



ENABLING SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS!

STATEMENT OF THE FEDERAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD



LEGAL NOTICE

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FOREWORD	4
1 INTRODUCTION	6
2 VOCATIONAL TRAINING, EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, OCCUPATION	10
3 MOBILITIES	14
4 YOUNG ADULTS IN A MULTIFARIOUS SOCIETY	18
5 INCLUSION: EQUAL RIGHTS TO BE PART OF THE SOCIAL FABRIC	24
6 WELL-BEING AND HEALTH	27
7 YOUNG ADULTS AND FAMILY	32
8 CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT	36
9 COMMUNITIES AND MUNICIPAL SOCIAL POLICY	41
10 CONCLUSIONS: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AS A YOUTH-POLICY TASK	46
LITERATURE	48
MEMBERS OF THE FEDERAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD	53
THE FEDERAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD	55

FOREWORD

Early adulthood lastingly shapes how the young generation becomes part of and finds its proper place in society on various levels. Hence the main purpose of writing this report on *Enabling social participation among young adults!* is to call on youth-centric and specific spheres of politics to systematically delve into the institutional structures of relevance to early adulthood. The aim is to jointly devise a policy that provides young adults' ways and means to participate in society on an equal footing.

The current coronavirus pandemic has again highlighted the fact that to date, young adults have rarely been the focus of social, youth-related, and participatory areas of politics. Current predictions point to youth-centric policy consequences of the pandemic that especially impact the group comprising young adults. One example is the disproportionate degree to which young adults are affected by economic and social factors, seen in terms of fewer protected jobs and an inadequate social safety net.

This also applies to vocational traineeships. There have been problems with job placements due to cancellations of job fairs and inadequate vocational guidance options. Furthermore, one fears that vocational traineeships will also decline. All these issues must be addressed as part of the measures being taken during the coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, special attention needs to be paid to young people who currently find themselves in various transition phases, are forced to flee, or cannot count on family support – here too, the pandemic gives rise to specific social consequences. Therefore, in view of how politics is addressing the coronavirus pandemic, it becomes quite apparent that early adulthood necessitates special, systematic, due consideration on the level of youth policy.

**FEDERAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD
CHILD AND YOUTH POLICY UNIT**

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¹ This statement was published in German in June 2020. It has been translated into English, revised and updated as was necessary.

1 INTRODUCTION

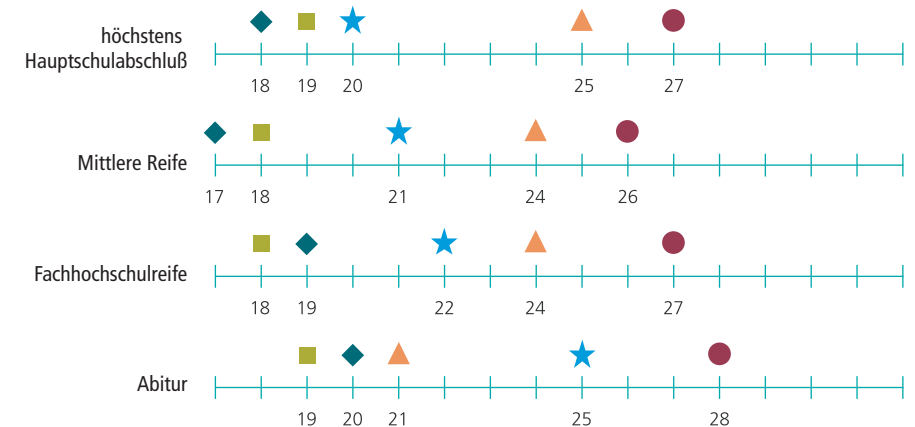
Today, when people in politics and society talk about adolescence, they simply consider it obvious that adolescence begins at the age of 12 to 14 years and lasts until about the age of 27. Not so long ago, the European social and youth policy (Walther 2016) enhanced its perspectives and measures to encompass this age range, while the focus is increasingly shifting to early adulthood in Germany too (German Bundestag 2017). This is also evident from the many measures being taken for this group of people today: for example, at job centers and in other facets of the social infrastructure.

This development commenced roughly in the 1980s (Müller 1987; Böhnisch 1992), when early adulthood was first defined comprehensively as the age from 18 to 27, because the boundaries of early adulthood began to become somewhat blurred. The social and cultural marks of this development then reflected later qualifications, new independent paths to adulthood, the growing number of university students, greater joblessness among adolescents, new forms of living, new youth cultures, people marrying later in life, etc. Ever since, young people in their twenties have increasingly found themselves in life situations in which they experience greater opportunities and pressures of adulthood than they did in their earlier years. However, they still lack an appropriate standing in society, or have yet to attain it, while their daily lives are still shaped by a youthful experimental approach (Stauber/Walther 2016).

Today, youth-centric policies and research have recognized that adolescence seems to have extended its boundaries or at least temporarily restructured itself by stretching into one's late twenties. This appears to stem from societal expectations and demands, such as gaining qualifications, self-positioning, and in-

dependence (German Bundestag 2017). The following chart highlights the age at which various events in life are reached after young people have obtained their school-leaving certificate.

all 18 to 32 year olds



Age at which 50% of young adults have experienced these events

- ◆ Starting first apprenticeship/degree
- Entered into first steady relationship (lasting at least a year)
- ★ First started earning
- ▲ First left parental home
- First moved in with a partner

Hauptschule (school for general education) certificate at the most

Mittlere Reife (basic secondary school certificate)

Fachhochschulereife (secondary school certificate qualifying students to study at a university of applied sciences)

Abitur (secondary school certificate entitling study at a university)

DJI Survey, AID:A II 2014/2015, adapted from Berngruber/Gaupp 2017, p. 8

ENABLING SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS!

The basic idea of this recommendation by the Federal Youth Advisory Board (FYAB) is to systematically apply a youth policy standpoint to assess how young adults participate in society in order to become part of our social fabric. To date, the social involvement of young adults has been regulated in a highly segmented manner, via diverse societal aspects such as training, education, gainful employment, support for families, healthcare, etc. This leads to friction in support, parallel structures, and competing support logics. In recent years, changes and more flexible systems and institutional structures for early adulthood – such as those for vocational and academic training – have yet to be considered in terms of how they impact the lives of young adults. Overall, FYAB adopts a broad socio-political definition of the term “societal participation”, encompassing inclusion, and not simply requesting the opening of existing institutional forms of participation to socially disadvantaged and excluded groups. The issue is how social freedom of action is organized for early adulthood, and how young adults could have equal rights in shaping their participation in society.

In this way, participation can be measured “by the opportunities or freedom of action to achieve an individually desired and socially typical lifestyle. Participation can be endangered (or become precarious) if both external and internalized social requirements for one’s own lifestyle and the actual possibilities to realize them drift apart. This risk turns into exclusion if persons or groups are constantly irreversibly excluded from typical social forms of participation, the ones they individually strive for, on the basis of their biographies” (Bartelheimer 2004, p. 53).

This report assumes an intersectional approach to examining social inequality. However, some chapters highlight examples of specific dimensions of the organization of social inequality. In the context of mobility, for example, this is done by focusing on migration, and in the context of a multifaceted society with emphasis on gender, or, in the chapter on the current debate on inclusion, with a focus on individual impediments and hindrances, which FYAB considers to be of prime significance for the political debate on societal participation.

Consequently, early adulthood has been at the heart of socio-political discussions for over three decades, and Germany has also applied a host of political initiatives to reshape it in recent years. One need only think of the Bologna reforms for university policies, vocational training, employment aid, or the suspension of compulsory military service. Nevertheless, there has been almost no development towards a coherent policy for this age group as demanded in the *15th Children and Youth Report*.

This report is intended to encourage systematic discussion of the age of young adults, with reference to the institutional structure of growing up, and to delve into the diverse social options for young adults’ participation. The core issue here concerns changes in participation of young adults in our society, and the resulting sustained consequences for shaping their future lives. With this report, FYAB cannot claim to comprehensively address the situation of early adulthood; rather it seeks to provide impulses for such contemplation and debate.

2 VOCATIONAL TRAINING, EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, OCCUPATION

HAVING NUMEROUS OPTIONS MEANS OPPORTUNITIES, BUT THIS ALSO INCREASES ORIENTATION PROBLEMS: A variety of education-policy-related actions in recent years have led to shifts in the educational system. Since an increasing number of people from diverse segments of society are in education, it takes longer for young people to become qualified. Consequently, striving for higher general school-leaving certificates has meant that people tend to be much older when they transition to vocational training. The average age of entry to vocational training is almost 20 (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2016, 2018). Over half the corresponding population at that age possess school-leaving certificates entitling them to study at university. This alone shows the significant shifts in our education system, marked by new demographic opportunities, social options, and a rise in the importance of formal, high-level qualifications for society.

One also observes a host of changes when looking at the range of qualification paths that have emerged in recent years. It becomes apparent that one can acquire a school-leaving certificate not just in a general education school, because a vocational training college also offers the secondary school certificate (mittlere Reife), or the certificate entitling students to study at a university of applied sciences (Fachabitur). Moreover, studies at universities have also transformed: private universities in particular are increasingly offering degree programs with flexible timing and locations so that one can study or take a distance learning program while working.

Young adults can pick from a multitude of career and vocational training programs, although this also means that they must choose from diverse options and find a new or different direction. On the one hand, young adults have new options and opportunities arising from the elimination of traditional transition patterns, the diversification of new vocational training paths, and the growth of new vocational training profiles after finishing high school. On the other hand, however, we expect young adults to cope with complex orientation activities and decisions based on a barely graspable number of options, which are essentially non-transparent for them (Reißig/Gaupp 2015). The decisions after finishing school become even harder, because of the rising unpredictability of future advancements. New technologies, globalization of the labor market, and new forms of work organizations make it quite difficult to forecast the future labor market.

Overall, the normal qualification process in Germany is full of social preconditions. "For instance, the school and vocational transition system is defined by a complexity of laws whose significance for the daily lives of young people is often hard to comprehend, even for specialists. It thus remains to be seen how adolescents and young adults should be expected to understand their rights" (German Bundestag 2017, p. 475). These young people are expected to have social relationships to give them in-depth advice and mitigate the social impact – especially in cases of tension with institutions or a potential switch or break. If these conditions are lacking, the transfer from a school to a vocational training program and/or studying at a university is marked by periods of waiting or unemployment and/or insecure entry options.

SOCIAL BACKGROUND IS DECISIVE – ESPECIALLY FOR SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN EARLY ADULTHOOD:

Young adults who cannot count on extensive support from their families or relatives and live under insecure conditions face a high social risk of being excluded from society's institutionalized qualification process (Ahmed et al. 2013). The education policy changes anticipate that young people tend to be independent actors for their vocational training careers, actors who self-direct their own trajectories via competition for recognized certifications. It is still the case that far too little attention is paid to institutional conditions for the successful qualification of specific social groups.

The fact that institutional conditions play a decisive organizational role in qualification processes is evident, for instance, in the trend at higher education institutions to progress and accelerate vocational training careers. In contrast, young adults with low-level qualifications reflect more of an extended school qualification process, as in the case of the so-called "transition system". This has anchored itself in the institutional structure of growing up. The goal of these propositions is to ensure that adolescents receive adequate vocational training or a job as quickly as possible or can catch up on a lacking school-leaving certificate. However, this only works in half of the cases. The number of individuals who switch after a year of preparatory vocational training to a second preparatory vocational training program is larger than the number of those joining vocational training programs (German Bundestag 2013, pp. 196 ff.) Despite economic relief, the transition measures continue to create waiting periods, or lead to a dead end for more than half of those concerned (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018, p. 143).

Hence before entering a vocational training program or getting a job, many young adults find themselves experiencing repeated failures, a lack of social participation options, and bad choices.

Institutional expectations and barriers can thus be so tough for adolescents and young adults that they result in them being excluded from institutions, which further compounds their precarious living situations. If they abandon or fail the normal qualification process, the outcome is a further decline in these young people's biographies and social participation.

DEMANDS:

- There is an uncoordinated, barely comprehensible juxtaposition of advice at the transition point of a school-career-employment world: This needs to be reformed and better intertwined. The training and transition system must be evaluated jointly and in greater depth in the context of the requirements of the current social and employment worlds, particularly in terms of the extent to which they respond to and support the core challenges of adolescence and early adulthood.
- Young adults need the assurance of a socially fairer, parent-independent, secure existence. Current sanctioning practices must be eliminated, and existing education options and support services must be coordinated better and seamlessly.

3 MOBILITIES

BEING MOBILE IS A CRUCIAL PRECONDITION FOR SOCIETAL PARTICIPATION, SELF-DETERMINATION, AND INDEPENDENCE: Mobility among young adults stems from their wish to self-decide when, how, and where they go. This sphere of action of young people grows with age and independence. Aspects of mobility become ever more relevant, chiefly during the phase of leaving the parental home. School, vocational training, university education, a job, and leisure activities all demand being on the move in one way or another. Many young adults perceive this as an opportunity, although many others live through this with fear and insecurity. As such, they regard their daily lives without mobility as devalued. This feeling is strengthened by the fact that for young adults, traveling reflects high status. According to a survey conducted by the Federal Environment Ministry in 2020, “Traveling and experiencing a lot” is one of the most important options enabling young adults to operate as consumers. However, young people’s room for maneuver and acting depends on their personal interests, social relationships, and financial options (German Bundestag 2017, p. 252). Moreover, their access to digital media plays a growing role in mobility and the choice of available means of transportation.

SPATIAL MOBILITY INFLUENCES SOCIAL MOBILITY: Changing one’s place of residence for a limited time is one of the main challenges and opportunities to shaping one’s life in the 21st century. Young adults in particular move from a rural area to cities for vocational training, university studies, or to start working. Hence they are confronted with numerous opportunities, requirements, and expectations – including pressure if they live in rural regions – concerning their geographical flexibility for shaping their education and career paths.

The situation gets worse if they need to commute back and forth regularly because they are bound to a hometown, for example, by social work or societal home care, or for personal reasons. Nevertheless, it has been shown that if young people pursue their education in far-off places, it can be beneficial for their social mobility beyond the level of education they have achieved (German Bundestag 2017, pp. 266 ff.) Yet regional differences in the infrastructure, at times quite significant, can endanger the chances of equally good lifestyles for young adults. To participate socially, young people need an infrastructure that enables them to change their place of residence for a limited time – and enables them to find affordable housing during education or employment, financial support for using public transportation, and social space for cultivating contacts and getting involved. Facilities like student housing with room-and-board for young adults are particularly necessary to provide educational support while they study or partake in vocational training. Such support helps them to settle down in the new location, make friends, and succeed educationally during their stay.

MOBILITY AND MIGRATION – TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN: The advancing globalization and internationalization of our society pose new challenges for young adults. International experience and intercultural competence become preconditions for both multifaceted coexistence and educational paths to an occupation. Multilingualism, intercultural competence, and the capability to deal with diversity or to work within transnational networks are considered extended processes for getting an education, experience, and qualifications. Unfortunately, this has yet to apply equally to international learning experiences gained through migration and flight.

Transnational mobility in Europe and the world has generally become more meaningful for young adults. Hence increasing numbers of them are focusing on this aspect, even though many face a multitude of structural barriers to mobility which must be brought down (Becker/Thimmel 2019). Transnational movements of migrants have also risen concomitant with globalization, climate change, political conflicts, and economic inequality.

One often sees young adults leave for another country because they see no future in a life at home. Because of isolation policies, many of these people fleeing their countries must begin their adult life in refugee camps, where their daily lives are defined by social and political exclusion. Thus the mobility policy of the European Union for early adulthood is characterized by a fundamental contradiction: While the EU strongly fosters the mobility of young adults from Member States, it fails to recognize mobility arising from migration and flight, and does not link this to the mobility policy for its citizens (Müller et al. 2017). Consequently, while mobility for education is socially accepted in Europe as a form of gaining resources, mobility arising from migration and fleeing bears more of a negative connotation in society. Those who meet the prerequisites of a global world are deemed mobile for vocational or personal reasons. Migrants, on the other hand, are sometimes stigmatized as alleged aliens whose immigration should be governed by regulatory measures.

DEMANDS:

- Regional infrastructure for mobility should be considered from the perspective of living conditions of equal value. One must find new, pioneering ways that are fitting for adolescents. This calls for needs-based opportunities for mobility for young adults that can be financed and which guarantee paths to educational and leisure options – regardless of the time and place of residence. Tickets for travel should also be easy to obtain digitally. Internet access must prevail everywhere. There must be sufficient affordable housing.
- All young adults must have the right to enhance their abilities in a global society through formal and informal education. They require high-quality options for transnational mobility in order to receive an education – irrespective of their origins, personal limitations, gender, or social standing. For participation in a society and for recognition of mobility for education, it is crucial that informally acquired competence is also accepted within the national and European qualification frameworks. Moreover, it is necessary to adapt welfare-state-related services to the structure of transnational mobility for education. These services must not lead to curtailment or cessation of services if that means that execution of the measures would be hindered.
- Young adults living as refugees in Germany should also receive support equivalent to that for other young people to enable societal participation, access to child and youth services, and measures promoting employment and health-care services.

4 YOUNG ADULTS IN A MULTIFARIOUS SOCIETY

DIVERSITY DURING EARLY ADULthood REQUIRES A SOCIAL PARTICIPATION POLICY: For about four decades now, the pluralization of lifestyles and de-standardization and personalization of the courses of lives have turned into a universal diagnosis of our society's modernization. Major attention has been paid to analyzing these times, especially in research fields concerning adolescents, where it was found that these processes characterize early adulthood. Not without reason, this perception of early adulthood begins as an age with special challenges in parallel with the time-period analyses: "In the 1990s, young adults were discovered as a new stage in life between an adolescent and adult, and as a strategic social group for the welfare state, and socio-pedagogic shaping of transitions in the context of de-standardizing the course of one's life" (Stauber/Walther 2016, p. 136). Particularly during early adulthood, pluralization of lifestyles offers new possibilities for a social and personal life. Its individualization leads to young people increasingly viewing the transition into adulthood as a biographical call to master one's own path to qualification, independence, and self-positioning.

Yet the current diversity in early adulthood is not just a reflection of de-standardization of the courses of lives enacted through the change in qualification paths and new occupational profiles, and the duplication of cultural, political, digital, and social forms of expression of young people, supplemented by the pluralization of daily forms of social and private, familial coexistence. It is also a reflection of social reality in a migrating society which also helps

enrich cultural, religious, and social diversity and which in recent years has become the new norm in young adulthood. Accordingly, today many young adults experience their generational situation as an open and heterogeneous structure that enables plurality. There is hardly a majority lifestyle here, but rather a sizable acceptance of multitudinous differences in social, religious, and personal everyday routines.

Nevertheless, one is simultaneously reminded not to trivialize diversity (Hormel/Scherr 2004) and thereby overlook inequality and racism. Merely establishing the multiplicity of individual lifestyles and new forms of social coexistence as young adults does not cut it if social discrimination is not taken seriously and underscored by social participation and antidiscrimination policies. We must dismantle inequalities in social participation to ensure that social recognition and cohesion in civil society, in the face of social pluralization, can be achieved permanently. Certain concepts like intersectionality, however, demonstrate that, especially today, a policy of social participation must account for how social disparities – which remain along social lines of difference such as gender, sexual orientation, migration, fleeing, social origin, or disabilities – can, through their interplay, turn into social inequality within the sphere of social participation. Gender-based structural inequality helps to spotlight why it is still important to also delve into individual social lines of difference in early adulthood within a multifarious society.

STRUCTURAL GENDER-BASED INEQUALITY MANIFESTS ITSELF IN EARLY ADULthood:

This is quite prevalent, as ever, in gender-based differences in gainful employment, which manifests itself structurally, especially in early adulthood. Males clearly dominate paid, in-house training programs organized by firms, whereas females dominate the scholarly training fields that either pay nothing or at times charge school fees. Moreover, young females frequently find themselves in poorly paid jobs, typically female occupations. In young adulthood, the occupational status of women is often deemed less valuable and pays less. The outcome is that later in their careers, young women experience a worsening of their situations in the job market, even though in many fields they are better qualified than their male counterparts (Boll/Bublitz/Hoffmann 2015). Hence, gender-based structural inequalities stretch into young adulthood and become established in this lifespan.

This is apparent in prevalent gender-based norms. Although young lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and LGBTQI+ undo the stereotypes of gender heteronormativity, these stereotypes continue to be structurally embedded. These young adults are also subject to extreme reactions in familial, educational, and occupational environments. Conflicts, violence, imprisonment, and neglect are still the consequences of coming out (Krell/Oldemeier 2017). Studies have emphasized the correlation between stigmatization of LGBTQI+ adolescents and the symptoms of psychological illnesses, not to mention higher suicide rates (Hatzenbuehler/Keyes 2013). Heteronormative expectations and structures can persist and negatively impact life at school or work.

DEMANDS:

- Young adults should have the right to a resolute anti-discrimination policy governing all social and institutional contexts. We need to implement such a policy that is explicitly linked to young adulthood institutions, such as facilities for vocational training, universities, job centers, cultural activities, sports, associations, and religious communities.
- Gender equality during young adulthood can only be achieved if sociopolitical and structural discrimination in vocational training and occupations (different pay for work, etc.) are addressed in a systematic manner.
- We need to consistently expand support options, especially for young adults facing social discrimination, as in the case of young refugees, young LGBTQI+, etc.

LEGAL AGE LIMITS FOR YOUNG ADULTS – AGE COUNTS

Excerpts from an expert opinion issued for FYAB by Dr. Thomas Meysen, Lydia Schönecker & Dr. Nadja Wrede (SOCLES International Centre for Socio-Legal Studies).^a

The child and youth welfare section of SGB Part VIII (German Social Code) defines “young persons of full age” as young people who have reached full legal age (§7 (3) of SGB Part VIII). Yet this terminology has not been integrated into the German legal system. The penal code for young offenders applies an alternative definition based on one of the oldest linguistic frameworks and assumes a completed maturation process after childhood and adolescence when discussing adolescents (§1 (2) of JGG, the Juvenile Court). The latter term also concerns the right of residence and at one juncture speaks of “tolerated juvenile and adolescent foreigners” (§25a (1) of AufenthG, the Law on Residence). Yet, at another juncture, the same law recognizes the full status of an adult when dealing with young adults (§44 (3) s. 1, no. 1 of AufenthG). This terminology appears again under the basic security law in SGB Part II, concerning educational and participation needs (§28 (1), s. 1 of SGB II). However, in their relationship with parents, SGB II deems young adults to be children, even after they have come of age (§7(3), no. 1 of SGB II: “unmarried, employable children”). The same applies under the civil code to one’s right to receive maintenance (§1603 (2), p. 2 of BGB, German Civil Code: “unmarried children of full age”), under the Tax and Child Maintenance Code (§32 (4) of EStG (Tax Code), §2 (2) of BKG, Federal Child Maintenance Code), and under the family and health insurance code (§10 (2) of SGB II). These terms are mostly combined under the main heading “young people” along with the group of under-18s, sometimes considered exclusively with adolescents (SGB II, §16h of SGB II), and sometimes with children and adolescents (§7 (4) of SGB VIII). When standardizing age limits, one often refers to simply individuals or vocational trainees who have completed one or the other year of their lives (e.g., §22 (5) of SGB II, §10 (3) of BAföG, §2 (1), no. 4 of FSJG, §2 (1), no. 4 of FÖJG, §2 (1), no. 4 of JFDG). [...]

^a The complete expert opinion can be viewed in German online on the FYAB website (<https://bundesjugendkuratorium.de>), or obtained in print from the Child and Youth Policy Unit.

Selected Terminology on the Post-Maturity Age Group, Pursuant to the Law:

Young persons of age	SGB VIII	Children	SGB II, BGB, EStG, BKG
Adolescents	JGG, AufenthG	Young people (part of a group)	SGB II, SGB III, SGB VIII
Young Adults	SGB II, AufenthG	Persons employable and entitled to benefits, vocational trainees, etc., until reaching a specific age	SGB II, BAföG, FSJG, FÖJG; JFDG

Such inconsistency in the German legal system’s terminology concerning the age group after coming of age suggests that the law remains primarily obligated to itself and its internal system – assuming it has such an obligation. In SGB II, one could question this aspect, since the law is inconsistent, offering four of the six different linguistic variants listed, ranging from young adults to children, from young people to persons or employable individuals entitled to benefits, up to the age of 25. [...]

This analysis of the law has clearly highlighted one aspect: In many instances, legislators would like to have a major influence on the organization and planning of young people, much more so than for other adults. Legislators also seek to impact the start and end of one’s rights and obligations in stages – even during the independence phase of early adulthood. At times, legislators grant young adults privileges and allow this group of people to have their own typical rights relating to the developmental challenges of this phase in life, and protect the continuity of processes and status in life commenced during childhood and adolescence, through to the end of the development stages. At times, legislators restrict the rights and freedom of people who have come of age more so than for other adults. Additionally, legislators deem the status of young adults comparable with those under 18 years of age. At other times, legislators also show respect for the independence of this phase of life and its specific challenges.

5 INCLUSION: EQUAL RIGHTS TO BE PART OF THE SOCIAL FABRIC

EARLY ADULthood IS WHAT DETERMINES SUSTAINED PARTICIPATION IN OUR SOCIETY: It is during early adulthood that one determines whether inclusion works and enables social participation in the normal forms of working, living, social space, and the civil society – with equal opportunities and free of barriers – or whether social exclusion manifests itself in a person's biography. In this respect, FYAB uses a terminology for inclusion that encompasses all societal groups. Yet it is necessary to explicitly name the various groups again, because they are either not in the spotlight of the political process or the perspective for early adulthood is overlooked.

It has been established that vocational training is crucial for the social participation of all young people during early adulthood. Hence if young adults are to be independent, the transition into the working world and vocational training is decisive: Young people with individual impediments and/or disabilities "manage this transition with difficulty, because their risk of exclusion rises with each stage of education" (Klemm 2015, p. 35).

These days, the transitions to jobs in early adulthood appear to be less inclusive. This is because measures which are supposed to enable participation in regular vocational training and work do not always secure a livelihood. Moreover, support services for participation in working life (such as a personal budget pursuant to §17 of SGB IX) are utilized by few individuals (Rohrmann/Weinbach 2017, p. 60) because they are not integrated into the infrastructure of the vocational training and worlds of work or the social environment. Hence, even in the cultural and social life of early adulthood, barrier-free social infrastructure is more of a goal than a reality.

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH INDIVIDUAL DISABILITIES ARE PRIMARILY YOUNG ADULTS WHO HAVE THE RIGHT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO BE PART OF OUR SOCIAL FABRIC: While the debate on inclusion focuses mainly on the age of children and adolescents and the education system, the *15th Children and Youth Report* (German Bundestag 2017) clearly determined that our knowledge is quite limited when it comes to how young people with individual impediments and/or disabilities experience their social participation in early adulthood and how they can realize their rights to participate on a daily basis. For instance, very little is known about how they shape and experience their social affiliation, both during leisure activities² and on their paths to qualifications. There has been scant research, especially on discrimination faced by those of this age.

Furthermore, there is little transparency within social services on the practice of assigning young adults to specific measures, while the participation called for by participation planning is barely implemented during the process and planning stage. Consequently, young adults find it extremely difficult to realize their career plans, or their expectations for social, cultural, and political participation. On top of this, there are no options to achieve recognized school-leaving and vocational certifications with which they could enter the labor market and receive a job which requires qualifications and offers them a secure livelihood. At the same time, there is a "growing group of young people who find a visit to a workshop for the disabled deeply perturbing for their identity, a place they reject as discriminating and one that won't secure their livelihood" (Lindmeier 2015, p. 316). This is where the *Budget for Vocational Training* (§61a (2) of SGB IX), implemented on January 1, 2020, comes into play. It is intended

² There is almost no empirical knowledge of how young people with individual disabilities organize their leisure time. Options for sports and travel are generally not designed for this target group, and come with major barriers.

to ease disabled individuals' entry into a vocational training program and offers alternatives to such workshops. We will have to wait and see to what extent this instrument will be deployed for advising and assisting young adults with individual disabilities.

The extent to which other processes of inclusion can be molded by young adults themselves would be an indication of further developments. In the context of inclusion, not just social services, but also the political defining process, daily forms of work, education, culture, religion, etc. are confronted by the fundamental claim to participation, and are required by the UN Convention to enable participation and involvement in decision-making. Through participation in decision-making, inclusion becomes the core means to social participation. The following must also be considered: one may integrate someone, but not include anyone and instead simply enable social inclusion.

DEMANDS:

- Young adults with individual impediments and/or disabilities must be supported and assisted by child and youth welfare services through the age of 27, just like other young people.
- One must work with young adults to plan their transitions to vocational training, further qualifications, and work, and sustainably secure these through infrastructural and regular ways of organizing the labor market, universities, etc.
- One must listen to the knowledge on daily lives of young adults with individual impairments and/or disabilities. Moreover, corresponding self-organizations of young people should be incorporated in research on adolescents.

6 WELL-BEING AND HEALTH

YOUNG PEOPLE FACE PARTICULAR RISKS ON THEIR PATH TO QUALIFICATION, INDEPENDENCE, AND SELF-POSITIONING: Surveys on health pay insufficient attention to young adults. Surveys focus on early childhood and adolescence due to the premise that these periods in life are deemed quite significant for the prevention of illnesses and promotion of health (German Bundestag 2009). In the meantime, however, lifecourse research has found that one should view early adulthood as extremely relevant from the standpoints of prevention orientation, the sociology of health, and psychology. This is the key age for consolidating long-term health habits (von der Lippe/Reis 2020, pp. 198 f.)

Young adults have multifaceted options, but have also become less secure (see chapter 2). On the one hand, structural shifts have given rise to more opportunities and freedom for young adults to plan and shape their lives. On the other hand, the risks of biographical uncertainties increase, and young people must address them. The core significance for the well-being and health of young adults is defined by the vocational training/job factor. School-leaving certificates and associated decisions to take specific educational programs (vocational training or university studies) often determine the social positions and resources (financial, personal, and social) that young people can obtain in subsequent phases of their lives. Thus a multitude of health problems arise in the face of limited employment perspectives for vocational school students, options for participants in occupational youth welfare services, and for the long-term unemployed (German Bundestag 2009, p. 151 ff.). At the same time, disabilities and health problems in one's life can favor unemployment and complicate access to the labor market.

However, young adults who are in training or have a permanent job – often with uncertain perspectives – face various kinds of stress that can negatively impact their psychological and physical health. Working young adults with insecure occupational perspectives report increased pressure to perform, the fear of losing their jobs, long phases of depression, and low levels of well-being (Langhoff/Krietsch/Starke 2010). Even university students report rising psychosomatic symptoms caused by stress. Overall, young adults are motivated to adapt to unstable conditions and structural circumstances. However, depending on their social and financial resources, they have different degrees of room for maneuver and opportunities to mitigate health risks or to simply compensate for them.

The current state of healthcare is inadequately tailored to young adults and their specific challenges. Hence this leads to problems when they come of age, because the individuals also transition into the adult medicine phase, with different forms of treatment and therapies. Of benefit here is so-called transition medicine, which systematically navigates this transition in order to avoid the wrong or inadequate care. This approach plays an important role³ for youths and young adults with chronic illnesses, since 40% of them do not make the transition to adult medicine, or do so very late (von Moers/Müther/Findorff 2018). Germany has major healthcare deficits in this transition phase, while some other countries have overcome this by setting up transition clinics or new collaboration structures (Oldhafer 2015).

SOCIAL NETWORKS, AFFILIATIONS, AND RELATIONSHIPS DECISIVELY DETERMINE THE WELL-BEING OF YOUNG ADULTS:

The debate on young adults and their peer groups frequently highlights negative effects like violence or delinquency, whereas the potential for support and positive effects on the well-being and health of this group is rarely addressed. The same can be said about the debate on usage of digital media. One should not underestimate the dangers of, for instance, isolation through heavy use of media, or attacks and discrimination, or the harm to a young adult's personal integrity caused by data collection and dissemination within the digital world (FYAB 2020). But there are barely any reliable data for this age group. In this context, we must also analyze how digital media enable new forms of social relationships and affiliations in their daily lives. During the current pandemic, the potential of digital media to shape social relationships has become more evident than ever, even for the early adulthood phase. In this context, it is important to not forget that despite broad-based availability of the internet and digital communications, social inequality in connection with the use of digital media can multiply and strengthen. In addition to unequal participation in existing opportunities online, further inequality in terms of access is created for young people with limited resources (Kutscher/Kreß 2015; FYAB 2016).

³ The Robert Koch Institute assumes that 16–18% of adolescents suffer from chronic illnesses (Poethko-Müller et al. 2018).

Overall, however, in this digital age and in reference to social affiliation and participation, young adults continue to consider not just a secure income, but also families and friendships as core values that can markedly influence their well-being. Connecting with others of the same age helps foster one's health for development during adolescence and early adulthood (German Bundestag 2017, pp. 216 ff.) According to the 18th Shell Survey (Wolfert/Quenzel 2019), people are much more likely to have friendships and stable relationships if they are financially secure (56% of those surveyed said they had good friends), compared with young people in a poor financial situation (only 36%). Beyond financial circumstances, the employment situation is of great significance as the source of social contacts and social recognition. It is assumed that over 80,000 young drop-outs are essentially excluded, and will generally no longer be reached by social welfare services (Skrobanek/Tillmann 2015). These adolescents and young adults face special health risks which cannot be offset by support from their social environment, and which could lead to other health impairments and participation risks, some permanent.

Moreover, so far, the debate on sexual violence and attacks has barely considered the early adulthood phase. The institutional structures for early adulthood and social networks have hardly been discussed in this context. In technical colleges, universities, or in vocational training programs, one seldom finds concepts for protection and options for sexual education. The danger posed by (sexual) assault and abuse of power is a reality within organizations and under typical living conditions, even for those 18 or

older. Sexual violence can affect young adults in institutions, as peer violence exercised by those of the same age, or by older adults, or through digital media. Institutions for early adulthood must come up with universal concepts to protect young adults against sexual violence and attacks, and help them to defend themselves against any form of sexual violence. Sexual health and related well-being must be promoted during early adulthood too, a period when many young people choose their types of partnerships and orient themselves.

DEMANDS:

- Young adults have specific needs, pressures, and potential: however, this is not reflected in the German healthcare system's structure or content. We need to develop and embed multi-professional, networked structures for the transition to adult medicine.
- From the standpoint of societal, social, and educational policies, we must develop structures that support young adults to care for their own physical and mental health.
- Organizations and institutions that care for, assist, and advise young adults, will only fulfill their responsibility if they have concepts for protecting against sexual violence and assault.

7 YOUNG ADULTS AND FAMILY

YOUNG ADULTS ARE INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON THE ORIGIN OF THEIR FAMILY TO DIFFERENTIATE AND EXTEND THEIR CURRICULUM VITAE: In Germany and in other Western nations, leaving one's family home means not just financial and social independence, but also the main step in the transition from an adolescent to an adult. Typically, German young adults express the wish to live away from their parents. However, such a move, depending on their schooling, is strongly connected to social and financial transitions during their lives. Those with the highest level of school education, entitling them to study at a university of applied sciences, generally leave their parental home in their mid-twenties (if a secondary school certificate is their highest level of education: 25 years of age; with a secondary school certificate and entitlement to study at a university of applied sciences: 24 years of age). Those who attain a school-leaving certificate (Abitur) tend leave their parents' home much earlier, at the age of only 21 (see p. 7)

Over the last decade, policy reforms for schools and universities have been likely to result in even earlier departures from parental homes by those who obtain a school-leaving certificate. Those with limited financial resources are more likely to feel the consequences of spatial separation arising from their delayed switching to a path of vocational training and career, and/or from pursuing several paths of vocational training (Berngruber 2015).

Holders of a school-leaving certificate qualifying them to study at university are generally four years younger than other groups of students when they leave their parental home to study at a university, for example. However, most university students still depend on financial assistance from their parents and tend to commute between their university town and home at weekends. Often, they also spend the transition period between the end of their degree program and commencement of work at home (Berngruber 2020).

Adolescents and young adults in particular gain spatial independence when they transition from non-family living situations. These are care leavers (see pp. 19 f.) with limited residential rights and those who are in neither vocational training nor gainful employment (German Bundestag 2017, pp. 181 f.).

PARENTHOOD DURING EARLY ADULTHOOD OFTEN COMES WITH FINANCIAL INSECURITY: The *15th Children and Youth Report* shows that young adults tend to become independent later by starting a family and assuming the role of parents, or by taking on the role of a partner – mostly in their third decade (German Bundestag 2017, p. 190). Nevertheless: almost 15% of all live births are to mothers under 25.

According to Zerle-Elsäßer et al. (2012), parents in early adulthood (mother between 18 & 24, father from 18 to 29) face serious financial and psychosocial pressures and insecure circumstances. The situation of young adult mothers is uncertain and marked by stigmatization when they seek vocational training opportunities (Scientific Advisory Board for Family Matters 2011, p. 59).

Although young adult fathers also have less financial security than older fathers, it is mostly young women who interrupt their vocational training or university studies and take on the primary role of caring for the child. Fathers are mainly responsible for ensuring financial security of the family. Since vocational training is a source of income, fathers rarely interrupt such training during parenthood. Generally, parenthood barely impacts the vocational training or career of fathers (German Bundestag 2011, pp. 89 ff.).

The living situation is chiefly uncertain for single young adult parents. Almost 30% of all single parents are younger than 34, women comprising the majority (BIB 2016). Especially here, but also in other familial constellations of young adults, the main challenges concern the compatibility of their family structures and financial security for vocational training or higher education (Middendorf/Apolinarski/Poskowsky 2013, pp. 498 ff.) Social laws in Germany are not designed to address parenthood during vocational training or university studies, but instead assume that parents are already working.

YOUNG ADULTS WITH CARE RESPONSIBILITIES FACE EXTRA PRESSURES AND CHALLENGES IN BECOMING INDEPENDENT:

Long-term care and support circumstances that often exist during childhood and adolescence tend to remain during early adulthood. Young caregivers need to find a balance between their own needs with the needs to care for and support family members. Young adults face typical challenges like starting and pursuing university studies, vocational training, entering the labor market, setting up their own household, and initiating an intimate relationship. However, for the target group, these become difficult or are strongly influenced by their caregiving or support activities (Nagl-Cupal/Daniel/Hauprich 2015). One of the biggest challenges young adults face within the family context is the inability to plan – because of the unpredictability of the courses of many illnesses. Furthermore, such young adults rate their health-related quality of life as much worse than that of other young people who do not have to give care (Metzing 2018, pp. 54 f.)

DEMANDS:

- The financial resources available to young adults essentially determine whether they have the luxury of making a move towards independence. Moreover, they need to find affordable accommodation. Therefore, financial aid from the state must be seamless and must also apply for people who interrupt their studies or study part-time.
- Parents in vocational training programs or those studying at a university must be given financial support equivalent to that of child support. We must better adapt regulations for training, studies, and examinations to the needs of young adults with a child and/or those with raising and caregiving responsibilities.
- To ensure comprehensive support for young adult caregivers, cooperation is required on the local and multi-professional levels in the fields of education, social, and healthcare systems. Great sensitivity for these issues is also required from decision-makers: health insurers, schools, municipalities, and advice centres.

8 CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT

EARLY ADULTHOOD IS DECISIVE FOR POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION: Of all 12-to-25-year-olds, 45% say that they are interested in politics (Schneekloth/Albert 2019, p. 51). At the same time, only 3–5% of 12-to-25-year-olds are members of a political party, union, or citizens' initiative (Schneekloth/Albert 2019, p. 101). As for all age groups, voter turnout among 18-to-29-year-olds has been in significant decline since the 1990s: in 1983, roughly 83% of eligible young people voted, but in 2017 none of the three youngest age groups crossed the 70% threshold. Of all population groups, 18-to-29-year-olds vote most seldom. However, this relatively low level of interest in traditional political involvement does not mean that young people do not position themselves in politics. Today, they prefer to engage in informal political activities: they boycott goods, support petitions, join demonstrations, and otherwise use increasingly stronger forms of digital involvement (German Bundestag 2017, pp. 229 ff.)

One also sees right-wing populism gaining strength in early adulthood, as in the case of almost all age groups. Particularly young adults are experiencing and representing this movement in some regions and milieus as a dominating political culture that extends all the way into the institutions for vocational training and education. Thus among young adults one also sees a prevalence of authoritarian positioning and sexist and discriminating positions that flow counter to the democratization of society and coexistence in civil society.

All in all, one observes that political participation and education need to be revived within the institutional structures of early adulthood. The political and social commitment of young adults outside of institutions for vocational training, universities, associations, clubs, the German armed forces, and not least the po-

litical parties indicates that today these institutions are perceived less as places for shaping democratic politics. For many years, vocational and academic training were deemed the main sites of political socialization, for example in the debate on democratizing businesses, universities of applied sciences, and universities. However, in the public's perception too, such activities are considered to be secondary to the vocational and academic development of expertise.

Democratic creation and participation within institutional structures of early adulthood is significant for political socialization, and despite the appreciation of all new, even digital, informal political forms of education and civil society's self-organizations, the latter cannot replace, but only supplement and challenge the institutional structures. This challenge through informal forms of political participation by young adults must be accepted and processed by the institutions as criticisms of their organizational structures.

As such, the institutions, clubs, associations, and political parties must perceive that the existing options for political participation are closely connected with social origin and level of education and defined by gender. Male adolescents, for instance, visibly participate more frequently in politics than their female counterparts. Especially young women with diverse social origins, or with a migration background, do not receive sufficient support for political participation. Access barriers also exist for the young disabled, and their options for political participation are rarely addressed. All this prevents many young people from contributing their perspectives and experiences to the political discourse and negotiation process. There is a lack of ways designed for adolescents and young adults to engage politically and express

their group's experiences, information, interests, and how they are affected. In an opinion paper, the FYAB (2019) stated that young people are barely included in policy advice activities on the federal level. Their knowledge is rarely sought or demanded.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG ADULTS STRENGTHENS OUR CIVIL SOCIETY:

At the same time, early adulthood is also a formative age for voluntary participation. According to a survey of volunteers, about a third of the young people between the ages of 15 and 30 participate in civil society; this level remained almost constant in the years 1999 to 2009. In 2014, however, participation levels surged by 47% (Simonson/Vogel/Tesch-Römer 2017, pp. 21 f.) On the one hand, this rise can be traced to social trends such as an expansion in education or growth of involvement in clubs and organizations, as observed in other surveys too (Hille/Arnold/Schupp 2013). On the other hand, this development must stem partly from the new definition of voluntary participation in the last survey of volunteers. In the 2019 survey of volunteers, these methodological changes were again reversed, which suggests that new numbers expected at the end of 2020 could be lower. As for the forms of commitment, the involvement of young people tends to decrease somewhat in formally organized civil society institutions, whereas voluntary commitment outside of clubs and associations is growing (Simonson/Vogel/Tesch-Römer 2017).

Studies have shown that the question of membership in organizations and associations depends primarily on one's (biographical) situation in life – known as biographic adaptation (Jakob 1993). In addition to personal orientation, volunteering enables social affiliation and experiences of self-efficacy.

This occurs mainly via involvement in civil society and positioning in the form of participation and helping to mold social life and political processes. The German survey of volunteers explicitly describes voluntary commitment as an indicator of social affiliation and social cohesion within our society, and as a yardstick of solidarity (Vogel et al. 2017, p. 92).

Moreover, early adulthood is chiefly the stage of life for voluntary services, e.g., in the form of voluntary military service, a voluntary social and 'ecology' year, cultural year, or voluntary service in Europe and abroad, such as the European solidarity corps, weltwärts, etc. Even if some of these programs last beyond this stage of life, the majority of those who volunteer do so during early adulthood. Young adults repeatedly criticize the underlying differences in social arrangements between the programs, in terms of pocket money, gratuity, sociolegal frameworks, etc. (DKJS 2019).

In reference to social participation, voluntary service is mostly deemed an occupational year of transition, or presented in terms of its significance for one's future career orientation. Moreover, the regularly recurring debates on compulsory service emphasize its significance for social coexistence, social care for people in need of support, and the social educational effect on young people. At its core is the completion of voluntary service in a democratic society, which means a commitment to civil society. This generative core of voluntary service and other forms of participation are often masked by the logic behind the creation of jobs and transition, or by a debate on gaps in social, health, and care services. A year of voluntary service for young adults should be seen chiefly as a contribution to education and orientation and to the democratization of social and societal participation, and ought to be arranged accordingly in terms of its organization and social conditions.

DEMANDS:

- The institutional structure of early adulthood – vocational training facilities, universities, associations, clubs, the German armed forces, and political parties – must welcome the new forms of political communication, including digital ones, and evaluate and fortify their organizations for democratic participation.
- Decisive antidiscrimination policies are needed to enable those in early adulthood to resist right-wing populism and other political and extreme positions – positions that support and strengthen discriminatory, antidemocratic, and misanthropic tendencies. Furthermore, young adults need extra support and protection when they intervene against discrimination or themselves become the victims of discrimination and exclusion.
- The organizational structures of voluntary services under all programs should be designed in equivalent formats, and their basic civil societal focus on the democratization of social participation must be reinforced. The right to one year of voluntary service (national, European, or international) should be introduced, with adequate financial backing, since this reflects civil society's core idea of voluntary service. The legal right to participate in voluntary service should account for the large numbers of prospective persons who do not receive a placement. It should also express appreciation for young people's commitment to civil society. FYAB rejects the introduction of a one-year mandatory social service program; the commitment of young people depends on its voluntary nature.

9

COMMUNITIES AND MUNICIPAL SOCIAL POLICY

DURING EARLY ADULthood, COMMUNITIES APPEAR TO BE VERY DIVERSE SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY: If we compare a university town with a rural region in Germany, it's immediately evident that the composition of young adults differs greatly by region. This depends largely on the structures of schools for vocational training, further education, and university education, but also on the social and cultural circumstances, and if and how one can use the opportunities to unfold personally. Mobility increases no later than the point when occupational training starts (see chapter 3). Early adulthood is the stage of life for local reorientation, facilitated by options for an education and occupation in the region. However, beyond this too, the composition of early adulthood differs markedly among communities. Also, many young adults live in two regions and commute between them. This should be made easier, as it is advantageous for both the region and the young people.

Nonetheless, there are undoubtedly major regional differences in terms of social, political, and cultural participation by young people. Communities are almost forced to visualize how their groups of young people help shape their social life – a visualization that amounts to a seismogram of their future. Young adults do not find equivalent living conditions in the various regions. However, it is evident that the major differences in social participation for young adults in rural areas and large cities are diminishing, for instance, in terms of mobility, the media, digital communications, and multiple affiliations.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURES BASICALLY CO-DETERMINE WHETHER YOUNG ADULTS HAVE SOCIALLY JUST AND FAIR CONDITIONS FOR SOCIAL PARTICIPATION:

There is a rule of thumb that applies to the debate on successful municipal infrastructures: If the infrastructure functions well, people barely notice it (van Laak 2018). Infrastructures are something that inevitably operate in the background (Eßer/Schröder 2019), enabling young adults to participate socially in their communities. However, infrastructures function imperceptibly only through the interaction of many social services and actors, and must be organized. The specialist workgroup on “Participation and Cohesion of Society”, which was set up for the commission on “living circumstances” of equal value, established that in the perspectives of adolescents and young adults, there is need for action in the following areas of the infrastructure: cohesion (fostering familial and generational dialog); structures (ensuring they exist): sports activities and options for cultural and political education; accessibility (mobility, broadband services, cell telephony), how adolescents are depicted (promoting the portrayal and perception of the diversity of young people and young adults); and participation in decision-making and society, education, the labor market, and integration.

Newer studies on municipal policies (Bendel/Schammann/Heimann 2019) have found that municipal political strategies tend to (or could) organize highly diverse infrastructures for social participation, and that young people also experience this very clearly. Municipal social policies can lead to crucial differences in social participation of young people; young adults undoubtedly sense whether the social infrastructure creates barriers to social participation. They also notice when social services and cultural and religious offerings do not focus on their living conditions and do not recognize their daily lives – offerings such as job centers, youth welfare offices, associations, theaters, clubs, healthcare services, churches and religious communities, vocational education facilities, businesses, and housing policies.

A municipal infrastructure for young adults is one of the primary challenges for municipal social politics. Yet this is often created in a highly segmented form, and barely deemed a fundamental challenge. It was essentially the debate on youth policy, the departure of young people, vocational training and education possibilities, housing shortages, youth poverty, and the so-called decoupling of young people (Mögling/Tillmann/Reißig 2015), care leavers and young people with physical limitations, and inclusion, which made it feasible to bring the issues of the social infrastructure during early adulthood into the contemporary framework of municipal social politics.

Overall, it is certain that not just one organization or social service can enable social participation of young adults at a local level. Instead, this must be achieved through integrated local resources providing social spaces. However, municipal social policies and social services are responsible for ensuring that young people have equal access to social participation in diverse social spaces. Hence infrastructures require solid municipal social policies to also create cross-sectoral, integrative, and cooperative social infrastructures. For the infrastructures, one needs the input of young adults, and not only for rural regions. These individuals contribute their perspectives on the basis of their plans and wish to jointly shape their social participation.

CARE LEAVERS: A LENS ON MUNICIPAL SOCIAL POLICIES

The passionate debate in recent years about the living situation of young adults, the care leavers who were under the umbrella of child and youth welfare services during childhood and adolescence, or others who grew up in foster families or foster homes, has shone a spotlight on challenges facing municipal social policies. Care leavers are particularly dependent on local municipal infrastructures to facilitate their daily lives and enable their social participation once they leave a foster home or foster family. It quickly becomes obvious that the heavy dependence of care leavers on municipal infrastructures exists because they have limited family infrastructures and material resources at their disposal. Hence one asks the question whether care leavers consider the local infrastructures provided by youth welfare services, job centers, schools & universities, vocational training facilities, businesses, healthcare services, leisure, and housing opportunities to be municipal infrastructures. Do care leavers strengthen these infrastructures by exercising their right to equal opportunities for social participation, or do they tend to experience disruptions in their daily lives? In recent years, there has been an intense debate on who has local access to which infrastructural opportunities, and how socially selective these are. How many care leavers can realize the training and education they strive for, and which opportunities within the municipal infrastructure are reserved for them?

Here it becomes quite apparent that the question of inclusion and socially fair infrastructures during the early adulthood stage of care leavers is more than just a question of the processes and social services at individual facilities. Especially during early adulthood, it is of fundamental importance that young people are empowered to participate socially within the regular structures of education, gainful employment, and daily life (living, leisure time, etc.). The educational phase is completed and transitions to vocational qualifications. The independence of young people must be secured existentially, and social positioning and affiliations must be found. However, the support often ends upon their leaving the care of child and youth welfare services. If at all, the debate focuses on the transitions from child and youth welfare services over to the federal participation law and job centers. Beyond that, one sees barely any systematic debate on securing the sustained social, occupational, and existential social participation of young people.

DEMANDS:

- In each region, we need integrated, municipal planning for social and youth welfare services for the early adulthood phase, based on the immediate social environment and oriented around participation. Moreover, young adults should be included more at the local level in political decision-making at diverse stages of the process.
- For municipal social policies, we need to strengthen and establish cross-sectoral collaboration. Individual services must be guaranteed, but tied to the social space and embedded in an integrated municipal support structure.
- Low numbers should not become the decisive factor: regions with a weak infrastructure in particular need public, social, cultural, and educational infrastructure. These regions should remain attractive for young adults by activating their local resources. Furthermore, innovative solutions for mobility are required for young adults living at several locations: mobility should be expanded while the barriers to dual local affiliations (tax based on place of residence) should be eliminated.

10 CONCLUSIONS: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AS A YOUTH-POLICY TASK

The developments and political challenges described in this statement show that many key events occur today during the early adulthood phase. This happens without the challenges being adequately reflected upon and adopted from a youth and socio-political standpoint. In recent years, the German government's youth-centric strategy and inter-ministerial collaboration has, for example, also demonstrated a fundamentally new perspective towards youth policies. Nonetheless, early adulthood has yet to enjoy adequate, systematic consideration of youth policies. This report is thus a call for these and inherent areas of politics to place more emphasis on changes in young adults' social participation than has hitherto been the case. The goal should be to create a policy that empowers all young adults to enjoy equally accessible forms of social participation. The demands stated in this report depict the multifarious organizational challenges we face.

In order to devise coherent solutions, the FYAB recommends setting up a special enquete commission on Young Adults. This would utilize a comprehensive analysis of changes and more flexible systems within institutional structures with respect to growing up and its impact on young adults' circumstances. The outcome would be the first systematic draft policy spanning multiple fields of politics concerning youth policies specific to early adulthood.

This enquete commission spanning multiple fields of politics should also incorporate young adults, their various organizations, municipal and state politicians, and members of civil society. This approach could further fortify the youth-centric strategy of the German government.

The FYAB considers it extremely urgent to thoroughly assess the extent to which institutional structures for vocational training, education, gainful employment, family support, healthcare, etc., respond to the core challenges of early adulthood and empower young adults with equal rights to participate in society. In this process, it is imperative to address the prevalent frictions, for instance, within social security systems, parallel organizations, and competing support logics, and debate how to secure sustained, societal, occupational, and existential social participation for young adults.

Developments in other European nations also demonstrate that early adulthood is a period in which inequality plays a major role in social participation and subsequent phases of one's life. This is also the time in which social differences intensify and manifest themselves – if state support and aid end too soon. One must always respond to questions concerning sustained, societal, and existential security for young people in terms of concrete regional conditions. However, the FYAB believes that this calls for an enhanced effort to address and negotiate these issues in a European context.

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