsor of child and youth welfare work. Youth councils have historically fulfilled a dual function by providing impetus for both local and regional youth policy.

Youth councils in Bavaria are accordingly the driving forces for youth policies in their role as work groups for youth associations. At the municipal level they take on extensive municipal responsibilities benefiting young people, as stipulated by the German Social Code, Vol. VIII, and are themselves sponsors of a wide range of youth welfare institutions, services and activities in the communities.

2.6 The Bavarian Youth Council provides advice and assistance to municipalities in developing youth policies

The Bavarian Youth Council has been actively advising and assisting municipalities in youth policy and youth welfare work at least as early as the 1990s, when Section 17 of the Bavarian Child and Youth Welfare Act was introduced (now Section 30 of the AGSG). Youth policy both at the state level (Länder) and the municipal level is the core task of the Bavarian Youth Council. Thanks to its networks at the municipal level it is an expert in dealing with political issues. The organization shapes the topics, tasks and goals of municipal youth policy. At the same time, it is also a participant and beneficiary.

The system of community youth coordinators is unique in Germany, and was initiated and advised mainly by the Bavarian Youth Council, and is now assisted by youth welfare networks. There are various instructional aids, practical materials and concepts that help raise the profile of youth welfare work in municipalities, assist municipal youth welfare work and develop the concept of municipal youth policy (e.g. Handbook on Municipal Youth Policy, Handbook for Youth Coordinators, etc.). Article 32 of the AGSG entrusts the Bavarian Youth

Council with the tasks of a supra-regional sponsor of public youth welfare work, equipping it with the status unique in all of Germany of an independent work group of youth associations and youth groups, with the legal form of a public body. These tasks require the Bavarian Youth Council to advise the youth welfare offices of the regional authorities, thereby contributing to the ongoing development of youth-friendly structures in the municipalities.

2.7 Partnerships between municipal umbrella associations and the Bavarian Youth Council for developing successful municipal youth policy

Long-term collaboration between the Bavarian Association of Cities and Towns, the Bavarian Association of Municipalities, the Bavarian Association of Counties and the Bavarian Youth Council has sharpened and defined the distinct image of municipal youth policy. Joint publications, and certainly the annual Joint States (Länder) Meeting for Municipal Youth Policies, which was first convened in 2010, are examples of a common understanding regarding the development of municipal youth policy in Bavaria.

3 Foundations of Successful Municipal Youth Policy

No two municipalities are alike: political circumstances, different sizes and heterogeneous structures, conditions and backgrounds make it difficult, if not impossible, to devise a comprehensive set of tasks applicable to all municipalities in creating successful youth policy. Local circumstances determine which tasks will be given preference in a specific municipal political concept.

However, there are four main topics¹⁸ that are recognized as the basic principles for determining which issues should be considered and given attention. Municipalities are advised to use this integrated approach with its four core components as a basic guide for municipal policies.

There is also the option of obtaining competent advice and assistance locally from municipal youth welfare workers in the youth welfare offices or in the city or county youth councils. Across Bavaria, the coordinator responsible for youth policy at the Bavarian Youth Council provides assistance in accordance with his or her tasks under Section 85 of the German Social Code, Volume VIII.

3.1 Successful municipal youth policy enables all young people to participate in society

“Youth participation means responsible involvement of young people in shaping their present and future situations. It involves active and binding participation, cooperation and influence of young people on planning, decisions and their implementation, to the extent that their own lives and that of the community are involved.”¹⁹ Decisive for successful municipal youth policy is therefore the amount of respect young people experience in their communities, whether they are taken seriously and included in the process – in all areas of their lives.²⁰

Taking the concerns of young people into consideration forms the basis of youth policy. Successful municipal youth policy opens up extensive possibilities to all young people in the community to participate. This policy creates and improves the possibilities open to them for increasing their participation. Successful municipal youth policy not only provides more opportunities and possibilities for participation, but also strengthens the personal resources of young people, so that they can participate in society as they see fit and according to their talents and interests.

In the context of this type of participative youth policy, municipalities should exploit all suitable possibilities for getting young people involved. Successful municipal youth policy provides many possibilities for involvement. It also evaluates and expands political structures and options for taking action in the community to counteract specific barriers to the participation of young people.

Good municipal policy is therefore more than a way to represent and advocate for young people. It also grants youth the necessary access and capability to provide input, as representatives of their own interests. And because young people are themselves experts on

¹⁸ This refers to the core elements of the youth policy of the Federal Youth Board (BJK) of 2009 (“Zur Neupositionierung der Jugendpolitik”, BJK 2009), and expands them to the municipal level (see also Pletzer 2017, p. 83 et seq).

¹⁹ More Participation and Political Education in Bavaria: Resolution of the 141st Main Committee Meeting, October 2012

²⁰ See Prölß 2017, pp. 43–59

the society of the future, the involvement of young people is not only the “basis for a perception of democracy that is linked to experience and is therefore sustainable”²¹, but also a contribution to improving the quality of municipal policy decisions.

Municipal youth policy takes all youth into account and creates programs that can also reach young people that cannot otherwise participate on their own initiative. It must facilitate more participation, involvement and democracy in the central aspects of young peoples’ lives – for example in schools, vocational training and work, as well as in youth welfare programs.

To summarize: Municipal youth policy is a policy of participation and involvement²²

All young people are brought into the community’s planning and development process, are taken seriously and are shown respect. Information aimed at young people has a low threshold of accessibility. Any prejudices or misunderstandings are addressed with interaction and close, frequent contact between policymakers and youth. Diversity is acknowledged, respected and taken into consideration, regardless of the young peoples’ social background, level of education, physical ability, or sexual identity or orientation.

3.2 Successful municipal youth policy provides all young people with access to education and skills

“Successful educational policies are the prerequisite for individuals to become active and creative members of society. To achieve this, the major goal must be to provide all young people with equal opportunity in accessing various education programs and services, both formal and informal”²³. Youth policy is an education skill-building policy aimed at “providing young people with optimal assistance on their path to becoming self-reliant individuals and to support them in acquiring the skills required to be actively and creatively involved in a democratic society.”²⁴

Successful municipal youth policy utilizes its authority on the municipal level to sponsor personal development and educational opportunities for all young people in the community. This policy sees education as a comprehensive process and does not operate solely as a compensatory social and educational policy, rather promotes the right to a humane childhood and youth. With proactive education and assistance in the transition to adulthood, it provides access to extensive education and training possibilities for all young people in the community. Municipal youth policy combines services and facilities provided by schools and non-school organizations, as well as formal and informal education opportunities.

Within the framework of its authority and competence, supportive and useful municipal youth policy works to provide equality in access to job training and education, as well as sustainable sponsorship and support for all young people in the community.

²¹ Kinder- und Jugendprogramm der Bayerischen Staatsregierung, Fortschreibung 2013

²² See also: Koordinierungsstelle Handeln für eine jugendgerechte Gesellschaft: Merkmale jugendgerechter Kommunen (Coordination Office for Creating a Youth-friendly Community: Features of Youth-Friendly Communities), <https://www.jugendgerecht.de/aktuelles/merkmale-jugendgerechterkommunen/> (Zugriff 3.10.2017)

²³ A regional education network cannot function without welfare services (Ohne Jugendhilfe keine Bildungsregion: Erwartungen der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe an Bildungsregionen in Bayern: Beschluss des Bayerischen Landesjugendhilfeausschusses vom 12.03.2013 https://www.blja.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/blvf/bayerlandesjugendamt/ohne_jugendhilfe_keine_bildungsregion.pdf (abgerufen 02.01.2018)

²⁴ BJK 2009, p. 21

An initial and significant step is successful cooperation between the various formal and informal educational institutions at the local level. Many Bavarian municipalities have already taken steps in this direction. For example, the main emphasis of the Bavarian Educational Regions Initiative (Initiative Bildungsregionen in Bayern) is on the organization and connectivity of the Bavarian school system, but also on creating comprehensive educational programs through collaboration between a large number of relevant partners. A Bavarian education region should accordingly “comprise all education and training facilities already located in the region or in planning that are particularly relevant to young people and their families. In addition to school programs, this includes in particular the services and facilities provided by youth welfare work, family assistance, early intervention (Frühe Hilfen), childcare programs, youth social work (in particular in schools: JaS), and educational programs provided by youth protection services.²⁵ The goal is to ensure the future of young people in a specific region by means of customized education programs that enable them to take advantage of opportunities to get an education and participate. Active communities should get involved in these local initiatives.

In the triangle created by the job market, education policy and youth policy – a new municipal focus of activity²⁶ – municipal youth policy should define itself as a partner for designing and creating programs. The result is that policy will be able to influence individual education, life and professional paths with financing and support (e.g. by means of youth job agencies). “Only if we can improve education on a wide basis for all children and young people and thus provide them with better future prospects – and not only in the area of institutional education in childcare and schools – will child and youth policy become something more than compensatory social and educational policy, and at the same time promote the right to a humane childhood and youth.²⁷

To summarize: Municipal youth policy as an educational and skill-building policy²⁸

Municipal youth policy in the sense of successful educational skill-building policies is based on a comprehensive understanding of the educational role of child and youth welfare services, bringing together social learning with school education and extracurricular learning. This gives all young people access to school and extracurricular learning and educational programs (e.g. those of youth organizations, municipal youth welfare services, youth social services, etc.). Any hurdles created by the individual’s financial situation or social circumstances will be eradicated with suitable measures. School and extracurricular learning and educational programs should be located close to the community. This also applies to good job opportunities. Information exchanges and traineeships introduce students to the working world at an early stage. As close to their location as possible, they are given advice and support in looking for jobs, education and admission to advanced studies. To this end, local schools, companies and government cooperate intensely.

²⁵ ibidem, p 2

²⁶ Kühnlein 2008

²⁷ See also AGJ 2009, p. 5

²⁸ See also Koordinierungsstelle Handeln für eine jugendgerechte Gesellschaft: Merkmale jugendgerechter Kommunen, www.jugendgerecht.de/aktuelles/merkmale-jugendgerechter-kommunen (abgerufen 03. 10.2017)

3.3 Successful municipal youth policy grants all young people access to assistance, protection, counseling and support

All young people have the right to assistance in their personal development and guidance in becoming self-reliant and capable members of society. In accordance with this basic principle, which is found in Section 1 of the Child and Youth Welfare Act (Jugendhilfegesetz), the municipalities should create conditions and structures that optimally support and guide all young people as they become adults and develop their personalities.²⁹

In collaboration with youth welfare offices and in addition to their services, municipal youth policy that aims to protect and support youth should provide all young people in the community, regardless of origin, gender or place of residence, with the basic foundations and access to programs that they need in order to make this phase of life a positive one. At the same time, municipal youth policy also works preventively against the risks inherent in the process of becoming an adult. In consensus with youth support programs and welfare services, such policy develops and maintains the infrastructure required for these services.

Municipal youth policy uses its local expertise to assist young people in precarious situations in their communities, or prevents these situations from the outset. Thanks to its local expertise and specific vantage point, municipal youth policy that is attuned to such dangers is at an advantage compared with programs provided by youth welfare offices. Problem areas in individual cities and municipalities can be observed much sooner at the local level, analyzed more specifically and dealt with more effectively.

Municipal youth policy focuses specifically on services that support and assist young people who are confronted with stress and particular problematic situations due to the difficult conditions in which they are growing up. This task of providing protection and support requires municipalities to structure their activities to specifically and actively address local poverty, precarization, and social and cultural discrimination of young people and their families in cities and municipalities.

Municipal youth policy is able to go beyond standard youth welfare services in helping young people with their problems – which are usually related to local sociological circumstances – by taking action that draws on local resources. Responsible municipal youth policy does not simply shift this task to the youth welfare offices responsible for overall youth welfare (Section 79 of the German Social Code, Vol. VIII). To the contrary, it builds practical collaboration between the individual municipalities and the youth welfare institutions of public and private organizations. This beneficial partnership builds and refines the youth welfare expertise of both the youth welfare offices and the cities and municipalities themselves.

To take advantage of these benefits, municipal youth policy should draw on collaboration with additional social services or youth welfare organizations. After all:

“...it is obvious that a comprehensive policy covering the areas of family, education, work, integration and youth is relevant to mastering the challenges of transitioning out of the youth phase”.³⁰

²⁹ See also BJK 2009, p. 18

³⁰ See BJK 2009, p. 20

To summarize: Municipal youth policy is a policy of protection and support ³¹

Communities ensure the best possible conditions to support and encourage youth while they grow up and develop their personalities. Communities actively work to combat both poverty and the social and cultural discrimination of young people.

All young people – regardless of origin, gender or place of residence – have access to the basic foundations and to programs that they need in order to make this phase of life positive. Youth welfare offices, municipalities and voluntary youth welfare organizations cooperate closely. The municipalities assist and support youth welfare offices in their policies by providing, where necessary, additional quality services in child and youth welfare in sufficient number. The youth welfare offices provide advice, support and financial assistance to municipalities, and involve them in youth welfare planning processes.

3.4 Successful municipal youth policy plans and ensures personal freedom and mobility for young people

Good cross-generational co-existence in the community primarily takes place in public spaces. Successful municipal youth policy ensures equal participation of young people in the public sphere, and advocates quality living spaces and housing. It considers the interests of young people during spatial planning and development processes and invites them to provide their input as experts. Municipal mobility planning also takes the specific needs of young people into consideration. In addition, successful municipal youth policy ensures young people get the time and the space they need to develop their talents, try things out, take ownership of and provide input. Municipal youth policy supports youth associations and youth councils as a means for young people to organize themselves.

For young people, taking ownership of public space in their communities is an important part of their personal development. Public space provides an essential arena for young people to live, meet, learn or just hang out³² and is therefore a place for earnest and complete “inclusion of youth in responsibilities of civil society as the basis for integrating active youth culture. Consequently, city and village squares, streets and public buildings must always function as youth squares, youth meeting spots and youth facilities as well.”³³

Keeping public spaces as accessible as possible is essential for equality of participation. To this end, municipal youth policy is tasked with providing all young people adequate access to the public resources that are important to them. “In urban development and housing construction, municipalities should (therefore) always factor in the needs of young people. Municipalities must recognize that public spaces are an area for youth and give them the opportunity to influence and use them.”³⁴ This aspect also applies to the involvement and inclusion of young people in all areas of social and cultural life in the local community. Youth welfare work facilities are not a disruptive element; they provide important impetus for designing social spaces, and require a central position in the communities.

³¹ See also Koordinierungsstelle Handeln für eine jugendgerechte Gesellschaft: Merkmale jugendgerechter Kommunen, www.jugendgerecht.de/aktuelles/merkmale-jugendgerechter-kommunen (abgerufen 03.10.2017)

³² Bayerischer Jugendring 2011, p. 5 et seq.

³³ Ibid., p. 13

³⁴ Van Daven-Agreiter 2006, p. 11

Furthermore, young people should be actively involved in planning and designing public spaces. As users of future planned spaces, they should be involved in and given responsibility for the development of cities, towns and villages. Due to their social-space expertise, their creativity, enthusiasm for planning, imagination and cultural diversity, they are in a position to provide positive input for new designs and blueprints for spatial and urban planning.³⁵

Successful municipal youth policy starts at the interface with urban planning and development, representing young people's interests in basic spatial planning for all community development. It uses political means to ensure young peoples' influence on municipal spatial planning. For example, a key area of youth policy is municipal housing planning to create sustainable and intergenerational housing.

Another important factor that determines whether young people can remain in their communities is location – youth policy should focus on providing sustainable, practical and efficient local and regional mobility. Young people are a user group with high mobility needs and expectations. Accordingly, in the competition to attract young citizens, rural communities in particular should focus on developing sustainable public transportation that is tailored to the area.

Beyond the spatial context, freedom is another important aspect of youth policy. In recent years, the increasingly results-oriented, accelerated, over-structured and time-pressured daily life of young people has led to increased expectations regarding job and education programs. Many individuals have the growing impression that they have no more time for themselves and no room for influencing their lives.³⁶ The emphasis on learning and social control in everyday life limits their freedom and their chances of successfully coping with the basic challenges of youth.

To meet these challenges, young people need, in particular, sufficient opportunity to try things out and to influence their schedule – by reserving free time that is not subject to scheduling. “Young people need sufficient time to develop their personalities. They should be allowed downtime and more flexibility to develop, to become part of their environment and to shape that environment.”³⁷

Creating and maintaining such freedom for young people is thus another cornerstone of municipal youth policy: “Maintaining and creating this free space is a task for society as a whole. Thus, freedom is necessary, not only in terms of time, space and creativity, but also in a figurative sense.” The core task of youth policy is to create and maintain freedom and to encourage communities to defend freedom in order to ensure a balance between education and personal development.³⁸

³⁵ These participation rights and the “consideration of (their) interests in all matters that affect them” is already law in several states (Länder) and is included in municipal by laws.

³⁶ See also: 15. Kinder- und Jugendbericht der Bundesregierung (The 15th Federal Report on Children and Youth), p. 109 et seq., in which the term “freedom” is a major aspect.

³⁷ Koordinierungsstelle Handeln für eine jugendgerechte Gesellschaft: Grundsätze und Ziele eigenständiger Jugendpolitik, www.jugendgerecht.de/eigenstaendige-jugendpolitik/grundsaeetze-und-ziele (abgerufen 01.01.2018)

³⁸ DBJR 2010, Selbstbestimmt und nicht verzweckt, p. 2

To summarize: Municipal youth policy successfully plans and ensures freedom for young people³⁹

Young people have accessible spaces and areas that suit their needs for community, leisure time, play, sports and recreation.

In particular, municipal facilities for young people – such as public youth spaces or youth recreational centers – should be made available as experimental and creative spaces, without use restrictions and with as few rules as possible.

A lively youth scene is both an acceptable and visible element of public space.

Youth-friendly housing is also available to young people with limited means.

Local and regional transportation planning factors in the mobility expectations of young people.

Reliable digital networks and smart mobility provide additional future prospects, especially for young citizens.

Conclusion

A vital community needs involvement from citizens who identify with the community and are actively involved in its development. Youth belong to the community, and their place is in the midst of society. Young people need opportunities to learn and try things out so as to enable them to experience and experiment with their role as active citizens. To contribute to society and become familiar with and practice their future responsibility as citizens, they need impetus and opportunities, as well as assistance and guidance. They can find all of this in their local communities.

Many cities, towns and municipalities in Bavaria have worked successfully with their counties to initiate the process of becoming youth-friendly communities by implementing an independent youth policy that places the interests and needs of young people in the center of interdepartmental municipal politics. This successful municipal youth policy develops and creates a good political and societal framework for youth – a supportive “institutional network for growing up.”

The community family provides an essential contribution to the creation and maintenance of active community life in which children and young people play a strong role. Youth-friendly communities are an important factor, one that is becoming increasingly important in the context of demographic and structural change. Successful municipal youth policy contributes to the future of every community. Youth policy that is designed with sufficient planning, professionalism and vision is thus an integral part of successful municipal policy.

³⁹ See also Koordinierungsstelle Handeln für eine jugendgerechte Gesellschaft: Merkmale jugendgerechter Kommunen, www.jugendgerecht.de/aktuelles/merkmale-jugendgerechter-kommunen (Zugriff 3.10.2017)

Recommendations of the Bavarian Youth Council

for creating a framework for strong youth policy at the municipal level

Successful collaboration, well-coordinated political action – assisted by key individuals in local municipal government – as well as consistent and systematic action by municipal political institutions and bodies can help municipalities create dynamic and successful youth policies. Youth policy is cross-cut policy and must therefore be put in the hands of community leaders.

Skilled commitment, assistance from the Bavarian Youth Council and support from municipal umbrella associations in Bavaria have all given municipal youth policy in Bavarian communities the attention it deserves, as well as a voice in municipal government and considerable success.

These recommendations from the Bavarian Youth Council on how to create successful municipal youth policy should assist youth welfare offices in their job of creating, supporting and developing municipal youth policy. They are based on extensive experience in creating successful municipal youth policy in Bavarian communities. Under Section 32 of the Regulation on Implementation of the Social Codes (Verordnung zur Ausführung der Sozialgesetze), the Bavarian Youth Council as a public body (Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts) is tasked by the government with executing youth welfare work of the regional youth welfare institution pursuant to Section 85 (2) of the German Social Code, Vol. VIII (SGB VIII).

It provides assistance to the youth welfare offices in the form of recommendations and suggestions. The Bavarian Youth Council defines and fulfills its statutory duties while complying with high quality standards. In the context of carrying out these obligations, the Bavarian Youth Council has published the following recommendations in accordance with Section 85 (2) no.1 of the SGB VIII.

1. Mobilize youth welfare planning at the level of counties and independent cities

As part of their overall responsibility and responsibility for planning (Secs. 79 and 80 of the SGB VIII) and their quality assurance tasks (Sec. 79a of the SGB VIII), the youth welfare offices of counties and cities must ensure the necessary infrastructure for youth welfare work in line with young peoples' needs, must maintain that infrastructure and, if necessary, create new infrastructure. Expert and objective youth welfare planning (Sec. 80 of the SGB VIII) is particularly important. Keeping youth welfare planning up to date serves to enhance the substance and structure of youth welfare work and provide the necessary resources. Without these statutory tools for youth services, it makes no sense to analyze or develop youth-friendly infrastructures. Regular updating of youth welfare planning is standard practice and part of the basic foundations of municipal youth policy. Only if it is done, can this policy provide an adequate response to the rapidly changing circumstances and needs of young people, and be equipped for the demands youth policy will face in the future.⁴⁰ Modern youth welfare planning allows for long-term management in times of structural and demographic change, and increases planning security and the range of options – also for voluntary organizations.

⁴⁰ See also Kammerer 2017, p. 122

To create solid planning foundations and prospects for municipal youth policy, the Bavarian Youth Council recommends updating youth welfare at five-year intervals. In particular, the counties should plan youth welfare services so that they also encourage county municipalities (cities, towns and municipalities) to continue to develop their own youth policies. For this reason, under Section 80 (4) of the SGB VII and Section 30 (3) of the AGSG, county planning should be carried out in consensus with the county municipalities. In addition, the Bavarian Youth Council recommends that basic planning issues, areas of focus and developments pertaining to youth be regulated by each county municipality on its own and within its sphere of its responsibility.

The Bavarian Youth Council suggests combining youth welfare planning with school development planning and development planning or urban planning. Standards for youth welfare planning should be entrenched in school development planning and urban development.

2. Activate youth welfare committees

Successful municipal youth policy also requires the assistance of youth welfare committees to create a youth-friendly society and youth-friendly communities. In the context of dealing with all aspects of youth work, these committees are tasked with providing input and recommendations on trends in youth work, planning youth work and funding voluntary youth work (see Sec. 71 (2) of the SGB VIII).⁴¹ Quality control in child and youth welfare work (Sect 79a of the SGB VIII) is another area of responsibility of youth welfare committees. Accordingly, youth welfare committees are the most important and influential elements of municipal youth welfare institutions. They are the key bodies for co-determination, steering and planning of child and youth welfare work in cities and counties.

Given these responsibilities, the youth welfare committees are also the central institution for addressing and developing youth policy at the municipal level. Youth welfare committees can implement municipal youth policy as a political strategy that takes the youth phase as a whole into consideration, at least to the extent that this is a firm goal of all committee members.⁴² The quality of the work of youth welfare committees depends to a great degree on how well they advocate the interests of all young people. Including the youth councils and various youth associations in the network of youth welfare committees contributes substantially to this goal, and should be given more emphasis.

The Bavarian Youth Council recommends that youth welfare committees in Bavaria continually and specifically address the lives and problems of young people and thus make an active contribution to the well-being of children and young people. In particular, all cities, towns and municipalities in the counties should be involved and treat the topics and programs of municipal youth policy as a separate policy area, providing advice, support and sponsorship.

The Bavarian Youth Council asks the youth welfare committees to instigate and assist these entities in updating their youth welfare planning.

Youth councils, youth associations and voluntary organizations should be encouraged and given every opportunity to contribute to and participate in the youth welfare councils. Efforts

⁴¹ See Section 71 (2) of the SGB VIII

⁴² Nonninger 2017, p. 238

should be made to increase the indirect involvement of young people themselves, for example by giving them the status of expert advisors. To this end, the format of meetings should be adapted.

3. Set up youth committees in the cities, towns and municipalities of the counties

The Bavarian Youth Council recommends establishing individual youth committees as subcommittees of the city and municipal councils, if possible as expert committees in the sense of Section 32 (1) of the Bavarian Municipal Code (Gemeindeordnung). These separate committees create a politically institutionalized, structured basis for transparent youth policy activities of the municipalities.

The youth welfare committees, one of the two statutory components of youth welfare offices, assume the responsibility of managing youth welfare matters for public youth welfare organizations. In contrast, municipalities without a youth welfare office are not expressly represented in local councils regarding issues of youth welfare.⁴³ Youth matters in county-based cities, towns and municipalities are relegated to various other committees, for example social committees or sports and cultural committees. However, this allocation of responsibility creates the risk that youth matters are not sufficiently addressed, or may lead to a “crisis policy” in response to current incidents or problems. In any case, the process of developing preventive action plans and also farther-reaching development and design strategies should not be neglected.

Within these committees there are concrete opportunities for young people to participate. As a rule, municipal committees may also call on the support of experts. In such cases, young people, youth councils and various youth associations are to be involved to a greater degree in the work of the municipal committees (e.g. permanent representation of the youth city council members, youth associations and youth councils or delegates of the youth parliaments).

4. Improve and strengthen the role and tasks of youth coordinators

The Bavarian Youth Council recommends appointing youth coordinators as specific contact persons for youth policy in all cities, towns, and municipalities. These youth coordinators are to be designated or elected as political representatives from among the city or municipal council members. There should be regular reports in city and municipal councils on the work of youth coordinators.

Municipal youth coordinators are key individuals in municipal youth policy.⁴⁴ They communicate, represent, assist and promote municipal youth policy issues in the political committees. Youth coordinators focus on making sure that city and municipal councils do not sideline municipal youth policy issues. Effective youth coordinators keep the concerns of young people on the agendas of city and municipal councils. Youth coordinators give municipal youth

⁴³ See Section 71 (2) of the SGB VIII

⁴⁴ More on the profile, tasks and work of youth coordinators: Bayerischer Jugendring: Jugendbeauftragte in den Gemeinden. Informationen, Praxisbeispiele und Handlungstipps zur Gestaltung der Kommunalen Jugendpolitik. München 2014.

policy a face and make it accessible, and the ripple effects of their efforts bring the necessary dynamism to youth welfare work.

The Bavarian Youth Council also recommends an annual review of planning and development of youth policy in each community.

As regards youth welfare offices in Bavaria, the Bavarian Youth Council recommends regular continuing education, consultation and support for youth coordinators and other political representatives involved in municipal youth policy.

5. Strengthen participation opportunities and rights for young people in the community

The Bavarian Youth Council recommends specific quality standards for involving young people. An earnest desire to involve them is more than just a statement of intent and has long-term effects. Only well-defined standards will help achieve goals and fulfill expectations.

The Bavarian Youth Council welcomes the multiple approaches taken by Bavarian communities to enhance the participation of children and young people. The variety of possibilities should continue to receive support and financial assistance. To this end, skilled support and assistance as well as sufficient materials and funding should be provided for participation models.

The Bavarian Youth Council recommends specific standards on participation and involvement in its publication “Participation and Involvement of Children and Youth in the Community – Municipal Youth Policy is Effective Participation Policy” (Mitwirkung und Beteiligung von Kindern und Jugendlichen in den Gemeinden – Kommunale Jugendpolitik als qualifizierte Beteiligungspolitik):

- establish a culture of commitment
- guarantee participation for all girls and boys
- participation must have consequences
- make participation realistic and manageable
- create publicity
- provide information, advice, assistance and instruction – without domination by grownups
- keep things as informal as possible, yet keep in mind that institutions ensure commitment, reliability and continuity
- to ensure that participation can be fun: use child- and youth-appropriate methods
- provide participation opportunities for children in particular
- prepare specific goals for participation
- policy should be as tangible as possible

Within the context of their responsibility for infrastructure and quality assurance, youth welfare offices are also tasked with providing sufficient opportunities for young people to participate.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ See also Section 8 of the SGB VIII

With appropriate motivation, advice, sponsoring and training, youth welfare offices should help provide suitable participation opportunities in their districts.

6. Continue to improve municipal cooperation in the areas of municipal youth policy and youth welfare work

Horizontal and vertical cooperation between municipalities and counties often brings substantial improvement to infrastructures for children and youth. These efforts should be enhanced and intensified to assist youth welfare offices in fulfilling their obligations under Section 30 (1) sentence 3 of the AGSG. Youth welfare offices should be proactive and thorough in their function of providing impetus to enhance municipal youth policy – for example by funding personnel costs. Municipal collaboration to develop successful municipal youth policy and youth-friendly community infrastructure should also be strengthened at the district level as well as at the regional planning level. District youth councils and collaboration between regional youth councils is instrumental in achieving this. The Bavarian Youth Council has the role of initiating, advising, supporting and funding these types of initiatives. District youth councils should also be involved.

7. Municipal youth policy depends on youth welfare services and infrastructure

Municipal youth policy sees youth policy as a distinct policy area for the young generation. Young people organize themselves into youth associations, groups and initiatives and lobby for their interests. Public and organized youth welfare efforts promote the personal development of young people by being a model for democracy and assisting them in acquiring the necessary skills and ability to get involved. Accordingly, youth welfare work and its democratic institutions should receive support and funding. Successful youth welfare work and stable infrastructures are the basic foundations of successful municipal youth policy (see also Sections 11 and 12 of the SGB VIII).

Claims of the Bavarian Youth Council

for supporting of successful municipal youth policy in Bavaria

1. Encourage more participation of young people: Amend the Bavarian Municipal Code regarding the participation of young people

To create responsible youth policy, it is absolutely essential to involve young people. The Bavarian Youth Council proposes that the Bavarian Municipal Code (Gemeindeordnung) be amended by a new Article 18c Participation of Children and Young People, to create the municipal legal framework for their participation. It should describe and categorize the rights of young people to participate in all matters relating to them in their communities. Furthermore, the Bavarian Municipal Code should be amended to also grant people under 18 equal rights to participate.

2. Encourage more participation of young people: Lower the voting age to 14

Young people demonstrate an interest in political processes early in life. They want to help shape our society. Their interest in being involved in the community grows with increasing opportunities to participate in decision-making. The Bavarian Youth Council has been active since 2005 in giving youth a voice, and calls for lowering the active voting age to 14 for elections at the municipal, Landtag (state parliament), Bundestag (federal) and European level.⁴⁶ The positive response to youth statutes in youth associations reinforces this request.

3. Youth checklist at state (Länder) level

The Bavarian Youth Council proposes the introduction of a youth checklist at the level of the German states (Länder). A youth checklist should discern the effects of scheduled legislation on young people and assess the compatibility of such laws with the interests of the young generation. Such a checklist would constitute an evaluation and awareness-raising tool and conform to the principle of effective youth policy. It can make a valuable contribution to youth equality and to laws that are better aligned with the concerns of young people. The Bavarian Youth Council must provide professional support to the process of introducing a youth checklist at state (Länder) level.

4. Additional assistance for the Bavarian Youth Council and youth associations in their efforts to continue successful municipal youth policy in Bavaria

The Bavarian Youth Council petitions the Bavarian Landtag and the Bavarian government to provide additional personnel and funding for continued development of municipal youth policy.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Resolved at the 126th Main Committee Meeting of the Bavarian Youth Council on 17-19 March 2005 www.bjr.de/service/beschluesse/details/absenkung-des-wahlalters-211.html (2.1.2018))

⁴⁷ The Bavarian parliament resolved on 14 March 2017: "The parliament lauds the strong commitment shown by youth welfare organizations in the communities. The federal government is requested to assess how the vision of strong municipal youth policy and work can be improved, with the involvement of the youth associations, and made more transparent with the personnel and funding available." (Drucksachen 17/14997, 17/15494)

Without reliable resources and infrastructure it is impossible to create municipal youth policy. Youth associations and youth councils can thrive only to the extent that they are capable, especially at the municipal level. Additional resources for youth associations and the Bavarian Youth Council are necessary for plans, projects and initiatives related to the further development and transparency of solid municipal youth policy.

For several years now, various political levels have actively made a case for specific youth policy:

- a. As part of the Federal Youth Strategy for 2015-2018: Creating a Youth-friendly Society with Strong Youth Policy
www.jugendgerecht.de/ueber-uns/jugendstrategie-2015-2018
- b. Joint efforts of the federal and state governments provide various links between the specific youth policy of the German federal government and the implementation of EU youth strategy.
www.jugendgerecht.de/eu-jugendstrategie
- c. Among other things, this federal initiative provides impetus for developing a youth policy in the various states (Länder).
www.jugendgerecht.de/jugendgerecht-vor-ort/laender-als-partner/
"There are already individual state programs and initiatives with specific emphasis on independent youth policies in Saxony-Anhalt, North-Rhine/Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate."⁴⁸

In Bavaria, the Bavarian Youth Council and youth associations lobby extensively for youth policy matters and initiatives. For example, the initiative described in this position paper for developing successful municipal youth policy in Bavaria is made possible mainly by additional incentives and activities of the Bavarian Youth Council and youth associations. In this way, the Bavarian Youth Council uses its youth welfare networks to ensure that Bavaria can develop and define a specific youth policy. The efforts of the Bavarian Youth Council are still essential for driving good youth policy – also at the municipal level. The multiple youth welfare networks provide assistance, support, advice and sponsorship to successful municipal youth policy at all political levels. There can be no youth policy without youth welfare work.

These steps to continue developing successful municipal youth policy in Bavaria should be stabilized and be made effective for the long term.

In the context of its youth policy and political sponsoring activities, the state board of the Bavarian Youth Council should work at improving effective municipal youth policy in Bavaria and making it more visible as well as lobby the Bavarian government for more resources.

⁴⁸ www.jugendgerecht.de/eigenstaendige-jugendpolitik/ (abgerufen 02.01.2018)
www.jugendgerecht.de/eigenstaendige-jugendpolitik/laenderals-partner (abgerufen 21.01.2018)

Priorities:

- facilitating additional activities, initiatives and models of the Bavarian Youth Council to promote successful youth policy in Bavaria
- evaluating infrastructures and preparing a topography of youth-friendly communities in Bavaria (including the tasks of the Bavarian Youth Council regarding statistics on child and youth welfare infrastructure)
- providing adequate resources to the Bavarian Youth Council to carry out government tasks devolved to it pursuant to Section 85 of the SGB VIII, especially regarding additional assistance of local municipal organizations in developing effective municipal youth policy
- sponsoring exemplary or innovative activities, initiatives, measures, projects etc. at the municipal level that could become lighthouse projects and make a major contribution to the advancement of successful municipal youth policy in Bavaria

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