



# THIS IS WHAT MATTERS!

YOUTH WORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
DEMOCRACY

Right-wing extremism prevention through youth cultural approaches

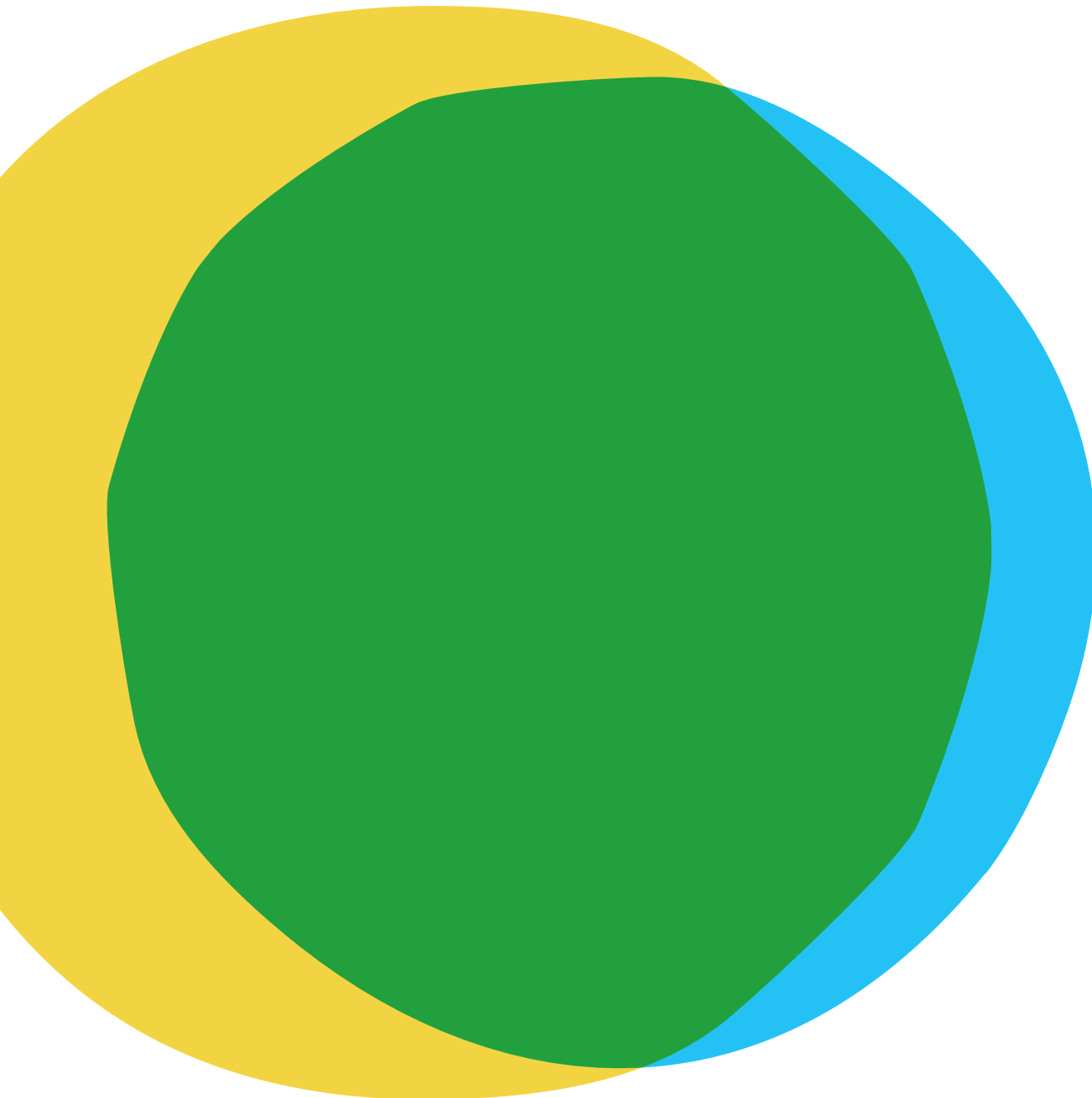
# WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO

cultures interactive e.V. (CI) is a specialized organization for the prevention of right-wing extremism and advancement of human rights-oriented youth culture work. Funded by the German federal program “Demokratie leben!” (“Live democracy!”), CI advises associations and youth work organizations, youth welfare and youth social workers in their pedagogical practice. In addition, CI trains professionals and local teams who develop youth-oriented preventive measures, targeted interventions and integral civic education in local contexts. And CI works directly with young people, develops models of pedagogical intervention, conducts workshops, school project days, and discussion groups in schools and youth clubs throughout Germany. In doing so, the organization uses methods of youth-cultural political education, narrative approaches, social trainings, individual time-out procedures, and peer-to-peer counseling concepts. In various model projects, CI also continues to develop cross-phenomena approaches to political education, whereby gender-reflective or girl- and boy-specific approaches as well as the development of inclusive measures of human rights-oriented youth cultural work are central components.

Democratic attitudes, human rights and youth cultures, as well as group-related misanthropy and violent extremism, do not stop at national borders.

Therefore, professional exchange and cooperation on a nationwide, but also EU and international level are an important part of the activities of the association. The focus of the European work is on cooperation and professional exchange with partner organizations in Central and Eastern Europe. CI facilitators are involved on both a federal and EU level in professional and political forums and pursue research towards developing recommendations for youth work/youth welfare. CI also works on building networks for prevention and youth cultural practice for human rights and democracy.

About the content of the brochure: By way of introduction (I), we consider the function of youth and youth social work in today’s social climate and extend an invitation to form a network of youth (culture) work for human rights and democracy. In a thematic approach (II), we address the problem areas that can be responded to with a youth culture-based approach and summarize principles of successful civic education and prevention work. In section III, the potentials of youth culture work in the context of the governmental Child and Youth Plan are presented. The section “An A-Z of human rights-oriented and democracy-promoting youth culture work”, is to be understood as a provisional checklist for one’s own practice. In section IV, approaches and terms are explained that are essential for CI’s work.



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# I. INTRODUCTION

Strengthening human rights and democratic attitudes is essential – especially now. Youth and youth social work with all its facets in the community, in youth clubs, in street work, at schools, and in vocational orientation measures play a decisive role here. Their mandate, as set out in §11 of the German Social Code Book VIII, is to convey to young people the skills they need for self-determination, social responsibility and social commitment, and to strengthen their development into responsible citizens. Democracy needs people who engage in a constructive way, who actively participate in democratic, dialogue-building negotiation processes, and who are committed to shaping a positive way of being and living together in a democracy.

In order to be able to impart these important competencies of democratic practice, a solidly equipped youth work is needed in the community, whose employees are enabled by the public sector and its funders to provide corresponding opportunities of social, cultural and civic education. This demand is not new, but it gains additional explosiveness when looking at the political developments of recent years. Today more than ever, youth work is called upon to counter expressions of group-related hatred (e.g. towards “refugees”, “Muslims”, “gays”, “disabled people”, “women”) as well as openly confronting comments that reject democracy and doing so in an educational and

preventive way. But working in these tense environments may also mean developing and practicing approaches of sustainable “democracy learning”.

Cultures interactive e.V. (registered NGO) has been active for over 20 years in promoting democratic and human rights action among young people through youth cultural approaches – or through creatively practiced youth (culture) work. This also includes prevention of right-wing extremism and group-focused hostility. In the work for the federal program “Live Democracy!”, CI is involved in the nationwide development of structures for the prevention of right-wing extremism in the field of youth work/youth welfare and provides consulting in this field. This also includes advanced training and qualification of professionals as well as the transfer of innovative pedagogical practice approaches into the governmental structures of education and youth work.

Since 2001, CI employees have consistently had successful work experiences in the application of youth cultures with young people in social and political hotspots. Hip-hop/rap, techno, punk, YouTube, parkour, skateboarding, etc. appeal directly to the interests of all young people. The results in universal/primary as well as in event-related/secondary prevention were all the more positive. Furthermore, systemic models of work in local

youth facilities and social spaces have been developed and implemented, as well as extracurricular youth education activities. Further training of professionals, youth-cultural participation procedures, open-topic discussion groups, narrative group work, inclusive meeting formats, intensive pedagogical training measures of social and labor market integration, procedures of mediation at schools, interventions to support distancing and exit processes from right-wing extremist attitudes and affiliations were also on the agenda. These different activities and forms of intervention are

based on methods of youth-cultural civic education and narrative group work which were developed by CI, as well as on the principles of gender-reflective and inclusive youth social work.

**This brochure aims to demonstrate the potentials of youth (culture) work within the context of civic education, empowerment, and prevention and to encourage the use of these approaches as a means of promoting democracy and human rights education in one's own practice.**

## A lobby for youth work

This brochure is also intended as an invitation to participate in a network of youth (culture) work for human rights and democracy: There are many actors in small and large youth institutions, in youth associations and working groups who are responsible for creating impactful activities around cultural, social and civic education in youth and youth social work. With the network Youth culture work for Human Rights and Democracy (Jugendkulturarbeit für Menschenrechte und Demokratie) initiated by CI, structures of mutual conceptual and practical support, effective methodology development and transfer, and quality assurance are to be exchanged in order to be able to regularly face current social challenges. This network is

open to people throughout Germany, Europe and neighboring countries who intend to contribute to achieving this central goal: **To apply youth culture activities methodically for the promotion of cosmopolitan, tolerant attitudes and youth-oriented democratic participation of adolescents from diverse backgrounds and throughout all regions and social milieus.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Cf. on EU level: <http://brave-h2020.eu/braveFair>





### YOUTH CULTURE WORK CAN COMPLEMENT BOTH CULTURAL AND CIVIC EDUCATION

While cultural education often introduces (young) people to high-cultural forms of expression, such as literature, theater and (classical) music, youth cultural education also reaches adolescents of diverse backgrounds with their authentic youth cultural self-expression – e.g. their own rap songs, beats, videos and dance performances, situated within their socio-political contexts. Both the cultural and the social and community perspectives of young people are thus broadened through creative stimuli suitable content.

## II. THEMATIC APPROACH

### 1. Briefly explained: Youth (culture) work for human rights and democracy

Those wanting to work effectively with young people with regard to their democratic stance, must meet them within their environment and present a personally open and relation-oriented attitude. Youth culture, such as hip-hop or punk, are suitable door-openers for achieving effective lifeworld-oriented civic education with adolescents from different backgrounds. Spaces of informal education can be created promoting emancipatory and critical awareness as well as the constructive engagement with social issues within the framework of youth cultural activities as practiced in breakdance, band music, comic, YouTube and other similar workshops. Youth cultural practice is based on the concept of “DIY! – Do-it-yourself!” which also implies advocating for one’s own interests. The key experience of being able to participate culturally and politically oneself then also promotes solidarity-based action and civic participation as well as the assumption of responsibility (see also “civic youth culture work” below).

Youth culture work in CI’s sense is a type of translation work. It communicates to young people how their own personal interests are linked to their wider social environment. It creates a link between young people’s lives and “politics,” which is initially largely abstract for many adolescents. Youth culture work strengthens their ability to develop and implement concrete ideas for their environment from their creative interests. When concepts become reality, young people experience self-efficacy and self-worth. Above all, youth cultural activities make human rights-oriented and democratic values such as diversity, solidarity, rule of law, and participation tangible, through which young people can become resilient to ideologies of inequality and authoritarianism. Youth cultural activities may therefore become a basis for both the free and pro-democratic development of personality and the strengthening of community and civil society.

## 2. Youth work in the context of prevention – a short inventory

*“The central task of youth work dealing with right-wing extremism is to become effective as an agent of socialization and as a place of education that stimulates and supports the appropriation of human rights and democratic convictions by young people.”*

(Scherr: Wegweiser Jugendarbeit gegen Rechtsextremismus, p. 110, translation by cultures interactive e.V.)

The mission of youth work to promote human rights and democracy through social, civic and cultural education is anchored in §11 of the Child and Youth Welfare Act SGB VIII. Successful youth work ties in “with the interests of young people”, enables

them “towards self-determination” and furthermore stimulates towards “social co-responsibility and to social commitment (...)”.

A youth culture-based approach is a good method to fulfill the mission of youth work to promote democracy and to do this by implementing informal civic education. Effective youth-cultural activities provide young people with opportunities for participation, co-determination, voluntary engagement and political initiative. Because of their practical access and direct reference to the world in which the addressed young people live, youth culture work provides integral civic education – especially in the realm of political emotions – that can appeal to and involve all young people. Youth facilities can thus become places where democratic participation, the principle of equality of all people and opportunities for creative design and self-expression come together in an organic manner.

Certain preconditions are however necessary for this, without which youth work can hardly

### “IDEOLOGIES OF INEQUALITY”

assign people into different groups that are not considered equal but are debased and disparaged (“the blacks,” “the women,” etc.). These ideologies are the socio-psychological key element of phenomena of “group-focused enmity” (GFE), i.e. group hatred (“Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit”/ GMF; cf. Heitmeyer, Zick, et al.). Kurt Möller has introduced the alternative term “generalizing constructions of degrading others” (“Pauschalisierende Abwertungskonstruktionen” (PAKOS). His perspective focuses less on who or what is degraded, but rather takes a look at those who behave in a degrading way. The terms GMF and PAKO and their empirical basis are helpful in clarifying what specifically needs to be considered in the prevention of right-wing extremism and other forms of violent extremisms. After all, the loud and emotionally charged disparagement of specific social groups is often the clearest indication of social milieus in which human rights and democracy are no longer respected and strategies of preventive youth work are called for.

become a factor toward effectively supporting the skills needed for practicing democracy and human rights. Often there is a lack of structural, human and financial resources that are required when good work needs to be done under difficult conditions and in challenging social milieus. This is, for example, because (1) facilities are predominantly visited by young people who express violent extremist attitudes, authoritarianism, and ideologies of inequality, or (2) the local context, such as parents and the adult environment, do not share the democratic and human rights goals inherent in the approach of youth (culture) work.

In order to be able to fulfill its mission as defined in §11 SGB VIII (German Social Code Book), youth work needs:

- sufficient pedagogical staff
- time and opportunities for staff to reflect on difficult processes and their own approach and work habitus
- internal support by the responsible body and the professional environment
- external consulting
- resources for creative and co-design activities, also for different groups of addressees (see “inclusive youth culture work”).



#### EXCURSION INTO YOUTH SOCIAL WORK

Furthermore, the Social Code Book VIII also foresees youth social work. According to Section 13, youth social work has the task of compensating for social or individual disadvantages, for example by integrating young people linguistically, at school and at work. Youth social work implements this objective, for example, through offering settings of youth vocational assistance, youth migration services, youth housing and school social work. In this context, employees in this field require a great deal of support and expert advice on how to respond appropriately to group-focused enmity/group hatred (GFE) and (right-wing) violent extremist ideologies. On the one hand, clients of youth social work are considered to be particularly at risk of being influenced by violent extremist groups and

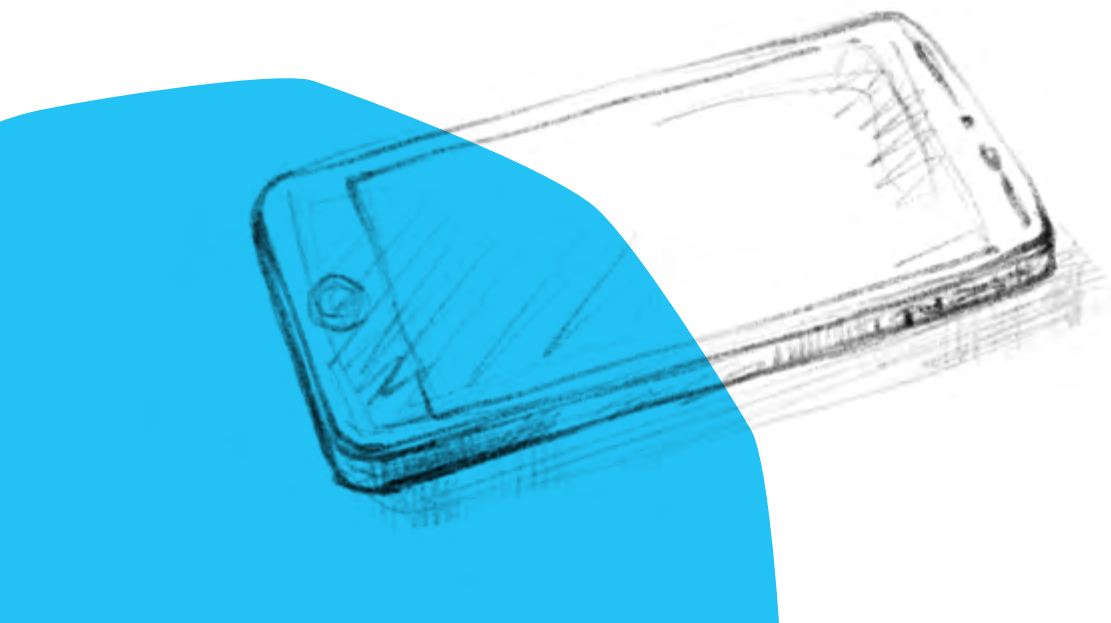
turning to right-wing extremism or other forms of extremism. At the same time, the clients of youth social work are often themselves affected by expressions of group-related degradation. After all, most of them are young people from precarious social contexts and overburdened families – be it from a migration background or not. In this respect, all measures that serve the social integration and participation of young people are conducive to strengthening their resilience – provided that the activities and procedures are characterized by respect, equality, transparency and participation of adolescents in the community. Furthermore, it is important that youth social workers are supported in their ability to sensitively recognize risk factors and processes of individual change in adolescents and offer support accordingly.

### 3. Basic principles of prevention: How can hateful and anti-democratic attitudes be prevented?

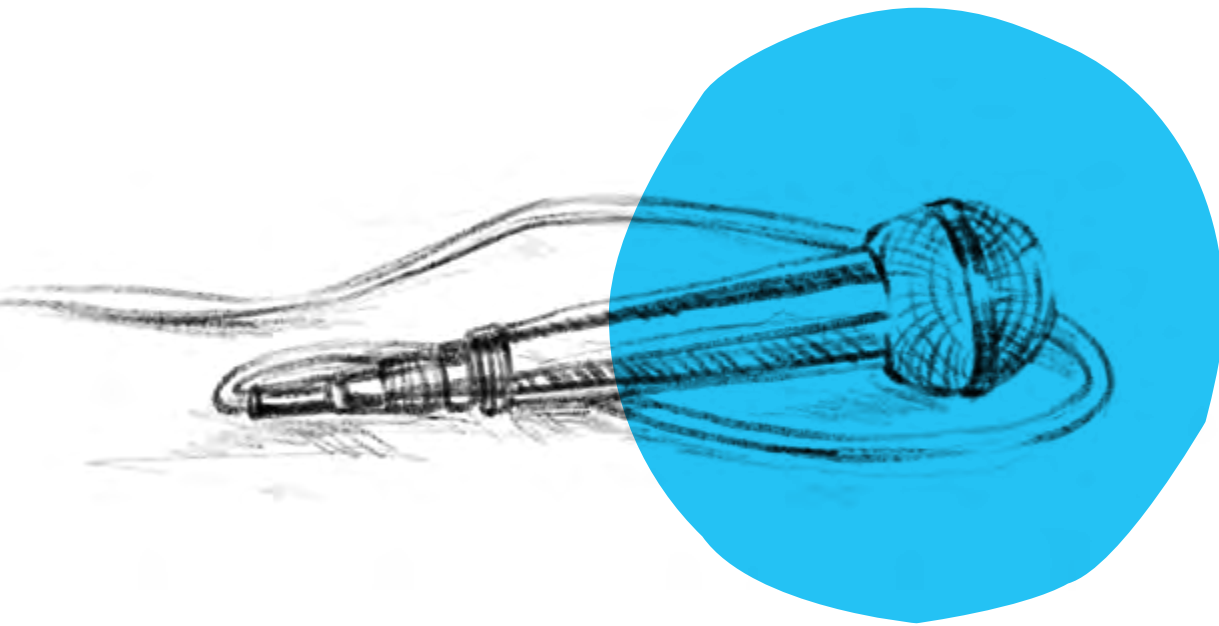
The question of the extent to which youth work should be dedicated to preventing (right-wing) violent extremism or group-focused enmity (GFE) is sometimes controversial, despite the clarifications already given. There seems to be concern here about being overwhelmed by state security concerns and partisan political maneuvering. There is, however, no question that youth work should not primarily have to legitimize itself through the task of preventing violent extremism. Youth workers are often confronted with GFE and group hatred, anti-social and anti-democratic behavior and need to be able to respond appropriately to ensure the well-being of young people. As a result, there is a need for youth work organizations to receive appropriate counseling with regard to preventive methods and available networking structures – which are also part of a holistic concept of civic education and human rights education.

The term “education” may be misleading, for education is often understood primarily as imparting knowledge and, at best, as supporting discussions. However, ample experience has shown that preventing hateful and inhumane attitudes is less about cognitive issues and ideologies and more about emotional and psychosocial processes. This is because resentment, prejudice, and group-related hatred, as well as feelings of personal degradation, cannot simply be explained away with “better arguments”. Rather, pedagogical approaches are needed here that rely on interpersonal exchange

and sincere listening, and this begins by building trust and relationships through personal contact. Systematic lecturing or “clarifying” and “not letting stand” what is generally held to be a “questionable” statement is rather unfavorable as long as the primary interest in and respect of the person making the statement cannot be conveyed. Successful youth work in the communities needs actors who are continuously committed and willing to take up conflict tensions and latent and open







attitudes of group enmity and degradation. Young people are particularly at risk of adopting hateful and anti-democratic attitudes if they live in a social and family environment that is characterized by ideologies of inequality and in which abuse of “blacks,” “women,” “Muslims,” and “gays”, for example, is not called to order.

Youth work can take on a key municipal function at precisely this point and create spaces with young people that are based on fairness, equality and tolerance. Essential for this is (1) solid staffing and funding, (2) a good local network that involves participants from administration, school and police and supports youth workers – while always ensuring

full protection of personal data. What is also essential is (3) that institutions like schools, youth facilities, law enforcement facilities call upon and commission external civil-society practitioners and facilitators of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention who can provide full confidentiality and bring in an independent perspective.

#### KEY PRINCIPLES OF EXTREMISM AND GFE PREVENTION:

- Building trust and commitment
- Working frankly and authentically with others
- Providing full confidentiality and protection of personal data
- Emphasizing personal resources over deficits
- Emotional and social learning in groups rather than cognitive-focused individual learning
- Experiential learning over normative instruction
- Narrative-recounting methods – to tap into personally experienced learning
- Use of creative and design activities
- Sensitization of sensory perceptions and affects
- Inclusion of topics relevant to the life worlds of young people – including gender issues
- Consideration of and exchange about current and historical social debates
- Inclusion of local structures and adjacent psychosocial intervention areas
- Collegial reflection and team consultations
- Sustainable impact through long-term commitment
- Clear demarcation from security agencies’ functions

Cf. “RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice” (2016) and “The policy brief of the EXIT Europe project” (2021), both retrievable on [cultures-interactive.de/en/articles.html](https://cultures-interactive.de/en/articles.html).

## 4. Problems and objectives of prevention

### 4.1. Prevention of right-wing extremism

Right-wing extremism is based on notions of inequality, especially racism and ideologies of “white supremacy,” as well as on (ultra-)nationalism, authoritarianism up to and including the “Führer principle”. Furthermore, there are often positive references to National Socialism and the Third Reich. Right-wing extremists construct the idea of a homogeneous “national community” in which origin, language, religion, appearance and traditional gender roles are central criteria for assessment and acceptance. People who do not conform to this idea are degraded, disparaged and sometimes directly attacked.

Current right-wing extremist movements also usually take a critical and hostile stance toward the EU, propagating a (Western) European, sometimes also

“Eurasian” supremacy or ethnopluralist ideology. In some cases, they rely on national economic liberalism instead of the welfare state and question the demands of the civil rights movements of the 1960s, as well as the legal equality measures that later emerged from it.

On the level of action, right-wing extremism manifests itself through violent or violence-accepting behavior as well as through participation in corresponding political parties, such as the NPD (National Democratic Party of Germany) and the “III. Weg” (The III. Path) or organizations such as the “Identitarian Movement,” also regional right-wing extremist comradeships or terrorist groups. Frequent activities include violent and verbal attacks against minorities, immigrants, the government and political adversaries. In order to achieve their strategic goals, right-wing extremist organizations always seek to connect with the “center of society,” e.g. in alliances initiated or supported by groups that appear more moderate

#### TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

Right-wing extremism opposes the equal rights of men and women, women’s bodily self-determination, and the protection of minorities, whether in terms of sexual orientation or cultural, ethnic, or religious affiliation.

#### ETHNOPLURALISM

Like classical racism, ethnopluralism seeks homogeneous “ethnic communities.” Nevertheless, it does not necessarily regard one’s own nation as superior and allows coexistence, but rejects “mixing”. Some groups, especially those of the “new right,” try to distinguish themselves from classical right-wing extremism in this way. However, ethnopluralism merely shifts racist concepts to certain regions, e.g. to “Europe” or to “the Christian Occident.”

and are directed against immigration, other religions, refugees or sexual self-determination (e.g. PEGIDA and corresponding offshoots or the “Demo für alle” [Demos for everyone]).

Those who see right-wing extremism prevention as a task of their own (pedagogical) actions want to prevent authoritarian (“we need a strong leader again”), nationalistic (“Germany must look after its own interests”), xenophobic (“they don’t belong here”) and other resentful and prejudiced attitudes from being represented by ever more people. This is because such statements call into question central democratic values and basic constitutional rights, as well as society’s separation of powers, freedom and peacekeeping.

#### GRUNDGESETZ, ART. 3:

#### „ALL PEOPLE ARE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW“

Practicing democracy and the preservation of human rights needs active supporters and committed representatives of the constitution (German “Grundgesetz”, Basic Law). In this context, it is important ...

- to be vigilant in recognizing and responding to all statements that aim to abolish democracy and human rights
- to help the unprotected and unheard who are threatened by right-wing extremist and populist enemy images so that they receive due attention, e.g. ethnic, religious, cultural, sexual minorities
- to recognize legitimate criticisms of lack of equality, attention, and participation for populations defined along lines such as

poor-rich, urban-rural, or by milieu-based and socio-regional classifications, and to seek constructive suggestions for improvement for these criticisms.

#### ATTITUDES AND STRUCTURES

In fact, one’s own attitude and communication in (pedagogical) everyday activities are the most important factors in implementing sustainable right-wing extremism prevention. This sounds simple, but it is not. In order to have an impact on the ground through one’s own pro-democratic, cosmopolitan and tolerant attitude, and not to become isolated oneself, a good local and supra-regional network of supporters is also necessary, which must be constituted of collegial actors and municipal officials.

The federal program „Demokratie leben!“ (“Live Democracy!”) provides a broad framework of institutions, agencies and resources for prevention work. Its individual elements can work well together if they are used systemically and linked to the governmental structures of education and youth work. At the municipal level, these include the Partnerships for Democracy, most of which are affiliated with independent organizations and youth welfare offices. At the state level, there are also the State Democracy Centers, Mobile Counseling Centers on right-wing extremism, Victims Counseling Centers for survivors of violent right-wing extremist attacks, and organizations providing distancing and exit assistance. At the federal level, more than 30 specialized civil society organizations are commissioned as framework partners of the federal program in order to provide specific services with regard to particular

issues of violent extremism.

CI works as one of these specialized civil society organizations; it consults associations and agencies of youth work, youth welfare and youth social work on issues of right-wing extremism prevention and pedagogical practice through youth (culture) work for human rights and democracy. In addition, CI trains professionals and local teams to be able to carry out youth-oriented prevention work, targeted interventions and civic education on site.

To this end, CI also develops quality standards, provides recommendations on good practice in prevention activities and on good practice in program design in the field of preventing so-called violent extremism – and contributes to the professional and political debates within and about this filed at the federal and EU levels (cf. footnote 3). In particular, CI advocates for the inauguration and build-up of a professional association for practitioners of prevention and exit/distancing work

which is funded by but maximally independent from any governmental agencies. Therefore, CI strongly suggests to dismiss existing governmental plans to install a top-down “Federal Agency for Quality Control (of NGO work)” under the authority of the ministry of Interior and opt for the bottom-up procedure of quality development through an independent professional association. In this way CI seeks to contribute to assuring that the key division of powers and functions between governmental/security agencies and NGOs/practitioners (of prevention, education, social work, mental health etc.) which is so important in democracies will be duly observed – thus mitigating the risk that a sort of “prevention police state” modus is involuntarily created.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cf. “The civil society alternative to the ‘Federal Institute for Quality Control’: an independent professional association of practitioners in the prevention of extremism”, <https://cultures-interactive.de/de/positionenkommentare.html>.

## 4.2. A brief comment on the concept of “extremism”

Using the term extremism can be seen critically. It is based on the so-called “horseshoe theory,” according to which left-wing and right-wing extremism are two opposite ends of the political scale in society. This scale is viewed to lead via a “radical” and “moderate” left and right into a large social center, which is assumed to be neutral and democratic. However, this logic overlooks the fact that ideologies of inequality and sentiments of group-focused enmity can be found across all sectors of society – and increasingly so today.

The “horseshoe theory” also ignores essential differences between the two ideologies at stake and it cannot meaningfully describe other forms of extremism.

“Why don’t you also do something against left-wing extremism?” This question has been asked time and time again of those involved in the prevention of right-wing extremism. First of all, the answer is clear: If young people behave in a way that is against the law, hateful, violent or inhumane, everyone involved will see an urgent need

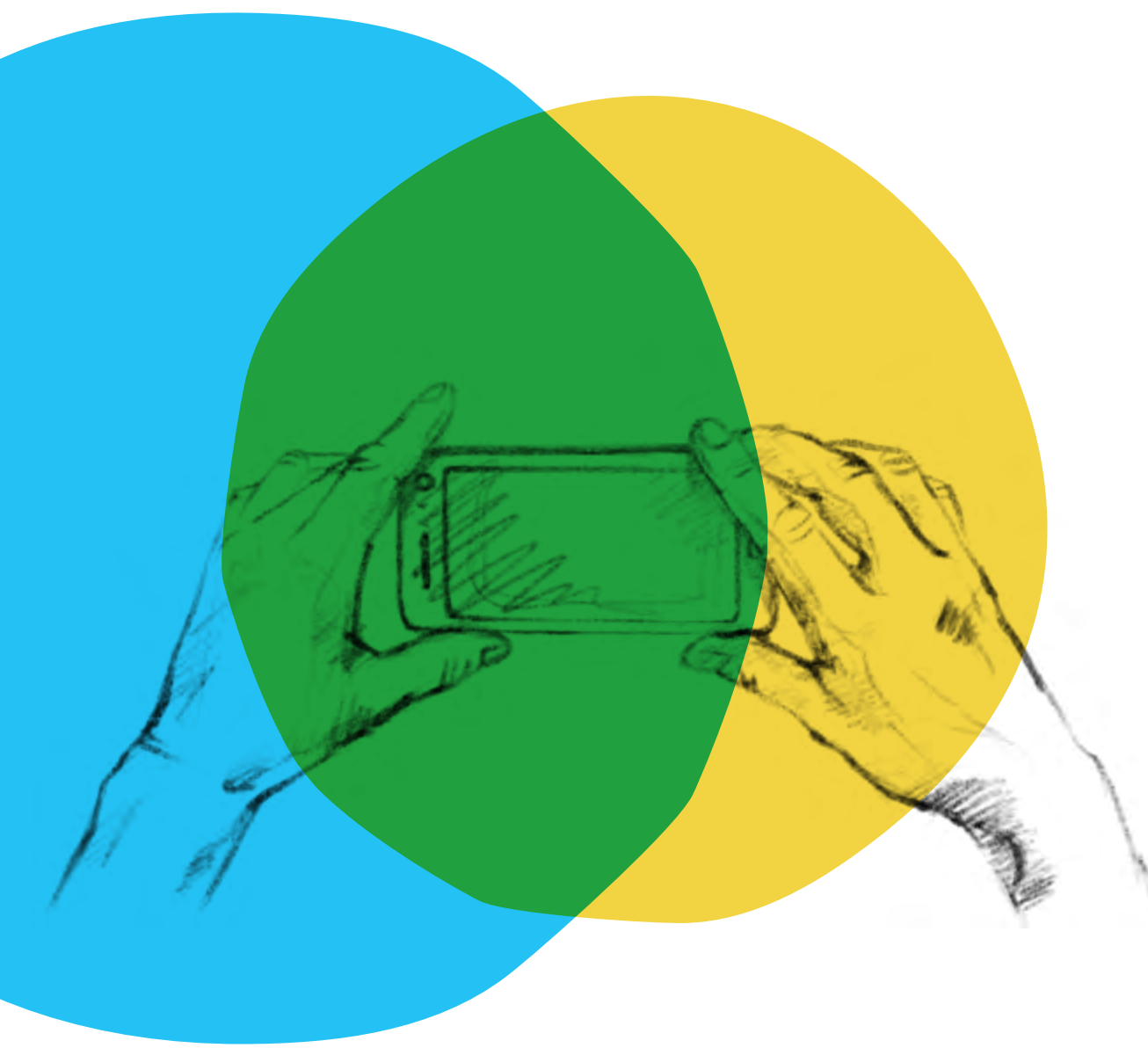
for action and react with appropriate security and socio-educational rehabilitation measures, regardless of which political affiliation the young people belong to. However, sometimes every demand for radical social change is dismissed as misguided and “extreme” – and suspected. In the last two decades, cultural and political youth scenes and adult initiatives that campaigned against right-wing extremism and for human rights – often in conflict-ridden regions and at high personal security risk – have repeatedly been classified as left-wing extremist and a threat to democracy, including by the state. This is absurd and counterproductive for all those who stand up for human rights and democracy. Admittedly, the widely established term “extremism” can hardly be completely abandoned on the spot today. So far, few convincing alternative terms

are available, especially not in the English language. It is therefore necessary to continue discussing how ideologies and behavior based on notions of inequality and degradation of others (as, for example, in right-wing extremism or religiously based extremism) can be meaningfully addressed across different phenomena. The empirically underpinned concepts of “group-focused enmity” and of “generalizing constructions of degrading others” at least represent partial solutions (GFE/GMF and PAKOs; cf. further above). A focus of anti-human rights or anti-democratic views may also be part of such terminological solution. Perhaps the expert discussion can contribute to making these alternatives more widely known, especially internationally, where concepts such as “group-focused enmity”/ GFE are virtually unknown.

*“Indeed, an extremely important topic. I’ll tell you honestly: Whether left-wing or right-wing extremism – I don’t see any difference.”*

*“Yes, there is,” the kangaroo shouts loudly. “There is a difference. Some set fire to foreigners, others to cars. And setting cars on fire is worse. Because it could have been my car. I don’t own any foreigners.”*

(Marc-Uwe Kling: “Die Känguru Offenbarung”/ The Kangaroo Revelation, translation by cultures interactive e.V.)



#### RELIGIOUSLY BASED EXTREMISM

When people talk about religiously based extremism, they often mean only so-called “Islamism”. However, it is pedagogically and socially urgent to also consider the numerous other forms of religiously based extremism, including Christian based extremism – and to recognize their parallels to right-wing extremism.

### 4.3. Cross-phenomenon prevention of right-wing extremism and religiously based extremism

Cross-phenomenon approaches in prevention work have been rare to date and are sometimes viewed with skepticism in Germany. The social and biographical conditions from which young people turn to religiously based extremism seem to differ too much from those that lead to right-wing extremism. Some seem to be predominantly young people with migrant Muslim backgrounds who are part of a minority in Western societies and perceive themselves and their religion as discriminated against. The others also come to a large degree from socially disadvantaged contexts. However, as part of the “white” majority society, they usually have better opportunities for participating socially, economically and culturally.

What is remarkable about these differences is that they hardly play a role when considering the pro-

cesses of turning to these two forms of extremism. Both right-wing extremists and violent Islamist extremists construct the disadvantage and persecution of their own group (“Foreigners get more than we do!”, “The government wants to displace us with foreigners and liberal population!”, “Muslims are persecuted worldwide!”, “The West wants to destroy all Muslim population everywhere!”). Such notions are seen as justification to attack others – and also to kill. The racially motivated attack on others thus becomes an act of (self-) defense. This seems all the more convincing to some (young) people, the more they feel disadvantaged and excluded.

A cursory comparative examination of both extremisms in terms of their ideological elements reveals some clear parallels, but also differences.

IDEOLOGICAL PARALLELS	Right-wing Extremism	Islamist-based Extremism
Over-identification with a constructed self-collective	"We, the real Germans"	"We, the real Muslims"
Degrading of others	In the ideological core, people of other nationalities and other skin color but also related to other categories (cf. GFE)	At the ideological core, other members of religions or non-believers but also related to other categories (cf. GFE)
Rejection of individual freedoms and democratic rights of co-determination	Democracy-rejecting "leader principle" (Führerprinzip)	Military or sect-like organized hierarchies with self-appointed religious leaders
Subordination of the individual to the collective/ authoritarianism	The national community/ white race	The community of "true Muslims"
Conspiracy theories and anti-Semitic interpretations of the world	The idea that a supposed Jewish financial capital would dominate the world. Blame defense (-> secondary anti-Semitism): "Jews wrongly portray themselves as victims." Israel-related anti-Semitism: in relation to Middle East conflict ("Jews = Israel", "Jewish Nazis in Gaza").	The idea that an international elite (often thought of as Jewish) would totally dominate the world. Anti-Semitism in relation to Middle East conflict ("Jews = Israel", "Jewish Nazis in Gaza"). "Jews wrongly portray themselves as victims." Legitimizing strategies for territorial action in conjunction with anti-Americanism.
Rigid gender and sexuality norms	"Biological" worldview with clear role concepts for men and women; heteronormative world-view. Women responsible for the national community and the preservation of the "race".	"Biological" worldview with clear role concepts for men and women; heteronormative world-view

IDEOLOGICAL PARALLELS	Right-wing Extremism	Islamist-based Extremism
Advocacy of violence	Call for and exercise of violence against political opponents and all who are not part of the Volksgemeinschaft. Open and covert terror to destabilize democracy.	Call for and exercise of violence against dissidents and arbitrarily defined enemies. Demonstration of power through terror and brutal violent crimes disseminated worldwide by the media.

IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES	Right-wing Extremism	Islamist-based Extremism
Access to the group	The basic ideological construct of the "national community" is racially or nationalistically exclusive and exclusionary.	The religious community is not exclusive in principle; option of conversion. Origin, skin color and the past do not play a role; everyone is allowed to join.
Spirituality	A spiritual-meditative practice is not present.	Has an option of spiritual-meditative practice.

Cf. among others Floris Biskamp on "Transnational Extremism" at the eponymous conference in Berlin of Schule ohne Rassismus – Schule mit Courage on 06.09.2018, to be listened to on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYnK96OI29c>, last call: 17.02.2019)



Individually, none of these motives can be considered as a risk factor. Even people who tick the boxes for all these factors usually choose different and productive ways of finding personal fulfillment.

### MOTIVES FOR DEVOTION

There are also parallels between the motives for young people who turn to right-wing extremism and religiously based extremism. It is important to understand these motives fully in order to be able to develop appropriate approaches to prevention. Therefore, some of them are listed here.

#### In general, young men and women in right-wing extremist or Islamist groups seek:

- Recognition/personal development
- Belonging/group identity
- Self-efficacy/action
- Solution to perceived or real problems (e.g. discrimination, injustice, also: personal crisis experiences)

The desire to feel recognized as a person, to belong, to be able to make a difference and have effects, and to overcome problems – all these are understandable motives that drive most people. Now, it is above all these young people who are considered at risk of turning to extremist groups, for whom these goals are difficult to achieve in mainstream society and in whose socialization other risk factors are added.

#### Other biographical factors:

- Growing up with insecure or instable relational attachments, or an arbitrary-authoritarian parenting style
- Unequal normative beliefs on gender roles in the social environment
- Family crises due to separation, death, addiction and (mental) health issues; de facto or emotional absent parents/the “absent father” pattern
- (Family) experiences of violence and being degraded as young person
- Transgenerational passing on of collective traumas of violence and war (cf. Sabine Bode: “The Forgotten Generation”)

#### Decisive regional or milieu-specific factors:

- Accessibility of extremist local group structures e.g., in the form of an active right-wing extremist comradeship or an active political Salafist or other Islamist group in the socio-spatial environment
- Availability of online and offline services close to young people, which right-wing extremists and violent Islamist extremists use for recruitment purposes
- The manner how the social environment (school, youth work, community) deals with hateful and anti-democratic statements





## THERE ARE GOOD REASONS FOR A CROSS-PHENOMENON METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH:

- in viewing of the pedagogical reality of youth facilities and schools
- out of respect for the particular addressees and regions
- to avoid further polarization

### CROSS-PHENOMENON APPROACHES AS A SENSIBLE BUILDING BLOCK IN PREVENTION

Appropriately addressing right-wing extremism and religiously based extremism is an important social and educational challenge. Great effort is made to counter these phenomena not only in terms of security policy but also in terms of pedagogical prevention. Politicians, public funding programs, institutions in the field of youth and educational work, and individual practitioners often view the phenomena separately from one another. This is not always favorable. In practice, youth and prevention workers can rarely foresee which problems they will be confronted with in social settings like schools. It can therefore be more effective if the different teams are aware of both phenomena, can identify threats, and can take a more holistic approach.

Another problem with activities that deal with only one form of extremism is that they must always make assumptions about certain groups of addressees, participants, as well as about certain communities or city districts. With whom and where do we work on religiously based or right-

wing extremism? How do we justify this at the level of primary prevention?

Focusing on one particular extremism can also reinforce the feeling that the other is being overlooked. This plays into the hands of violent extremists in particular. For example, religiously based extremism is repeatedly used by right-wing extremists to mobilize against “Islam,” and politically motivated Salafists use (anti-Muslim) racism and statements by right-wing extremists to demonize “the West” as a whole as enemies of Islam.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CROSS-PHENOMENA PREVENTION ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH WORK AND SCHOOLS:

It is necessary to offer projects with a broad understanding of prevention, in which

- the aim is to strengthen democratic and human rights attitudes and in which different group-focused hatred phenomena can be addressed
- stigmatization of addressees (so-called “target groups”) must be avoided
- staff should have the expertise in addressing both phenomena

### GOOD TEAMER KNOW-HOW

- Expertise and methodological knowledge of right-wing extremism and religiously based extremism, knowledge of parallels and differences in ideology and recruitment strategies
- The ability to ask (narrative) questions
- The ability to listen without judgement and to respond respectfully to what is heard
- The ability to moderate group processes and mediate conflicts
- The ability to react calmly and in a solution-oriented manner to (perceived) provocations
- The ability to recognize acute individual needs (e.g. psycho-/trauma therapy) and to request them sensitively
- The ability to embody human rights and democratic attitudes in an authentic manner
- The ability to clarify terms and to establish a common understanding of what is being said
- The ability to understand the realities of young people’s lives
- The ability to interact in a religion-sensitive and gender-reflective manner



# III. POTENTIALS OF A HUMAN RIGHTS- ORIENTED YOUTH CULTURE WORK – A PLEA

In youth cultures, young people create their experiential space – and form their identities in this phase between being a child and being an adult. At the same time, youth cultures are always an instrument of demarcation from the adult world. This is true for “youth culture scene” in particular, which represents the practice and participation-oriented core of every youth culture. This is because the members of a “youth culture scene” strongly self-identify, they “live their youth culture” and shape it, e.g. as a committed punk, ultra or as a rapper. Thus, through youth scenes in the most diverse social spaces – urban, rural, socially precarious or secure – it is possible to live out culturally and develop locally what is aesthetically and ideally envisioned in human rights-oriented youth cultures. In the process, young people often acquire a great deal of knowledge and a wide range of practical and, above all, social skills. For in their

scene, young people are always in a two-fold position: looking for acceptance within the group while at the same time demarcating those who are not.

The significance of youth cultural self-demarcation from the adult world becomes important, among other things, when the commercialization of a youth culture takes place – but sometimes also where pedagogical overload becomes apparent. When the commonly shared symbolisms and stylistic moments of one’s own scenes, which function as internalized markers of recognition and belonging and are always creatively developed further, are suddenly marketed as popular cultural trends and watered down or cut back in their content and demands, a tension arises. This can also happen when concerns of prevention, civic education, or security policy are given precedence, resulting in methodological and content-related constraints.

All the more is it important to safeguard an open space for unrestricted exchange and discussion when designing projects based on youth cultures – and to protect them from external interests.

Carefully implemented in this way, youth culture-based approaches to civic education can open up a sympathetic negotiation space for social issues that appeal to and directly affect young people – especially those young people with whom contact seems to have been almost entirely lost. This is because youth cultures are very close to the inter-

ests of adolescents in terms of content and form, and offer them a wide range of points of contact with the world in which they live. In this context, youth-oriented and intensified civic education, combined with a socio-educational protection mandate, is particularly relevant where a youth scene tends to be undemocratic and non-inclusive – potentially sexist or aggressively directed against minorities and outsiders. Pedagogical support can achieve a great deal in this case without having to intervene directly in creative freedom.

## 1. Reflection and fairness through youth cultures and civic education

Youth culture work can reach adolescents from different backgrounds to address and reflect on socio-political conflict instigating issues such as racism, social justice, and gender roles in a way that is appropriate for young people. In hip-hop circles, for example, there is a persistent prejudice that women cannot rap. However, the fact that there are obviously plenty of talented female rappers is self-evident when a workshop is led by a female youth culture facilitator who raps herself and can motivate the girls taking part. The self-understanding of the “do-it-yourself (DIY)” approach promotes creativity and self-commitment in this way.

Teaching democratic competences cannot be achieved through a pedagogical approach to education that only instrumentalizes youth cultures for the transfer of knowledge. Rather, authentic role models are required, whether they are scene actors or educators with relevant experience, who can shape youth cultural practice as a personal space of individual experience, creativity and social reflection. Experience has shown that this approach is also effective with the adolescents who tend to vehemently reject other groups. This is because exchange during the workshop, which also includes a moderated conversation about one’s own life situation, enables the questioning of



### YOUTH CULTURE WORK PURSUES CENTRAL GOALS OF THE GERMAN GOVERNMENTAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMME:

- to impart knowledge
- to enable the formation of judgement
- to encourage participation and engagement

alleged truths, the changing of perspective as well as the fostering of empathy for “other” groups. In doing so, an open attitude is cultivated that is also empowered to set limits where necessary – transparently and comprehensibly – and in close consultation with the young people themselves.

Youth cultural practice and youth culture work can be educational and individually supportive almost entirely of themselves – and out of the creative, artistic process itself. This is because youth culture work lets young people take advantage of their own talents, strengthens their self-confidence, encourages them to pursue their interests, but also allows them to experiment and work towards self-empowerment. In addition, young people learn social interaction in heterogeneous groups, which enables them to take on new roles in the social space and become actively involved in social and political life.

Moreover, the therapeutic factor of art and creativity is not to be underestimated. It is inherent in every creative-artistic activity and is especially

important for those adolescents whose connection to their own experience and to society is in danger of being lost.

Youth cultural facilitators have a key function in this process. Having been part of the youth scene themselves, they embody credibility and authenticity. This gives them a natural authority, enabling them to convey the meaning and added value of a critical and democratic attitude. With their background, they are able to draw from their own experiences when questioning ideologies of inequality. As a result, they can engage in a candid debate with young people who sympathize with these ideologies without stigmatizing them. At the same time, these youth culture facilitators prove through their skills and their narratives that change is possible.

Youth cultural scenes often develop along political lines of conflict. For example, disputes with the municipality have to be fought out before a skateboarding half-pipe is made available in the public space. And an urban youth club can only become

a center of living democracy when an open and diverse youth and/or music scene is established there, dissolving the appropriation strategies by authoritarian cliques. Youth culture work is located accordingly within the framework of a committed and creative democracy education. It contributes

to the capacity for political judgment, constructive criticism, and active social and societal engagement. And it conveys the experience that local conditions can be influenced in one's own interest when working with others to achieve this.

## 2. Self-efficacy through youth cultural practice in peer groups

To be recognized by their peers is of great importance to adolescents. They perceive their environment largely in perspective to and through direct interaction with their peers. Thus, an approach that begins directly with the every-day lifeworld perceptions of young people is promising and purposeful. In this context, the opportunity to pass on one's own (cultural) skills to others can create a great deal of solidarity and inclusivity among young people, improving their self-image in a positive direction.

Young people with a strong sense of self are not only aware that they can shape social processes, they are equally aware that they also depend on other young people to do so — and therefore need to reach out to them. Through interactions with their peers, they continually develop their own positions and enrich them with new perspectives. That is why the content level must be closely interwoven with the relationship level in youth culture work. The best way to access this is through emotional and group-dynamic points of contact – and

CREATIVE COMPETITION

Authentic

Participation

Self development

Representation



through joint creative design. The content-related and cognitive aspects can then be taken up in the further course.

Youth culture work for human rights and democracy supports young people in developing their social skills. A preventive effect against ideologies of inequality unfolds when young people recognize that their actions generate social effects and can bring about change. An important condition for success is that they can create their own spaces to try things out. These autonomous experiences strengthen their trust in themselves and others. In addition, adolescents who are productive in terms

of youth culture directly recognize the personal value and social benefit of democratic and human rights attitudes – as a basis for the free development of their personality.

Of course, such favorable cognitive and developmental processes also require certain framework conditions that enable continuous, peer-pedagogical relationship work. Appropriate financial and professional conditions and municipal infrastructures are the indispensable prerequisites for youth culture work that can have a lasting preventive effect.

### 3. Democratic participation of adolescents in the community

*“The idea of democracy remains barren and meaningless unless it has become flesh in human relations.”*  
(John Dewey: The Public Sphere and its Problems, Berlin/Vienna 2001, p. 125, translation by cultures interactive e.V.)

Youth cultures can be a fundamental factor and a crucial interface for a civic and inclusive community. This community is comprised of networks between adolescents, their families, the social space, and their schools, which not only support the young people in shaping their worlds but also opens the door to an understanding of broader democratic participation. This is because a personal

relationship to “politics” can be established, which young people otherwise tend to perceive as abstract or only associate with the affective performance and self-interest of politicians. This is especially true for marginalized youth, who can be addressed with youth cultural activities in “their own manner of speech.” When milieu-related, spatial and social barriers as well as fear of contact, prejudices, and patterns of discrimination in a community are eliminated, an understanding of common interests emerges – as well as the possibility of working together. Skaters and rappers with and without refugee experience can meet daily at the half-

pipe, which was fought for through local politics. The youth club can host a biannual youth culture festival for inclusion and against discrimination, which brings together graffiti exhibitions, youth concerts, and a soccer tournament, for example.

The local youth cultural scene can then also give rise to a substantive discussion of ideas of fairness, society and human rights that reaches further and radiates into the community. After all, human rights affect all social and age groups equally, both in the private sphere and in social contexts. Human rights as a foundation is also suitable as a basis for

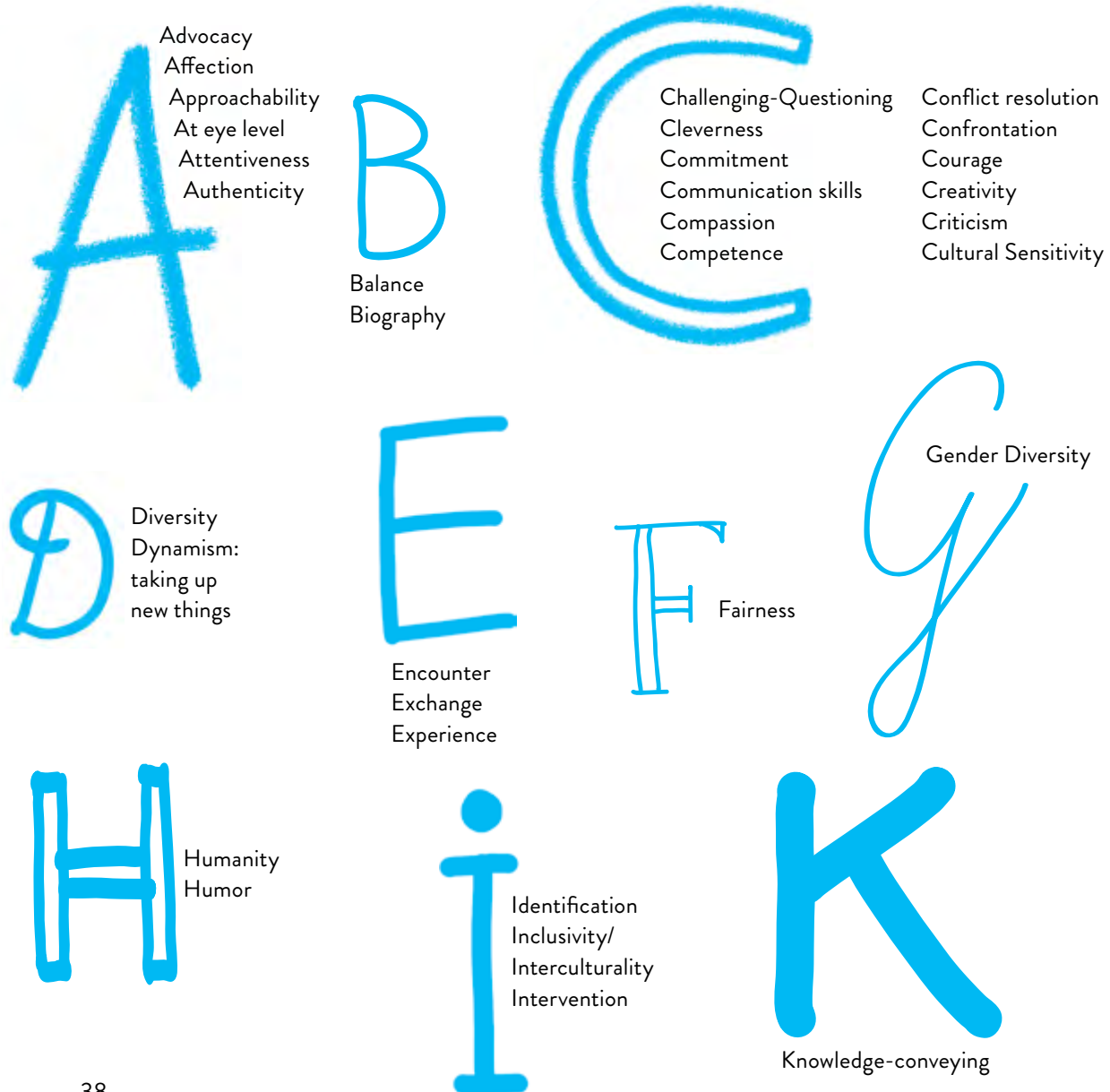
finding common ground between young people and adults becomes. It also becomes clear that it is a fundamental interest of all people in a community to maintain and further develop lively democratic structures, respective (youth) culture scenes as well as pluralistic, intergenerational ways of life.

**Inclusion, conceived as the democratic participation of all people in the community, is a lived example against ideologies of inequality.**

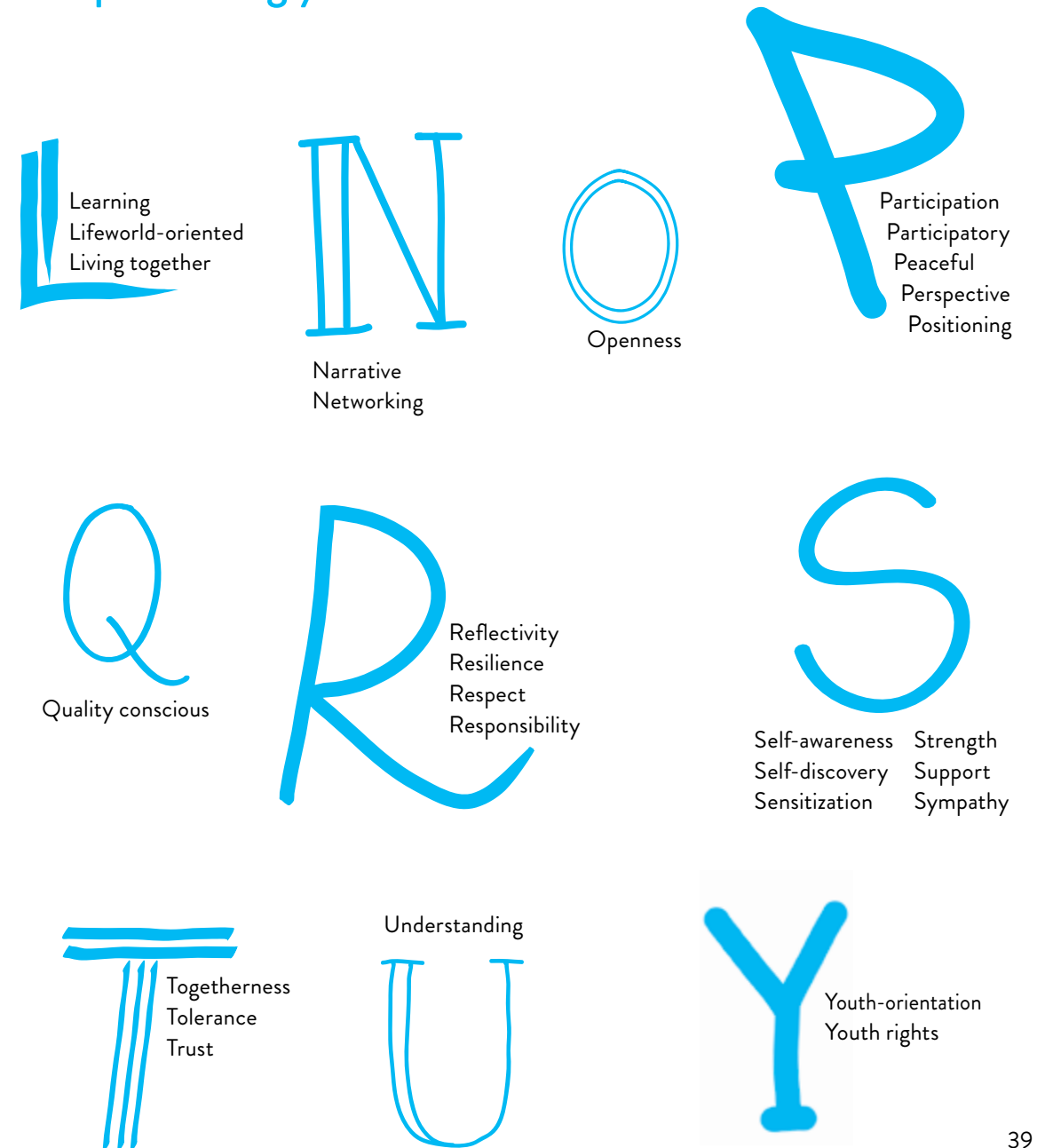




## 4. An A-Z of human rights-oriented and democracy



## promoting youth culture work







gender inclusive  
democratic human  
rights-oriented youth  
culture work ...

WHAT?

## IV. APPROACHES AND TERMS OF CULTURES INTERACTIVE'S WORK

### I. Civil society-based youth culture work

Civil society-based youth culture work is manifested in formats and concepts that empower young people to stand up for their rights and interests in their community environment in a committed, emphatic, and constructive way – and thus considering the community as such. This approach responds to the following phenomena:

- Young people who, due to a lack of participation, do not have a clear understanding of democratic structures
- Children and young people who have the feeling that they are not being heard by their persons of reference
- No or limited activities that relate to the everyday perspective and interests of young people

To remedy such a starting point, long-term approaches are necessary. In successive pedagogical and youth-cultural settings, young people can be encouraged to discover where their potentials lie and to develop possible ways of enriching their living environment in a way that is influenced by youth culture. The implementation of youth cul-

tural interests on site – such as the conversion of a warehouse into a skate hall, the allocation of a youth space, the creation of a legal graffiti wall, the revitalization of an old movie theater – must be welcomed and designed with youth in mind so that these ideas do not get lost in the gears of administrative mills.

Youth culture work in the realm of civil society is a sustainable approach to the development of young people's investment in the community and towards supporting their ability to do things themselves (DIY) to bring about change. Through serious participation in local political processes, young people experience democracy as something that consists not only of the right to vote, but above all centers around the opportunity to make their own voices heard and actively contribute to improving and enriching their own living environment. Last but not least, communities that develop a lively youth culture become a more attractive place for families to live.

## 2. Human rights-oriented perspective

Human rights-oriented youth culture work makes it possible to (1) dissolve prejudices and lessen hate-based attitudes toward certain groups, (2) create a willingness to engage in dialogue and tolerance, and (3) create a greater understanding of the everyday significance of universal human rights. Human rights-oriented youth culture work responds to the following phenomena:

- Degradation and contempt towards people – also among young people – e.g. due to gender/sexual orientation, skin color, ethnic origin, religion and culture
- Prejudice against refugees
- Skepticism towards the principle of equality, especially with regard to family and work

This requires a professional sensitivity on the part of the workshop facilitators towards phenomena of group-focused enmity (GFE) among young people. Derogatory remarks referring to certain groups are often accepted and are considered typical youth jargon in their entire range. However, it is important to work on this. Young people use different terms to insult others and display a general attitude of contemptuousness depending on the group, region, and milieu. This often has less to do with youth cultural fashions than with milieu-specific attitudes. For “retard,” “negro,” “Arab,” “hooker,” “Jew,” “Nazi,” “victim” can only function as a pejorative if they are sufficiently common and widespread as terms throughout the social environment.

In youth culture workshops, especially those that work with language and texts such as rap, YouTube, or comics, one can systematically work out with the young people which terms have positive connotations and which swear words they use to express contempt and provocation – and what this means for the implicitly named groups.

In all youth work settings, derogatory language and accompanying exclusionary dynamics should be taken seriously. Youth workers can call young people’s attention to their offensive language. “Hey, I noticed ...”. They should personally distance themselves from this use of language and if time allows, the youth workers can take a closer look at the words and scenes of offense with the group. Some people are unaware that they constantly degrade certain groups of people with their insults and thus also support existing power hierarchies: Hetero before Homo, Man before Woman, Jews as a symbol of all evil in the world, etc. The pedagogical process becomes particularly interesting when unpacking how it is that they make particularly strong use of certain group-focused curse words in their group (e.g. towards girls/women, gays) – then searching for alternatives and solutions with the young people. Because with these questions, one quickly reaches the point where a lifeworld-oriented civic education can take place – especially in the realm of building ‘social and emotional civic intelligence’.

### Different sorts of degrading statements:

- degrading remarks related to gender and sexual orientation (for example, against girls, boys, homosexuals and transsexuals),
- religion-related degrading (e.g. against Jews, Muslims, or Christians),
- ethnic/nationalistic degrading (e.g. against Turks, Arabs, Germans, Roma, etc.)
- socio-economically based degrading (e.g. against the unemployed and welfare recipients, the homeless, etc.)
- degrading statements based on physical characteristics (e.g. against people with disabilities or who are overweight)



### HUMAN RIGHTS – A SELECTION IN SIMPLE LANGUAGE

All human beings are equal and free from birth (Article 1). No one may be discriminated against (Article 2). Everyone has rights, no matter where they are (Article 6). Everyone may freely express his or her opinion and artistic expression (Article 5). All people are equal before the law (Article 7). No one may be arbitrarily imprisoned (Article 9). Everyone has the right to move freely (Article 13); the right to asylum (Article 14); the right of everyone to marry and found a family (Article 16); freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 18); the simple right to food, shelter and medical care (Article 25). Everyone has a right to education (Article 26) and the right to a free and just world (Article 28)

#### Excursus – protection of minors

Looking at the objectives of civic and human rights education will always consider the general, non-partisan obligation to ensure the protection of youth (cf. below on the “educational protection of children and youth” according to the Social Code, SGB VIII). Living in a general attitude of group-focused enmity, of contempt for and dominance over others and other groups is fundamentally detrimental to the development of young – and adult – people. Already apart from all political ideologies, it is a fact that enmity and group hatred poisons – also

in the literal and/or physiological sense. For people who are caught up in resentment, hostility and bitterness are demonstrably less healthy and have a shorter life expectancy; moreover, they also tend to be less creative/constructive and cause more damage and costs. All the more reason, then, for the obligation to protect young people to prevent these risks as systematically and sustainably as possible.

### 3. Inclusive youth culture work

Inclusion is the opposite of exclusion. Inclusion means that everyone belongs – and is included – as a matter of course. In an inclusive society, it doesn’t matter what someone looks like, what language/s she or he speaks or whether they are differently abled. In terms of inclusive youth culture work, this means that everyone should be able to participate in youth cultural leisure activities.

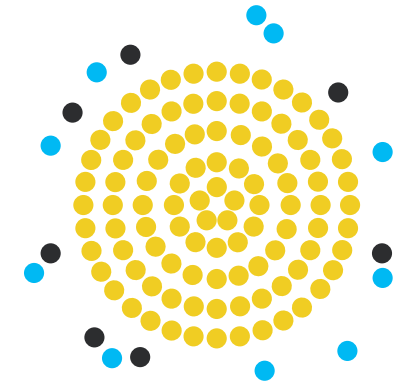
The inclusive youth culture approach responds to the following phenomena:

- Inclusion has by far not yet been achieved on all levels and is taken for granted as a human right.
- So far, this topic is mainly discussed in relation to children and young people in regards to the school context and rarely in terms of leisure activities or open youth work.
- Youth work has to develop methodically in order to design inclusive youth culture activities.

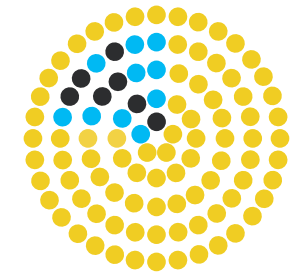
Settings and methods for youth culture activities have to be designed inclusively in order to be able to respond to the different needs of people. If all children and young people can be part of an activity, it is increasingly perceived as normal to be different. Sometimes all it takes is a little rethinking in the organization of youth cultural activities; then diverse groups that stick together will form almost on their own. In concrete terms, every youth (cultural) activity can be subjected to an inclusion test.

#### A provisional list of questions for designing inclusive youth culture work:

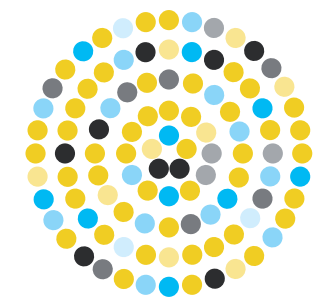
- How must rap, digital music production, graffiti, comics, skateboarding, parkour, street dance workshops be structured to work for people with limited physical function, or sight or hearing impaired for example?
- How can civic education or practice-oriented explanations be expressed in simple language?
- Are there language inclusion and translation/subtitle options in place?
- What assistance can the workshop facilitators and the group provide?
- How should rooms used in open youth work be equipped?
- What needs to be considered when using technical equipment, making it accessible for all?
- Are there enough role models in the team who are “different” – for example, are differently abled and who pass on their youth cultural skills to children and young people?



Exclusion



Integration



Inclusion

Reference: [www.aktion-mensch.de/dafuer-stehen-wir/was-ist-inklusion.html](http://www.aktion-mensch.de/dafuer-stehen-wir/was-ist-inklusion.html)

## GENDER ASPECTS

The focus on gender aspects means working with the respective ideas of young people about their masculinity and/or femininity, about the background and consequences of binary gender role concepts, dealing with homosexuality and bisexuality and with self-locations that are not clearly male or female (queer) or with ambiguous gender (transsexuality).

## 4. Gender-reflective prevention

Gender-reflective prevention work describes methodological approaches that pay special attention to gender aspects and gender politics in relation to group-focused enmity, right-wing extremism, and religiously based extremism.

This is a reaction to the following phenomena, among others:

- rigid, restrictive role concepts in relation to “being a man” and “being a woman”, sexism and homophobia as an ideological framework in right-wing extremism and religiously based extremism
- the factor of certain concepts of masculinity and femininity in turning to right-wing extremist and religiously based extremist groups
- the increasing social rejection of emancipation movements that advocate equal rights for men and women and equality between

heterosexual and homosexual lifestyles

- the questioning of the right to bodily self-determination, for example in order to defend oneself against sexualized violence or with regard to the right to abortion
- the empirically proven interaction of sexism and racism  
(cf. Maite Garaigordobil)

Youth (culture) work approaches that are gender-reflective challenge rigid binary gender role concepts and provide adolescents with an understanding of the real diversity of people with different gender and sexual identities.

Any youth (culture) workshop can be designed to bring critical awareness regarding the different life situations of people who might identify as ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ as well as people who do not fit into binaries. This can be done in a variety of settings:

### Gender-reflective coeducation

In mixed-gender groups, the aim is to talk to each other about stereotypical gender roles (“Boys are like this!”, “Girls are like that!”) and to challenge and dissolve ideas of inequality. Social norms regarding gender roles and gender relations are discussed on the basis of the young people’s direct experiences. Are girls allowed to do the same things as their brothers, do they have the same tasks in the family, are they allowed to stay out as late in the evening? What is the situation like in everyday life? Do teachers treat female-looking students differently than male-looking students?

### Gender-specific work with girls

Gender-specific work with girls offers safe spaces where girls, accompanied by educators, can strengthen their self-confidence, reduce possible disadvantages, and, if necessary, also work on the need for change. This can be, for example, experiential pedagogical activities for girls in fields of activity generally dominated by boys or men, such as band workshops, soccer, rap, breakdancing, skateboarding by and for girls. Problem- or solution-oriented measures also deal with girl-specific threats (public space, sexual violence) and disadvantages (“My brother is allowed to do much more than me”).

### Gender-specific work with boys

Gender-specific work with boys supports concepts of critical masculinity: one-dimensional ideas of masculinity presented by the media or generally seen in society are questioned. Alternative role models are consciously introduced into youth work and boys are strengthened in developing identities that are not based primarily on physical

strength, assertiveness, sports, competition or heterosexuality, for example. Also “typical” youth culture activities for boys like martial arts or fan scenes can be well connected to the topic of “critical masculinity”.

### Cross-work approaches

Female educators are deliberately deployed in boy groups and male educators in girl groups. The aim here is to set gender role images in motion and to enable new experiences in social interaction with the “opposite sex”; e.g. as a workshop facilitator in skateboarding or heavy metal band workshop, or as a facilitator of an experiential outdoor training camp with boys or as a workshop facilitator in dancing, cooking or baking.

## 5. Early distancing

Early distancing measures fall under the heading of secondary prevention. Distancing work is aimed at young people who hold extreme right-wing, religiously based or otherwise legitimated anti-human rights beliefs. Especially if these young people are not yet fully “immersed” in a violent extremist scene, they can still be approached – early – and relatively easily by educators and facilitators of preventive measures. In this early phase, the aim is to provide suitable activities for the young people, to establish contact, to engage in trust-building conversations about their social and biographical situation, to reflect on their attitudes, and to jointly envisage alternative, non-extremist ways of shaping their own lives.

The approach responds to the following problems:

- There is a lack of youth work offers in the area between primary prevention and criminal justice measures.
- Provocative and extremist political self-expressions by young people are usually ignored or forbidden by the family and educational environment, and in any case are hardly ever seriously dealt with. Those who had left extremist scenes later reported that they would have been still quite approachable by education practitioners in the early phases of radicalization. However, they lacked a patient and appreciative “counterpart” with whom they could have discussed issues, including political ones.
- Young people turn to right-wing extremist groups because they are actively

approached and feel valued by them.

- Young people need alternative options to achieve a sense of personal belonging and purpose.

Early distancing services should be closely networked cross-departmentally with the relevant municipal actors and authorities. This should happen directly with schools, youth work and youth welfare offices, youth social work (young people who are not in school), juvenile court and probation services, and juvenile judges, while fully respecting the protection of personal data. As a rule, young people who display right-wing extremist tendencies and are known to the staff at an early stage, should be addressed as quickly as possible. In intensive individual and group settings, processes of self-awareness and reflection on life history, attitudes and behavior are then stimulated. Qualified facilitators, possibly working as a duo team, moderate these processes in the sense of “triangular distancing work” and maintain the balance between relationship/trust building and a critical stance or distancing from hateful and anti-democratic statements. Early distancing work faces numerous challenges that can only be touched upon here:

To describe the balance between relationship building and critical distancing, CI coined the terms critical-attuned or supportive-confrontational attitude.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. “RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice” (2016) and “The policy brief of the EXIT Europe project” (2021), both available on <https://cultures-interactive.de/en/articles.html>.

On Confidentiality and the Right to Refuse to Testify cf. “Exit Counselling, Confidentiality, the Right to Refuse to Testify – and Germany’s Poor Sense of Inter-Agency Trust”, available on [cultures-interactive.de/fachartikel.htm](https://cultures-interactive.de/fachartikel.htm)

### Voluntariness and confidentiality

Voluntariness is a basic requirement of distancing work. Nevertheless, young people can be actively encouraged and motivated to take up certain educational activities indicated for them in a self-determined manner. Self-motivated, (self-)responsible participation is indispensably linked to the guarantee of confidentiality – and basically also to the right of distancing and exit workers to refuse to testify on clients in court.

### Participation of the setting

The wider setting – school, youth shelters, mental health facilities, etc. – should be aware of services of distancing work and actively advertise them to the youth at risk.

### Counseling offers for the family system

Counseling of the families of at-risk youths must be considered. If the young people come from right-wing extremist or religiously based extremist milieus, the families are often skeptical about available services of distancing work (supporting the youth in distancing from violent extremist stance), and family support is all the more necessary.

### Appealing, youth-oriented activities

Distancing work and comparable preventive youth work activities that rely on the voluntary engagement of young people should be as attractive and motivational as possible, enabling young people to engage in the process in a self-determined way.

### The increasing importance of schools in the context of early distancing processes

In view of the above-mentioned challenges, schools are often an ideal place to initiate early distancing processes. Open discussion groups or narrative group work, for example in the context of afternoon or ethics lessons, can enable young people to exchange their political ideas and social experiences and also talk about their personal and family background. They may thus enter into more in-depth and transformative conversations in the group and with the group work facilitators from outside the school (see basic principles of prevention in Chapter II.3).





# V. ANNEX

## Legal basis for youth work geared towards promoting democracy and/or preventing extremism

In the following, several legal references with respect to youth (culture) work oriented towards democracy promotion and prevention are outlined, based on the current “Frankfurter Kommentar SGB VIII Kinder – und Jugendhilfe” (Frankfurt Commentary on the German Social Code Book VIII [SGB] on Child and Youth Welfare). This is in order to provide suggestions for a legal foundation of the field of preventive youth (culture) work. (Cf. Meysen 2019 in Münder/Meysen/Trenczek [eds]: “Frankfurter Kommentar SGB VIII Kinder und Jugendhilfe 8th ed. NOMOS, Baden-Baden 2019, pp. 172-175).

### § 9 SGB VIII, on the basic direction of education, equality of girls and boys

In the commentary: „While performing different duties under SGB VIII, the different circumstances of female and male young people are to be taken into account (No. 3). (...) This results in the obligation to develop a gender concept with the development and provision of specific offers for boys and girls. This is to be considered in youth welfare planning. (...) Originally, the discussion focused on girls (...). Meanwhile, both genders and their respective specific disadvantages

are equally in view.“

(Cf. Meysen in Münder/Meysen/Trenczek (ibid., pp. 172-175, Translation by cultures interactive e.V.).

### § 11, on Youth Work

**(1) Young people should be provided with the youth work services and activities necessary to promote their development. These activities should be correlated with the interests of young people, co-determined and co-designed by them, thus enabling self-determination and stimulating them to social co-responsibility and social commitment.**

(...)

**(3) The focal points of youth work include:**

- 1. Extracurricular youth education with general, political, social, health, cultural, natural history and technical education,**
- 2. youth work in sports, games, and socializing,**
- 3. workplace, school and family-related youth work,**
- 4. international youth work,**
- 5. recreation for children and young people,**
- 6. youth counseling.**



The commentary provides specific guidance for youth work aimed at strengthening democratic and human rights attitudes: The goals stated in paragraph 1 “are based on the general understanding that civic education is an overarching principle of youth work. This does not only mean the imparting and acquisition of basic economic, social, cultural and political knowledge. It is about an active, action-oriented involvement of young people in shaping processes of the local community. This task is the basis for getting involved in local planning and design processes. It implies that young people should be empowered to represent their own interests.” (...) In addition to civic education, youth work pursues a general extracurricular educational mission that explicitly includes cultural as well as health education in addition to social education. This is highly relevant for the prevention of violent extremism (cf. above on health and youth protection). Additionally, the law names general humanistic and socio-political goals “derived from the humanitarian image of man, for example, equality of opportunity, social justice, participation and shared responsibility.” (Cf. Schäfer/Weitzmann in Münder/Meysen/Trenczek (ibid., pp. 198-206, translation by cultures interactive e.V.).

### § 13 SGB VIII, on Youth Social Work ((U5))

**(1) Young people who are in increased need of support to compensate for social disadvantages or to overcome individual impairments should be offered socio-educational assistance within the framework of youth welfare to promote their schooling and vocational training, integration into the world of work and their social integration..**

From the commentary: “Section 13 standar-

*dizes youth social work as an independent area in the system of child and youth welfare between the assistance for education and child and youth work. As a special subarea, its goal is in particular the linguistic, educational and vocational integration of young people. Youth social work is the generic term for various services to support disadvantaged young people. In essence, these are primarily youth vocational assistance, youth migration services, youth housing and school social work. (...) The focus on adolescents and young adults who are particularly disadvantaged and show considerable individual and social deficits in their development assigns youth social work, in addition to its assistance function, above all an advocacy function for the concerns of this group of addressees.”*

(Cf. Schäfer/Weitzmann in Münder/Meysen/Trenczek (ibid., pp. 216-230, translation by cultures interactive e.V.).

### § Section 14, on Educational Protection of Children and Young People

**(1) Young people and legal guardians should be offered educational protection for children and young people.**

**(2) The measures should ...**

- 1. enable young people to protect themselves from dangerous influences and learn to take criticism, decision-making skills and personal responsibility as well as responsibility towards their fellow human beings ...**
- 2. to better enable parents and other guardians to protect children and young people from dangerous influences.**

The commentary states: “Young people should be made aware of risks and dangers and taught skills

*to deal responsibly with risky life situations or to protect themselves. (...) The separate regulation of educational child and youth protection also corresponds to the significantly changed and fast-moving lifeworld of young people in recent years and their handling of dangerous situations resulting from this.”* Particular reference is made to the risks posed by digital media. Undoubtedly, however, the increasing risks posed by violent lifestyles and lifestyles resting on group-based hatred and enmity are also relevant. The measures focus essentially on prevention, information and education. Young people and guardians are to be reached, but also institutions of education and upbringing or their professionals who work with young people and offer parental counseling.

This is based on a comprehensive understanding of the protection of children and young people. Protection of minors “cannot be limited to one area, nor does it represent an isolated ‘special area’. This has practical relevance, since child and youth protection are a component of a promotion of children and adolescents aimed at prevention and integration. (...) It is about empowerment in dealing with dangers. Youth work activities that are sufficient in terms of quality and quantity have, in addition to their educational functions, a high value in terms of youth protection.”

(Cf. Schäfer/Weitzmann 2019 in Münder/Meysen/Trenczek (ibid., pp. 231-234, translation by cultures interactive e.V.).

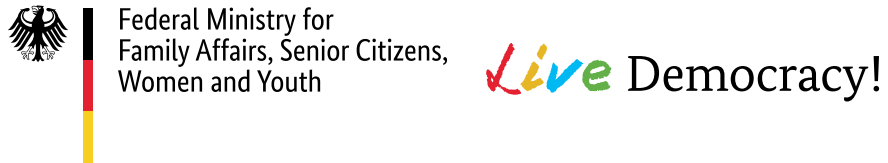
The educational protection of children and young people, which is regulated in this section 14, differs from the statutory protection of children and young people, among other things, in that it

does not contain any regulatory provisions, but instead focuses primarily on information, advice and prevention. The addressees are young people, their legal guardians and educational professionals. So far, the commentary on the law has focused strongly on the use of and potential dangers posed by digital media. This paragraph could serve as a legal basis for **all organizations** that compile information on the risks of right-wing extremism and religious extremism, make it available and disseminate it, carry out educational projects on prevention, offer counseling, support parents, and provide training for educational professionals.

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