

## Strengthening voluntary services - preventing cuts in funding

Voluntary service in many areas means voluntary work by young people and young adults for children and young people. A commitment to make a lasting contribution to society. Throughout Germany, around 80,000 young people are currently involved in voluntary service in civil society, thus strengthening cohesion in our democracy, especially in the voluntary youth services (Voluntary Social Year and Voluntary Ecological Year).

The Voluntary Social Year (FSJ) and the Voluntary Ecological Year (FÖJ) are places of social learning and inclusion. They are suitable for young people and young adults from all backgrounds of our society because of the diversity of the places they work and the low-threshold access requirements.

From a commitment policy perspective, FSJ members make an important contribution to society for, to and with people in Germany as part of their service. Many of these young volunteers would like to continue their voluntary work even after their service and thus represent an important resource for volunteer work even after their service.

Furthermore, today's volunteers are tomorrow's trainees. Evaluations in recent years have shown that for the majority of young people in voluntary service, it is a pioneer of vocational orientation in the social field. Especially in view of the shortage of skilled workers in social and nursing professions, volunteers must be supported on their career path in order to be able to retain them as employees\* in the long term.

Voluntary service providers are increasingly having to contend with rising personnel costs and the rising costs of organising educational seminars. Financial security is needed to ensure that the objectives of youth voluntary service are maintained at a high level of quality. Last year's increase in funds was a first relief for the sponsors of youth voluntary services. All the greater was the disappointment at the news that this increase was not to be sustained. Instead of promoting the voluntary commitment of those performing voluntary service, millions are being made available for a commitment foundation whose purpose does not benefit the voluntary work of young people.

Therefore, the German Federal Youth Council and its member organisations demand that the German Bundestag and the Federal Government withdraw the cuts and that the necessary funds in the voluntary service budget be maintained. In the medium term, we also call for a general increase in appropriations in the budget for the coming years in line with demand.

*Decided unanimously by the General Assembly on 25-27 October 2019 in Berlin.*