

# EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK

Bavarian Youth Council





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## European Youth Work

Preamble to the BJR Statutes (1947):

**“All work should be based on love for Germany and on the willingness to do everything that serves peace and understanding between all peoples.”**

From the very beginning, international youth work and, in particular, the European aspect thereof has been an important part of youth work in Bavaria. Even early on, initial links to other countries and regions in Europe were established, with youth political delegations and exchanges of young people being organised and financed. For more than 70 years, the Bavarian Youth Council (Bayerischer Jungendring or BJR) has been working for peaceful coexistence in Europe and bringing young people together. The BJR advocates for young people and represents their interests at European level.

Since our 2017 statutory reform, Europe has been firmly anchored in the preamble of the BJR statutes:

**“We stand by a Europe of solidarity that guarantees peace and cohesion. Together, we are actively committed to the preservation and youth-oriented further development of the European Union.”**

Europe has undergone enormous change and has now become more important than ever for society and young people in Bavaria. In a time where right-wing, nationalist tendencies are regaining strength, one of the most important instruments for experiencing diversity and overcoming prejudices continues to be engagement between people. Further developing Europe and the European Union (EU) socially and contributing to a union of peace is central to the BJR. •

## History

### **“Finally, I congratulate you on being the youth of today.”**

*(Charles de Gaulle, French President in 1962, addressing the youth on Franco-German friendship)*

After two world wars and the Shoah, international youth work became an important means of reconciling the European continent. Young people in Germany were to be given their own voice so that they could never again be instrumentalised by the state. Thus, with the BJR, the Allies created a construct that enabled young people to organise themselves independently. The government merely provides the structures and means for this.

International work in Bavaria is thus planned and carried out on a decentralised basis by the local actors themselves. •

## Milestones





## Core principles

**“It is the task on all levels of the BJR in particular to (...) maintain and promote international dialogue and cooperation.”**

*(Statutes of the BJR)*

The basic principle of international youth work in Bavaria is “bottom-up” instead of “top-down”: Themes, Partnerships, Formats and Goals – in international collaborations, each youth group in Bavaria can decide for itself how to move forward. They are accompanied by youth workers and the BJR supports, advises and promotes the actors. International youth work should be open to all young people, regardless of their social, family, religious and cultural backgrounds, sexual identity and financial resources. Furthermore, the principle of freedom also extends to the partner group, so that cooperation can take place on an equal footing. •













## Youth encounters

### **“All actual life is encounter.”**

*(Martin Mordechai Buber, Philosopher)*

Leaving one's own “comfort zone”, daring the unknown, allowing the new, overcoming one's own limits, getting to know people and thus gaining new perspectives on the world – these are the opportunities and challenges of a youth encounter. It enables informal learning processes and offers a wide range of experiences for the personality development of young people. Young people learn to deal with “strangers”, to find their place more easily in this world and to make new, often long-lasting friendships.

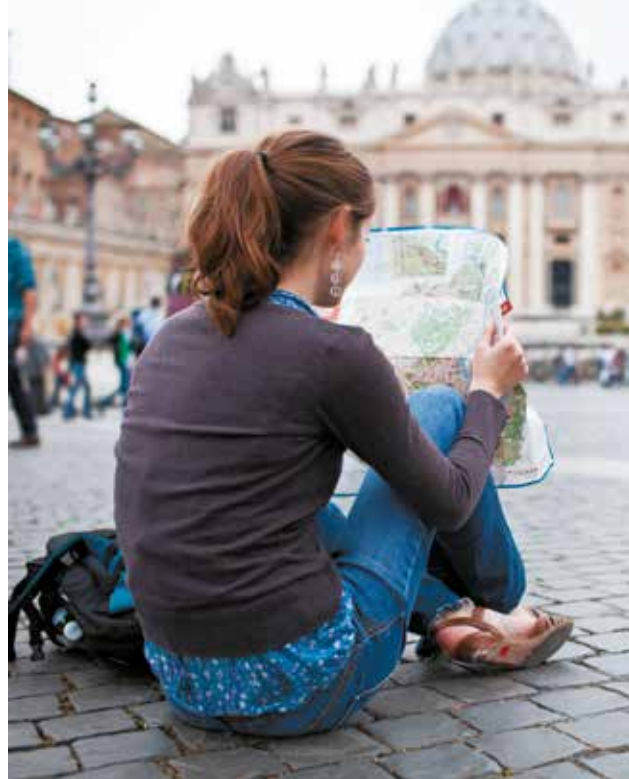
The BJR supports the actors in international youth work in creating these encounters. In addition to financial support, the BJR acts as a go-between, for example, with a partner organisation abroad and provides advice on methodological and content-related issues as required. Approximately 100 youth encounters are funded by the BJR every year. This does not include measures which are implemented via federal central offices, EU funding or other third-party funding. The BJR as a body thus brings at least 20,000 young people from all over the world into contact every year. •

## Youth exchange

**“International youth work is a part of political education on democracy, participation and international understanding.”**

*(Resolution on International Youth Work in the BJR)*

Youth exchange was recognised early on as an effective means for achieving peaceful coexistence between different nations. Young people visit each other and can thus be both hosts and guests. Linked by a common theme (e.g. sport or environmental protection), a common goal (e.g. a media project) or a common framework, a youth exchange offers the best prerequisites for finding common ground despite differences in the different countries. Young people are involved in planning programmes from the very beginning and the organisation is designed to be participatory. •















## Exchange of multipliers

**“Intercultural dialogue is a necessity of our time.”**

*(Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008)*

Youth work specialists are needed to successfully accompany international youth exchanges. In Bavaria, youth work can not only rely on full-time professionals; it can also depend on countless volunteers. In an exchange of specialists, full-time and voluntary youth workers are networked with specialists from other countries and regions. In addition to diversity-conscious and reflective intercultural learning, it is also the aim to have an exchange between specialists on current issues in youth work. In the past, the participants exchanged views on digitisation, gender policy, political education and civil society, flight and migration. This allows for the establishment of long-term collaborations. Experts become multipliers of international youth work, who have experienced for themselves what an international encounter can mean as a learning experience. The BJR carries out about ten measures every year to promote the continuous formation of multipliers. •

## Exchange of knowledge

**“There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.”**

*(Victor Hugo, author)*

In addition to personal encounters in the exchange of specialists, new technology can help to facilitate an international and digital youth worker exchange. It is all about the exchange of ideas, information and knowledge – theoretically and practically. If a sustainable network is created, it can be used as a resource for further knowledge exchange. Moreover, many (digital) platforms and (digital) events also provide an opportunity to promote international youth worker exchange. The basis for this is a fundamental international understanding of youth work that does not stop at national borders. The BJR supports this through constant contact in international networks, the translation of important publications into English, the documentation and presentation of its international exchange, and its claim to continually broaden its own horizons in all topics. •





## School partnerships and school exchanges

International school exchange is a special offer within the school, which aims at personal development and the use of non-formal learning. In addition to extracurricular youth work, the BJR is also responsible for school exchanges in Bavaria. This task was assigned to the BJR by the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. In this capacity, the BJR offers a comprehensive service for schools which are planning school exchanges with other countries. In addition to advice on exchange and the provision of networks, qualification programmes are also on offer and these exchanges are funded by the BJR.

There are nearly 500 partnerships in Bavaria in the form of school exchange programmes with 15 countries in total. Each group consists of about 15 Bavarian and 15 international young people. Every year, around 15,000 school students thus benefit from these international exchanges. •

## Teacher exchanges

Due to the federal structure in Germany, it is not standard practice for youth work and academic-related issues to come together under the same umbrella. In this respect, the BJR is an exception, allowing many advantages and synergies to arise from these exchanges. Thus, networks and methods can be used for both areas. Some BJR seminars, such as the Israel Seminar, are aimed equally at youthworkers and teachers – methods and experiences can be exchanged and collaborations between school and out-of-school actors can occur.

For teachers, who otherwise tend to work on their own, it is particularly important to network – throughout Bavaria and internationally. After all, the promotion of sustainable exchange requires viable relationships and a lively preoccupation with social issues in the countries of exchange. •







## Individual student exchange

**“Exchange is about learning. Learning how to live.”**

*(Exchange Student)*

Scientific studies show that an international student exchange is both a central and a long-lasting experience in the lives of many young people. Taking part in exchange programme is known to have a considerable positive effect on the participant's personality and biography. Getting along in another country, education system and family is an important challenge for young people. And for many, this means a considerable gain in autonomy, self-confidence and world knowledge.

The BJR has been organising and coordinating individual student exchanges in Bavaria for the past 70 years, thereby offering Bavarian pupils the opportunity to attend school abroad for two to three months and live with a family. Conversely, foreign pupils have the opportunity to stay with a family and go to school in Bavaria. Currently there are programmes with English, French and Spanish speaking countries – in Europe and worldwide. •







## Exchange with nursery schools and trainees

**“International encounters offer learning experiences not available elsewhere.”**

*(Resolution on International Youth Work in the BJR)*

Lifelong learning is a core principle of international youth work. This starts with preschool children and extends to young people in vocational training and beyond.

The German-Czech cooperation (TANDEM) has many different approaches: Children from nursery schools and day-care centres in Bavaria, Saxony and the Czech Republic go on excursions to neighbouring institutions in the other country to meet their peers. Bavarian and Czech preschool teachers have the opportunity to attend classes in the partner country and learn about their methods, topics and procedures during stays of up to two months.

Professional internships of two weeks up to twelve months can also be completed. Young people can join a partner company or a partner school in the neighbouring country as a trainee and thus expand their professional, intercultural and personal competences. The above-mentioned programmes are flanked by educational measures, and the participants receive a European certification of competence: The “Europass Mobility”. •

## Networking, promoting, advising

The BJR represents the networking structure of over 400 youth organisations (including all youth associations operating nationwide) as well as the seven district youth councils and 96 city and district youth councils. In this structure, the Youth Council also has the sponsorship of youth education centres, youth leisure centres, youth centres, etc. With this subsidiary structure, the BJR as a whole reaches two thirds of all young people in Bavaria. Countless full-time employees and volunteers work with different formats on implementing European and international youth work programmes. For example, European and international voluntary services are in the hands of sponsoring organisations.

The BJR assumes the following tasks and services for attractive and successful international youth work:

- ❖ **Advice** on the promotion and content of international youth work
- ❖ **Central office in Bavaria** for the administration and allocation of federal and state funds
- ❖ **Contact centre** for the establishment and maintenance of structures abroad
- ❖ **Further training and networking** in the form of thematic and methodological seminars, conferences and specialist events for multipliers inside and outside schools.
- ❖ **Lawyer for international youth work** and for representing interests at state, federal and European level.
- ❖ **Expertise through the monitoring of trends** and developments in international youth work
- ❖ **Lecturing and authoring** of articles on topics related to international youth work. •









## Funding programme for the further development of international youth work

Innovation needs flexibility. Classic funding programmes, however, are often associated with restrictive requirements: Group size, format, partner structure and also contents are partly assumed. With the Specialist Programme for the Further Development of International Youth Work, the BJR has been supporting projects and measures since 2015 which are of particular importance for Bavarian youth work or contribute to the sustainable further development of international youth work. These are in particular activities and projects with an extraordinary focus on content or with a new target group, trips to initiate partnerships or measures that serve the internationalisation of youth work. Formats for European political education are also possible in this specialist programme. •

## The European Office of the BJR

**“We are convinced that the future prospects of children and young people in all policy areas can only be secured through a policy of sustainable development and a continuation of the integration process for a peaceful and democratic Europe.”**

*(A Europe of the Future, Position Paper BJR 2015)*

It is not only conventional youth policy that has an influence on the lives of young people. In almost all policy areas there are issues that concern young people's causes and needs. Examples are education and labour market policy, social policy and mobility. A youth perspective is therefore absolutely necessary. In turn, the issues in youth work often have a European dimension, for example when it comes to environmental and climate protection, flight and migration or social inclusion. Topics such as media and digitisation are also strongly debated and politically decided at European level.

### **An office in Brussels**

In 2016, the BJR was the first Youth Council to open a representative office in Brussels, thereby overcoming the physical distance to the European institutions. The tasks at hand in Brussels are manifold. Increasingly, youth work delegations are making their way to Brussels to acquaint themselves with European politics. The many policy papers and decisions made in Brussels need to be reviewed in terms of their impact on young people. To meet these challenges, we urgently need to cooperate with other organisations, institutions and interest groups and to build networks. Before major decisions are made at EU level, we negotiate with politicians and decision-makers in order to weigh-in the concerns of young people and the specific youth-related policy viewpoint. The BJR's great strength is the experience of our many youth workers, youth leaders and young people on site. EU politics are often complex. It is therefore important to make European debates accessible to youth work in Bavaria and to remain the contact for European processes.

Only a youth-oriented EU, which offers young people perspectives and sees them as potential rather than problem, is sustainable. The ultimate goal is peace and cohesion. This also includes solidarity and dialogue with neighbours. •





## Examples of good practice

### Reflecting Memories

Reflecting Memories is a joint project of the BJR and the “Agency for Education – History, Politics and Education”. The aim is to network institutional actors in the field of international encounters and to keep the discussion about the importance of remembering and commemorating the Shoah, the Roma Holocaust, the German occupation and other Nazi mass crimes alive. In addition, the results of the project are to be made available to teachers and educators as a practical support in a publication.

### Bavarian Youth Day in Europe

Since 2016, representatives of youth work in Bavaria – youth associations, youth councils, local community or open form – can apply to present their projects and interests in Brussels. The participants can participate in intense discussions about their issues, opinions and demands in workshops with representatives of the European institutions (Parliament, Commission, Council) and European networks and partners. The results of this will then be shared with the Brussels public at an evening reception.

### Language animation

The Coordination Centre Czech-German Youth Exchange – Tandem is a recognised expert and reliable partner in the field of language animation. “Together in one boat” and “Neighbour. Language? Czech!” are language-animation projects that have already been running successfully for several years. The colleagues developed a phrase book for use at the German-Czech youth meetings called “Do kapsy – For your pocket” (purchase online → [www.tandem-org.de](http://www.tandem-org.de)). The icing on the cake in the comprehensive language animation programme is Tandem’s training course for the language animator called “Jassick trift Šprache”. •





## For further reading

**“Remembering Together – Building Bridges”** is a handbook with educational content, practical examples and documents on German-Israeli exchange, developed in cooperation with our Israeli partners and published bilingually – in German and Hebrew.

→ [shop.bjr.de/arbeitshilfen/70/gemeinsam-erinnern-bruecken-bauen-deutsch-israelisches-handbuch-inkl.-material-ordner](https://shop.bjr.de/arbeitshilfen/70/gemeinsam-erinnern-bruecken-bauen-deutsch-israelisches-handbuch-inkl.-material-ordner)

### **Resolution on International Youth Work in the BJR:**

The delegates of the 151<sup>st</sup> BJR General Assembly took a stand on the further development of youth exchanges and youth policy issues by adopting a resolution on the key issue of international youth work.

→ [www.bjr.de/nc/service/beschluesse/details/internationale-jugendarbeit-1866.html](https://www.bjr.de/nc/service/beschluesse/details/internationale-jugendarbeit-1866.html)

The BJR wants to shape European youth policy. The position paper **A Europe of the Future** (2015) formulates the BJR's demands on European policy:

→ [shop.bjr.de/positionen/27/ein-europa-der-zukunft](https://shop.bjr.de/positionen/27/ein-europa-der-zukunft) •

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