



**KINDERFREUNDLICHE
KOMMUNEN**

Good Practice in Child Friendly Cities



Good Practice

in Child Friendly Cities



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KOMMUNEN**

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Foreword



Anne Lütkes



Dominik Bär

Kinderfreundliche Kommunen was founded in 2012 by UNICEF Germany and the Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk (The German Children's Fund). We provide extensive support to cities and communities across Germany to sustainably and effectively implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the local level.

Our program is based on the international experience acquired through the international Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), launched by UNICEF and UN-Habitat back in 1996. Today, some 3,500 municipalities in 40 countries belong to the initiative. The CFCI has developed an internationally applicable framework for the implementation of the UN Convention at the municipal level. Our ambitious program builds on this framework, and currently involves over 20 German municipalities. In this endeavor, emphasis has been given to the following four elements: prioritizing children's best interests across the board, establishing child-friendly structural conditions, ensuring effective participation among children and young people, and disseminating information on children's rights.

In each of the participating municipalities, the program runs for four to five years and can be extended for a further term. Our team and our expert advisors help municipalities implement their commitments via a process that lasts several years and consists of the following five stages. (1) The municipality adopts an appropriate resolution. (2) With the participation of local children, the present situation is analyzed to assess where the city's strengths lie and where there is room for improvement. (3) An action plan is then drawn up

containing concrete measures for implementing children's rights. (4) Once the plan has been assessed by our team and our experts, the city or community is awarded "child-friendly" status. (5) The plan is then implemented over a three-year period, during which we continue to support the municipality. By producing a new action plan and restarting the program cycle, municipalities can retain their child-friendly status.

In our experience, each municipality has to discover which child-friendly measures are best suited to its own particular conditions. The action plans we have seen developed to date not only differ according to the size of the municipalities and their structural conditions; other key factors include their prior municipal policy experience, the commitment of local actors to the project, and the views of young people on their local area. In pursuing their own paths toward child friendliness, however, these municipalities have not only raised local awareness of children's rights; they have also developed an impressive array of initiatives, projects, and institutional reforms. What all these efforts have in common is the conviction that supporting young people and promoting their rights makes a decisive contribution to the vitality and sustainability of any community. Local authorities and politicians can only be successful in the long run through the voluntary commitment of their citizens and particularly of young people themselves. Alongside an active civil society and a supportive local economy, state & federal programs and projects run by foundations can also provide an extra impetus and make a valuable contribution.

Anne Lütkes
Chairwoman of the Board
Kinderfreundliche Kommunen e.V.

Dominik Bär
Executive Director
Kinderfreundliche Kommunen e.V.

Introduction

This brochure offers an insight into the diverse practices adopted by a number of cities and communities that have set out to become and remain child friendly. At issue here isn't a particular attitude, a set of non-binding goals, or the best of intentions – for who wouldn't want to be child friendly? The real question is the extent to which the ambitious and far-reaching goals and norms of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child have been implemented at the local level. Municipalities have a key role to play here since their institutions and services have a significant impact on young people's living conditions and opportunities. Children's rights are primarily realized locally. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted three decades ago, and almost all countries have now signed up to it. The Federal Republic of Germany did so in 1992 and withdrew its remaining reservations in 2010. Since then, the Convention has enjoyed the status of a federal law. The UN Convention has a number of noteworthy characteristics:

- States Parties undertake to submit regular reports on their efforts to implement children's rights and the progress they have made. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child comments on these reports and makes recommendations. Children's rights represent both a norm and a development goal that both state and society have a duty to implement.
- In the course of its 54 articles, the Convention states in detail that the core social, civil, and political human rights also apply to those under the age of 18. States Parties, for example, "shall assure to the child¹ who is capable of forming

his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (Article 12).

- The Convention makes clear that this age group also has a special right to protection, care, and support. "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies," it states, "the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration" (Article 3).
- The concepts of participation and prioritizing the best interests of the child provide a framework for the implementation of additional norms and rights, such as: the prohibition on discrimination; protection from violence, mistreatment, and neglect; freedom of expression and information; freedom of religion; freedom of association and assembly; the protection of privacy; support for disabled children; protection for refugee children; protection from abuse and exploitation; the right to social security and health care; the right to education, schooling, and vocational training; the right to rest, leisure, play, age-appropriate active recreational opportunities; and opportunities for free participation in cultural and artistic life.

This non-exhaustive list alone makes clear that there is hardly any area of community life in which children's rights are not affected and do not need to be taken into account. In various ways and through diverse projects, a great many municipalities in Germany and beyond have risen to the challenge of upholding these rights in recent decades. The international "Child Friendly Cities" network was launched by UNICEF and UN-Habitat back in 1996. Today, some 3,500 municipalities in

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¹ "For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." (Article 1).

40 countries belong to the initiative.² A glance at the wide range of countries represented (including Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Turkey, Brazil, Switzerland, Italy and France) suggests that, despite efforts to achieve uniform standards in children's rights, we can expect to see very different modes of implementation and emphases in different countries. Brazil's Platform for Urban Centres, for example, focusses on supporting particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

Founded by UNICEF Germany and the German Children's Fund, the Kinderfreundliche Kommunen (CFCI Germany) association has been helping cities and communities to realize their commitment to comprehensively and effectively implementing children's rights at the local level since 2012.

Since Kinderfreundliche Kommunen was founded, over ten municipalities have acquired child-friendly status and are currently implementing their action plans. Also, over ten municipalities are preparing their action plans and expressions of interest have been received from a number of others.

The structure of the present report is intended to reflect the insights of the German CFCI. Rather than simply presenting the different municipalities and their respective projects and successes one by one, we have chosen to offer a cross-section of around sixty approaches and measures grouped under four key areas noted above. In this way, we hope to draw out as fully as possible the inspiring ideas developed by the municipalities involved in the first phase of the program, in order to promote good practice. Here we consciously speak of "good practice" rather than "best practice," since (1) the diversity of the various municipalities makes any ranking impossible, (2) robust impact analyses of the projects are difficult to implement (3) many approaches are still too recent to be able to speak of guaranteed success. All experience has shown that taking inspiration from the good practices of other cities and communities is one of the key means of learning within the "child-friendly community."

This report nonetheless focuses on the practices

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² The projects undertaken in 31 countries were showcased on the initiative's website (www.childfriendlycities.org/initiatives/) in February 2019.

adopted in our municipalities' action plans, which were implemented with the help of our team and our expert advisors. For reasons of space alone, the examples represent only a selection of the projects launched, our aim being to highlight the diversity of approaches to promoting child friendliness. In this way, we hope to reveal the significant potential that can be tapped through the systematic incorporation of children's rights into community life. Local steering groups and institutional leaders have made the implementation of children's rights a cross-cutting task within local government and public institutions. This has helped to sensitize people to children's rights and pushed them to search for ways to better uphold them in community life. Although this process cannot be considered complete in any of the municipalities, we can observe areas of growth that may fruitfully be imitated. If children's rights are enshrined in Germany's constitution, as the current coalition government has agreed to do, the practices underlying child-friendly communities will only become more widespread.

The examples given in this brochure are based on accounts provided by the certified municipalities themselves, as well as on reports, evaluations, and other materials (including action plans, interim reports, and newspaper articles) produced in collaboration with our team. Particular emphasis is given to the measures and projects set out in the municipal action plans. Together with the interim and final reports, these action plans give a clear impression of the diversity and breadth of the various efforts undertaken by the municipalities and can usually be found on their official websites. We have largely dispensed with individual references in order to maintain readability. Representatives from the municipalities nonetheless had the opportunity to check the examples relating to their own practice. The internet sites referred to were last accessed in March 2019. Any remaining errors and discrepancies remain the responsibility of the editors and the publisher. The brochure is organized according to the four key categories developed over many years by the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI)³ and adapted by the Kinderfreundliche

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³ On the CFCI's programmatic considerations and its demanding standards, see the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook, April 2018.

Kommunen association for the German context. These consist of: (1) practices that prioritize the best interests of the child; (2) appropriate structural conditions to ensure these are implemented; (3) broad-based participation among children and young people; (4) the dissemination of information on children's rights across generations, and regular reporting on the situation of children and young people. As is often the case, the distinctions between these four dimensions only partially reflect what is in reality a multifaceted practice that often impacts multiple fields at once.

Prioritizing the best interests of the child



Children's rights always need to be respected and they are the essential yardstick by which we can measure the child friendliness of a community. This should also be reflected in the day-to-day activities of local government. Children's wellbeing depends on a range of elements, including health-care provision, protection against violence, safe spaces, good education and training provision, opportunities for exercise, play, and leisure – in sum, on all those factors that contribute to young people's welfare and development.

In light of this, local actors need to be aware of the objectives of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and implement appropriate measures within their remits. Where administrative decisions have an impact on the lives of children, Article 3, Paragraph 1 of the Convention demands that the best interests of the child shall be given priority in the decision-making process. This does not mean that the interests of children always come into play, but that the primacy of children's interests calls for special consideration. An essential prerequisite here is that these interests are both incorporated into decision-making processes in the first place and given due attention there. Local governments can ensure that this happens in the long term by introducing appropriate procedures and regulations. Prioritizing children's best interests is not only a legal norm, but also serves as an interpretative framework for legal deliberations and as a procedural rule. The best interests of the child therefore cannot be defined once and for all, but should rather be understood as a continuously developing, dynamic concept that encompasses numerous fields.⁴

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⁴ "The best interests of the child is a dynamic concept that encompasses various issues which are continuously evolving" (General Comment no. 14, II).

In concrete terms, four key factors contribute to prioritizing children's best interests in child-friendly cities and communities:

(1) Children's rights need to be prominently included in the mission statements and statutes of child-friendly communities. In this way, municipal leaders signal their commitment to them both to local government officials & service providers and to the broader local community. Municipal efforts can then be measured against these explicit commitments.

(2) In order to put flesh on the bones of such mission statements, staff in various local government departments and institutions have to be aware of how they can prioritize children's rights in their own areas. This not only requires a knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also the necessary sensitivity and imagination to be able to understand and assess which of their own processes and decisions may have an impact on children's interests.

(3) Child friendliness is always measured by the extent to which municipalities provide sufficient protection to this "weak" population group (which tends to be excluded from decision-making processes) and respond to their particular needs and interests. In every society there are particularly vulnerable children and young people who are more at risk of poverty, sickness, and violence. The prioritization of children's best interests is only credible if a community ensures that it protects and cares for the weakest of its young people.

(4) Ensuring support for children and young people is another important precondition in prioritizing children's best interests. Ultimately, young people can only really be protected and supported if they themselves are given a voice and can influence planning processes for municipal facilities and ser-

vices. This requires public support for initiatives and projects in which children and young people take their interests into their own hands and active citizens take responsibility for themselves and others.

Anchoring children's rights in municipal models and statutes

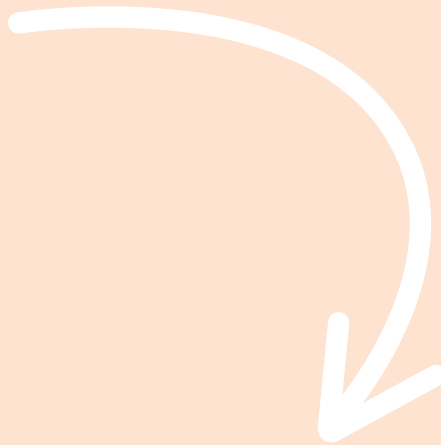
Municipalities cannot pass universally valid laws, but they do have various means of regulating their affairs within the framework of the existing legal system. In some areas, federal and state laws, together with European Union directives, set out detailed provisions. In other areas, they have considerable room for maneuver, which they can use in accordance with the right to self-government in Article 28, Paragraph 2 of Germany's Basic Law. Even where legislators have established a detailed set of rules, however (as in the case of Social Code VIII: Child and Youth Welfare), municipalities still need to fulfil these requirements in their own way and in a manner appropriate to the relevant local conditions. One key instrument of governance that is legally binding for the inhabitants of municipalities is statute law. It is on the basis of such law, for example, that municipalities issue regulations for the use of their open spaces and playgrounds and set fees for their open-air swimming pools. Through their main statutes, municipalities issue a set of basic rules which govern the functioning of municipal parliaments, advisory councils, and public services. If regulations concerning children's rights are incorporated into a municipality's main statutes, they exert a significant binding force on the local parliament and government. Municipal mission statements and guidelines are less binding, but have a particular resonance within the local community. This is especially the case when they have been developed with broad public participation. They should not only constitute objectives for local political and administrative actors, but should also involve other actors including associations, societies, foundations, religious organizations, initiatives, and businesses. Where such guidelines also yield concrete results, they can heighten the attractiveness of an area. Thus far, child-friendly communities have adopted both of these policy approaches.

Child and youth friendliness in Cologne's main statute

In Cologne's main statute of August 16, 2018, the city made a commitment to ensuring child friendliness.

In § 12b ("child and youth friendliness") the statute states that, "The city of Cologne is a child and youth-friendly city. With the means at its disposal, it shall work to uphold the rights of children and young people. Appropriate participation forums are being established for children and young people in Cologne's districts."

This statute undergirds the rights of children and young people in the day-to-day work of local political and administrative actors. As a concrete measure in this regard, the local government decided to establish children's and young people's forums in each urban district.



Kinder- und Jugendfreundlichkeit in der Kölner Hauptsatzung

In § 12b „Kinder- und Jugendfreundlichkeit“ heißt es:

„Die Stadt Köln ist eine kinder- und jugendfreundliche Stadt. Sie wirkt im Rahmen ihrer Befugnisse auf die Berücksichtigung der Rechte von Kindern und Jugendlichen hin. In den Bezirken werden Kinder- und Jugendforen gebildet, um die Beteiligung von Kindern und Jugendlichen zu gewährleisten.“

Weil am Rhein's child-friendly mission statement

In collaboration with almost all of its departments, the municipality of Weil am Rhein drafted a mission statement in 2016 setting out the principles of a child-friendly city. The mission statement takes up the core elements of the Kinderfreundliche Kommunen program and adapts them for the specific context of Weil am Rhein. The preamble states that,

"In Weil am Rhein, it is important to us to attend to children's interests and child friendliness in a binding and systematic manner at all levels of local government and community life. We want children and young people to enjoy living in our city and to feel at home here. They should be able to develop

their abilities and their personality, feel part of the local community and taken seriously by it, and learn to shape this community with a growing sense of responsibility."

This overall goal is spelled out in six key points.

Here are a number of excerpts:

"Child friendliness is crucial to our town's future. It is:

- Not only important for children and young people, but also for society as a whole.
- A factor that ultimately promotes the attractiveness of the city for all generations. The provision of excellent infrastructure for parents and families acts as an incentive for people to live and work in Weil am Rhein.
- Of great importance since it allows children and young people a) to acquire an understanding of democracy, b) to feel valued and taken seriously, c) to create a bond with the place in which they live.

We create structures that help children of all ages to spread their wings, by providing them with:

- Spaces they can design and use
- Areas within public spaces that they can use, make their own, and shape in the same way as any other generation.

We also anchor children's rights and interests within local government by:

- Consciously allowing for decision-making flexibility and continually welcoming the potential for modification.
- Making available sufficient resources and establishing appropriate structures.

In principle, we involve children and young people in all matters that concern them and provide transparent and age-appropriate information on our projects and plans."



Child friendliness in Algermissen's mission statement

In June 2016, the municipality of Algermissen adopted a new mission statement. The main heading for the social sector runs: "Child and youth friendly, family oriented, meeting the needs of senior citizens – quality educational, advisory, and care services." The "Overall Objectives" of this section express the following conviction:

"Cross-generational services ensure a high quality of life. The municipality of Algermissen is home to a population consisting of varying age and interest groups. Ensuring well-balanced living conditions therefore depends on providing suitable services for (young) families, children & young people, and adults in the prime of their lives, as well as for the growing number of local senior citizens."

The subordinate objectives of this section are as follows:

"The municipality of Algermissen sees the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a guideline for its municipal activities. Its aim is to implement the Convention at the local level by means of appropriate structures and measures."

Additional specifications are given within the other key areas of the mission statement, such as "Expanding and strengthening community life":

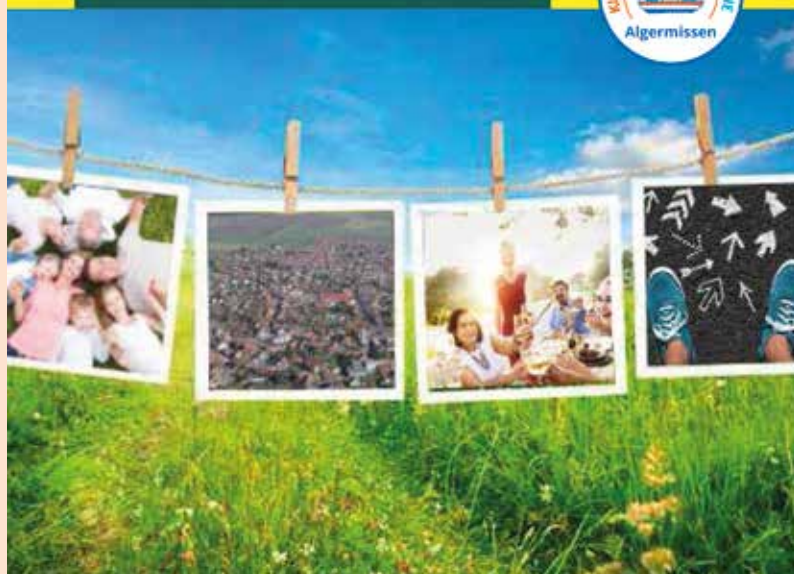
- "Numerous societies and associations help to shape community life in Algermissen. In future, particular emphasis will be placed on strengthening work with children and young people and on improving cooperation between different associations.
- Civic engagement represents a crucial pillar of social coexistence and will be supported even more strongly within the municipality in future, particularly through the strategic involvement of children and young people. These should be able to think of themselves as an important part of the community.



GEMEINDE
ALGERMISSEN

Einfach wohlfühlen. Mitten an der Stadt.

UNSER LEITBILD



- Those interested in getting involved will be given an opportunity to actively participate in the development of the community. By staging information and discussion events on current topics and launching participation projects for children and young people, the municipality is ensuring civic participation that lives up to the challenges of today.

In this way, the Lower Saxony municipality has expressed its willingness to respond to children's and young people's interests across the board in local government and administration.

Anchoring children's rights in local government action and prioritizing the best interests of the child

Mission statements and statutes are indispensable when it comes to institutionally anchoring children's rights in municipal practice. They can have a powerful resonance and furnish a common yardstick for municipal action. Yet they inherently remain abstract. Moreover, mission statements and guidelines always run the risk of making grand claims that cannot be lived up to fully in day-to-day municipal life. Such programs call for people who are willing and able to implement them. The more ambitious the mission statements, the more staff need to be willing to go the extra mile to ensure they are implemented as fully as possible. This is particularly true of tasks such as orienting local government action around children's rights, which cut through the usual division of responsibilities among departments and specialist areas, and therefore have to be approached as cross-cutting tasks. Even if special teams with their own competences and resources are established for this purpose, it can be a continual challenge to reach employees in individual departments and ensure that they prioritize children's rights. This first of all requires that they have a knowledge of children's rights, which cannot be expected at all levels and in all areas, even in communities that have committed to improving their child friendliness.

Through numerous collaborations, Kinderfreundliche Kommunen has therefore developed and tested several training programs that not only serve to increase awareness of children's rights in local government, but also to identify practical opportunities to implement them in specific departments and spur the necessary collaborative processes. Independently of this project, municipalities have also developed their own initiatives to strengthen children's rights at the local government level.



An information workshop on children's rights in Oestrich-Winkel

In the autumn of 2018, in collaboration with Dr. Rebekka Bendig and Berit Nissen of the Institute for Participatory Processes and Training, Berlin, we trialed a new workshop for local government staff titled "Information: Children's Rights and Administrative Action" in Oestrich-Winkel. The one-day information workshop⁵ is aimed at top administrators and managers of specialist departments and municipal institutions. It aims to provide an introduction to the principles and key pillars of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to support their implementation in local government action. Participants engage with the legal duties associated with the Convention and discuss prospects for implementing children's rights in administrative practice in their own municipalities.

For the Oestrich-Winkel event, we were able to secure the participation of key local government actors and representatives of local kindergartens and schools. In total, there were 16 workshop participants. Thanks to the participation of the mayor and the chairperson of the council, the top tier of the municipal government was also well represented. The range of departments represented (including those for economic development, public order, finance, road traffic, construction/urban planning, public relations, families, and youth welfare) also allowed us to highlight the implementation of children's rights as a cross-cutting municipal task.

The workshop consisted of two parts. In the first, the core elements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child were presented and their significance for municipal practice was indicated. This served to sensitize participants to the importance

of children's rights in their respective fields. The second part of the workshop discussed concrete implementation opportunities in Oestrich-Winkel that could be incorporated into the action plan currently being developed for the municipality. One outcome of the workshop was the formation of a steering group consisting of representatives of various departments, who were tasked with rapidly developing the action plan. On the basis of our experience in Oestrich-Winkel, the information workshop has proved to be beneficial in promoting child-friendly communities.



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⁵ The information workshop forms part of the "Children's Rights in Administrative Action" training program sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. In the months that followed, these information workshops were held in many other municipalities and received a positive response.



A workshop on administrative guidelines for child and youth participation in Weil am Rhein

In 2018, the city of Weil am Rhein became the first child-friendly municipality to hold a workshop that aimed to develop binding, cross-departmental administrative guidelines to promote child and youth participation. At Kinderfreundliche Kommunen, we supported this process by facilitating external consulting from the Institute for Participatory Processes and Training (IPPT), thanks to funding from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth.

The workshop was designed not only for top administrators but also for middle managers, operational staff, and specialists such as youth welfare workers. Over the course of a participatory process lasting several months, the aim was to develop guidelines that was tailor-made for Weil am Rhein and workable for the municipality's employees. In the course of the process, procedures and responsibilities were developed and specific steps were identified. Between the two workshop phases (which each lasted two to three days, or a total of 16 hours), the municipality continued to build on the interim results. At the end of the workshop, dates were set to test and implement the newly developed guidelines. The aim here is to strengthen the participation rights of young people in accordance with the UN Convention and to implement the participatory obligations in Baden-Württemberg's municipal code (§ 41a), which was extended in December 2016.

In future, participation is to become the guiding principle of local government action – yet this can only succeed if staff members enthusiastically

work to promote children's participation on their own initiative.

The workshop brought together representatives in various fields (including urban development, building management, schoolyards, school sports, green space and playground planning, kindergartens, and cultural administration) to develop guidelines on information and communication channels, opportunities for participation, time structures, and costs. All those involved agreed on a pilot phase that would end with the introduction of the guidelines. In the collaborative working process, it was also important that space was given to address concerns and potential stumbling blocks and limitations. The new administrative guidelines were published on the city's official website in October 2018.

Developing such administrative procedures depends on a number of preconditions, including: (a) an active steering group and coordination unit/contact person that meet the standards set out by Kinderfreundliche Kommunen; (b) a trial or implementation group that is willing and able to refine and develop the workshop results; and (c) proactive administrative heads who make clear that the necessary resources will be made available for participatory measures. These procedures require many hours and days of preparation and preliminary and interim clarification. The key success factors in the Weil am Rhein process included a constant flow of communication and the obligatory processing of all internal, intermediate administrative steps and feedback loops.

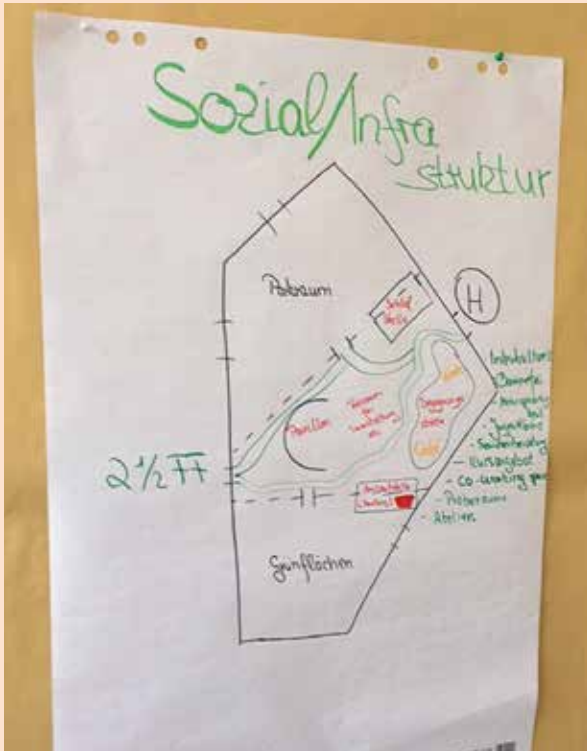
All this effort has ultimately paid off: The process has not only yielded results, but has also helped foster a positive, can-do approach.

Cologne's simulation workshop

In 2018, 18 administrative employees from Cologne's municipal government took part in a simulation workshop on urban development and children's interests. The workshop brought together staff from the departments for further education,

children, young people and families, school development, culture, roads and transport, and personnel development, as well as representatives from the urban planning office and the citizens' office. The Academy for Local Democracy acted as an external cooperation partner. In the workshop, the participants tackled complex planning processes and developed concrete, child-friendly urban development solutions. On the basis of the simulated project of redesigning a green space in an urban district, they were able to test out ways of incorporating children's interests into complex planning and decision-making processes, while tackling interdisciplinary tasks and negotiating a range of solutions.

In evaluating the simulation results, the participants gained important insights for their own administrative practices. These included using coalitions spanning different departments, cooperatively determining obligations, assessing whether to involve additional departments and partners, and preparing procedural checklists. It was also noted that children's interests can only be properly taken into account where early participation is ensured. Among the participants, there was consensus that cross-cutting issues such as diversity and inclusion should be given greater consideration in the metropolitan context. The simulation workshop received a very positive response from all the administrative staff involved.





Further training for local government staff in Regensburg

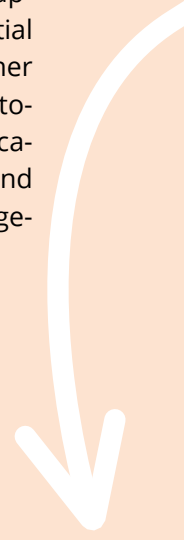
In order to sensitize local government staff to children's rights and interests – and particularly to child protection issues – the city of Regensburg regularly offers advanced training courses in these areas. It was in this context that the city developed its child protection reporting guidelines for those departments that have contact with children and adolescents and that might notice potential risks to their welfare. In 2018, further training on child and youth participation was included in the municipal training program. In addition, the department for municipal youth services organized a workshop in 2018 on the results of the federal government's 15th report on children and young people. Alongside the right to participation, the report focused on the right to leisure and recreation and on the unequal living conditions and disadvantages faced by certain children and young people.

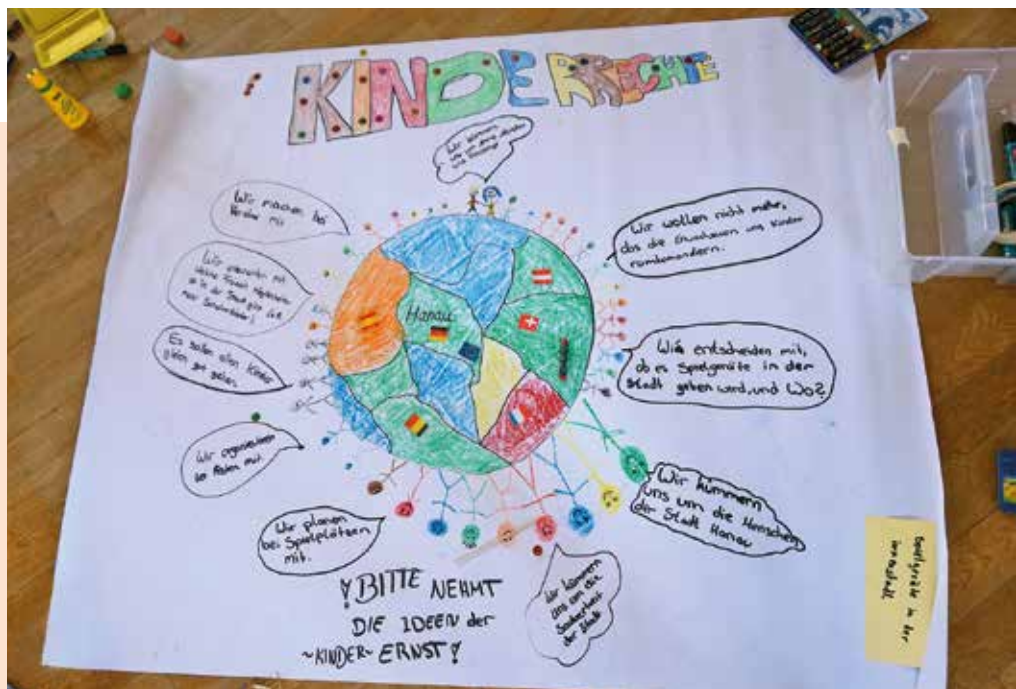
Firmly anchoring children's rights in Hanau's schools

In a number of Hanau schools, teachers regularly undertake further training on children's rights. On dedicated project days, students also learn about the children's rights that impact their day-to-day school lives. Early on, they are introduced to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in a manner appropriate to their age. This gives them the necessary basis to express their interests and needs and to stand up for them.

The project is described as follows in a flyer from December 2018:

"The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is legally binding in Germany and was included in the Hessian school quality reference framework in 2011. The principles of equality, protection, support, and participation thus provide the essential framework for school life and learning – whether in class, in project work, or in different participatory structures. School principals, teachers, educational specialists, parents, external partners, and students are driving this process forward together."





A prime example can be found in Hanau's Brothers Grimm elementary school, whose efforts began in 2010: "Our work as a children's rights school began with a song written by the children, entitled 'Die Rechte sind für alle Kinder gleich' (All children have the same rights), along with lessons on the school council and our Monday sessions, which have now turned into regular school assemblies at the end of every week. Activities here include singing the school song, a monthly quiz, honors, and reports from the principal, student representatives, and the young ambassadors club for children's rights. The club was first launched on a voluntary basis and today consists of the class representatives from classes 3 and 4, from whom a school re-

presentative is democratically elected. The junior ambassadors work on their own children's rights projects. In keeping with the school's multicultural community and religious diversity, it celebrates Basic Law Day every year to promote social values and mutual tolerance and appreciation as the basis for successful coexistence and learning. In cooperation with the child-friendly municipality of Hanau, the school's young ambassadors are involved in various projects to promote participation in the town. In the 2015-2016 school year, children were involved more fully in decision-making processes in the school community, and participated in the restructuring of the break time lending system, the introduction of a lunchtime token system, the selection of weekly project topics, and the implementation of the class council."⁶

Five Hanau schools are now participating in a model school network for children's rights and democracy run by the Makista association, which involved 27 of Hessen's schools at the end of 2018.⁷



6 Quoted from Makista e.V. Modellschulnetzwerk für Kinderrechte Hessen. Dokumentation zur Schulentwicklung. Stand Abschluss des Schuljahres 2015/2016 (www.makista.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Dokumentation-KiReSchulen-Hessen-2016-komp.pdf).

7 The German Children's Fund runs a similar program (offering consulting services, practical materials, and training schemes) for schools across the country that wish to become "children's rights" schools. Two elementary schools in the child-friendly municipality of Wolfsburg have already been awarded this title. (www.dkhw.de/schwerpunkte/kinderrechte/kinderrechtesschulen/).

Measures to protect children and young people

Children against child poverty in Senftenberg

In November 2017, twenty students from Senftenberg between the ages of ten and twelve took part in a workshop on child poverty in the region. They discussed the consequences of poverty for children and developed various strategies to counter it. An opportunity to develop these ideas was provided by a round table entitled Strengthening Children - Fighting Poverty, under the aegis of the

Brandenburg Ministry for Labor, Social Affairs, Health, Women and Families' "Strong Families - Strong Children" initiative.

The list of ideas and demands developed by the children is impressive. At the top of the list is a call for free services (such as meals and educational materials) and for improvements to kindergartens, after-school centers, and schools. They also



The compiled list of ideas and demands that acts on children's suggestions is impressive.



demanded better infrastructure (for public transport services), free travel tickets (e.g. for holidays), and adequate leisure and cultural facilities.⁸

The results of the workshop were warmly received in Senftenberg's children's and young people's parliament. The parliament has been involved in organizing projects and events for many years now and gives particular attention to children and young people from underprivileged backgrounds. To give a few examples of their work: (1) In the Theater on Prescription project, which is also supported by the city government, children and young people are given a voucher for themselves and one other person to visit the theatre, after attending a voluntary check-up with a pediatrician. (2) As part of the Lower Lusatia Network for Healthy Children, meanwhile, sponsors provide support to young families on a voluntary basis. (3) Low-income families can apply for a Senftenberg Pass, which provides access to public and cultural opportunities at a reduced cost. Following the round table discussion on child poverty, children in Senftenberg also launched their own project, Reading at the Lake, for children whose financial or social backgrounds hinder their social participation (see p. 46).

8 Cf. the workshop documentation, "Kinder stärken – Armut bekämpfen" of November 29, 2017.



Help islands in Hanau and emergency islands in Regensburg and Remchingen

The city of Regensburg and the municipality of Remchingen are both participating in the nationwide “Emergency Islands” project, which was launched by the Hänsel and Gretel Foundation in Karlsruhe in 2002. The project has now been implemented in more than 200 cities, municipalities and administrative districts. It involves a network of businesses, such as bakers, butchers, hairdressers, and banks, which serve as a first port of call for children who run into trouble on their way to school. Medical practices, pharmacies, schools, and public institutions can also serve as emergency islands.

The issues faced by children include violence and threats from older children, quarrels and tussles at the bus stop, threatening dogs, and many more. The danger isn’t always the “lurking stranger” out to kidnap little girls. Much more often, it is smaller problems that children run in to, such as losing their wallets or grazing their knees. In these cases too, emergency islands are places they can go to



receive practical help, such as plasters. These businesses of course cannot provide psychological or professional care, but in an emergency they can act as the first link in a chain that ultimately leads to the child’s parents or child protection services being notified.

The participating business owners sign a statement committing to helping children. All of the businesses are marked with an “emergency island” sticker that is clearly visible to children, and staff receive instructions on how to use emergency numbers.

The municipalities involved have learned from earlier criticisms of emergency island schemes as merely symbolic, promotional gestures that do not really benefit those affected.⁹ Training courses aim to ensure that the businesses involved can in fact provide children with assistance. In addition, greater numbers of public institutions and schools have been brought into the scheme, since these are considered particularly trustworthy by children.

The town of Hanau is taking this project a step further by intensively cooperating with the police. It is in the process of implementing a preventative scheme called Leo: Help Islands for Children, which has been offered by the Hessian police since 2005. The scheme’s symbolic mascot is Leo the





Regensburg: Easy access to help in schools and youth centers

Children and young people need to be able to get help easily in emergencies. To this end, Regensburg has set up a network of easily accessible contact points for children and young people. They can find a sympathetic ear from youth social workers at all schools and at district youth centers. As part of its child-friendly action plan, the city of Regensburg has increased the number of youth social workers at its schools and the amount of time they spend there.¹⁰

Trained professionals are also active in youth centers in all of the city's districts. These contact points are actively advertised in order to raise children's and young people's awareness of them and enable them to claim their right to protection.

10 With respect to youth social work in schools, the 2018 Regensburg School Development Plan states that, "The objective of such work is to improve the capacity of young people with particular socio-pedagogical support needs to take responsibility for their own lives and their social lives. It reaches this target group at an early stage through individual counseling, crisis intervention, careers advice, and by teaching and developing coping skills [...]. Youth social work in schools therefore not only helps young people whose physical and mental wellbeing is already at risk, but also ensures that such situations are avoided as far as possible" (p. 19-20).

lion, the children's commissioner. The aims of the project include boosting children's self-confidence, helping them develop an awareness of dangerous situations, and promoting mutual social responsibility.

The project flyer draws attention to the urgent need for such practices: "A lot can happen on the way to school: children chat and laugh and there are a lot of exciting things to observe around them. But they can also run into unpleasant situations: road traffic can be dangerous and children might be teased or approached by strangers. Due to their inexperience, children are more exposed to these dangers and unfortunately they often fall victim to traffic accidents and crimes. Among both parents and children, there is an increasing concern for safety. More and more parents take their children to school rather than letting them walk on their own." The scheme's partners include shops, service providers, business associations, elementary schools, children's institutions, youth centers, family organizations, religious institutions, and police stations.

9 Cf. the study by the North-Rhine Westphalia branch of the German Child Protection Association: "Ergebnisse der kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit 'Notinseln & Co,'" December 2013 (www.kinderschutzbund-nrw.de/pdf/Ergebnisse%20NotinselnCo%20Final.pdf).

The Regensburg City Pass

In order to support low-income families, Regensburg has introduced a means-tested city pass that gives residents of all ages considerable cost reductions on local public transport and in municipal businesses, cultural venues, and over forty external institutions such as sports and music associations. Children and young people, for example, can access public transport at particularly reasonable rates, which allows them to venture out independently.

Improving public transport through a survey of children and young people in Potsdam

Whether they travel by tram, bus, ferry, metro, or train, many children and young people use Potsdam's public transport system. What forms of transport are available, where they go, and how often they do so, is all determined by the local transport plan for the area. In 2018, children and young people were involved for the first time in revising this plan in a process coordinated by Potsdam's office for children and young people. The aim was to establish where public transport could be further improved in Potsdam over the next five years, in areas such as timetables, connections, stops, and



transport provision. Children and young people between the ages of 10 and 23 were able to submit their opinions via online and print questionnaires. A total of around 500 children and young people took part in the survey, which was carried out in cooperation with the city of Potsdam and the transport provider ViP. The evaluation of the questionnaires was supported by the municipal government's statistics and elections department. The office for children and young people submitted the results to the municipal government and the relevant planning office, and they were incorporated into the revised version of the local transport plan.

The officer in charge of transport development for the city of Potsdam was very happy with the results: "After my initial skepticism, I had to admit that this was a great idea, which should be part of the next plan update too."

Involving children and young people in Wolfsburg's transport strategy

The city of Wolfsburg has taken a broader approach to its transport strategy by making the mobility habits and wishes of young people between 10 and 27 a key area of focus across the board. At the end of 2017, it launched a citywide survey (conducted online, via posters and in municipal institutions) entitled How Mobile Are You? For the survey, the Youth Participation Network elaborated a set of questions including: "Which forms of transport do you use to get to school, to see your friends, or to visit your favorite place? How often do you fail to get somewhere or only get there with some difficulty? What changes would you like to see to make it easier for you to get around?" The majority of the 374 respondents wanted to see cheaper bus tickets, more frequent bus services, and better connections between the city's various districts. The majority of young people use the bus as their main means of transport to reach school, to go shopping, and to visit friends. In the respondents' view, there were often too few evening and weekend services. Criticism was also expressed with regard to cycle paths, with respondents highlighting a lack of lighting and signage and defective road surfaces. In order to gain further insights into the results of the survey and to develop concrete measures in response to them, the office for children and young people invited young residents to a 2018 youth forum. More than twenty people accepted the invitation and discussed issues relating to cycling and public transport in their city in a world café forum. They were accompanied by experts from the local government and from Wolfsburg's transport provider. A number of further steps and measures were jointly elaborated.



Night buses and mobility in Regensburg

The city of Regensburg has responded to young people's transport demands with a number of concrete measures. To take three examples:

In conjunction with the local youth association, many young people called for night buses to make their leisure activities safer and easier on weekends. In October 2016, Regensburg's transport federation launched a number of new night bus lines in the Regensburg city area. As part of a one-year trial, the five new night bus lines ran on Friday and Saturday nights every hour between 00.30 and 04.30. The night bus scheme was a success and was expanded in subsequent years.

During the city's child-friendly planning process, children and young people complained that it was dangerous and frightening when they were in the narrow streets of the old town and a large bus passed by. These buses were successfully replaced in 2016 by smaller, electric vehicles that were more appropriate for the old town streets.

Children's and young people's request to allow cycling in the old town and in the green spaces around it was also implemented through a city council resolution after a test phase.

Measures to support children and young people

Night sports in Weil am Rhein

In 2016, Weil am Rhein's youth parliament came up with the idea of creating an easily accessible leisure program for young people on weekends, which for some time at least would offer an alternative to private and commercial weekend leisure activities. This gave rise to the Night Sports project, which was warmly received when presented to the municipal committees.

The scheme was organized by a group of young people with the support of the city's children's and young people's commissioners. All of the clubs in the gymnastics and sports federation were contacted and asked if they wished to collaborate with the program. The young organizers visited various gyms and at the end of 2016 the SAK Altes Wasserwerk corporation was commissioned (as the responsible body for public children's and youth work) to implement the Night Sports program. Since the scheme depends on volunteering, seven-

teen young people were trained as either junior coaches, coaches, or evening leaders.

Following this planning phase, the Night Sports scheme was opened to girls and boys between 14 and 20 at the beginning of 2017. By April 2017, the then 23-member coaching team had led eleven sessions from 9.30 pm to midnight, with a total of 765 participants. Alcohol, drugs, and all forms of violence are strictly prohibited. Those who do not adhere to these rules are expelled from the hall by the coaches or evening leaders. The large size of the hall allows for a variety of sports activities and provides space for young people to develop their own initiatives. The scheme has been enjoyed by young people from all types of schools and from all over – and even beyond – the city.

An initial evaluation found that 23 percent of the participants were female and 77 percent male. Seventy-two percent of the sports enthusiasts were not members of a club. Before breaking for summer, the program held an end-of-year challenge just before Easter. The first winter season began in October 2017. The Night Sports scheme proved very successful and was continued in the winter of 2018/2019.



A contact and advice center for gay, bisexual, and transsexual young people in Wedemark

In rural areas in particular there is often a lack of support for young people who do not identify as heterosexual. In Wedemark, a range of activities and initiatives have been launched in relation to homosexuality, bisexuality, and transsexuality. At the beginning of 2017, the municipality invited teenagers and young adults to a live action role

shop also resulted in the creation of a youth group that has continued to meet for LARP activities and a queer youth group that has since met regularly in the house and organized various events. Open to anyone with an interest, the group uses flyers and posters to publicize itself and its events. Contacts with schools are also planned to discuss homosexuality, bisexuality, and transsexuality and to exchange information with students. In addition, a contact and advice center has been set up in the multigenerational house following the LARP work-



play workshop. The workshop took place in a multigenerational house and was intended to establish initial contact with young people who feel they belong to the LGBTQ community or have an interest in it. The workshop was so well received among young people that it was massively oversubscribed. As well as being enlightening and helping to build an identity among the participants, the work-

shop. Since the beginning of 2018, the *EinzigArtig* association has been offering professional advice and support there once a month, which is intended for gay, bisexual, and transsexual teenagers and young adults, along with their parents, friends, and relatives. It also aims to support young people who are not yet able to regard their sexuality as “normal” on account of their origin or faith.

Urban planning with the Stadtspieler-JUGEND game

Many of our municipalities have adopted a participatory game called StadtspielerJUGEND (Youth City Planning Game)¹¹, which we developed as part of a project funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community. The game aims to bring out the desires that children and young people have for their city, and particularly for specific sites. It facilitates participation among young people aged 14 and over and makes it possible to address specific questions concerning urban space in a district or entire city in a playful man-

unicipalities of all sizes. In this process, it is crucial that the results are passed on and analyzed further by those responsible for youth affairs in local government.

The game was used in after-school care centers in Hanau to involve children aged between ten and eleven in designing a new residential area. As Hanau's department of social affairs noted, the process highlighted "the great potential that slumbers in children and young people and that we must not do without."

In the municipality of Algermissen, meanwhile, young people designed a residential complex con-



ner. The format can be used very widely. It has been found to work well in elaborating cool yet feasible micro-projects in urban, community, and neighborhood development, and in planning social spaces around children and youth centers. The game can be used in small or large groups (such as at youth forums).

Young people from Senftenberg, Berlin, Wolfsburg, Hanau, Regensburg, Cologne, and Weil am Rhein were involved in the development phase of the game, which ran from 2013 to 2015.¹² With the exception of Berlin, the game was used to develop the child-friendly municipalities' initial action plans and has been shown in principle to work in mu-

taining compact apartments at affordable rental prices. Like their proposal for a "community park with a bathing lake," this proposal was praised by the local authorities as a particularly important idea.

11 This is an adaptation of the "Stadtspieler" game, which has been used in urban planning processes with adults – cf. Netzwerk-Agens e.V. (ed.) 2009: Stadtspieler Methodenbuch. Hamburg (www.stadtspieler.com/download/stadtspieler_methodbuch_0211.pdf).

12 Further information on the development of the method, along with documentation and other materials, can be found on the website: www.klikar.de/stadtspieler.html.

Promoting community development in Wedemark with the “Pimp Your Town!” simulation game

In association with its creators, Politik zum Anfassen (Tangible Politics), the municipality of Wedemark has been using a simulation game called Pimp Your Town! to simulate council work with young people since 2016.¹³ In the game, three school classes take on the roles of council members. Like real councilors, they discuss proposals and make decisions, which are then submitted to the municipal council in printed form. While they do so, a fourth school class produces a film documenting the process. The objective of the game is to get students interested in democracy and inspire them about local self-government. At the same time, the “real” local government can learn from young people’s ideas and gain new contacts in schools. The students from the three “council groups” are given guidance by the association, and each committee group receives one supervisor from the local council. These do not influence the students’ ideas, but go through the agenda with them and give them tips on how to reach a majority and on the work of the council in general. The fourth class conducts interviews, and produces reports and other materials to document the project online.

On the simulation days, students gain experience of party meetings, committee meetings, and a council meeting. After being welcomed by the

mayor of the municipality, they are given an introduction to local politics. They then formulate their ideas as motions, which their project partners use to build an agenda. Each of the three party political groups in each of the three committees puts forward five proposals, making 15 in total for each committee. Only the 18 best proposals (as selected by the students themselves) are then put on the council meeting agenda. The students first go through their committee agendas together and subsequently debate the issues in three simultaneous committee meetings. Each of these committees is led by the real-life committee chairperson. Within their party political groups, the students exchange their ideas and discuss how to proceed in the council meeting. The concluding council meeting takes place at the end of the last simulation day and is chaired by the council chairperson and/or the local mayor. It includes a debate and a final vote on the issues discussed in the committee meetings.

In 2016, local secondary schools sent two ninth-year classes and two tenth-year classes to take part in the program. Pimp Your Town! 2016 took place in September. Following the proposal for a high-rope course developed in the course of the simulation, a group of young people came together advocate for a parkour space in the town. A year later, 100 students took part in the game and came up with a total of 45 different measures. These measures were prioritized by the young people and sponsors were appointed to take them further.¹⁴



13 Pimp Your Town! is an award winning three-day simulation game developed by the Politik zum Anfassen association in 2006. As of 2019, it had been used in around 50 municipalities with nearly 10,000 students.

14 Some impressions of the Wedemark simulation game are documented on www.pimpyourtown.de/wedemark/.

“The Children’s Council” simulation game in Wedemark

In 2018, this simulation game was played with 40 students in the third class of an elementary school in Wedemark.¹⁵ In the elementary school version of the game, called “The Children’s Council,” children are given an introduction to local politics while also developing their ideas together about

fore have the opportunity to take up ideas from the simulation game (whether individually or on a cross-party basis) and can themselves submit them as council motions. Students can then be invited to attend the relevant committees and present their proposals. It is nonetheless clear to the students from the very beginning that only the “real,” elected council representatives can ultimately decide on whether their ideas will be imple-



Everyone can contribute with his or her ideas and everyone has to listen to them. At the end, everyone has one vote.

how cities, municipalities, towns, and districts can be improved in order to better meet children’s interests. The children file motions on issues such as mobility, housing, refugees, construction, and transport, before discussing these at a simulated council meeting held in the town hall and led by the council president. They then vote on them. The simulated parliamentary process also helps to teach elementary school students about democratic structures. Here it doesn’t matter how loud or quick someone is, how smart or how eloquent: everyone has a chance to contribute their ideas and everyone can consider these and give their view while others listen – and in the end everyone has exactly one vote.

The results of the children’s debate are summarized in a draft resolution and incorporated into the work of the council. The various parties in the city, municipal, local, and district councils there-

mented and that this process can take a number of years.¹⁶

In the 2018 game, the elementary school students put forward and voted on 18 proposals. There was broad approval for the following: a fundraising campaign to help the city’s poorest citizens, an elementary school charity run to help children in Africa, a call for more trees in the municipality and improved animal protection (especially for bees), a children’s concert, the renovation of their own school, and a plan to make school routes safer by painting yellow feet on pavements and crossings.¹⁷

¹⁵ The Children’s Council simulation game, developed by Politik zum Anfassen, was awarded the 2017 Primus Prize by the Stiftung Bildung und Gesellschaft (Foundation for Education and Society).

¹⁶ Our description of the process is based on the association’s own website presentation: www.pimpyourtown.de/kinderrat/

¹⁷ For the proposals and the results of the votes in Elze, see: www.pimpyourtown.de/kinderrat/elze/.

“Mayor’s Day: A great day for all” in Wedemark

At the beginning of 2018, the municipality of Wedemark held its first “Mayor’s Day.” Throughout the school day, students from various secondary schools presented their views on Wedemark to the municipality’s top officials. The students gave answers to the following questions: “What motivates me? What do I find important? What should the mayor be attending to? What can be done to make Wedemark more attractive for young people?”

The student presentations had been developed in a preparatory project day, which included a crash course on local politics. During this day, 100 students took part in a local council simulation game (see the “Pimp-Your-Town!” section, above), where they drew up a total of 45 proposed measures. These measures were prioritized by the young participants and sponsors were appointed in the municipal administration to take the next steps.



For one school day, students from various secondary schools presented their views on Wedemark to the entire administrative board of the community.

Thus prepared, the participants presented their proposals for Wedemark to the mayor, the first councilor, and the municipal treasurer. These proposals were integrated with others developed via other youth participation processes and analyzed further. Together with Politik zum Anfassen the schools concerned were then visited, in order to present and discuss the results.

In future, “Mayor’s Day” will be held once a year at the school complex as a youth consultation exercise for local council leaders.

The IBA “Meeting and Information Box” at the Rheinpark in Weil am Rhein

In 2015, as part of the planning process for an area around the banks of the Rhine, the municipality of Weil am Rhein launched a consultation process with children and young people called “Session in the City” in conjunction with the Jugend des Landkreises (District Youth) working group. The participants expressed a desire for some form of shelter or pavilion where they could meet their peers regardless of weather conditions. In response to this request, children, young people, and local government employees jointly came up with the idea of a mobile meeting space and information box in the future park area in the course of subsequent participatory sessions. Funding for the box was acquired through an urban redevelopment program. The meeting and information box will also feature at the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Basel 2020. For the IBA, the boxes were designed in the form of containers and installed at various locations. A canopy and a light allow children and teenagers to meet regardless of the box’s opening hours, and even in the evening. The box is fitted with a table and benches, and play equipment can be borrowed by children and young people on request. The meeting and information box opened in mid-2017. At the request of children and young people, the play equipment is only distributed under supervision, which the city’s children’s and young people’s commissioners and the district association have made possible on three afternoons a week. The city’s youth welfare agency uses the Infobox in a flexible way for mobile youth work. It has also been turned into a spontaneous outdoor classroom by a local elementary school.



Supporting refugee children through the Wolfsburg children’s advisory council

At the beginning of 2016, members of Wolfsburg’s children’s advisory council joined refugee children at two refugee shelters for an afternoon of play. The advisory council had previously decided to use part of the budget donated by the Bürgerstiftung Wolfsburg (Wolfsburg Citizens’ Foundation), along with donations from another project, for games, writing materials, and educational books for the refugees. The office for children and young people was tasked with purchasing these items. Members of the children’s advisory council spent the two afternoons playing with and getting to know the refugee children while demonstrating the games to them.

Ensuring a Child Friendly Legal Framework



Would your child know whom to approach in local government if he or she had a particular concern? Most likely not. This is why child-friendly communities have established contact points for children and young people. These serve to connect children to local officials and administrators. Ombudsmen can also help young people assert their rights. In designing these contact points, municipalities have a wide range of options. Children's and young people's offices or children's commissioners, for example, might serve as lobbyists for children's interests. Whatever specific approach is chosen, a child-friendly community guarantees that its children's interests are represented and enforced. Beyond its own administrative structures and institutions, it also initiates and supports local and regional networks and cooperates with strategic partners and children's rights organizations.

Anchoring children's rights within such institutions is essential to fulfilling the four central duties set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child: ensuring and safeguarding the rights to protection, provision, and participation, and raising public awareness of children's rights.

Children do not have the right to vote and cannot advocate for their own interests through political processes in the same way as adults. Like other "vulnerable" population groups, such as those without German or EU passports, they therefore need their own forms of representation and support. To this end, municipal child advocacy groups work to promote the interests of children and young people in local politics, government, and civil society. They provide information about children's rights to all those concerned and support children and young people when they autonomously exercise their rights and seek to play a role in community life. Institutional representation of children's interests is expected to conform to the following quality standards:

"Municipal children's interest groups always actively involve children and young people in their work in a variety of ways and using a range of methods. In doing so, they treat children and young people as bearers of their own rights, i.e. behave respectfully and appreciatively toward them and take them seriously.

"They intervene where children's interests have not been sufficiently taken into account in development or planning processes or if a child or adolescent is at risk. Through lobbying, networking, and campaigning, they raise awareness about children's and young people's rights. And through independent and effective monitoring, they provide decision-makers at the local, state, and federal levels with data to promote child and youth-friendly communities. Municipal children's interest groups work on a process-oriented basis and are entrusted with cross-cutting tasks in all municipal policy fields. They are endowed with the necessary authority through political and administrative legitimation. They possess both appropriate qualifications and sufficient human, financial, and technical resources."¹⁸

As the quotation suggests, facilities and resources are crucial if the various forms of children's advocacy are to be sustainably rooted within a municipality. In all of our child-friendly communities, creating and supporting such institutions and facilities is one of the decisive conditions of success, and the preparation of the action plan alone requires significant efforts to be made in this regard. Even in the pilot phase of the Kinderfreundliche Kommunen project, it became clear that there is no one path toward child-friendliness, but that each municipality has to find its own approach.

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¹⁸ Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Kommunale Interessenvertretungen 2015: Qualitätsstandards für kommunale Kinderinteressenvertretungen. Leipzig: BAG, p. 6 (www.kinderinteressen.de/images/pdf/BAG_Qualitätsstandards_2015.pdf).

The potential for experimentation is particularly rich when it comes to helping children articulate their views on the municipality and assert their own “right to the city.” This is also due to the fact that, beyond the norms of child and youth welfare rights, the various means of representing children’s interests at the municipal level have not yet been institutionally defined. This is true even of the few federal states that have made child and youth participation obligatory for their towns, municipalities, and districts in their municipal constitutions. The names and functional descriptions of such approaches and processes are accordingly highly diverse.

Favorable conditions for the implementation of children’s rights are created through the interplay of at least two structural elements:¹⁹

(1) In municipal governments, there is a need for institutionally anchored, professional representation that advocates for children and young people in politics, civil society, and local government, that promotes children’s rights as a cross-cutting task, and that heeds children’s interests raised by civil society and enhances their public profile. This representation might take the form of children’s and young people’s offices or children’s commissioner’s with clear powers, excellent local and regional connections with children’s and young people’s rights organizations, and the capacity to influence local child and youth policy. Irrespective of how we might designate it, such structural representation takes two key forms. On the one hand, it is concerned with conceptual or strategic cross-cutting tasks directed by a dedicated local government unit. On the other, it serves a civil-society function in the form of a contact and complaints center for children and young people. Where both of these functions are concerned, it is important and helpful if the representatives in question not only have clear responsibilities and skills, but also suf-

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19 The Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft (federal working group) cited above distinguishes between four structural kinds of municipal interest group: (I) units/children’s commissioners with a strategic conceptual mandate; (II) advocates for children and young people; (III) contact points for children and young people; (IV) independent ombudsmen for children and young people and complaint management centers (p.7). Even if the functional distinctions between these roles are uncontroversial, there are often institutional links between (I), (III), and (IV), as has been seen in our certified municipalities.

ficient resources and the necessary independence to credibly fulfill their mediating role.

(2) Equally varied is the representation of children by children through children’s and youth parliaments, advisory councils, forums, and commissions. A 2018 study by the German Children’s Fund identified around 550 municipal children’s and youth parliaments in Germany that had existed for at least two years, were not single-issue forums, and received legitimation through regular elections.²⁰ Such bodies help to bring young people’s ideas into the local political process. They often have their own budget for projects and are professionally supervised by local government officials and supported by local youth initiatives. There are also a wide range of institutional, age and issue-specific forms of representation and public programs such as children’s and youth forums. Some of these have already been discussed above. In general, however, it is difficult to understand and assess the impact of these bodies, particularly when they are consultative from the outset, i.e. designed to advise elected officials and decision-makers or experts in public institutions and services, or to help develop proposals through simulation games.

The following selection of initiatives focuses on offices for children and young people and children’s commissioners, as well as various kinds of children’s representatives who advise local governments and politicians. The examples show that their proposals are often taken up by local decision-makers – particularly in child-friendly communities.

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20 The key data can be found in the recent federal government report: Fünfter und Sechster Staatenbericht der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zu dem Übereinkommen der Vereinten Nationen über die Rechte des Kindes. Berlin: BMFSFJ/Bundesregierung, pp. 206-7.

Offices for children and young people

Cologne's office for children and young people

At the beginning of 2019, the city of Cologne opened its cooperative office for children and young people. The office is centrally located in downtown Cologne, opposite the city hall. One of the distinguishing features of this cooperative office is its composition: two full-time positions were established by the city of Cologne's department for children, young people, and family and another part-time position by the Kölner Jugendring (Cologne Youth Association). The representation service for local school students has also been integrated into the office. The cooperative office serves as an interface between children and young people and the district and city authorities.

The aim of the office is to develop and coordinate participation strategies for the city and to provide an easily accessible contact point to which children and young people can bring their concerns. In this way, it serves to institutionally anchor the interests and rights of Cologne's young people. As an office for child and youth participation, its main tasks include promoting participation among children and young people in local politics and the local community, helping children and young people establish their own organizations, and enabling participation for children and young people in urban planning processes. The office also advises participation facilitators and advocates for participatory processes in the city government and political bodies.



Hanau's office for children and young people

Initially a part-time project launched in January 2016, the Hanau office for children and young people has been staffed full-time since 2018. The publicly accessible office is centrally located in the town hall's "City Store" space, which offers numerous services and information on a range of areas. As the office itself puts it:

"The office for children and young people [...] is a bureaucracy-free contact point and intermediary for young people looking for advice and help. It organizes, initiates, and implements projects in cooperation with municipal authorities, organizations, independent bodies, and engaged citizens. Above all, it advocates for children and young people in Hanau – simply, straightforwardly, and without bureaucracy."

A flyer describes the office's goals and tasks in detail:

Objectives: The office for children and young people offers guidance on the wide range of counseling and support services available in Hanau, provide information on the work of various institutions, and quickly and competently put visitors in contact with the right people to deal with their queries. Our office serves as an information exchange and an intermediary between citizens, associations, federations, administrative departments, and institutions.

A project-based ideas platform: We aim to respond flexibly to developments in the town and are always open to new ideas. Here we depend on the participation, support, help, cooperation, and dialogue with all those working to make Hanau as child friendly as possible.

Functions: The office serves as a bureaucracy-free contact point and intermediary for children, young people, and families seeking advice and assistance.



Children's rights: We actively advocate for children's and young people's rights. In order to make Hanau even more child friendly, the office should be consulted and actively involved in municipal development processes.

Child participation: The office also provides a platform that enables children to get involved and participate in their city..."

Children’s and young people’s commissioners

Children’s and young people’s commissioners in Weil am Rhein

Weil am Rhein has had a children’s and young people’s commissioner since 2015. The commissioner’s demanding role involves managing and implementing the Kinderfreundliche Kommunen project. This includes ensuring participation among children and young people in the project and future administrative activities, as well as conducting surveys at schools, holding workshops for children and young people, and establishing an advocacy group with its own budget to represent children and young people. In addition, the commissioner is responsible for implementing and organizing local events for World Children’s Day and World Children’s Rights Day. Four years after the position was established, its value is clear. It has not only led to numerous projects with schools and associations, but also to the development and adoption of a participation guide for local government.

Potsdam’s coordinator for children’s and young people’s interests

Since the end of 2018, Potsdam’s coordinator for children’s and young people’s interests has ensured that the needs of young Potsdam residents are regularly taken into account in all urban planning processes. When drawing up its action plan, the city had already created an additional part-time position at the local office for children and young people. The coordinator now works to support the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at local government level.



Children’s and young people’s commissioners in the municipality of Algermissen

In the middle of 2016, Algermissen’s municipal council appointed the head of the children’s, young people’s, and family services as its commissioner for children and young people through a co-signing ceremony at the town hall. This ensured that the commissioner would be involved in decision-making processes at an early stage whenever children’s and young people’s interests are at issue. Two other youth welfare workers also address children’s and young people’s concerns and convey these and their suggestions to the local government.

In its flyer, the three-person team describes its expanded remit as follows:

“The Algermissen youth welfare team has always worked to meet the needs of local children and young people (including through “open door” events in youth centers, wide-ranging projects, training programs to help young people become youth leaders, and by providing advice and support). In our new function as children’s and young people’s commissioners, we also offer a confidential contact point where you can discuss your concerns, questions, and suggestions. We provide advice and support on any problems that might arise, as well as informing you about your rights, standing up for them, and helping you participate in issues that affect you.

“For all local council decisions, we assess whether the interests, needs, and wishes of children and young people have been or should be taken into account. Once a week, our consultation hour gives children and adolescents the chance to speak personally with a member of the youth welfare team.”



With this flyer, the three-person team of youth care, as a contact point for children and adolescents, announces their tasks.

Supporting children's and young people's commissioners in Wolfsburg

As of April 1, 2015, the position of Wolfsburg children's commissioner has been placed under the organizational remit of the councilor for young people, education, and integration. The aim here was to strengthen the children's commissioner's competences and decision-making powers by enabling faster and simpler access to individual council departments. At the Wolfsburg city council constituent assembly at the end of 2016, the statutes for the city's youth welfare office were amended so that the children's commissioner now acts as an advisory member of the youth welfare committee. In order to boost staff numbers at the office for children and young people, a position was created as part of the Voluntary Social Year (FSJ) program, which gives young people an insight into various aspects of local politics and municipal government. At present, FSJ volunteers are assigned to the office for children and young people, which is led by the children's commissioner.

The office's own description of its work identifies the following key functions:

"1. A contact point and advisory service. The office for children and young people acts as a first port of call for problems and questions affecting children, young people, and their parents.

It provides information about children's rights (in accordance with the UN Convention) and opportunities for children and young people to participate in Wolfsburg community life, while also referring visitors to local advisory centers and services.

2. Coordinating children's and youth affairs. The office for children and young people serves as the central information and advisory center for participatory projects and is responsible for conceiving and implementing participatory activities. In addition, the office advises and supports other departments and organizations. It also fulfils a monitoring function to ensure children's and young people's interests are being upheld.



The children's and young people's commissioner also advises the children's advisory council

3. Information and public relations. The office works to continually bring the interests of children and young people to public attention. This is achieved through a range of public events and through the publication of information brochures, documentation, and technical reports.

On account of its range of tasks, the office is not able to conduct any long-term advisory processes. It encourages, stimulates, and supports institutions, projects and specialist staff to work for the benefit of children and young people."

Children and young people representing their own interests

The Wolfsburg children's advisory council

The children's advisory council is a new means of facilitating participation among children. It is coordinated by the city of Wolfsburg's office for children and young people and is usually composed of two groups containing an average of twelve children aged between 8 and 13. These children represent the interests of their age group for one school year before a new cohort takes their place. As part of their annual planning process, they select the issues they consider most important in Wolfsburg and that they wish to address. Thus far, these have included refugees, schools and nature, the environment, school lunches, and playgrounds. A recruitment flyer for the fourth children's advisory council (2018/2019) states: "We need experts like you! Your opinion counts. Your interests are important. Know your rights. Raise your voice in the city! You can have a say on what your playground should look like, what leisure opportunities you want or don't want, how to make your roads safer, what facilities are lacking for children, and what needs to change in your district."

The flyer also notes that future council members will have the chance to:

- Test and evaluate new leisure and games provision
- Conduct playground checks
- Discuss YOUR concerns at regular meetings
- Find out about YOUR rights and participation opportunities in Wolfsburg
- Listen in to Wolfsburg city council meetings
- Report on YOUR concerns to the youth welfare committee or the commission for children and young people
- Receive vouchers for free entry to various leisure facilities.



The children's advisory council has been so popular in Wolfsburg that its number of members was increased to 26 in October 2018 to ensure that none of the applications had to be rejected. In its most recent term, the council selected four topics to address: the environment, playgrounds, schools, and transport. It also aims to integrate children's rights further into local government policies. As a report to the youth welfare committee states: "The children's advisory council will therefore be divided into two groups: one consisting of the new members and the second (expert) group consisting of those members who have already participated (a number of times) in the children's council. The expert group will continue to be regularly involved in the planning process for the Sonnenkamp development area and in other participatory projects in the city of Wolfsburg."

In the advisory council's work, great importance is given to developing age-appropriate forms of participation. These include simulated council meetings, which help to clarify the procedures involved in municipal decision-making processes and the ways in which they can be influenced.



A recent survey found that the children's abilities and knowledge (both about children's rights in general and the opportunities for participation among council members) – are highly impressive. The survey also found that children mainly learned about children's rights through their schools and the office for children and young people. All of the children stated that they are able to have a say in playground design. They primarily express their opinion about the city through discussions with the staff of the office for children and young people and in official children's advisory council meetings. They report that they feel they are taken seriously and that they have been able to help shape developments in an autonomous manner.



The children's advisory council planted a tree, according to their aim of a green and clean environment.



The Regensburg youth advisory council

In April 2015, Regensburg's city council passed a resolution to establish a new form of participation for young people – a youth advisory council. The project is an integral part of the city's approach to child and youth participation. The city council describes the socio-political rationale for the project and the role of the advisory council as follows:



“In this ‘body’, decisions are made that are actually implemented. In order to ensure the interests of children and young people are heard, the city of Regensburg is establishing a youth advisory council to complement its existing advisory councils for disabled people, emigrants, foreign nationals, and senior citizens.

The youth advisory council represents the interests of all children and young people in Regensburg. It is comprised of representatives elected by children and young people aged between 14 and 18. The council can offer proposals and recommendations on all matters concerning children and young people in Regensburg, as well as giving statements on such issues. It also has its own budget allowing it to independently support projects initiated by children and young people.”

Following an intensive election campaign, 25 girls and boys were elected to the first youth advisory council in February 2016 and tasked with representing the interests of the city's young people for two years. 4,332 young people were eligible to vote in the city area and elections were held in 17 schools and eight youth centers. Of the 44 candidates aged between 14 and 17, 25 were elected to the youth council. Voter turnout was just under 20 percent. Two years later, turnout had increased to around 30 percent. The first areas on which the council focused were urban infrastructure, cultural provision for young people, and intercultural dialogue. A separate working group was set up to address public relations work. In addition to its website and social network channels, the council reports on its projects and ideas three times a year in Your Voice magazine. It is supported by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth's Living Democracy program.



The council describes its role and activities runs as follows:

“It is tasked with advising the mayor, the city council, and its various committees and may pose questions to local politicians at any time [...]. With an annual budget of 18,000 euros, the youth advisory councils can carry out projects under their own initiative. Like city councilors, they are remunerated for their attendance. Their work is supported by the lord mayor, the office for municipal youth work, and the youth welfare committee.”

The projects launched by the first youth advisory council included an under 21's ticket for regional transport services, a sticker campaign on city center trash cans highlighting over-consumption, creative competitions for young people – including one on the theme of “time” – an international youth conference entitled “We R International”²¹ and a “Diversity Weekend.” The second council has taken on many of the first's themes and is increasingly concerned with the environment and leisure provision, such as attractive bathing sites on the Danube. The council has also played an active role in the city's sports development plan. Its structural anchoring within the local administration

has been bolstered through the allocation of permanent seats on the sports advisory council and the health and safety advisory council. In collaboration with the advisory council on integration, the youth advisory council was also instrumental in establishing an urban anti-discrimination office.

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²¹ The first international youth conference took place from July 31 to August 6, 2016, under the heading “Let's Talk about You and Me.” It brought together representatives from Regensburg's partner cities across the world (see www.regensburg.de/leben/familien/familienfreundliche-stadt/siegel-kinderfreundliche-kommune/umsetzungssstand).



The Wolfsburg children's and young people's commission

At the beginning of 2017, a children's and young people's commission was set up in Wolfsburg as a subcommittee of the youth welfare committee. In the commission, up to six young people aged between 14 and 27 work with local government officials to bolster the rights of children and young people and thus help shape the development of their city. Young people's wishes and demands can be fed directly into local administrative and political discussions through the youth welfare committee. The commission meets at least four times a year, and its collaborative work ensures a smooth transition between various participation opportunities. This continuity helps to foster long-term commitment to civic engagement among children and young people.



A report by the children's commissioner on the first term of the children's and young people's commission states that “In intensive meetings with local government officials and politicians, the young people have always entered into discussions on an equal footing and have addressed the question of how the local administration can communicate more effectively with young people in future. In collaboration with the communications department, the young commissioners and the office for children and young people have developed a set of recommendations on this. In particular, they have delivered on their proposal to make greater use of digital media, producing a YouTube video that presents the young people and their work in the commission.”

Senftenberg's Junior Experts

In order to lay the groundwork for and complement the work of the children's and young people's parliament, the city of Senftenberg also launched another participatory program, called Junior Experts, at the end of 2016.

The aim of the project is to help municipal employees see the city's child-friendly measures from the perspective of children between the ages of eight and twelve. It seeks to ensure that children's opinions, wishes, suggestions, and criticisms are taken into account. The most recent group of junior experts consists of eight children aged between eight and eleven. They are consulted on relevant issues by the city's educational and social workers and they meet once a month. Junior experts are called upon to collaborate on projects such as children's rights rallies, children's festivals, and children's city maps. Furthermore, the program helps to prepare them for roles in the city's children's and young people's parliament. Since children need to be 12 or over to enter the latter, this ensures a seamless transition.

The junior experts were also involved in the Reading by the Lake project, which was realized for the first time in summer 2018. The project was aimed at children between the ages of five and twelve and consisted of readings by local citizens who wanted to pass on their love of reading to others. The readings take place at different locations around lakes. Before the project was launched, the junior experts helped city administrators scout for, assess, and select these sites. To this end, a coach was rented and the children were taken to many different locations at lakes in the area. Many of the junior experts later took part in the reading project themselves.



Children’s and young people’s advisory councils Algermissen

In February 2017, around 1,300 children and young people between the ages of six and 21 were invited to a launch event to learn what a children’s and young people’s advisory council is, why it is important, and what political bodies do.



ensuring that local residents have access to a drug-store. In addition, they have realized collaborative projects such as flea markets, and have used the income from stall fees and food stands to fund the “Green Algermissen” project, which involves planting trees and bushes in the municipality. At the beginning of 2018, the children’s advisory council launched a survey on road safety in Algermissen.

They approached people on the street and left twelve survey boxes in bank branches, shopping markets, after-school care centers, and day-care centers for three weeks. The majority of the 140 respondents were aged between 40 and 70 and pinpointed 11 dangerous sites for cyclists on local roads. The children’s advisory council members are now

Two advisory councils were subsequently established: a children’s advisory council for those between 6 and 12, and a young people’s advisory council for young people up to 21. The children’s advisory council is comprised of 25 members; the young people’s advisory council of 10 members. Both councils meet on a monthly basis and coordinate with one another where necessary. Once a year there is an annual meeting of the children’s and young people’s advisory council, to which all children and young people in the community are invited. Members of the young people’s council have a seat on the committee for children, young people, family, and senior citizens, where they also promote the interests of the children’s council. They also work with the steering group run by staff from the youth welfare office, which ensures that children’s and young people’s suggestions and ideas are brought to the attention of local officials. The ideas proposed by the young people’s council have thus far included a summer barbecue, a new cycle path, youth centers in two districts, and a shop in one of the underserved districts. A graffiti wall built by the young people at one of the centers offers a legal way to give free rein to their creativity. They have also taken the initiative in en-



planning to raise awareness of these danger spots by installing signs they have designed themselves. In order to raise the necessary funds to install the signs, the children plan to collect donations and find suitable sponsors.

The children’s and young people’s commitment and their exciting, generation-spanning projects were honored with the “KinderHabenRechte-Preis2018” (Children Have Rights Prize) by the state of Lower Saxony and the Lower Saxony child protection association.

Student representatives meet the Remchingen mayor

In its action plan, the municipality of Remchingen committed to enabling student representatives from all schools to regularly advocate for their interests among local officials. Since 2017, student representatives have met once a year with the mayor and the Kinderfreundliche Kommunen coordinator. In an informal atmosphere, the students report on any issues they have encountered at their schools and offer their suggestions for improvements. Where necessary, the issues raised are then discussed with the school management and solutions are developed together with the student representatives.

In May 2017, the student representatives and the eighth class of a vocational secondary school undertook an inspection of a railway station site with the mayor, the deputy head of the council's construction department, and the Kinderfreundliche Kommunen coordinator.

Some of the children's requests and suggestions were quickly implemented:

- An additional street lantern was installed near an elementary school in a dark spot that the children had found unsettling.
- At one school, new lockers were installed with the close cooperation of the acting headmaster.
- At the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, students of the fifth grade of a secondary school were given training on using buses in cooperation with the police prevention team.

This dialogical approach is particularly attractive for children since the municipality not only takes their wishes and suggestions seriously, but also implements them rapidly.

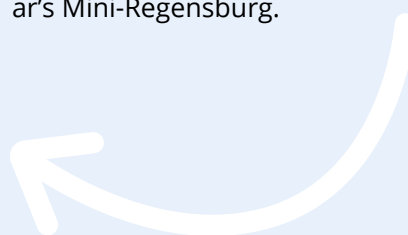


Child advisors in Regensburg

Since the end of 2017, Regensburg has had 30 child advisors. They are aged between eight and 14 and regularly meet with the mayor to discuss current issues. The majority of the child advisors are former members of the “mini-city council” run as part of the Mini Regensburg initiative, but others have also applied for the office. The children’s term of office began after the 2017 Mini Regensburg project and is to end two years later, after the next Mini-Regensburg. The children’s concerns focused on school renovations, bus links & bus stops, playground renovations, and safe routes to school. In 2018, the child advisors held a total of nine meetings. Their activities included meeting with the head of the school construction department, testing a new playground, generating a raft of ideas for play areas in the old town, and a visit to the Mini-Munich project, where they oversaw the “Regensburg Embassy.”



Some of the children’s requests concerning school renovations were quickly implemented. An elementary school façade was renovated, for example, and some missing toilet seats were replaced in a secondary school. Likewise, their ideas for play areas in the city’s old town were also quickly realized. Here the municipal gardens office had asked for the children’s help and was positively surprised by their inventiveness. In 2019, the children addressed the issue of safe school routes and helped to plan this year’s Mini-Regensburg.



Implementing a complaints procedure in Cologne's children's homes

In order to ensure ongoing participation at Cologne's children's homes, the children's and young people's welfare service (KidS) established a complaints procedure. The aim was to inform the children cared for by KidS about the complaints procedure and the various bodies in which they could participate, as well as encouraging them to actively do so.

To this end, an orientation guide providing age-appropriate information on the complaints procedure was developed. An insert was also produced to inform the children and young people individually about who to contact and how to make a complaint. The materials were printed in June 2018 and are given to children and young people when they move into a home, along with an "I have rights" children's brochure developed by KidS.

As part of a poster competition entitled "complaints welcome," a KidS complaints poster was developed in collaboration with children and

young people. Turnout for the project was excellent. The graphic elements of the winning posters were used to design a final poster that is now displayed in all KidS locations.

The complaints poster and the insert initially led to a rise in the number of complaints from young people living in KidS homes. For evaluation purposes, a form is being developed for the process, which is currently in the pilot phase.

In addition, the organization has established a KidS Parliament, which has met at least twice a year since November 2018. It gives children and young people the opportunity to put forward their complaints and actively participate in decision-making processes. The parliament currently consists of 24 members, who as speakers for their respective groups represent the interests of children and young people cared for either on a part-time or full-time basis. The dissemination and transparency of the parliament's conclusions is ensured partly through the spokespersons for the various children's teams and partly through the institutional managers in management committees.

In order to support the implementation of the agreed procedures and ongoing development, an office for child and youth participation was established in 2018. This is the first port of call for all questions concerning children's rights, participation, and complaints, and is also responsible for running the KidS Parliament. In addition, an advisory council on child and youth participation was established to support the office's work and to strategically initiate, plan, and implement relevant processes and measures.



Child and youth participation



The right to participation is one of the three central pillars of children's rights, and one that impacts and permeates all others. As with child protection, it isn't enough just to provide support for children without inviting them to have their say. Accordingly, our child-friendly communities have emphasized the importance of participation in many areas. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child formulates a sweeping demand: Children should be able to form an opinion on "all matters affecting [them]" and should be able to express this opinion freely. They are also entitled to have this opinion properly taken into account. The convention therefore expressly guarantees not only their freedom of expression (as per Article 13), but also their freedom of association and assembly (Article 15). There are of course limitations that apply due to children's developmental stages, so that their age and maturity level have to be taken into account. But this doesn't mean that the right to participation is tied to a particular age or developmental stage, but rather that age-appropriate forms of participation should be found and that children's desire to participate should be supported, with appropriate learning opportunities being provided to them.

These participation norms have not yet been fully incorporated into national regulations. One of the key maxims of child-friendly communities is that children should be involved as early, comprehensively, and effectively as possible in community decisions. Such communities have found imaginative ways to reduce barriers to participation and develop age-appropriate modes of participation that are suitable for these highly dynamic age groups. There have also been efforts to create participation chains, i.e. to establish forms of participation that build on one another, and ultimately to ensure there are appropriate opportunities available to children of all ages. And since children are never

obligated to participate, it is also important to motivate them and show them how worthwhile their opinions and collaboration are. Here it is essential to treat children and young people as equals and to ensure they have a sense of self-efficacy.

Participation is one of the children's rights that has received particular attention in recent decades. There are now a vast number of guides, quality standards, and modes and methods of participation.²² "Participation ladders," for example, which set out a hierarchy of forms of participation ranging from illusory participation to self-organization, are still popular today. The experience of the last three decades has shown that ambitions for child and youth participation are growing. This is a dynamic field in which new formats are constantly being tested. One of the key experiences of child-friendly communities is that children and adolescents both want to and are able to have a say in, collaborate on, and shape many areas of community life from a very early age. This is why a child-friendly community is distinguished by a wide range of opportunities for participation and an enthusiastic approach to experimentation. There is likely no community in the world that can claim to really involve its young people deeply in all issues affecting them. As a rule, we can find isolated high-participation areas within a generally low-participation field. But there are considerable differences from place to place and our child-friendly municipalities not only feel that they are implementing the central requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also

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22 To give just two examples: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) 2009: *Ausgezeichnet! Kinder- und Jugendengagement wirksam fördern*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung; BMFSFJ (ed.) 2015: *Qualitätsstandards für Beteiligung von Kindern und Jugendlichen*. 3. Auflage. Berlin: BMFSFJ.

that it is worthwhile to invest in participation for many other reasons besides.²³

As the student-led “Fridays for Future” movement has shown, young people are always ready to raise their voice and work for their future. Whether they will be successful depends heavily on how key decision-makers in civil society and government respond to their demands. Child-friendly communities are marked by their positive responses to the initiatives and protests led by younger generations. At Kinderfreundliche Kommunen, we attach particular importance to four key means of promoting child and youth participation:

(1) Further staff training. Whether communities encourage their children and young people to participate in shaping community life depends strongly on the willingness and ability of adults to actively involve them. In other words: Child and youth participation begins in the minds of administration officials and responsible adults. To date, training for administrative officials and employees in most specialist departments has generally not covered children’s rights in general nor participation skills in particular. This is compounded by administrative law, which, as one academic observer has noted, is flexible and administration-friendly, but “not necessarily citizen-friendly.”²⁴ This is particularly true in the case of participation among young citizens. Participation processes for such groups can only be supported and safeguarded if the municipality has employees capable of leading them and involving young people. A number of external institutions offer regular training and further education programs for this purpose. Internal training courses can also help improve participation-related skills among administrative and institutional staff. Ensuring employees are appropriately trained is an important precondition for ensuring regular participation in municipal planning and decision-making processes for children and young people.

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23 A paper entitled “Mehr Teilnahme wagen” (“Venturing more participation”), for example, brings together over a dozen arguments for increasing participation among children and young people. See Olk, Thomas/Roth, Roland 2007: Mehr Partizipation wagen. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.

24 Cf. Seibel, Wolfgang 2016: Verwaltung verstehen. Eine theoriegeschichtliche Einführung. Berlin: Suhrkamp, p. 194.

(2) Participation plans and guidelines. Goodwill and a willingness to participate are necessary but not sufficient in the long term. What is ultimately needed here is to make the right to participation defined in the UN Convention legally binding. In order to involve children and young people in a wide range of areas on an ongoing basis, institutional regulation is required. Such regulation might take the form of municipal bodies such as children’s and young people’s parliaments, commissions, and advisory councils. Children on these bodies can advise on municipal affairs, develop their own projects, and contribute to shaping their local community. Another approach consists in developing participation guidelines, which make it obligatory to consult children and young people when administrative departments are planning projects and institutions that may affect their lives.

(3) Project-oriented participation processes. Participatory schemes that focus on individual projects for a limited period of time are widespread. Planning processes for children’s playgrounds offer one prominent example here. Such processes are usually easiest to reconcile with young people’s everyday lives and demands, and can be particularly receptive their initiatives and suggestions. Project-based participation processes are also seen as particularly easily accessible and can be successful in social circles where participation is uncommon.

(4) Self-administered budgets. Participation budgets have recently increased significantly.²⁵ Such budgets guarantee a certain level of funding for projects chosen by children and young people themselves. They can then be assured from the outset that their ideas will not remain mere ideas, even if their project is not ultimately voted for. Budgets that are administered in this way through votes can be seen as a “schooling in democracy.” It makes a huge difference however, if a body such as a local council or youth welfare committee places its trust in children and young

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25 On the participatory opportunities offered by funds and budgets, see Roth, Roland 2018: Fonds und Budgets als Beteiligungsinstrumente. In: Stiftung Mitarbeit/ÖGUT (ed.). Bürgerbeteiligung in der Praxis. Ein Methodenbuch. Bonn: Stiftung Mitarbeit, pp. 148-154.

people, so that they can decide for themselves how to use the funds provided. It is by allocating such budgets that a municipality demonstrates its commitment to child and youth participation. Nevertheless, this approach requires professional support in order to achieve its desired effects.

Further staff training

Specialist forums for child and youth participation in Senftenberg

The implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the municipal level depends on communication and networking among local actors. To this end, two specialist forums on child and youth participation were held at Senftenberg's town hall in 2016. The attendees consisted of local government staff, local politicians, school principals, and representatives of children's and youth services. They discussed existing participation structures and explored ways of improving and expanding them.

In 2017, a number of other specialist forums taught participants about the essentials of communicating with children in administrative practice. When implementing participation programs, for example, it is important to speak with children as equals and to avoid using administrative jargon. It has to be made clear to children and young people that they are experts on the issues that affect them and that they can have a say in relevant decision-making processes. In addition, the forums provided an opportunity to learn conflict resolution strategies and convey important information on working practices within the municipality.

In cooperation with the Brandenburg office for child and youth participation and Potsdam's University of Applied Sciences, the municipality also developed a certified training program in participatory processes for municipal child, youth, and resident participation, which was staged in Senftenberg between September 2017 and February 2018. Over the course of seven training days, the program covered the basics of planning, implementing, and ensuring proper information management for municipal participation processes with different goals and target groups. These topics were then discussed further by participants and tested in practice settings.

Training participation facilitators in Wolfsburg

The city of Wolfsburg trains its own child and youth participation facilitators. To this end, it has developed a one-year training course in conjunction with the Volkshochschule Wolfsburg. Facilitators can then apply the knowledge they have acquired to one of the city's numerous participation programs.

Staff from various departments (including those for youth/youth support and kindergartens, schools, the environment, and the citizens' office) and from a number of external partners (including the Stadtjugendring Wolfsburg (Wolfsburg City Youth Association) and the Volkshochschule Wolfsburg) took part in the first further training course from April 2015 to May 2016. The course focused on forms of participation and methodological skills, and particularly on participation formats that might be suitable for Wolfsburg, such as children's and young people's forums, surveys, and strategic communication.

The 13 trained participation facilitators are part of a child and youth participation network founded by the office for children and young people, which meets regularly to share professional experiences, ensure appropriate structural conditions for participatory processes, and coordinate and expand future participation activities that require the support of participation facilitators. The aim is to create an overarching municipal network to facilitate participation among children and young people and to ensure links and suitable integration with municipal structures.

The second training course began at the end of August 2017. This was again a one-year in-service training course on facilitating child and youth participation programs. As well as communicating the philosophy behind participation, it also placed emphasis on its practical dimensions. The flyer for the course states that "Particular importance will be given to personal and professional attitudes toward participation and direct practical implementation – we will learn practical working methods in a collaborative atmosphere."

The second round of training expanded the municipal network to 20 participation facilitators. In September 2018, a two-day training course for volunteers and part-time city workers was also offered by a number of facilitators in cooperation with the Wolfsburg Stadtjugendring.



Study days in Algermissen: Children's rights in kindergartens and after-school care centers

In collaboration with the Institute for Participatory Processes and Training (IPPT Berlin), the municipality of Algermissen held workshops for all day-care centers and after-school care centers on how to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in their day-to-day practices. The day-care center staff jointly developed measures to facilitate this implementation, including dedicated kindergarten budgets for the purpose of informing children and parents about children's rights, a "children's right of the month" project, "quiet zones," children's rights photo stories, consultation hours with the mayor for kindergarten children, and expert discussions with children.



The aim of these seminars is to highlight the importance of children's rights and the associated tasks in day-to-day educational activities. In attending to practical examples, the workshops carefully addressed questions of process quality and how children's rights relate to their everyday lives, their arrival and departure from the centers, their sleeping, eating, daily routine, activities, communication, acclimatization, and their transition from the day-care center to school. These are all children's rights issues that require special attention in day-care centers.

Alongside these day-to-day topics, a number of quality-related issues were also addressed. These included the way in which furnishings and design could promote children's rights, the importance of children's rights in recruiting new staff, and the significance of the fundamental principle of the "best interests of the child."

The workshops met with a positive response from the participants. They provide a way of involving experts in the complex task of building child-friendly communities by allowing them to contribute their own creative and independent solutions.

The aim of the training is to create a comprehensive municipal network to facilitate participation among children and young people.

Participation plans and guidelines

Regensburg's child and youth participation plan

The city of Regensburg has a comprehensive plan to promote child and youth participation, which was published in April 2015.²⁶ The plan demonstrates the city's commitment by addressing a wide range of themes, forms of participation, and institutional opportunities, and through its consistent reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, it contains nuanced statements concerning additional legal bases for children's rights (SGB VIII, The German Building Code, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and so on).

The plan emphasizes the municipality's responsibility for ensuring successful participation among children and young people. "In order for participation among children and young people to become a reality, it is crucial that they are taken seriously and listened to by adults. In the day-to-day life of a city, it is very common for children's and young people's perspectives to be ignored. In order to give them a fair chance to participate and have their say, it is essential to create structures that enable them to get involved. There also need to be monitoring mechanisms to ensure that these structures are respected rather than (accidentally or intentionally) overlooked."

As well as drawing subtle conceptual clarifications (e.g. between providing information, enabling participation, and facilitating co-determination), the plan also sets out quality standards and municipal implementation procedures, and provides for regular reporting. Its aim is to ensure ongoing and reliable participation by making sure that child and youth participation is structurally anchored within the municipality. This calls for individual participation plans in those institutions that work with children and young people. In addition, the plan provides for the creation of an overarching municipal contact point.

The participation plan distinguishes between two forms of participation: (1) issue-specific participation projects in areas such as playground design,

urban development, youth welfare planning, and new construction for youth facilities and schools; (2) general forms of participation that are already practiced in Regensburg, such as the District Youth Participation (JUPS) program and the Mini Regensburg Children's Rights Agency. It also draws attention to other planned or partially realized long-term participation structures such as the youth advisory council and child-friendly planning processes. Alongside a number of other participation areas, the plan also includes a voluntary commitment to give children the opportunity to participate in all new playground planning and renovation projects in the city. It also states that participation projects that have been implemented are to be documented and presented to the city council.

A further key provision is that agencies responsible for public youth welfare are to ensure that opportunities for participation and co-determination are firmly rooted in their own plans.

Finally, the plan exhibits an openness to participation projects initiated by children and young people themselves. The municipality is to provide support and contact points for these through its committees and institutions.

With this poster the municipality informed children and young people in Algermissen about the online survey and how to participate.

²⁶ The plan can be downloaded at: www.regensburg.de/fm/121/konzept-partizipation.pdf.



Project-oriented participation processes

Meeting places for children and young people in Algermissen

In the summer of 2017, wooden play equipment in a leisure park in Algermissen was burnt to the ground. Since young people had often gathered in the area, the youth welfare department launched a survey to gauge their interest in and ideas for a new meeting place. The department used the e-participation tool Tricider to ensure that all interested young people could participate in the survey. The tool registered 377 page views, 18 proposals, and 91 votes. Tricider offers an anonymous space in which participants can propose and discuss ideas on a specific question and then

vote on it. This makes it easy for young people to contribute and discuss their proposals. At the end of this virtual process, a physical meeting was held in the leisure park to allow for face-to-face discussion. Here the results of the survey were discussed again. The evaluation showed that the children wanted to have a warm and dry shelter, preferably fitted with a light. In discussions with the relevant municipal offices, it became clear that a provisional solution would first be required. Following discussions with some of the young people involved, the decision was made to renovate a dilapidated construction trailer in the municipal construction yard. In order to recruit volunteers for the project, a WhatsApp group was created and a flyer was produced. Any young person could join the group and learn about the project or get involved. The group is led by the young people themselves and sessions are arranged through the WhatsApp group.



Young people design a street workout park in Weil am Rhein

Having first practiced their hobby “in the wild,” a number of young people in Weil am Rhein campaigned for a street workout park and presented their proposal to the city administration. The proposal was warmly received, and together with local government employees, the young people designed and realized the facility. They joined the city administrators in several planning meetings, which was a positive learning process on all sides. In a meeting with the representative of the TÜV (the Technical Inspection Association), for example, the young volunteers learned about the requirements concerning the height and the foundations of sports equipment. Closely involving young people in the entire planning process in this way made it possible to ensure high-quality facilities that were widely supported by their user base. The new facility for young sports enthusiasts opened in May 2015. Thanks to the participation process, the young people developed a strong sense of responsibility for the sports facility. In collaboration with the children’s and young people’s commissioner, they organized the opening ceremony for the facility and assumed responsibility for its maintenance. When the equipment was daubed with

graffiti by unknown individuals, they procured the necessary cleaning materials from the city administration and removed the graffiti themselves.

Today, over 50 young people regularly work out at the facility and an extension is being planned. In the Deutsche Kinderhilfswerk’s 2018 Goldenen Göre awards, the project won the “Europa-Park JUNIOR CLUB Award.” The 1,000 euro prize money was invested in expanding the site. News of the young people’s initiative has meanwhile spread to surrounding areas and inspired others to launch their own initiatives.



In partnership with local government employees, young people design their own street workout park.

Children and young people contribute ideas for a new development area in Wedemark

In Wedemark, the “Am Mühlengrund” area called has recently been opened up for development. In 2017, in conjunction with the local art college and the municipality's youth welfare worker, the department for building and planning launched a new procedure to involve children and young people in the development plan for the area. In the first planning workshop, young people explored the area and learned about nature conservation, house types, and soil conditions. Elementa-

up on the basis of a social area analysis and a world café with parents and family members. Parceling out the land and allocating areas and roads proved to be a challenging task.

The experience gained during the implementation of this pilot project will be evaluated and incorporated into the municipality's future approach to urban development planning. The planning commission for the new development area has recommended that five percent of the costs of the construction project be allocated to the participation process. This recommendation will be taken up in the pilot project evaluation.



ry schools students were partnered with 17 and 18 year-olds to work together. On the whole, the students enthusiastically contributed their ideas and imaginatively developed them. They drew up their own models for houses, gardens, and playgrounds, and for the area as a whole. The results were exhibited in the town hall in mid-2017 and included in the town planners' preliminary drafts. In the second participation phase in spring 2018, the children mainly dealt with issues concerning play areas, shared usage areas, space allocation, and development grids. New models were drawn



Children design a play area on Remchingen's Rathausplatz

The construction of the new town hall in Remchingen has paved the way for the completion of a long-planned new open space in the town center. The area lies between the new town hall and a number of existing buildings including a nursing home, a social welfare center, and a cultural center. Following a 2018 planning process in which local children participated, it is now set to become a recreational area for all age groups.

In the autumn of 2017, administrative leaders, the project planning office, municipal councilors, and school administrators worked together to develop a participation process for students in the 3rd and 4th classes at Remchingen elementary schools.

A plan was drawn up to install a set of oversized letters on the open space that children could play on. In the spring of 2018, students were then given a chance to submit their proposals for this new play area. During school lessons, they first chose a word and then reflected on how the individual letters might be used as play equipment. Around 200 students in 46 groups put their ideas down on



paper, and their suggestions were evaluated by the building authority, the planning office, and the Kinderfreundliche Kommunen coordinator in Remchingen. The local authority considered five of the word proposals to be feasible and these were submitted to the municipal council to make a final selection. A majority of committee members decided in favor of the word "Remchingen," and the first letter has already been produced and installed on site. After winning a playground competition that received over 200 entries, Remchingen was awarded 1,000 euros for the participatory project in October 2018.

Youth forums in Wolfsburg

Wolfsburg's youth forums provide a regular opportunity for young people to discuss specific urban development issues with members of the local administration. The forums are organized and supervised by the office for children and young people. The first youth forum, which dealt with the topic of social space, was held in March 2016 and brought together 12 young people aged between 13 and 19 to discuss their ideas for improvements and changes in their district. These ideas were then presented to the district council. The main wishes expressed in the forum were for a barbecue area, an ice cream parlor or kiosk, and nets for the goals at the local football field. The last 2018 forum, on the topic of "mobility," represented the conclusion of an online and poster survey in which almost 400



young people took part. The results of the survey were discussed by the youth forum participants. In collaboration with experts from Wolfsburg's transport operator and the city of Wolfsburg, the youth representatives identified shortcomings in the public transport system and proposed solutions to them. One of the young participants' main demands was to be able to use public transport at a lower cost.

"Following the Youth Forum on Mobility," a 2018 report by the youth welfare committee states, "a working group was set up on improving the mobility of young people in Wolfsburg. Bringing toge-

ther representatives from the local administration and Wolfsburg's transport operator, the group aims to respond to the requests from the youth forum and the students' and parents' councils for the expansion of transport provision. It initially developed a number of different plans for subsidizing transportation for young people and submitted its favored plan to the various council parties for their consideration."

Thanks to the positive results of such processes, youth forums have now become a key means of ensuring child-friendly urban development in Wolfsburg.

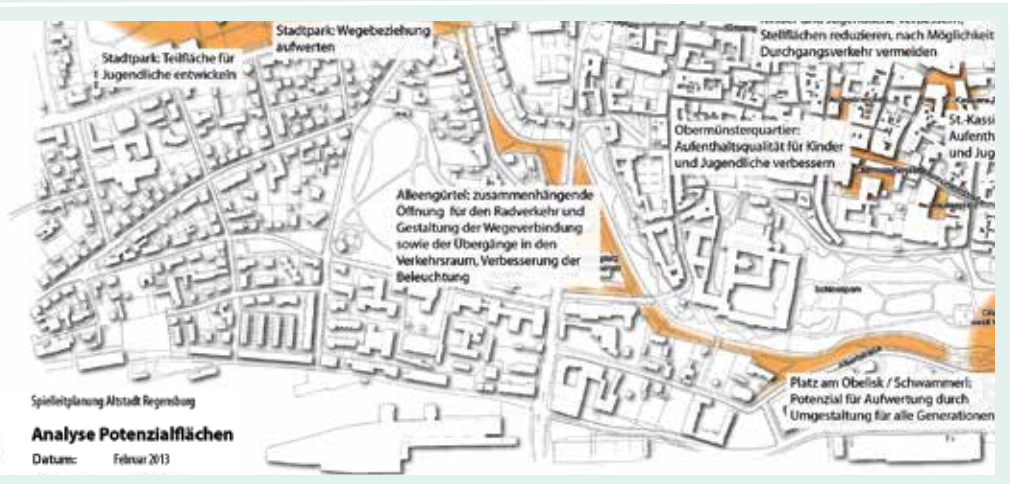
Regensburg's children and young people help shape their city

The plan for child and youth participation adopted by Regensburg's city council in 2015 provides for obligatory child-friendly planning (Spilleitplanung) as an ongoing, long-term means of ensuring child and youth participation in local government activities.²⁷ This can be traced back to the city's positive experiences with child-friendly planning as a form of participatory urban planning and development. Child-friendly planning processes have been used since 2010 to better take into account children's interests.²⁸

This method does not simply apply to new development areas or land use plans, but to the whole social environment as an experiential space and a space of play. Child-friendly planning is therefore never a short-term participatory process. For a city like Regensburg, child-friendly planning is rather an elaborate, protracted task that cannot be undertaken for the entire city area all at once. As part of the planning process, binding quality targets were set for the city as a whole. In addition, different areas of the city are being addressed step by step with the participation of children and young people. In the last few years, Regensburg constructed its third-largest city park. Children and young people



were able to help plan and design the park's play and sports area via several participatory sessions. Ideas for the park were contributed by students at a school for children with mental and physical disabilities, an association for people with physical and multiple disabilities, and students from an elementary school and a secondary school.



27 Detailed information on the methods and usage of child-friendly planning can be found at: www.child-friendly-kommunen.de/fileadmin/kfkfiles/Toolbox/Spilleitplanung_Broschuere.pdf.

28 On the approaches and results of the first few years of the program, see Stadt Regensburg (ed.) 2013: Spilleitplanung Innenstadt. Eine kinder-, jugend- und familienfreundliche Konzeption für die Innenstadt Regensburg. Regensburg: Stadt Regensburg.

Child-friendly planning for Regensburg's Kasernenviertel

Southeast Regensburg is home to a former barracks and the Lerag industrial site. This brownfield area holds great potential for the development of the city, and the local authority has planned to construct housing, green spaces, and associated infrastructure on the site. In light of this, the city considered it particularly important to carry out child-friendly planning for the area. As in the inner city, this planning process was carried out in several stages for the barracks quarter.

In the summer of 2014, children and young people

led adults through their neighborhoods, showing them where their play and recreational areas were and telling them where they felt there were issues with the neighborhood. As in the inner city too, a survey was carried out using questionnaires and mental maps.

The results were documented and incorporated into the child-friendly plan for the barracks quarter. The plan sets out key quality standards, while also detailing where action is required and the site's development potential for children and young people. In September 2016, the city council approved the child-friendly plan for the southeastern area.²⁹



29 As documented in: Stadt Regensburg (ed.) 2016: Spielleitplanung. Eine kinder-, jugend- und familienfreundliche Konzeption für den Regensburger Südosten mit Kasernenviertel. Regensburg: Stadt Regensburg.

Children and young people led adults through their neighborhoods, showing them their play and recreational areas and where there are problems for them in the neighborhood.



District walks in Senftenberg

Neighborhood walks are a simple and effective way of learning about an area in order to plan its future development – whether for children and young people or for the mayor. This is why this cost-effective and easily realizable form of participation has been used in a number of our child-friendly communities (such as Weil am Rhein’s “Town Expeditions”).

The method has been particularly intensively used in Senftenberg, where neighborhood walks are organized on an annual basis. In the course of these, local children accompany the mayor and local government officials on visits to sites such as schools, playgrounds, sports facilities, and school routes. This allows the children and adults to ask each other questions and get a response right away. During the walks, children gain a clearer sense of the

strengths and weaknesses of their local area and put forward their ideas and suggestions to local officials. Here are just a few examples of the process:

At the beginning of 2016, an after-school care center in Senftenberg held its first neighborhood walk. During the walk with the mayor, the children aged between seven and nine offered suggestions on how to make their city even more child friendly. The walk was documented via a photo exhibition in the town hall.

In 2017, the city’s junior experts (see p. 46) were commissioned to test a new puzzle map called The City Explorer: A Puzzle Tour of Senftenberg, which had been specially designed for families and children.

In the course of a campaign entitled “The Senftenberg of Tomorrow: Your Vision,” many children



expressed a wish to see improvements in road safety, particularly on their school routes. As a result, another district walk held at the end of 2017 focused on identifying danger spots in the vicinity of an elementary school. Together with the city's junior experts, members of the children's and young people's parliament put colored markings on these danger spots to alert pedestrians and car drivers.

This walk was preceded by investigations undertaken by children at an after-school care center into danger spots on the school route and on footpaths. The children marked these on city maps.

At the end of 2018, 13 elementary school students were invited to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their school with their principal and the mayor. Before the tour of the school began, many suggestions for improvement were put forward by the students, as well as a proposal for a school newspaper.

The more quickly such proposals are implemented, the more attractive these walks become for the children.



The Junior Experts mark dangerous areas with stencil and spray paint they have to pass on their way to school.

Children's conferences in Senftenberg's kindergartens

Children's conferences are held every Friday in Senftenberg's kindergartens, and give four- to-six-year-olds an opportunity to voice their wishes and concerns. The conference discussions cover issues such as interior design, toys, the canteen menu, and small projects. Before getting involved themselves, younger children first watch older children to learn how participation works at their kindergarten.



Self-administered budgets

In order to ensure autonomous and effective participation among children and young people, two main options are open to us. On the one hand, we can seek to implement as fully as possible the suggestions and wishes proposed by children in consultative forums (from children's and young people's councils to site visits with city officials). Where this implementation does not seem possible or sensible, the young people in question are entitled to know why their suggestions were not taken up or implemented. Only in this way do they have the encouraging experience of participating in the democratic process and being heard.

On the other hand, local parliaments and city governments can set up fixed-volume funds to be made available to children and young people through transparent allocation processes with clear guidelines and objectives, so that children can realize their own projects. Funds and budgets such as these may be allocated through one-off calls for proposals on a given theme. One example is the 2015 Hanau Youth Prize for Tolerance and Democracy.

Funds like these are increasingly being used to provide the financial basis for children's and young people's committees. Senftenberg's children's and young people's parliament, for example, independently manages a fund of 3,000 euros per year, from which it allocates funding to selected children's and youth initiatives. The parliament members decide which projects to fund and learn how to use the available resources in a responsible manner that ensures equal opportunities.

A budget for children and young people in Weil am Rhein

Weil am Rhein has allocated a budget for children and young people, which is administered by the town's youth parliament. The youth parliament has developed guidelines for awarding funding, as well as a payment system, an application form, and advertising materials such as flyers and posters.

Children and young people between the ages of 10 and 21 can apply for financial support from the youth parliament if they wish to organize a project for themselves and other young citizens in the town. The first budget, totaling 2,000 euros, was made available to the youth parliament in 2015. The youth parliament has set out strict guidelines for the allocation of funds:



„§ 1 Applicants must live in Weil am Rhein, be aged between 10 and 21, and have the consent of their legal guardian if they are under 18.

§ 2 The project venue must be in Weil am Rhein and the event must be open to the public. It must not be discriminatory or violate anyone's human rights in any other form. An estimate of the cost of the project including budgeting must be enclosed with the application (see application form). The application must be complete. The law for the protection of minors applies.

§ 3 The event's target audience should be children and young people between the ages of 10 and 21.

§ 4 The youth parliament shall decide on the allocation of funds in a public session [...]

§ 5 The application must be submitted using the application form and received at least six weeks before the date of the event. The application shall only be considered if all mandatory fields have been completed and a valid copy of the applicant's identity card or passport has been enclosed. The mandatory fields are: project name, contact details of the applicant (and his/her legal guardian if applicable), project description, budget including overall cost estimate, project plan.

§ 6 The applicant will be invited to a private meeting and successful projects will be announced in a public meeting.”



The Regensburg youth advisory council's self-administered budget

For 2018-2019, Regensburg's youth advisory council has been allocated an annual budget of 18,000 euros to implement its own project ideas. Most of this funding comes from the Living Democracy! program run by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The city of Regensburg provides additional financial support to the youth advisory council in the form of attendance fees (of 30 euros per meeting) and funding for public relations work (including a website and printed materials).

The council members make budget decisions by passing resolutions in the monthly plenary session. A simple majority of the 25 members is required for any resolution to pass. The administrative work required by the funding guidelines for the federal program is carried out by Regensburg's office for municipal youth work. The usual provisions for the use of municipal funds apply (i.e. inviting tenders, performing a performance audit /assessment by the audit office before awarding funds).

As a whole, the volume of the youth advisory coun-

cil's budget is difficult to quantify. In the case of municipal infrastructure projects (involving sports development, public playgrounds & sports facilities, public transport, and urban development) for example, the council's ideas are not implemented using the youth fund. Two such examples are the "Under 21" online travel card requested by the council and the establishment of an anti-discrimination office.

These measures required significant funding from the general municipal budget. Administering an independent budget of 18,000 euros is a challenging task, since on account of holidays and other factors, the council effectively only has a ten-month financial year, and does not have to pay any fees for the use of public facilities.

Funding guidelines and public budget rules (such as earmarking, differentiating between capital budgets and operating budgets, and prohibiting funds from being carried over from year to year) can represent bureaucratic obstacles – at least from the perspective of actively engaged young people. But such hurdles can often give many young participants their first experience of time and project management.



Right to Information and Monitoring



What we don't know, we can't appreciate. And only if we know our rights are we able to claim them. Empirical studies have repeatedly confirmed that awareness of children's rights remains low in Germany. The Children's Report of 2018 found that 84 percent of children and 87 percent of adults knew them only by name or not at all. Compared to the previous year, awareness had even decreased.³⁰ One of the concerning findings of these surveys is that parents with children only differ negligibly from those without children. The lack of awareness is also unaffected by educational level, age, and urban/rural differences.

The various municipalities on the path to child-friendliness cannot therefore assume that the children's rights they wish to promote and uphold are even known to their citizens. This not only holds for children and young people and the population as a whole, but also for the majority of employees in local government and local services. What we need, then, are a wide range of imaginative educational drives to raise awareness of children's rights and ensure they are firmly rooted in a community's DNA.

The primary task here is for the municipality to provide comprehensive information on children's rights across the generations. Only in this way can it increase support for an ambitious child rights policy that impacts all municipal activities affecting children and young people. Only in this way can it generate understanding and support for prioritizing children's rights where there are conflicting interests, as required by Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Only in this way can young people be encouraged to claim their "right to the city." And only in this way can the mu-

nicipality spread the word among adults that reorienting municipal policies toward children's rights benefits the whole town or village.

(1) The first step is to inform local residents about children's rights. The examples below show how this can be achieved from a very early age. In principle, information can be provided in any place, at any time – whether at sports events, vacation activities, in the official gazette, at theatre performances, and so on – the possibilities are unlimited. The more children and young people are themselves involved in information campaigns, the more authentic and effective these will be. Our examples make clear that such campaigns can inspire action.

(2) Regular surveys with children and young people can help make children's rights more tangible and vivid (as a number of the examples discussed above have shown). Such surveys address questions such as: How child friendly is our community from its children's perspective? What do young people like about it and where do they feel it falls short? How have the measures and projects set out in the municipal action plans been received? Where is there a need for adjustment? Where public projects are concerned, evaluation and monitoring are more frequently called for than actually implemented – usually the effort needed to do so is too great or the results are too unwieldy. Child-friendly communities have come up with many ideas on how to gather the views of young people – either those who are already involved in projects or who are addressed by them. They undertake participatory evaluations and gather feedback that can be used to plan further activities. They also regularly write reports on the status of children and young people in their community. To this end, they interview children and young people and involve them in participatory processes that aim to be as inclusive as possible. Consulting with children and young

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³⁰ Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk 2018: Kinderreport Deutschland 2018. Rechte von Kindern in Deutschland. Berlin: DKHW, p. 35.

people in these various ways is a prerequisite for cities and communities that set out to become as child friendly as possible. Nevertheless, regular monitoring that addresses the central areas of children's lives is only just beginning to emerge.

(3) Child-friendly municipalities also engage in extensive information campaigns to inform young people about the opportunities available to them and the measures taken for them. Children and families in difficult situations in particular need information on counseling and support services and contact points in their environment. Children and young people are also helped to establish and maintain their own communications and public relations platforms, which increasingly involve digital media.

Disseminating information on children's rights

Information boards and banners on children's rights in Regensburg

Regensburg has developed a range of ways to anchor children's rights within the local community. Children's and youth workers receive training on the subject and on contributing to the city's website. Since 2017, playground display boards that were developed in collaboration with children have provided age-appropriate information on children's rights. Banners were also created to provide straightforward and comprehensible information about the most important children's rights and their implementation in the city.

These are regularly used to inform people about children's rights at events such as the Kinderbürgerfest (Child Citizen Festival) in the city park, Bunte Wochenende (Diversity Weekend), the Familienspielfest (Family Games Festival), and in schools.



**STADT
REGENSBURG**

 <p>Recht auf Gleichheit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alle Kinder sind gleich wertvoll und wichtig. • Kein Kind darf benachteiligt oder diskriminiert werden. • Keiner wird ausgeschlossen. 	 <p>Recht auf elterliche Fürsorge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinder haben das Recht bei ihren Eltern zu leben. • Eltern müssen sich gut um ihre Kinder kümmern. Für sie sorgen und die Kinder im Guten erziehen. • Keiner darf aus Kindern ihre Eltern einfach so wegnehmen. • Selbst wenn sich die Eltern trennen, haben die Kinder ein Recht darauf Kontakt zu beiden Eltern zu haben. 	 <p>Recht auf Schutz vor Gewalt und Ausbeutung</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jede Gewalt gegen Kinder ist verboten. • Niemand darf Kinder ausbeuten oder missbrauchen. 	 <p>Recht auf Bildung</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alle Kinder haben das Recht auf Bildung – im Kindergarten, in der Schule und auch in der Freizeit.
 <p>Recht auf Spiel und Freizeit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alle Kinder haben das Recht zu spielen und sich zu erholen. 	 <p>Recht auf Beteiligung</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mädchen – Mägdchen – Mädchenkinder • Alle Kinder haben das Recht sich zu informieren, zu sagen, was sie denken und mitzubestimmen. 	 <p>Recht auf besondere Förderung bei Behinderung</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinder mit Behinderung haben das Recht besonders gefördert und geschützt zu werden, damit sie aktiv am Leben teilnehmen können. 	 <p>Recht auf Gesundheit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jedes Kind hat das Recht auf ein Höchstmaß an Gesundheit, auf Gesundheitsvorsorge und medizinische Betreuung.

Alle Bilder entstanden im Frühjahr 2016 in der Grundschule der Vielfalt und Toleranz, Regensburg. Stadt Regensburg, Amt für kommunale Jugendhilfe, Jugendamt Regensburg, Gestaltung: Kathi Dreier-Regensburg | Druck: Klettner-Klein, Regensburg

Kinder haben Rechte!



“SFBaby” – Children’s rights for Senftenberg’s very youngest residents

The city of Senftenberg has hosted an annual children’s festival since 2016, which brings together babies born in the previous year for a group photo with their parents. The aim is to make both the babies and parents feel welcome in the city. Each family is given a baby gift bag by the mayor, which is filled

with vouchers, an SFBaby T-shirt, and a toy for the baby. The bags also contain information about children’s rights.

The SFBaby photos can be found on the city’s official website under “Kinderfreundliche Kommune.”



Children’s rights in Senftenberg’s Official Gazette

Senftenberg’s official gazette reaches a large number of residents, since it is distributed free of charge to all households. In order to raise awareness of children’s rights, the gazette published a regular column from June 2016 to October 2018 entitled “As Children and Young People, We Have Rights!” Each article in the series focused on a specific children’s right. Although such an official newspaper is unlikely to reach children directly, the inclusion of children’s rights in this way reflects their increasing importance in the local community. In addition, the column’s child-friendly style is intended not only to make parents and teachers reflect, but also to encourage them to read it to their children.

The fourth article in the series offers a striking example:

“Your right to play and leisure time. It’s especially important for children to be able to experiment and to learn and experience new things! That’s why the right to play and leisure time is an especially important right. Article 31 of the Convention

on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to leisure and rest. Things like sports clubs and playgrounds have to be provided for you so that YOU can do and experience great things in your free time ...

In Senftenberg, there a wide range of leisure activities on offer for all children. Did you know that there are over 200 clubs in our city, where you can take part in sports, cultural events, or other collaborative activities? Alongside the Pegasus cultural and leisure center, the Würfel association, the WK III, and the theater’s youth club, there are a whole host of other facilities such as the water park, the city library, and the zoo – all places where you can both learn and play. The city also has to make sure that there are playgrounds where you can let off steam in safety. The local authority currently maintains 23 playgrounds in the city area and the various districts”.

(Official Gazette of April 15, 2017)

Children's rights kits

Children's rights kits have been used in Remchingen, Potsdam, Regensburg, Senftenberg, and Weil am Rhein. The kits contain a set of information materials that can be borrowed by local teachers. Each municipality compiles its own kit, often taking inspiration from and using materials produced by UNICEF and the German Children's Fund.

helping teachers discuss children's rights in kindergartens. It includes a booklet with instructions that have been specially developed for the kindergarten context. The kit can be borrowed free of charge from the department.

In a kindergarten in Remchingen, staff developed a mobile children's rights kit tailor-made for their needs. It is available to all children and helps to



The children's rights kit is filled with information and teaching materials on all aspects of children's rights. It is not only suitable for use in class, but also in other contexts in which children learn about children's rights. The kit contains a range of exciting ideas for project work with children of different ages, and the materials invite young people to intensively engage with the topic of children's rights and develop their own ideas in relation to it.

The Regensburg kit was developed by the department for municipal youth work, with the aim of

promote close engagement with children's rights. This approach can be adopted by all Remchingen kindergartens to fit their own needs, with the municipality supplying the requisite material.

In Senftenberg, the children's rights kit helps to introduce students in the town's four elementary schools to children's rights in a playful way. In a video posted on the municipal website a boy explains the contents of the kit and the corresponding children's rights. A similar video was made in Remchingen.

The Mini Regensburg children's rights agency

Following a test run two years earlier, a "children's rights agency" was established in 2015 as part of the children's play city project Mini Regensburg. The idea was developed by the department for municipal youth work. Every two years, the agency informs around 1,500 children a day about children's rights as part of the three-week vacation program. The agency also publicizes opportunities for participation and contact points in the city. Its public relations work makes use of the various media available at Mini Regensburg, and includes stage-based events, lectures at the children's university, and information stands.

Throughout Mini Regensburg, the agency gives the children an opportunity to voice their concerns, criticisms, and suggestions for improving the children's play city. In addition, the children "employed" by the agency carry out surveys on the theme of "Regensburg's child-friendliness." This allows the department for municipal youth work to gain an insight into and potentially boost the level of awareness of its child-friendly measures every two years. If issues or criticisms arise in this process that are important to the children and that they want to put to the city's administrators and politicians, the agency helps them to do so.

The agency devotes particular attention to informing children about their right to participate. Important information for children and young people is placed on the city website in an age-appropriate manner, and special websites have also been developed for youth centers and the youth advisory council. All play areas for children and young people are also clearly displayed on the city's website. In addition, the Mini Regensburg website provides information about children's rights.



A theater play in Weil am Rhein: “Everyone should know about children’s rights, including you”

In the town of Weil am Rhein, fifth-year secondary school students staged a play about children’s rights. In the autumn of 2015, the students had engaged intensively with children’s rights in class and on project days. In collaboration with their class teacher and the German teacher, they subsequently developed their play and contributed to the national Children’s Rights Day. More than 90 students watched the performance on December 18, 2015.

“Children are always right”: A play in Wedemark’s kindergartens

In the winter of 2018 and spring of 2019, Ingrid Irrlicht brought her play “Children are always right” (Kinder haben immer recht) to Wedemark’s kindergartens. The play introduced the theme of children’s rights in a playful way. It was performed at 16 kindergartens, reaching around 800 children and their parents. As a follow-up to the play, the kindergartens are planning to address the topic of children’s rights through a range of activities in the autumn and spring. The project partners are all kindergartens in the municipality of Wedemark run by independent and local authorities.

With her play “Children are always Right”, Ingrid Irrlicht introduced the theme of children’s rights in a playful way.



The Wedemark children's rights run

Wedemark's annual sports day combines exercise and play with education about children's rights.³¹ The regular "relay race for children's rights" and other events help to publicize different children's rights, particularly the right to social participation. One example is the "blind football" event. Thanks to collaborations with local sports associations, children and young people are able to learn about the opportunities open to them in their local area.

The "children's rights run" offers families the chance to take part in a one or two kilometer race.

On this sports day, the focus was placed squarely on the various children's rights. Moreover, the open day for the various sports associations reflected a commitment not to restrict the idea of the child-friendly community to Wedemark, but also to keep in mind the wellbeing of children in other parts of the world. This cross-border approach to child-friendliness was also evident in the decision to sell Fairtrade articles (i.e. those that are produced without exploitative child labor) at the event.



In 2017, the working group on children's rights and Wedemark's youth welfare department organized a refreshment stand with fair-trade goods, a sponsored children's rights relay race, and a children's rights information stand. The proceeds were donated to a social project in Wedemark. The children's relay race was accorded a special symbolic significance: passing on the baton here was a figurative expression of the fact that children have rights – that they have exactly the same rights all over the world, even in the remotest corners of the planet, regardless of gender, nationality, religion, or skin color.

31 As early as 2008, the municipality of Wedemark inaugurated its "Children's Rights Street" initiative, which featured stands drawing attention to individual children's rights. This was a two-year project run by Wedemark's working group on children's rights with students from five of the municipality's schools. The working group brilliantly documented the art project and was awarded the "UNICEF Ambassador Special Prize" in 2009 (www.kunstschule-wedemark.de).

Conducting regular surveys with children and young people

A survey by the youth advisory council to support youth welfare planning in Regensburg

In February 2017, questionnaires were sent out to all young people in Regensburg between the ages of 14 and 17 (a total of over 4,000 young people) as part of a youth survey carried out for the purposes of youth welfare planning. All the young people who returned the questionnaire were automatically entered into a prize draw.

1,249 young people (or 29 per cent) completed and returned the questionnaire. The high response rate was partly due to the fact that both the youth advisory council and many schools and social workers approached children personally and encouraged them to participate.

The 65 survey questions covered topics including: children's leisure activities, interests, wishes, and needs; their satisfaction levels in areas such as transport, housing, green spaces, and education; and issues such as bullying and support needs. The results laid the basis for the youth welfare plan that will be presented to the youth welfare committee in 2019 and will serve to orient youth and social work in the coming years.

Young people participating in the survey, could win a prize.



The 2018 Cologne youth survey

From April 9 to July 1, 2018, all of Cologne's 70,000 young people between the ages of 14 and 20 were able to take part in a voluntary, anonymous youth survey for the first time. The 27 survey questions covered topics such as "perspectives on and for the city," "participation and engagement," and "leisure activities and interests." Young people were involved in the survey project throughout. They were represented on the survey advisory board by district students' representatives and via a partnership with the Cologne youth association. The advisory board met regularly to observe all stages of the project. In addition, workshops were held with young people before the survey was launched to discuss the questionnaire topics and the design and strategy for the advertising campaign.



Before the start of the survey, pre-tests were carried out with young people, and during the survey a qualitative workshop was held, followed by a results evaluation workshop. In order to also encourage participation among less academic young people, a social media campaign was launched in cooperation with the Rheinische Fachhochschule, alongside a traditional marketing campaign. In addition to the online questionnaire, paper questionnaires were distributed to youth centers and schools. A number of prominent bloggers in the youth scene also acted as "survey patrons," sharing the link to the youth survey via online posts and calling on their followers to participate.

One of the key results from the nearly 5,100 responses was that young people in Cologne identify with their city, value its vitality, culture, tolerance and diversity, and want to make a difference.³² At the same time, the interviewees raised many points of criticism. Improving the cleanliness and safety of the city was seen as just as important as improving mobility (including expanding cycle paths and public transport) and the need for outdoor meeting places, nightlife options, and free Wi-Fi. The participants also highlighted the need for additional youth facilities and advice centers, as well as green spaces and sports facilities.

A welcome finding of the survey was that over 60 percent of the young participants were interested in politics and engaged with civic life. One of the most widely shared demands is for the right to vote from the age of 16. The action plan project, "Putting money in the hands of children and young people" also met with great interest.

.....
³² The results can be viewed on the survey website: www.jugendbefragung.koeln.



Information for children

The Kinderfreundliche Kommune newsletter in Wolfsburg

Wolfsburg's office for children and young people publishes a regular online newsletter about the progress of its child-friendly measures and our activities with and for children and adolescents. Between August 2016 and March 2018, it published a total of 13 issues.

The newsletter is widely distributed via a mailing list. It is sent to all current and past members of the children's advisory council, members of the children's and young people's commission, all local government departments, the Wolfsburg participation facilitators network, and the press.

Videos on practices in child-friendly communities

The Internet is one of the most important sources of information for younger generations. Our child-friendly municipalities have therefore posted videos online giving an insight into their work, especially in participation committees. To give a few examples:

Wolfsburg's children's and young people's commission

The work and ideas of the young people in the youth welfare committee's children's commission were the subject of a 2018 film that is now available on the municipal website.

Regensburg's youth advisory council

A film about Regensburg's youth advisory council can be found on Youtube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtPHHPLNao8



An app for young people in Algermissen

Since the beginning of 2017, Algermissen's youth welfare department has had its own app to let young people know about its work and the services it offers. Among other things, the app lets people know about open days at youth centers, as well as sports, cultural, and leisure projects. It links to the youth welfare department's other information channels on Facebook and Instagram, and also highlights upcoming participation opportunities.

The app has proved to be an effective means of increasing participation among young people in the community.



Der #Ferienpass2019 ist endlich da. Die #Jugendpflege #Algermissen ist immer in Bewegung. Als nächstes stehen...

Mehr anzeigen

03. Jun. um 09:59 Uhr



Gänserock 2019 läuft....

Mehr anzeigen

25. Mai. um 19:57 Uhr



Weil am Rhein's QR code

A youth participation QR code can be found on websites and billboards at schools and other public places around Weil am Rhein. It provides up-to-date information on participatory opportunities.

The cities and communities participating in our program

The following population figures refer to 2017.

Algermissen

Population: 7.864
Children and young people: 1.305 (16,6 %)
In the program since: December 2014
First Action Plan: 2016 – 2018
Second Action Plan: 2019 – 2021



Hanau

Population: 96.130
Children and young people: 17.880 (18,6 %)
In the program since: August 2012
First Action Plan: 2014 – 2018
Second Action Plan: 2019 – 2021



Bad Pyrmont

Population: 19.067
Children and young people: 2.460 (12,9 %)
In the program since: October 2019

Köln

Population: 1.080.394
Children and young people: 173.943 (16,1 %)
In the program since: November 2013
First Action Plan: 2018 – 2012



Dormagen

Population: 64.177
Children and young people: 10.461 (16,3 %)
In the program since: March 2018

Lampertheim

Population: 32.609
Children and young people: 5.185 (15,9 %)
In the program since: May 2019

Eltville

Population: 17.125
Children and young people: 2.843 (16,6 %)
In the program since: September 2018

Maintal

Population: 38.930
Children and young people: 6.579 (16,9 %)
In the program since: September 2019

Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Population: 27.024
Children and young people: 3.783 (14 %)
In the program since: July 2017

Mannheim

Population: 307.997
Children and young people: 47.431 (15,4 %)
In the program since: December 2018

Nauen

Population: 17.686
Children and young people: 2.865 (16,2 %)
In the program since: August 2018

Oestrich-Winkel

Population: 11.838
Children and young people: 1.776 (15 %)
In the program since: November 2017
First Action Plan: 2018 – 2020



Stuttgart

Population: 632.743
Children and young people: 97.442 (15,4 %)
In the program since: March 2018

Taunusstein

Population: 29.746
Children and young people: 5.354 (18 %)
In the program since: February 2015

Wedemark

Population: 25.599
Children and young people: 4.582 (17,9 %)
In the program since: March 2015
First Action Plan: 2017 – 2020



Potsdam

Population: 175.710
Children and young people: 30.573 (17,4 %)
In the program since: May 2015
First Action Plan: 2017 – 2020



Puchheim

Population: 21.396
Children and young people: 4.022 (18,8 %)
In the program since: June 2016
First Action Plan: 2019 – 2021



Weil am Rhein

Population: 30.197
Children and young people: 5.496 (18,2 %)
In the program since: March 2012
First Action Plan: 2015 – 2018
Second Action Plan: 2019 – 2022



Regensburg

Population: 150.894
Children and young people: 21.729 (14,4 %)
In the program since: December 2012
First Action Plan: 2015 – 2019
Second Action Plan: 2019 – 2022



Weilerswist

Population: 17.500
Children and young people: 3.097 (17,7 %)
In the program since: September 2018

Remchingen

Population: 11.766
Children and young people: 2.082 (17,7 %)
In the program since: February 2015
First Action Plan: 2017 – 2020



Witzenhausen

Population: 15.163
Children and young people: 2.350 (15,5 %)
In the program since: September 2019

Senftenberg

Population: 24.558
Children and young people: 3.487 (14,2 %)
In the program since: January 2013
First Action Plan: 2015 – 2019



Wolfsburg

Population: 123.914
Children and young people: 20.198 (16,3 %)
In the program since: September 2012
First Action Plan: 2015 – 2019
Second Action Plan: 2019 – 2021



BILDNACHWEISE

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