



GEMEINSAM

GESTALTEN

MITTENDRIN

Geflüchtete
Jugendliche
stärken.

[Topic sheet 2/2018](#)

Participation

In recent years, the concept of participation has become increasingly important in the context of work with children and young people. However, the concept has yet to be implemented in a consistent way in many areas.

The central objective of participatory approaches is to view young people as being equal and having equal rights, to value their participation and to respect their opinions. To achieve this, children and young people must be included in all relevant processes and decisions.

Young people with experience as refugees also face the challenge of having to deal with a fundamentally new situation in an unfamiliar environment. Their integration is made difficult by the fact that many of them live in isolation, lack specific language skills and face barriers to accessing school and vocational education. For the world they live in, participation is not only an important step towards independence, but also a prerequisite for inclusion.

When they exercise their own agency, young people are put in a position to discover their strengths and develop self-confidence. Children and young people also have rights and these must be explained to them and recognized in practice. Participation is the first step towards autonomously shaping one's own path in life.

Practical experience confirms that young people with experience as refugees can only successfully develop self-confidence and independence through their own active participation. The educators from the Medien-Etage of the KJK Sandgasse (Sandgasse Children's, Youth and Culture Centre) in Offenbach also deal with participation and the factors that enable it on a daily basis. For this reason, the team at **Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten - Geflüchtete Jugendliche Stärken** has enquired about how the participation of young people is made possible there and what insights can be derived from the Medien-Etage's work.



The Media Floor of the KJK Sandgasse in Offenbach

As part of the Children's, Youth and Culture Centre (German initialism: KJK) in Offenbach, the Medien-Etage is a central location, supervised by educational staff, where the conscious and reflective use of digital media is facilitated. The content produced in media workshops is broadcast over the Offenbach Youth Network or as part of Standby - Das Yougendmagazin, a magazine-format video programme broadcast via the Offener Kanal Rhein-Main (Rhine-Main Open Channel).

What makes the Medien-Etage unique is the fact that its work is oriented towards its participants' needs and environment. Their projects are designed to enable young people to participate in processes that help generate social relations.

As part of the **Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten** program, the Medien-Etage carries out projects with young people with and without experience as refugees. It cooperates with the Theresien Kinder- und Jugendhilfezentrum (Theresien Children's and Youth Welfare Centre), which accommodates unaccompanied underage refugees in various residential groups. By designing the media themselves, the young people are empowered to show their own perspectives. Here they decide on the conditions under which they wish to appear and play an active and investigative part in determining the media design.

Legal framework conditions

- The three Ps, covering rights of provision, protection and participation, form the foundation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which has been ratified by 196 states worldwide. The Convention has been in effect in Germany since 1992 and since 2010 it has also applied to **all** children and adolescents living in Germany.
- Articles 12-15, 17 and 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly advocate for active participation and the necessary fundamental principles (freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of thought, freedom of assembly, access to the media, right to cultural participation) which every child needs in order to actually be able to participate.
- According to § 8 of Book VIII of the the German Social Code (SGB VIII), children also have the right to be included in decisions affecting them according to their stage of development.
- According to § 80 of Book VIII of the Social Code, young people should be adequately involved from an early stage on in youth welfare planning, but also in relevant local and regional planning.



Shafiqullah Navabi,*
student, 15 years old,
from Afghanistan

"I thought it was great to interview the people on the street. It was a lot of fun for me."



The Medien-Etage in Offenbach offers plenty of great examples of young people's participation, such as the Multimedia Workshop project, which took place in autumn 2017.

The goal of the project was to bring together young people with and without a history as refugees and to give them the opportunity to organise the week according to their own desires and ideas. Ultimately, the young people decided to create video reports in the form of interviews. Their involvement was essential in each of the processes, starting with planning, then development and finally execution. Among other things, they decided to conduct the interviews on the streets of Offenbach and to ask passers-by for their opinions on topics such as politics, refugees and holidays.

The results of the work consisted of films and images which the participants ultimately cut together and edited. Their successful work acquired even more significance when **the film material was broadcast** on the city's public channel.

* Name changed

Challenges in implementing participation

All participants must internalise an **understanding that participation is a fundamental right**. On the one hand, this means that adults must unlearn the established behaviour patterns they are used to.

On the other hand, children and young people must be made aware of how they can best exercise their own rights. Participation requires knowledge, skills and a basic understanding of democratic processes.



Insights from the field

“Young people with and without a history as refugees have come together to conceive their own media projects. Together, they gained new experience and were able to act as reporters themselves. This gave them the opportunity to present themselves effectively in front of the camera. The self-empowerment of the young people as well as the self-confidence they have gained is the key to the success of the projects.”

Andrea Filsinger,
Department Head at the
Offenbach Youth Welfare Office

For young people with a history as refugees, this challenge is exacerbated by the fact that they are often confronted with particular burdens. These include trauma, the geographical separation from family and friends and an unresolved legal status. These factors induce stress and must be considered, addressed and dealt with systematically.

Institutions and municipal partners must therefore **anchor their approaches to participation structurally** and implement them in their daily work.

1. Participation can be achieved in different ways, e.g. through hobbies, membership in associations, success at school, and/or training.
2. Self-empowerment serves as an instrument of visibility and generates self-confidence through the success of one's own products and projects.
3. Participation is a cornerstone of inclusion. It is therefore necessary to create frameworks and spaces that facilitate participative processes. Closeness, trust and constant communication with the young people involved are essential in this process.
4. Participatory programmes should be freely selectable and their content well-prepared.
5. Participatory programmes should be combined with language support to facilitate dialogue with young people.



Factors leading to successful participation

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“With the help of responsible adults and appropriate institutional frameworks, the participation of children and young people is a process that can succeed. Institution-specific policies setting out the rights of young people, form the technical basis. It is the specialists of the institutions who promote and further develop the participation of the children and young people entrusted to their care. They achieve this through their personal, professional-ethical and socio-pedagogical attitudes and actions.”

Dayana Fritz,
Programme Manager of Youth Welfare
at Hephata Hessisches Diakoniezentrum e.V.

Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten –

Empowering Young Refugees

Young refugees have a right to participate. Yet, they can rarely exercise it. In response, the German Children and Youth Foundation and the Bertelsmann Foundation have jointly set up the program **Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten – Geflüchtete Jugendliche stärken** (creating con-jointly right in the middle – empowering young refugees). The aim is to strengthen young people between the ages of 14 and 27 in order to develop their potential and to exercise their rights. Together with their municipal partners, youth workers at three locations will test methods for the promotion of empowerment and develop them further.

This topic sheet is part of a series in which experiences and findings arrived at in the course of providing young refugees with practical support are taken up and presented in an accessible way. All publications can be downloaded at www.dkjs.de/themen/alle-programme/gemeinsam-mittendrin-gestalten



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Photos: Media floor of the KJK Sandgasse and
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Willkommen bei Freunden – Bündnisse für junge Flüchtlinge helps municipalities and other districts, towns, to welcome and look after refugee children and young people. The aim is to enable young people with a history as refugees to exercise their basic right to education and participation, to receive the support and assistance to which they are entitled, and to have the opportunity to become actively involved in the community.

www.willkommen-bei-freunden.de

The project **jugend.beteiligen.jetzt** (involve.young.people.now) is a platform that offers qualifications and provides the know-how and tools that help facilitate youth participation in the digital realm. In this way, a lively culture of participation can be firmly anchored in the everyday lives of young people and political decision-makers.

www.jugend.beteiligen.jetzt

Under the motto "Empowering young people for the digital world", **Think Big** teaches young people digital skills and supports them in shaping their future in a digital world. The aim of the programme is to promote young people's initiatives and digital participation and support them in transforming themselves from users into designers of the digital world.

www.think-big.org

The **Bertelsmann Stiftung** offers a range of information and publications on child and youth participation in Germany.

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de

The **Children and Youth Parliament** (German initialism: KJP) of the city of Offenbach is a political, non-partisan advocacy group representing the interests of children and young people in Offenbach.

www.offenbach.de/rathaus/politik

In cooperation with:

BertelsmannStiftung

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Building our future with children
and youth arriving in Europe