

## Ensure international youth work! Structure the financial support of international child and youth work more comprehensively and in line with needs!

We youth associations and youth councils demand more financial contributions for international child and youth work via the Federal Child and Youth Plan (KJP) as a central funding instrument! International encounters are central to international child and youth work. At present, many such offers cannot be guaranteed or are carried out under poor conditions because of a lack of financial resources and very rigid funding structures. In our opinion, this is not in line with the objectives of Article 11(3)(4) of Book VIII of the Social Code, which clearly and unreservedly lays down a binding and unrestricted entitlement to funding.

### **The cultural, political and social relevance of international child and youth work**

At present, antidemocratic tendencies and an increase in group-based hostility to humanity are evident in many countries of the world, combined with the upswing of right-wing radical parties and politicians. These developments can and must be counteracted from the perspective of children's and youth associations.

This is where international child and youth work comes in. After two world wars and the Shoa, it became increasingly important as an instrument of political education. Over the decades, it has contributed to the reconciliation of the European continent and has led to the European Union growing together into a Union of peace. However, this long-lasting peace is not a matter of course. Even today, resurgent right-wing national forces are again trying to divide Europe. Efforts are therefore still needed to preserve European peace and to promote international understanding and European integration. International child and youth work based on the principles of freedom, equality, solidarity and justice can be understood as such a measure.

In a globalised world, however, international child and youth work has long had an impact beyond Europe. This is why, in addition to the European Union's funding instruments, which are more heavily funded, there is also a need for a strongly-funded international support structure in the children's and youth plan, which will enable encounters to take place all over the world.

International child and youth work enables young people to gain experience outside their familiar environment, to question their own and foreign prejudices, to want to understand previously unknown models of society, cultures and religions and as a result to develop their own critical awareness of them, but also of their own political, cultural and social norms. Inevitably, international child and youth work also includes aspects of global learning. Abstract contexts such as global economic cycles are made more tangible through international exchange. Conflicts of interest and injustices between the global South and the North are becoming more visible - but possible solutions are also being recognised more readily. Awareness of sustainable management, minimum standards and minimum safeguards, the improvement of production conditions and also a possible change in one's own consumption can be the result of international child and youth work.

International exchanges and encounters between youth associations are of particular importance. International meetings are planned and carried out jointly by young people and youth group leaders within the framework of cooperation between youth associations from different countries that has lasted for years or even decades. International encounters are an expression of the transnational self-organisation of children and young people. Through the joint preparation and follow-up of the partner and sister organisations at eye level, the youth association goals of participation, self-determination and personal responsibility are achieved to a high degree.

The examination of such issues as well as young people from different countries leads to a deep understanding of cultural diversity. Against the background of advancing globalization, it is becoming increasingly important to deal competently with this diversity. Encounters marked by tolerance and acceptance and a multi-perspective understanding of society are therefore indispensable for a contented and peaceful coexistence of all people.

### **The fields of activity**

#### *Individual*

The participation in an international exchange program promotes the political commitment of young people and offers a very good opportunity to broaden one's own horizon. Even long after the measure has been completed, the children's and young people's experiences continue to have an impact and thus continue to initiate thought processes. Participation promotes social skills, makes an enormous contribution to the formation of young people's identities and creates confidence in their own abilities. It enables us to understand our own world in the context of social and historical contexts. In international youth exchange, personal, local and global actions are linked.

Through the social element of international child and youth work, the ability to work in a team is promoted as a matter of course and foreign language competence is promoted in a sheltered space, which ultimately overcomes language barriers. In international youth work, a wealth of playful and creative methods is used, which above all promote non-linguistic communication between the participants.

The engagement with "the other", exciting experiences full of fun in a socio-culturally heterogeneous group and the making of lifelong friendships; all this leads to a positive attitude towards the respective host country as well as intercultural experiences in general.

#### *Social*

The individual and social fields of action merge into one another. Social structures provide the framework for individual action and individual action in turn shapes society.

International child and youth work is characterised above all by its meeting character. Encounters of young people from different regions of the world enable the deconstruction of the "we" thinking, so that all people in their diversity are recognized and valued. In this way, young people experience and learn tolerance and the equal treatment of all with each other from the ground up as the norm.

However, the impact of international child and youth work does not end with the participants themselves. Participants become multipliers for tolerance and diversity in their own social environment through their experiences. Even if the individual effects on third parties cannot of course be a plannable aspect of international encounters, they still have an influence on society as a whole on work against exclusion, intolerance and group-related misanthropy that should not be underestimated.

### **The challenges**

More solid financial resources for international child and youth work are urgently needed so that the socially important effects of the international work of child and youth associations can continue to be achieved. To this end, the funding rates for international youth encounters must be increased so that international youth encounters do not already fail due to increased implementation costs. Rightly rising travel costs in view of climate change pose great challenges for international child and youth work. Youth associations want to enable climate-friendly travel; however, they must also be adequately equipped for this purpose. In order to achieve this and further

increase the quantity and quality of international child and youth work, the funding volume for international child and youth work must also generally grow.

Another acute problem of international youth association work is too rigid application deadlines. It is incomprehensible why it is possible to apply during the year in one funding pot but not in another. Especially activities for the initiation of international child and youth work at expert level are partly dependent on short-term applications. In the worst case, waiting times of 1.5 years from networking to application to approval and disbursement of subsidies do not allow work oriented to the needs of the partners involved. For volunteers in particular, the long lead time in submitting applications is a major hurdle.

Last but not least, the host principle also poses great challenges to youth associations time and again. Especially where funds are most urgently needed, such as in countries without sufficient financial support for child and youth work, international encounters are hardly possible, or only with the immense use of own funds. As a result, only the privileged societies of Europe and the world can continue to facilitate international encounters for children and young people. European or even global integration is moving into the distant future under such funding conditions.

In addition to carrying out joint activities, exchange measures also serve political education, the exchange of experience, getting to know the culture and special features of the host country or cultural area. However, the current funding regulations prevent guest groups from organising programme points with overnight stays in neighbouring European countries. Thus, the possibilities of many youth groups for programmes are limited, especially in the border area. Similarly, visits of several days to EU institutions with exchange partners are only possible without funding.

### **The claims**

For children, young people and young adults, the people who will one day shape our common future, we youth associations demand an appropriate and cost-covering financing of international child and youth work. Investments in the participation and co-determination of young people are investments in a peaceful and tolerant future worldwide. That is why the DBJR is making very concrete demands:

- An increase in the total volume of support for international youth work corresponding to the financing of the following measures.
- A structural increase in all flat-rate subsidies for international youth work in accordance with § 11 Para. 3 No. 4 SGB VIII.
- The level of funding for international youth exchanges must be put on an equal footing with that for professional staff programmes.
- One criterion for travel cost promotion must be climate friendliness and not the price of the means of transport. For example, the costs for climate-friendly means of travel must be fully covered by an additional flat rate.
- An increase in the total funding volume of international child and youth work corresponding to the increased lump sums.
- Financing of fees for project management, external specialists and experts as well as language mediators and interpreters.
- Additional financial resources for the promotion of inclusive measures, e.g. for accompanying people with disabilities, accompanying people with mental illness, childcare for single parents, etc...

- Simplification in the application and use of multilateral youth exchanges and youth education measures and continuous promotion of these. Sufficient financial resources must also be available for the establishment and expansion of sustainable, long-term relationships that build bridges between countries.
- A clear opening of the host principle, i.e. subsidies for travel costs of foreign participants to Germany as well as daily allowances for events abroad.
- The transition to year-round application in all funding pools financed by the KJP, as well as in Erasmus+.
- The abolition of rigid limits on the number of participants.
- The start of a process in which, together with the youth associations, funding opportunities for other formats of international youth work are developed.
- Release of resources that are tied up in the founding and work of youth organisations, as the youth organisations no longer fit the working methods of youth associations in terms of their funding criteria.
- Reduction of visa barriers, which generally assumes that young people are unwilling to return. Freedom to travel must be made tangible for all young people.
- Flexibilisation of support for one-off stays in neighbouring countries within the framework of youth and specialist meetings.
- Administrative simplifications through billing exclusively on the basis of flat rates.

*Adopted unanimously by the Main Committee in Berlin on 11 December 2019.*