ARBEITSGEMEINSCHAFT FÜR KINDER- UND JUGENDHILFE AGJ

Youth Work in Uncertain Times

Between Advocacy, Peace Work and Security Policy Expectations

Online Discussion Event organised by the Association for Child and Youth Welfare – AGJ

19 November 2026 | 4:30–7:30 pm CET | Online via Zoom

Invitation

The geopolitical situation in Europe has fundamentally changed in recent years. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and other international conflicts have brought questions of peace and security, defence capabilities and societal resilience increasingly to the forefront of political debate. At the same time, young people face a wide range of challenges: they are experiencing the consequences of international crises, economic uncertainty and societal transformations, and must shape their futures under increasingly uncertain conditions.

These developments are also changing political priorities at the European level. As security, crisis preparedness and defence capabilities gain importance, social infrastructure, participation and the interests of young people are coming under increasing pressure. At the same time, there are growing expectations that young people themselves should contribute to societal resilience and crisis response. Questions of peace and security, economic security and intergenerational justice are therefore becoming central issues for the future of youth policy.

What role does Youth Work play?

This raises the question of what is expected of Youth Work in the context of current security policy developments, and how these expectations can be reconciled with its professional identity, its autonomy and its role in representing the interests of young people. Particular attention will be paid to participation, democratic learning and peace work, as well as the risk that Youth Work may be instrumentalised to serve security policy objectives.

What can we learn from different European perspectives?

This online expert event will explore these questions from a European perspective. Together with experts from academia, politics and practice, we will discuss how different European countries are responding to these challenges, what role Youth Work plays in times of societal crisis, and how the interests and perspectives of young people can be brought into debates on security policy and youth policy.

The event combines an academic and European policy introduction with an international panel discussion. Subsequent thematic breakout sessions will explore key questions in greater depth and relate European experiences to the situation in Germany. These sessions will also consider how

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young people's voices can be made more prominent in these debates and what insights and impulses can be drawn for practice in child and youth welfare.

Together, we will discuss how Youth Work can define its own professional identity within this field of tension, strengthen its democratic foundations and commitment to peace, and ensure that it is recognised as an actor in societal dialogue and decision-making processes.

Language: The event will be held mainly in English. Contributions to the discussion and questions may be made in either German or English – via the chat function or verbally. We are happy to assist with translation on request.

Registration: Register for the event

Please note that you will not receive an automatic registration confirmation. We will send you the link to join the event shortly before it takes place. If you have any further questions, please contact Irene Poczka at irene.poczka@agj.de.

The Zoom access details will be sent to registered participants by email in good time before the event.

Programme

4:15 pm – Zoom room opens

4:30 pm – Opening and welcome, Alexander Nöhring, Managing Director, Association for Child and Youth Welfare – AGJ

Part I: Youth Work between Intergenerational Justice, Peace and Security

4:35 pm – Introduction: Youth Policy and Intergenerational Fairness in Times of Geopolitical Uncertainty, Dr Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll, German Youth Institute (DJI)

4:45 pm – Keynote: European and Academic Perspectives on Youth Work in Uncertain Times, Asst. Prof. Dr. Marko Kovačić, Head of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Rijeka, Croatia

5:00 pm – Questions from the audience

Part II: European Perspectives on Youth Work, Crises and Societal Resilience

5:15 pm – International Panel Discussion

With experts from various European countries and institutions, including:

- **Annika Termonen**, vice chair of the Finnish Youth, Peace and Security Network – Finnish perspective
- **Anaïs Thizy**, co-founder of the Coalition for Youth, Peace and Security in France – French perspective
- **Asst. Prof. Dr. Marko Kovačić** – Croatian perspective
- **Alex Weber-Herrmann**, Young European Federalists, Germany – German perspective
- **Melanie Schütz**, Delegate of the EU Youth Conference, German Federal Youth Council
- **David Jelinek** – European Commission, Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS)

Part III: European Experiences and Implications for Practice in Germany

6:20 pm – Break

6:40 pm – Breakout Sessions: What Do European Experiences Mean for Youth Work in Germany and Europe?

7:10 pm – Presentation of Key Insights and Joint Outlook

7:30 pm – End of the event