Advancing youth participation
Structured Dialogue in Austria 2014/15
Improving young people’s lives
All over Europe. Together.

A good-quality offer for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or continued education? Civic education and vote at 16? Support for young entrepreneurs? Stays abroad? These topics and many more are subject to EU youth policy.

Since 2010 the Structured Dialogue ensures systematic inclusion of young people in the political decision-making process for selected thematic fields of youth policy.

This is a unique process in the EU - no other policy area includes citizens in such a way. The Structured Dialogue is integral part of the EU youth strategy.
A new culture of participation

Young people have the right to be included in decisions that affect their lives. Opinions and needs of young people should be taken into account in all political decisions from a local to an international level.

Politicians and administration staff in Austria take the results of the Structured Dialogue seriously. At EU youth conferences the results contribute to EU-wide recommendations, thus valid for Austria, too.

Shaping our future in a common Europe
For 18 months young people and decision makers in the field of European and Austrian youth policy have turned the field of youth participation upside down and developed new ideas and solutions. In line with our slogan **Shaping the community! But how?** we organized dialogue conferences and trainings, supported local dialogues and established a dialogue platform online. The results show their impact in Austria and all over Europe.

Find out more on the following pages.
Advancing youth participation in Austria ...

... was the slogan of the two Dialogue Conferences we organized in 2015 in Velden and Bregenz.

Young people and decision makers of five regions met for three days in June and September. As equal partners they experienced and shaped a new culture of participation.

Together the conference participants produced project ideas and joint recommendations for the implementation of a new culture of participation all over Austria.

Look at the pictures and read the recommendations on www.strukturierter-dialog.at
Dialogue Conferences
We are here and want to take our future into our own hands.
Matthias, participant in Velden

It is inspiring and motivating when you recognize that everyone wants to put their ideas into practice.
Yagmur, young participant in Velden
Staying authentic is essential – only then you can meet as equals.

Wolfgang, provincial youth governor in Lower Austria

My interest in youth politics has strongly increased since the dialogue conference.

Derai, young participant in Velden
Structured Dialogue works – at all levels

In order to discuss youth participation with young people locally, Local Dialogues have been organized for the first time in 2015. The results essentially influenced the Austrian contribution to the EU-wide consultation.

Over the year, more local activities were organized in order to put into practice the ideas for an enhanced youth participation. In total 27 such Local Dialogues in youth organizations and youth groups took place between Dornbirn and Vienna. About 450 young people were directly involved in discussions and creative activities.

On www.strukturierter-dialog.at you find an interactive map of Austria with all Local Dialogues listed.
Why don’t we have a say in creating a syllabus for subjects like citizen education?

Felix, Local Dialogue Oberndorf

I would have never thought that politicians can be so informal and relaxed.

Local Dialogue Gaschurn
Politics is not just boring, it can be really cool!
Local Dialogue Kronstorf

Politicians should approach youth actively and on equal footing. It is not like we would oppose everything.
Rasim, Local Dialogue Oberndorf

I am ready to work on an implementation and not only make demands – honestly!
Local Dialogue Seiersberg-Pirka
For each thematic priority of the **Structured Dialogue** an EU-wide consultation of young people is conducted. In Austria, the answers are being collected online via a dialogue platform.

For the first time in 2015, such an online dialogue has been organized on the topic of youth participation. It is a continuation of the direct talks at the local level.

The platform is open for anyone interested and allows further discussions of ideas and proposals beyond the local and regional level.

You can still look into the discussions and their results on the platform - this is essentially in line with the **Structured Dialogue** idea of process transparency.

Explore our online dialogue platform on [https://mitmachen.strukturerter-dialog.at](https://mitmachen.strukturerter-dialog.at)
In the autumn of 2014, 60 multipliers were trained in three trainings that took place in Vienna, Salzburg and Graz. Many of them organized **Local Dialogues** afterwards in order to discuss youth participation locally and online.

Find out more about the trainings on [www.strukturiertedialog.at](http://www.strukturiertedialog.at)
Dialogue Trainings
That was a great training for me that gave me lots of insights into participating in political processes and made me reflect upon those.

Training in Graz

I leave the training inspired and motivated.

Martin, participant in Salzburg
Each form of participation has to lead to a concrete action. Only in that way do young people feel that their engagement is worth it.

Carmen, participant in Salzburg

The training made me reflect upon political participation and broadened my horizon.

Training in Vienna
Taking the recommendations seriously

Soon after the first dialogue conference the presidents of the federal state parliaments put civic education in schools on their agenda. They invited the responsible minister to their meeting.

The Joint Recommendations agreed upon in Bregenz were forwarded to a great number of decision makers in politics and administration.

The president of the federal council (Bundesrat) forwarded the recommendations to all council members and encouraged them to take them into account in all their decisions.

Representatives of the Austrian National Youth Council personally handed over the recommendations to the spokespersons for youth in the national parliament.
Impacts in Austria
The federal working group on youth participation organized a symposium on the results of the dialogue conferences.

The federal youth departments as well as the ministry each took on project partnerships to support implementation of the project ideas developed on the Dialogue Conferences.

In that way, the ideas not only influence the political discourse but have effects now or in the near future.
The Ministry of Families and Youth together with the Austrian Youth Information Network chose three projects and invited everyone involved to join a workshop to further develop their ideas.

In Lower Austria a group of young people is working together with the youth department in order to improve the information offers for participation possibilities.

In Tirol the youth department plans on implementing the project idea “booking a dialogue”.

Read more about the 15 project ideas on www.strukturiertedialog.at/empowerment/folgeprojekte2015/
The youth ministers of the EU approved the Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe on November 23, 2015. The resolution widely takes into account the results of the Structured Dialogue process.

For the first time in such a document, there is a recommendation for lowering the voting age to 16, where Austria is a frontrunner. Civic education in schools is also mentioned - in that case, Austria lags behind.

The quality criteria for real and effective participation are forward-looking: hardly any current participation processes fulfill the criteria sufficiently.

Participation online is another priority topic - trainings for teachers and multipliers and a good combination of direct participation and digital tools are necessary.

Read the council conclusion on www.strukturiertedialog.at
Impacts in the EU
Global developments in economy, migration flows etc. challenge Europe and particularly youth. Precisely for that reason it is important that needs, ideas, fears and worries of young people are being heard and taken seriously.

The core idea of the **Structured Dialogue** is to include young people in developing solutions and taking decisions.

In Austria we will extend the outreach of the activities for youth, multipliers, politicians and administrative staff until mid-2017. We will host discussions online, organize trainings, dialogue conferences and more.
Hosting a dialogue for youth and politics is a chance, no matter if locally or EU-wide. With the Structured Dialogue we want to link initiatives in the field of youth participation.

Our aim is a culture of participation that brings joy and motivates engaging in building an inclusive society.

We are looking forward to keep working with our partners and extending or network with new partners in all regions and policy fields.

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