

INCLUDING EXCLUDED AND DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLICY MAKING ✓

For politicians, it can seem complicated to involve young people in their work, even more so if the young people do not seem “reachable”. Many young people in Austria experience social exclusion and numerous social disadvantages, they do not feel that they belong or are relevant to politics. But these young people are not “lost” and in many cases are interested in political issues and do want to participate. The checklist below can help you if you want to know...

- **WHAT difficult-to-reach young people have to say on political issues; and**
- **HOW to get the opinions of disadvantaged young people, as well as what you need to be aware of.**

This advice can work at many different levels: from the regional level to consultation processes at national or EU level.

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SUCCESS FACTORS

for the participation of disadvantaged and excluded young people

The checklist was developed in the framework of the bOJA project "Structured Dialogue Reloaded", which was supported by beteiligung.st. Further information can be found here: www.boja.at/partizipation (at this time this information is only available in the German language)

1. Conducting a Survey is not enough

Knowledge is required before participation, it is important to ensure that young people understand what it is all about.

When working with disadvantaged young people, it cannot be assumed that there is already an understanding of the concepts or functions of the political system. It requires the young people to gain background knowledge before they can ask and respond to questions.

2. Connection with the everyday life of young people

Knowing the realities of young people's lives and combining political themes with everyday life is very important.

It is essential that the young people can connect politics and the environment in which they live. Therefore, the chosen consultation topics must be aligned with the everyday life of the young people.

3. Formulating the questions simply

Clear questions in easy language are good for a consultation/survey.

As an anchor, specific questions and topics should be chosen, in simple, age-appropriate language.

4. Use of different methods

A questionnaire alone is not enough. If you want to reach disadvantaged young people, use a variety of methods appropriate to their age.

The use of leisure activities with relevant information makes it possible to attract the interests of the young people. Knowledge transfer and practical discussions can be packed into creative methods.

6. Visualize partial successes

Making the impact of participation visible is especially important for keeping young people motivated and interested.

Find ways to get quick visible results, this motivates young people if they can see the immediate effects. The process needs to be transparent and flexible.

5. Serious participation and appreciation

Young people have many interesting things to contribute. Take advantage of this resource and take young people seriously.

Young people can quickly see if their participation is not being taken seriously. It is therefore important to explain what will happen with the results of their inputs and their work.

7. The principle of voluntary participation

Openness and voluntary participation are critically important when working with disadvantaged young people. A classic style workshop with fixed times and a stable group can be too similar to school and often fails in this kind of youth work.

It is important that the young people involved feel that they have the freedom to get in and out of the process at any time.

9. Open youth work as a resource and support

Skilled professionals from youth centres and mobile youth work, know the life situation of the disadvantaged young people as well as many useful methods for working with them.

These people are the best resource for the political participation processes with disadvantaged young people because in many cases they have good contacts with the target group as well as access to facilities that can be used.

10. Experiencing self-worth

Consulting young people can be hugely important in the lives of the young people, it can promote self-confidence and an understanding of democracy.

Beyond the participation process, it is also important for young people to be supported in strengthening their abilities/skills of self-organisation, self-determination and self-worth.

8. Competent accompaniment

Participation processes with disadvantaged young people depend on trust being built. For this to happen the young people need a professional stable figure "staying with them" throughout the whole process.

You know your community best. Find professionals in the community who can act as experts and partners for your participation project.

Imprint

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bOJA, Nationwide Network of Open Youth Work, is the competence center for professional open youth work in Austria. The association represents 630 facilities and both mobile and centre based youth work nationwide. The association is a service and networking agency for open youth work as well as a nationwide expert office for quality development.

beteiligung.st, is the expert office for child, youth and citizen participation. It advocates for the right to participate, develops suitable framework conditions for a practiced culture of participation in compliance with quality criteria, and promotes democratic thinking and action.

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