



# **BKJ calls for Integration of Non-formal Cultural Education into European Youth Policy Strategies**

Statement

Statement on the European Youth Work Agenda by the Board of the German Federation for Arts Education and Cultural Learning (BKJ)

Non-formal cultural education throughout Europe starts with the interests and individual circumstances of the young people it aims to engage. However, it is not well defined at European level and often regarded as part of culture or formal education policy. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) intends to take Germany's presidency of the Council of the European Union as an opportunity to encourage EU member states to agree a European Youth Work Agenda in 2020 and implement it in subsequent years. Non-formal cultural education as a field relevant to youth policy must be further integrated into European youth policy strategies.

## **By raising the political status of non-formal cultural education we can reach young target groups across Europe**

'Together for Europe's recovery.' This is the motto behind the German government's goals for Germany's presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2020. The words are meant to send a strong signal for the political initiatives that are urgently needed at European level now and in the coming years.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) intends to take the initiative in the area of youth policy and push for a European Youth Work Agenda. A relevant draft proposal is to be discussed and agreed by the ministers of the EU member states responsible for youth affairs by the end of 2020 before being implemented in the subsequent years.

The agenda gives the BMFSFJ the opportunity to actively encourage these ministries to recognise non-formal cultural education as a field that is clearly relevant to youth policy and further integrate it in their domestic and European youth policy strategies. Non-formal cultural education is not very well defined at European level and often regarded as part of culture or formal education policy.

Throughout Europe, extra-curricular cultural education in its many different methods, projects and organisational formats starts with the interests and individual circumstances of the young people it aims to engage. It can reach young target groups that feel left out by other forms of youth work and education.



# We want to see non-formal cultural education fully integrated into European youth policy because...

## 1 Non-formal cultural education is an active part of youth policy at domestic and European level.

The European term Youth Work does not have quite the same meaning as the German term 'Jugendarbeit' as defined in §11 SGB VIII. The differentiated German child and youth welfare system covers open child and youth work, European and international youth work, municipal youth work, youth association work, youth education work and youth social work, including school social work and youth employment assistance.<sup>1</sup>

Non-formal cultural education in this context is not explicitly mentioned in the various European publications and consequently receives less political attention in a number of EU member states. The current European youth strategy for 2019 to 2027<sup>2</sup>, for example, makes no explicit reference to non-formal cultural education for young people.

This seems to ignore the fact that this area actively contributes to youth policy developments at domestic and European level under the heading 'Engage, Connect, Empower'.

2 Non-formal cultural education practitioners help young people develop a reflective attitude towards Europe through international exchange experience. With support from Erasmus+ Youth in Action (YiA) and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) funding programmes, whose remit includes the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, practitioners of non-formal cultural education help many young people to develop a reflective attitude towards Europe through international exchange experiences, involving artistic expressions and to clearly articulate this attitude in public performances and presentations and so gain and pass on motivational experience of European life.

## 3 European funding programmes in the youth sector are crucial to non-formal cultural education.

The opportunity of actively using the European youth funding programmes Erasmus+ YiA and ESC is particularly important to non-formal cultural education practitioners, who have practically no access to EU funding programmes in the education and culture sector, since these are geared towards formal education institutions on the one hand and primarily large-scale pan-European artistic collaborations and events on the other.

This makes it all the more important that the European Youth Work Agenda yet to be agreed provides non-formal cultural education practitioners throughout Europe with the opportunity to work together across borders even more closely in a professional and strategic network.

1 The European Youth Work Agenda for high-quality youth work in Europe and in Germany, position paper by the Child and Youth Welfare Association (AGJ), Berlin, 5/6 March 2020, [www.agj.de/fileadmin/files/positionen/2020/European\\_Youth\\_Work\\_Agenda\\_english.pdf](http://www.agj.de/fileadmin/files/positionen/2020/European_Youth_Work_Agenda_english.pdf)

2 [https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy\\_de](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_de)

# ➔ Non-formal cultural education is ready to take on an active role in the implementation of a European Youth Work Agenda

The organisational forms and structures of cultural education outside of schools vary greatly between European countries. And yet, with new momentum from the implementation of a European Youth Work Agenda, the 56 regional and national professional organisations and associations from all areas of art and culture in Germany – and the BKJ itself as an umbrella organisation – can and want to play an active and creative role in pan-European networking, in professional exchanges, in learning from each other and in the strategic collaboration with their many European partners.

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Bundesvereinigung Kulturelle  
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The Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture (youth and cultural centres) in France, child and youth theatres across Europe, Dom Kultury (cultural centres) in Poland, youth centres with a cultural focus in various countries, youth art schools in Germany, music schools, libraries and youth circuses in various countries and a myriad of other types of non-formal cultural education providers reach a large number of young people across the European Union every day.

They are interested and actively engaged in continued collaboration from a European perspective within the framework of the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda. They wish to share the knowledge of their professional and voluntary workers and use artistic processes to make the complex structures of Europe as a common living environment and of Europe as a politically shaped union accessible to young people in a participatory and creative manner.

Berlin/Remscheid 15 June 2020

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