



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



NETWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
NATIONAL COALITION GERMANY

YOUR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



KiKA
von ARD und ZDF





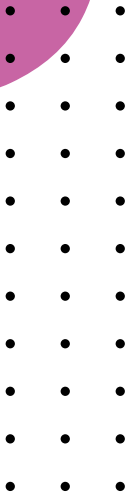
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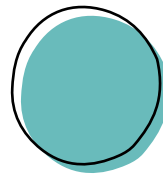
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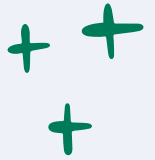
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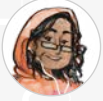
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FOREWORD



Hello everyone, I had a project day on children's rights in school today. It was really good. I knew there was such a thing as children's rights, but I had no idea what they really meant.



Cool, I'd like to do something like that sometime too.



I think all children should know about children's rights.



Yes, and all adults should too. After all, they have to stick to them as well.



We could do with a booklet or something that has everything in it and that you can show to people and say: this is how it is. I'm entitled to them.



Yes, that would be great. But not a booklet or book that you have to buy and that not everyone could afford. It has to be free. Then schools would also order it and do project days.



Hmm. Who could help us?



Hang on, I've got an idea. I'll make a quick call.



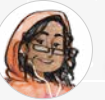
Lisa Paus was added



Hello, I'm Lisa Paus, the Federal Minister for Youth. Children's rights are particularly important to us here at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth!



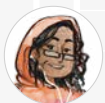
So you need a brochure explaining children's rights? What can I do to help?



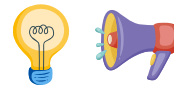
Yes, exactly, but in a way that I really understand them.



That's right, but not just that. I think it would be good if children also worked on the brochure themselves.



OK, that can be done. I already have an idea of who can help us with it.



Lisa Paus has added the Children's Rights Network



Hi there! We're the Children's Rights Network. We lobby for the enforcement of children's rights in Germany. Lisa Paus says you'd like to have a brochure about children's rights.



What topics would be important for you?
What should definitely be included?



It's got to include what children's rights there are.

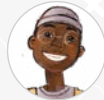





I think there have to be examples. Real stories about children and young people who stand up for children's rights. Otherwise others won't believe at all that they really have rights and can change something.



I'm also interested in how children's rights are actually enforced and who checks on them!




Consider it done!  And what do you want the brochure to look like?

It should certainly be colourful and have pretty pictures.



Yes, and the pictures should go well with the texts. Then you can see straight away what it's all about.



These are great ideas. That's what we'll do 



Absolutely. But you'll help us, right?



Let's get to it!



WHAT ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?



What are children's rights?

There are special rights for all people under the age of 18, and these are called children's rights. Every child has these rights, simply because they are a child. This means that they cannot be given to children or taken away from them, and children do not have to earn them. On the contrary, adults must have really good reasons for restricting children's rights.

Children and young people need very special rights to protection, promotion and participation. The rights to protection are intended to protect them from physical and psychological harm or exploitation, for example. So that children and young people can grow up healthily and develop properly, there are rights to receive support. These make sure that their needs are met – especially when it comes to their health, nutrition, education, identity and standard of living. The participation rights specify that children and young people must be listened to, and their opinions and ideas must be taken into account.



The history of children's rights



Did you know that there was probably no difference at all between children and adults in the Middle Ages? Or that the understanding of what children are like has changed very often over time? Sometimes, children were seen as innocent and in need of protection, then again as wild and dangerous, and still others thought that children had to be moulded so that everyone could get on well together. All these ideas have also had an impact on children's rights, but it took a very long time before these rights were written down and became binding for everyone who signed up to them.

Individual rules for protecting children were included in agreements between some countries at the beginning of the 20th century, for example in order to protect girls from being sold. All children were mentioned for the first time in the Geneva Declaration in 1924. This was about how children could be protected by adults from hunger or neglect. It did not yet pay any attention to what children themselves wanted and what they felt they needed. And the agreements were not legally binding, meaning that the countries did not have to obey them. This also applied to the UN's 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child. But the Declaration already contained a lot of individual children's rights, for example for children with disabilities. In the meantime, more and more people began to take an interest in children and their interests, and this made sure that more and more countries took an interest in young people and their needs. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emerged in 1989, following on from a great deal of discussions and ideas.

You'll find more information on the Rights of the Child in the chapter "Did you know ...?" from page 58 onwards



RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Children's rights are set out in 54 articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. You can find out exactly what it says here.



The best interests of the child

Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The best interests of the child are a cornerstone of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The “best interests of the child” means that a child is physically and mentally well. Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the best interests of the child are to be a primary consideration. This means that the best interests of the child must be considered as particularly important in all decisions concerning children and young people. Primary consideration of the best interests of the child is so important that it affects all other children's rights. What all children's rights have in common is that children should be alright as a result of these rights.



Why are the best interests of the child so important?

1. Children are usually more vulnerable than adults.
2. We all live in a world made by adults for adults, and in which children's interests are easily overlooked, or adults' interests take precedence.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child seeks to redress this imbalance. The well-being of children is therefore to be a particularly important consideration when decisions are made or when something happens.





What exactly are the best interests of the child?

Although the best interests of the child are so important, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child does not say anywhere exactly what they are. This is partly because children are and live very differently all over the world. That is why they also need and want different things. What exactly the best interests of the child are must therefore be determined in each case and for each child individually. There are aids and criteria to make this work. The most important thing, however, is that the child must be heard so that their opinion can be incorporated into the decision. This is why the principle of the “best interests of the child”, and the right to participate, are very closely linked.





Opinion and participation

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children and young people have a right to participate on all issues that affect them. The right to participation is primarily set out in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Who knows best what children want?

The opinions and knowledge of many different people are sought in politics in order to work together to find a fair, proper solution to problems. Experts above all are called on to represent the population. Children and young people make up about one-fifth of the population. They are the best experts when it comes to the issues that really concern them. This makes it particularly important to get children and young people directly involved and to ask for their opinions, regardless of their age.



Where and how can children and young people participate?

Children and young people in Germany are still not always involved and listened to in all areas that affect them and in which they should therefore have a say. But there are already many different opportunities and projects where children and young people can be involved and express their opinions.

Youth associations and youth councils: There are many different youth associations and youth councils where young people come together to work on different issues. You can find out here which youth associations there are and what they do: www.dbjr.de

Children's and young people's parliaments (KiJuPa for short): The members of the KiJuPa are elected by the children and young people of the locality for a specific period of time. The children and young people who are elected lobby in the political arena for the interests, wishes and problems of children and young people in their locality. KiJuPa are therefore representatives of the interests of children and young people.

Children's and youth advisory councils: EA children's and youth advisory council is a form of involvement and participation by children and young people in local policy decisions and political processes. Youth advisory councils are political bodies, and consist of elected representatives of the children and young people in their municipality.

But there are also some organisations that have their own children and youth advisory council. These include:

- www.dkhw.de/ueber-uns/kinder-und-jugendbeirat/
- www.sos-kinderdorf.de/botschaft-fuer-kinder/fokusthemen-der-botschaft-fuer-kinder/gelebte-beteiligung
- www.unicef.de/mitmachen/youth/junior-beirat
- www.eurochild.org/eurochild-childrens-council/

Opportunities for participation:
Youth associations,
children's and youth advisory
councils, class and school
spokespersons, elections ...

Children's rights –
on **KiKA** of course





Children's and youth offices: They work at municipal level to advocate for more participation by children and young people. You can contact the children's and youth office in your neighbourhood with your concern, and they will help you with implementation.

Class and school spokespersons: If you are elected by your class or school, you are the contact person for teachers and students.

Elections: Some Federal *Länder* already allow you to vote in *Landtag* (regional parliament) or local elections from the age of 16. Politicians are therefore discussing whether it should also be possible to vote in national elections from the age of 16.

And then there are the under-18 elections:

www.u18.org

Further opportunities for participation: Children's and youth forums, conferences, assemblies, youth roundtables, youth juries, (plenary) children's and youth assemblies, class councils, digital platforms, webdays, digital children's and youth assemblies ...





What is pseudo-participation? What is real participation?



Many people are now making an effort to listen to children and young people and get them involved. But this does not always lead to real participation. Sometimes, for example, children and young people are invited to attend events, but are not able to contribute personally. Or they are listened to, but in the end their opinion does not influence the decision. We talk about "pseudo-participation" in such cases. With real participation, it is important that children and young people are involved in decisions from the outset and can help shape the whole process.



Sena

Sena (age 13) worked on the Second Children's Rights Report to the United Nations in 2019. She came up with her own project for the Report, which she implemented independently. In order to enable more participation by children and young people in her home city of Bielefeld, she set her mind on establishing a children's and young people's parliament.

After planning and networking with people who could help her, Sena was up and running. Pupils from year two and three at three schools in Bielefeld were able to choose four interested children to attend the first meeting. That meeting was about improving the school playground and the situation of teachers and educators. Thanks to Sena's efforts, the KiJuPa has now been adopted by the youth committee, and is to be included in the municipal budget.



Politicians could integrate more youth parliaments. This would encourage children and young people to get involved in politics, to get informed politically, and then have a say. And then they could also discuss their own rights and make their own rights effective.

Bastian, age 20



I think it's good when I'm asked what I want.

Oskar, age 6



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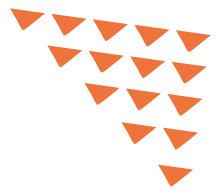
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Discrimination

Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

All people should be treated equally. No one may be discriminated against. This is what it says in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. People are nevertheless treated differently in everyday life. Children and young people, too. Some of them are placed at a disadvantage or bullied, for example because of their skin colour or religion. We also say they are discriminated against.

Children and young people are also discriminated against in school. These are mainly children and young people from other countries, or from poor families. But children with disabilities also suffer from discrimination.



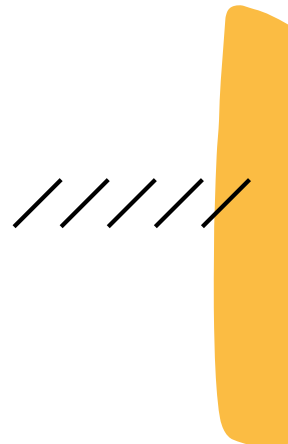
There are people in Germany and across Europe who hold radical positions and think democracy is a bad thing. Sometimes they claim that some people are worth more than others. This claim is inhumane, which is why it is very important for everyone to be concerned about it: no one should be discriminated against, not now, not ever.



Where to get help

There is help available if you have experienced discrimination or been bullied. The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency advises and supports people who have been placed at a disadvantage or been discriminated against: www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de

The *Netzwerk Zeichen gegen Mobbing* anti-bullying network provides people who have been affected by bullying with information and advice: www.zeichen-gegen-mobbing.de





Protection from violence

Articles 19 and 34–37 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children are to be protected from violence everywhere, be it at home, at school, when playing or on the Internet. There are many different forms of violence, and that is why there are several articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that are intended to protect children and young people from physical, psychological and sexual violence, as well as exploitation and neglect.

Some children are nevertheless affected by violence, and others are neglected by their parents. Then their physical, mental and emotional well-being is at risk. We also say: the best interests of the child are at risk.

How can we protect children and young people against violence?

Children and young people have a right to be protected from physical, sexual and psychological violence. Child protection is regulated by special laws in Germany. Child protection includes that specific professional groups must proceed in a specific manner if they suspect that a child's well-being is at risk. In addition, the Youth Welfare Office is mandated to take care of children and young people who are exposed to violence.



Where to get help

There is help available if you have experienced violence or other violations of children's rights. The *Nummer gegen Kummer* helps children, young people and parents with small and big worries. It offers counselling for all questions, worries and problems:

www.nummergegenkummer.de

The *Jugendnotmail* offers online counselling for all children and young people on all topics and in all situations: www.jugendnotmail.de



Luisa

Hello, my name is Luisa and I am 15 years old. I live in the SOS Kinderdorf children's shelter in Thuringia. I've been living there for almost nine years.

I'd just turned six when the youth welfare office and the police suddenly turned up on my mum's doorstep. I don't really remember any more why. The official reason was violation of children's rights and violence against children. I also have a little sister. She was two and a half years old at the time.

We stayed in the Hideaway for a few months, and I eventually started school in year one. Then on 13 September 2013, we were taken to our new home and felt happy. Less than a month later, other children came to stay at the house with us too. It was as if it had been made for us. I would like to thank everyone again for this support.



KiKA says:
Children really need to
know that they have
rights of their own!





Children's rights in the digital world

Article 17 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children's rights in the digital world

Children and young people use the Internet and digital media every day – they are a central part of everyday life. Today, we can use the Internet on computers, tablets or smartphones, almost anywhere and at any time. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states: The countries that have signed the Convention must provide children with access to the media.

→ This means that children's rights also have to apply in the digital world. For example, the right to education or the right to obtain information. The right to play digitally is also particularly important for many children and young people.



It is totally important that the people who are taking care of us treat us well.

Charlotte, age 14



Child protection in the digital world

Children and young people can also be at risk in the digital world. They are vulnerable to cyberbullying, for example. When strangers can contact children on the Internet, this creates risks such as cybergrooming. There is also unlimited access to online sexual content today.

→ This means that today's digital world creates new forms of exclusion, discrimination and violence. These take place especially on social networks such as TikTok and Instagram, and they spread quickly. Children and young people therefore need to know about these dangers and be protected from this kind of content.

What is cyberbullying?



Cyberbullying is insulting, threatening or hassling other people on the Internet, for example via smartphones, messenger services, websites, forums, chats or communities. This can take place through media such as pictures and videos, or through chats in which people talk nasty. This often involves telling untruths and lies.

More and more children and young people are being affected by cyberbullying. The problem and its effects should therefore always be discussed at schools or in clubs.



What is cybergrooming?

This means approaching children on the Internet. The culprits are mostly men, but there are also female offenders. They try to gain the trust of their victims, most of whom are minors. For example, they use a fake profile to pretend to be someone else, talk to children about popular topics such as music, leisure or clothes, and try to establish a friendship. Once they have managed to do this, they sexually harass children. For example, they get them to send them nude photos, or even try to arrange to meet up with them.



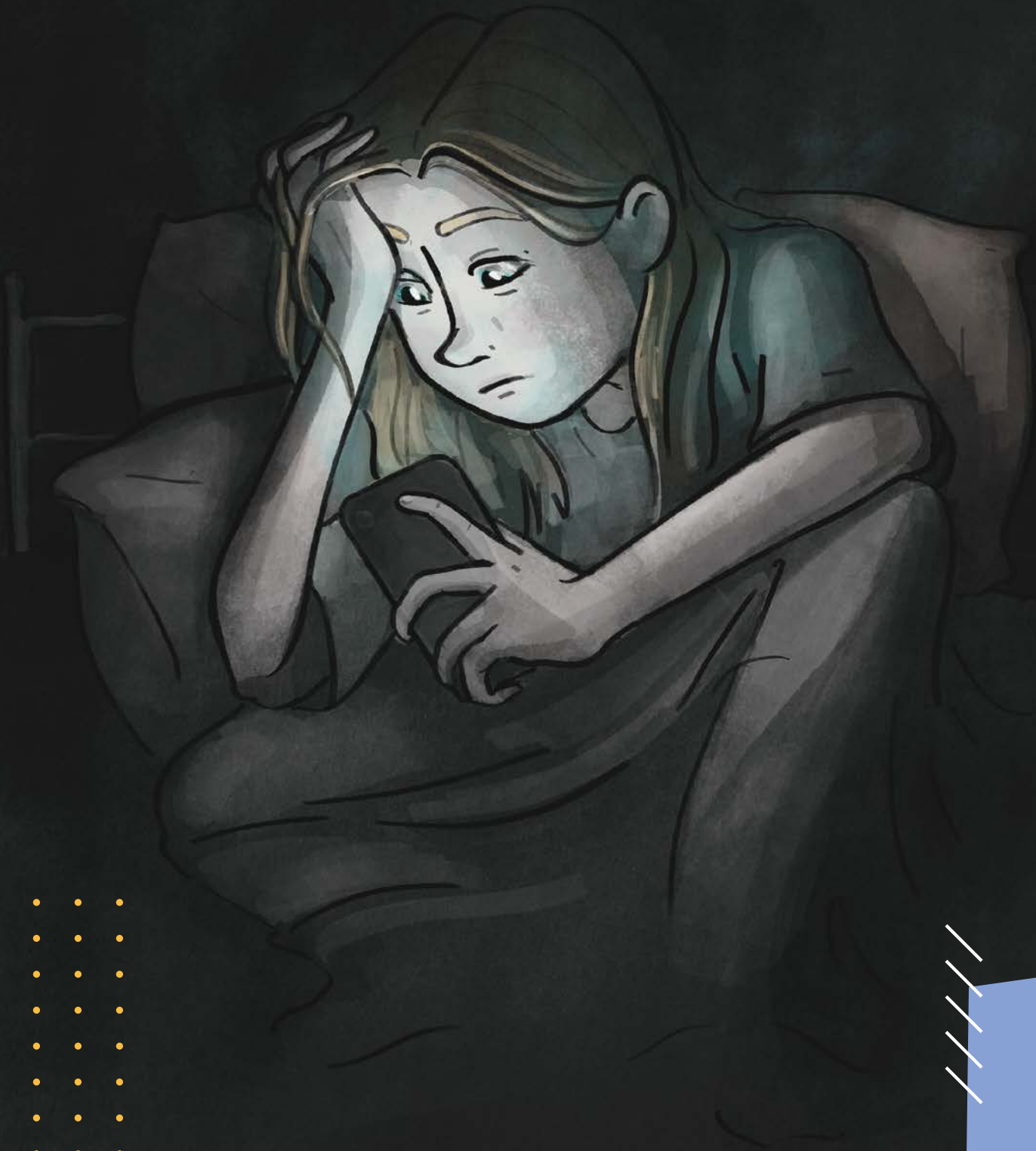
Where to get help

If you are affected by cyberbullying, it is important to talk to others about it and get support. The following online services can also help you:

- **for counselling:** juuuport
www.juuuport.de/beratung
- **for advice and help:** jugend.support
www.jugend.support

If you realise that other people are being bullied, it is also important that you support them and offer to help them.





ARTICLE
16

Privacy

Article 16 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child protects young people from arbitrary interference in

- their private lives,
- their families,
- their correspondence and
- their honour/their reputation.

The purpose of the rules is to enable children and young people to live their lives in a self-determined way. This helps them to find out who they are, what is important to them and how they want to live. For instance, this includes young people being able to write down their thoughts and decide for themselves who is to know about them.



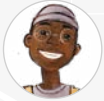
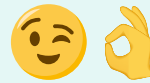
Franziska Breitfeld is a lawyer and executive director at the Children's Rights Network. We talked to her about the right to privacy.



Does that mean that no one can read my diary or my letters if I don't want them to?



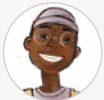
That's right! This also comes up in the Basic Law and in other sets of rules.



What's the Basic Law?



That's our Constitution – that means it's the highest law in Germany.



Aha. So what does it say there?



For example that there is secrecy of correspondence, and also the right to free development of the personality. And that applies to children too.





And so these laws forbid my parents from reading my stuff?



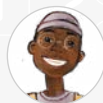
Yes, but there are exceptions. For example, if you are in danger or there's a good reason for your parents to be really worried about you. Then they can go through your things and read your diary to make sure you're OK.



Uh-huh. So if they're worried that I'm not doing well in school?



No, that's not enough. It has to be a particular danger or situation. For example, if you haven't come home and your parents find out that you're being bullied. So if something bad might have happened to you, there could be a pointer in your diary.



Yes, okay, I get that.



What about privacy on the Internet?



There was no Internet as such when the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was written. That's why it doesn't say anything about protecting emails or social media accounts. But the point of children's rights is that children can decide for themselves with whom they share their thoughts. That's why the right to privacy also applies on the Internet, at least for posts that you only share with your digital friends, for example, and that are not visible to everyone.



Someone once made a video of me without asking if I was even okay about them doing that, without my wanting them to. It really wasn't a nice experience.

Tabatha, age 10



I think it should actually go without saying that adults respect and protect privacy.

Zaineb, age 11



ARTICLE
5, 9-10,
20-21

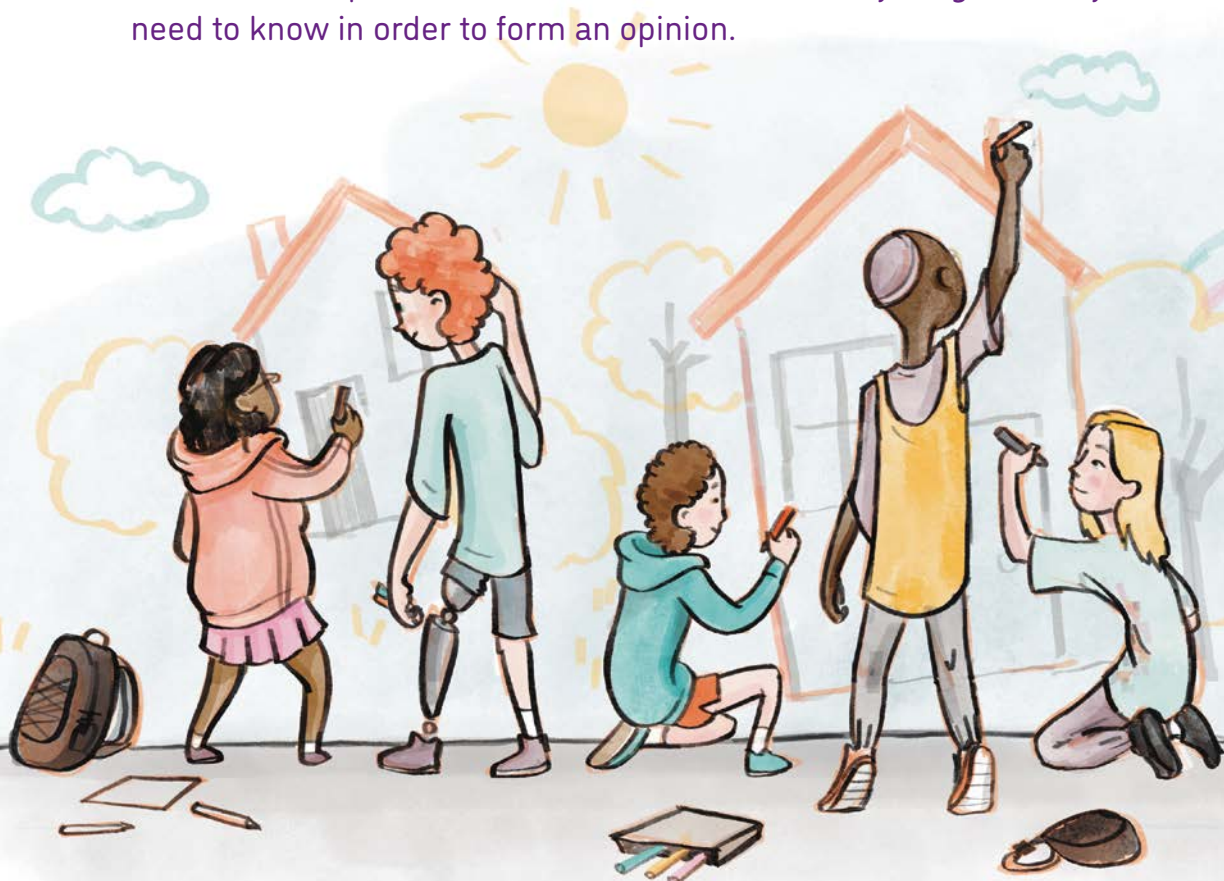
Family and other types of care

Articles 5, 9-10 and 20-21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Family and parents don't have to be a person's biological parents. Families are diverse. The people with whom children and young people grow up must make sure that they are alright and that they can develop well. It is the job of the state to support them in this.

What happens when parents cannot take proper care of their children?

All children should live in a place where they feel comfortable. Not all children and young people can live with their parents. Some parents are not able to take proper care of their children and bring them up well. They are simply overwhelmed by this task. The family may then decide, together with the youth welfare office, whether the children should live in homes and foster families, for example. A court decides on this in cases where the children are not doing well at all. In both cases, the children must be asked how they feel about it and what they want before a decision is made. To do this, the adults must explain to the children in advance everything that they need to know in order to form an opinion.



Children and young people in foster families

Sometimes children cannot live with their parents. Foster families take in children who cannot live with their parents. The foster family takes care of a child until they can return to their parents. The children are not meant to stay in the foster family forever, but it still often happens that children live there for several years. The children have a right to stay in touch with their own family during this time.



Where to get help

Youth welfare offices in Germany are responsible for advising children, parents and families. You can find information on the work of the youth welfare offices on the website of the Federal Association of Land Youth Welfare Offices. There you can also find a youth welfare office near you: www.unterstuetzung-die-ankommt.de



“It's very important for everyone to have someone they can talk to, and also to have people they can call family.”

Tabatha, age 10



Children and young people with disabilities

Article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The rights of children and young people with disabilities are set out in Article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is also the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in which the United Nations set out the rights of such people. Everything possible must be done to enable children and young people with disabilities to play an active role in society.

What do children and young people with disabilities need in order to play a part in society?

Children and young people with disabilities should also be able to lead a meaningful life in Germany. They should be able to participate in all activities as much as possible, and as much as they want to, just like children and young people without disabilities. In order for this to work, society as a whole must strive to ensure that children and young people are not excluded.

I have often experienced that people with disabilities are excluded. For instance in town, when they ask where something is, most people simply walk by and ignore them.

Kimberly, age 13

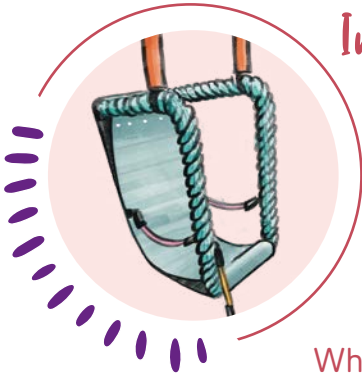
Why are children with walking difficulties offered so little support on public transport?

Cagla, age 25

- For example, schools should be adapted to children and young people with disabilities and their needs so that they can be taught together with all other children.
- Leisure activities should be designed in such a way that children and young people with disabilities can also take part.
- Very special support should be available to families who have children with disabilities because such children sometimes need very special support or care. This can be a challenge for some families if there are not enough services available, or if the services are very expensive.

→ It is ultimately up to all of us to ensure that children and young people with disabilities can participate everywhere.





Inclusive playgrounds

Most playgrounds are not very accessible for children with disabilities. This means that some of them come up against “barriers” there. They cannot use some of the equipment, or they cannot get to the playground in the first place.

When a playground is built without these barriers, it is called an inclusive playground. But what does a playground need in order to be inclusive? It could be extra grip rails on the equipment or a bit more space, for example on extra-wide slides. It is also important that all the equipment is easy to reach and equipped with wheelchair ramps. The playground itself must also be easy to get to, and putting a car park nearby can be helpful.



Health

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Physical health

The right to health means that a child should live in the best possible conditions with regard to health. This includes healthy food, clean drinking water, and medical care. We have a good healthcare system in Germany, but many more adults are hospitalised in Germany than children. This means that sometimes not enough thought is given to the special needs of sick children and their families.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is concerned that too many young people in Germany are coming into contact with alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. The fact that more and more children are getting sick because they are overweight also worries the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Mental health

The right to health includes not only physical health, but also mental health. This is more than just not having a mental illness. Being mentally healthy means feeling well, and being strong enough inside to be able to cope with life well, even in the face of difficulties, because only people who feel well are also healthy and can develop well.

→ Whether body or mind, children should grow up in a healthy, safe environment so that they do not fall ill in the first place. If young people are ill, it is their parents' responsibility to ensure that they get help quickly. The state must make sure that the right care and good services are available for children.



Where to get help

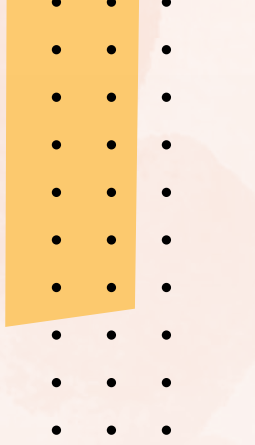
The *Nummer gegen Kummer* helps children, young people and parents with small and big worries. You can get help here if you are not alright: www.nummergegenkummer.de



We often don't notice at all that many children are sometimes not feeling OK. They don't show anything on the outside. Regular conversations and meetings with other people can help children to open up and gain confidence.

Ann-Sophie, age 12





Children and COVID



The impact on health

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in Germany in the spring of 2020 changed all our lives. A great many people in our country, children among them, have since become infected with COVID, despite the massive countermeasures that were taken.

The pandemic has not only caused physical strain, but also mental stress. We know from studies that many children and young people felt lonely and depressed during the pandemic. They were sad and afraid more often, sometimes so much that it hurt. Many children need help or want support, but they often have to wait a long time to get it.

Other effects

The coronavirus pandemic does not only affect children's health. Many other areas of life also changed during this time.

For example, children's rights to education and leisure were restricted by the temporary closure of schools, daycare centres and recreational facilities. Also, more children have experienced violence because help has not been reaching them and their families as readily as it used to.

When politicians tried to contain coronavirus, they did not always focus on children, their rights and their well-being. They often only talked to adults, and did not ask children how they were doing and what they needed. This was especially noticeable for those children who often have a harder time anyway. Some families have no money for a computer, or they live in a small flat with a large number of people. And support is often also missing if the parents themselves are ill and need help, or if the children have a disability.





So, if you're in quarantine, you soon get cabin fever, and then if parents and children can no longer go outside and go for a walk, they quickly become aggressive, and then it happens very quickly that they resort to harsher methods.

Samuel, age 12

The pandemic, quarantine and isolation from other children made you realise that you're very much alone without other people. You can hardly do or experience anything together. The loneliness and lack of contact has increased the mental burden for many.

Ann-Sophie, age 12



The National Pupils' Conference

The National Pupils' Conference brings together all pupil spokespersons from Germany's Federal *Länder*. They deal with various education policy topics and promote the exchange of ideas between pupils and their co-determination. They also addressed the anti-COVID measures at schools, and they published a position paper on this in April 2021.



“The National Pupils’ Conference calls for forward-looking action on the part of decision-makers in order to make sure that pupils are not labelled as COVID year groups in future. Completely closing schools down cannot still be the only solution after more than a year. The National Pupils’ Conference takes the view that using measures such as blended learning, using vacant rooms, expanding air filtering systems and on-site testing facilities makes it possible to design lessons in such a way that they do not endanger the health of the people involved in school life and still make good teaching possible.”



The environment

Still no explicit right in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child does not contain an intrinsic right to a healthy environment. The Convention does however give children and young people the right to grow up in the best possible way. This includes a healthy environment.

Climate change is a major challenge for everyone. Air pollution and the large amount of rubbish in the oceans are other major problems. This is why many children and young people feel threatened in their lives today, and worry about their future. As a result, the “Fridays for Future” movement and its demands also find a lot of support among children and young people in Germany.



Jule Pehnt (17) is the press spokesperson for Fridays for Future. We talked to her about her commitment.

Hi there Jule! How are you doing? 😊



Hi, I'm doing great! But there's also a lot going on in the world and in my life. 😊



I heard you're the press spokesperson for Fridays for Future. How did you get that job?



Yes, that's right. I've been with Fridays for Future for about two years now, helping to organise various projects and demonstrations. First I did a lot in my hometown of Freiburg, then regionally in Baden-Württemberg, and then I helped on projects all over Germany. I was asked at some point if I would like to take on a few press enquiries, and then after that I started doing more and more. Somehow you just sort of get into it.



That's great. Especially because I have the feeling that young people are much too often not really taken seriously. How do you feel about that as the press spokesperson of such a young movement? Has that ever happened to you?



I think we see this almost every day, and it's really pretty frustrating. Above all, it's about political decisions that are made, and we see again and again that our voices are not taken seriously – unless we all make so much noise together, out on the street, that they can't be overheard.



But I have also experienced this at events or in conversations, when people are happy to listen to us and issue invitations to us, but they don't take the essence of our demands seriously, they just smile at us nicely.



A lot of people find it quite hard to hear about all the things that have gone wrong in the past, and how much energy we now have to put into dealing with the climate crisis. But the most shocking thing for me is actually when friends from the Global South, who really experience the consequences of the climate crisis on a daily basis or whose homes are being destroyed, are simply ignored.



It's a great thing that you keep fighting the fight, despite the resistance you come up against! What is your biggest motivator to get involved with Fridays for Future?



Well, I'm most concerned to see what huge effects the climate crisis is already having, and the injustices that people and children our age have to face. What got me out onto the street right from the start was that I was very frustrated that nothing was being done about it.



It's simply accepted that the climate crisis will continue to escalate, restricting millions of people everywhere today and in the future, and affecting their lives.



Sometimes I'm also a bit anxious about when and where the next drought or flood will happen – even though I usually don't experience it myself as many other people do. But what gives me a lot of motivation and the strength to not just stand by and do nothing is that I know how much is possible, and that together we can create a better world.



This demonstrates the huge amount of power and stamina we need to keep going out onto the streets together, as long as not enough is being done!



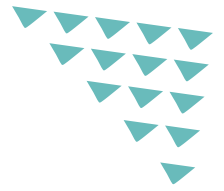


No children's right to a healthy environment – how can that be?

The right to a clean and healthy environment has not yet been included as a separate right in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, however, feels that this issue is extremely important. The Committee will therefore be publishing a general comment on children's rights, the environment and the climate in 2023. The Committee intends to do this in order to hold governments accountable. They should ensure that children and young people live in a clean, green, healthy, sustainable world.

Do you want to know more about the work of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the general comment? We will be explaining on pages 66/67 what they are.





Poverty and social security

Article 26 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Is there poverty in Germany?

Germany is a rich country, and yet there are children and young people who are poor or could soon be poor. Roughly three million children and young people are currently considered to be at risk of poverty. That is one child in five.

What is it like for children to live in poverty?

Children from poor families cannot join in when their friends do something because they cannot afford it. But then not only do they miss the outing, they also cannot talk about the experiences afterwards, meaning they are even less part of the group. So we see that poverty can lead to loneliness.

Sometimes there isn't much space at home because several children share a room, for example. This makes it difficult to study and concentrate. Sometimes parents can't help with homework because they have to work, and there is no money for tutoring. This also makes it harder to keep up in school. If grades suffer, it's difficult to get a school-leaving certificate, and that often determines what education and professions children can choose. Without secure, healthy work, young people get stuck in the poverty trap, and so their whole life is marred by poverty. Their children could then get into the same situation, and poverty is "inherited", so to speak.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child places countries under an obligation to do something about this.

You will find clips
and exciting reports on
this at [kika.de](https://www.kika.de)



Prof. Dr Michael Klundt lectures in the Bachelor's programme in Applied Childhood Sciences, and heads the Master's programme in Childhood Sciences and Children's Rights at Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences. Among other things, he researches the topics of child poverty and wealth as well as child, youth, family and social policy. We spoke to him.

Hello Michael! You work on child poverty, don't you? What exactly is it you do? 😊



I used to interview children and find out via questionnaires how they live. These days, I mainly study and interpret scholarly studies on the lives of children living in poverty. Then I investigate the way they are treated in politics, the media and academia. 📣



Then you know a lot about child poverty. So when is a person actually poor? 🙈



The poverty threshold in the EU is set at 60 per cent of the median net household income. This is currently 2,256 Euros for a household with two adults and two children.



Child poverty in Germany is first and foremost poverty in one of the richest countries on the planet. So this is less about absolute destitution and starvation, and more about deprivation, exclusion and disadvantages in comparison to the general standard of living in society. When almost everyone has things like a refrigerator, a school satchel, various toys, crayons or a television, it's not fair for some people to be excluded from that.



So does that mean that there are large numbers of poor children in Germany?



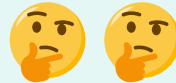
Depending on the method of calculation, somewhere between two and four million children, so roughly one child in five.



The German Child Protection Association (DKSB) already arrived at much higher numbers of children affected by poverty in Germany in 2018, taking unreported figures into account. The DKSB thus assumes that there are about 4.4 million poor children, and a total of about 13.4 million poor minors in Germany. This means that roughly one-third of all children in Germany are affected by poverty.



Wow, that's quite a lot! What is it like for the children and their families when they are poor?



Children's quality of life, education, health and future opportunities are massively affected by growing up in poverty.



They often live in cramped conditions and thus usually don't have anywhere quiet to do their homework. While the permanent shortages make the family environment worse, social networks are also smaller, as the children take part in fewer leisure activities – music classes or football clubs, for example.



Due to a low social standing, many poor children develop low self-esteem. They start school with less favourable conditions, where they often receive lower grades than children from affluent backgrounds, even if their performance is the same.



Hmmm. And what can we do about it?



Here too, it's important to listen to the reasonable demands of children and youth associations, social associations and children's rights organisations.



In order to support the parents, most of whom are working, we need a poverty-proof minimum wage. In order to support the entire family, we need a preventive child and youth welfare system that is primarily task-orientated and not expenditure-orientated.



In addition, we need to get rid of all fees, and we need all children to get free learning materials for education (from books to hardware), and a free healthy lunch. Building on this, we can lift large numbers of children and their families out of poverty with needs-based benefits and socially equitable family support. At the moment, it's the richest who get the most family benefits and have the best educational conditions.



Finally, we need to make access to counselling and social services easier in order to avoid bureaucracy, stigmatisation, humiliation and ignorance.



Private wealth is growing as never before, but if it were distributed fairly, the resources would be available to fight poverty effectively and (re)establish children's rights.





Did you know that there is also such a thing as emotional poverty?

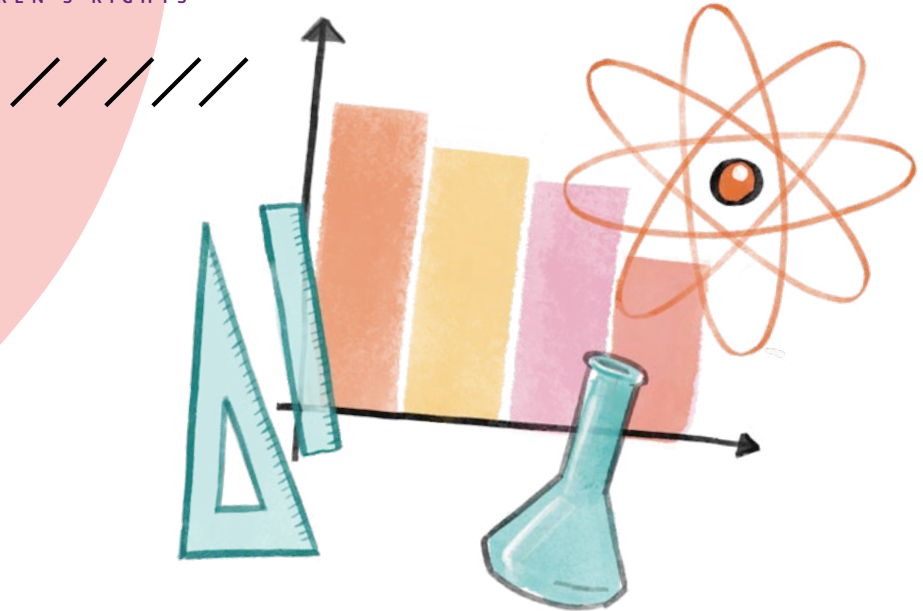
This means that parents do not hug their children often enough, do not comfort them sufficiently, or do not spend enough time with them. So this means that even a child who has a lot of money can be poor, and a family with not much money can be emotionally rich.



If you have to spend all your time thinking about whether you're actually going to survive, that can put quite a strain on you, and it can be quite hard on your health too.

Celina, age 16





Education

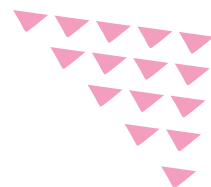
Articles 28–29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

All children and young people in Germany are to have equal access to education. They should be able to receive and take advantage of educational offers. Children are to have a say in what and how they want to learn in nursery and school. They also have a right to be treated with respect and appreciation by their teachers.

Do all children have the same opportunities to attend daycare centres and be supported properly?

Children have a right to equal educational opportunities. This already starts in daycare centres, meaning they need to have the opportunity to attend a daycare centre in the first place, and they should be well cared for and supported everywhere. It is not fair for parents to have to pay different amounts of money for their children's daycare depending on where the centre is located. What is more, families on a low income often have to spend a particularly large part of it on daycare. There are also differences in how children play and learn. For example, some daycare centres have fewer teachers than others. Many new daycare centres are being built, and others are being improved in other ways, in order to make sure that all children have the same opportunities from the beginning.





It makes me really angry that there is no individual support. They don't look into children's circumstances, whether there's a lot going on at home, or problems for example. The focus is always on the weaknesses and nothing else. I think it's really sad that you can't change much as a single little person. It would be better to hear in the evaluation that you got 60 per cent right instead of 40 per cent wrong. That would make all the difference.

Charlotte, age 14



Education is the cornerstone for a better future. But education often depends on the family situation in Germany too.

Gloria, age 17



Do all children have the same opportunities in school?

Unfortunately, not all children have equal rights when it comes to school. Some children are at a disadvantage, for example children with disabilities or with a migran background. Children who live in poor families also often have fewer opportunities. They sometimes go to a lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*), even though a grammar school (*Gymnasium*) would suit them better. This disadvantage has an impact on their entire later life.

Many schools are short of teachers, so classes get cancelled. A lot of schools also don't have enough classrooms and are short of money. That's why they can't buy anything new, like good technical equipment for pupils.



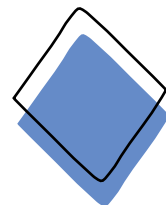


What is ESD?

ESD is short for "Education for Sustainable Development". Sustainability means living and acting today in such a way that future generations can also live well and in a healthy environment. Education is very important for a sustainable way of life. Only if we know what is required to enable us to live sustainable lives can we put it into practice. And only if as many people in the world as possible join in can we preserve a healthy environment for future generations. This is exactly what ESD is all about.

ESD enables people to think and act in a sustainable way. The focus is on a number of different questions. For example, how do my decisions affect future generations in my municipality or in other parts of the world? What is the impact of how I consume, what means of transport I use or what type of energy and how much energy I use? What global mechanisms trigger conflicts, terror and displacement? What can we do about poverty?

The United Nations have agreed that ESD should be fully implemented by 2030 (see Declaration on page 59).





The children's right to education in particular is very important to me personally. Education sets the stage for a self-determined life for young people. Education offers opportunities and perspectives, and it is the key that opens every door. It is only by providing future generations with a good school education that we can prepare them for the complex world that awaits them.

Marisol, age 17



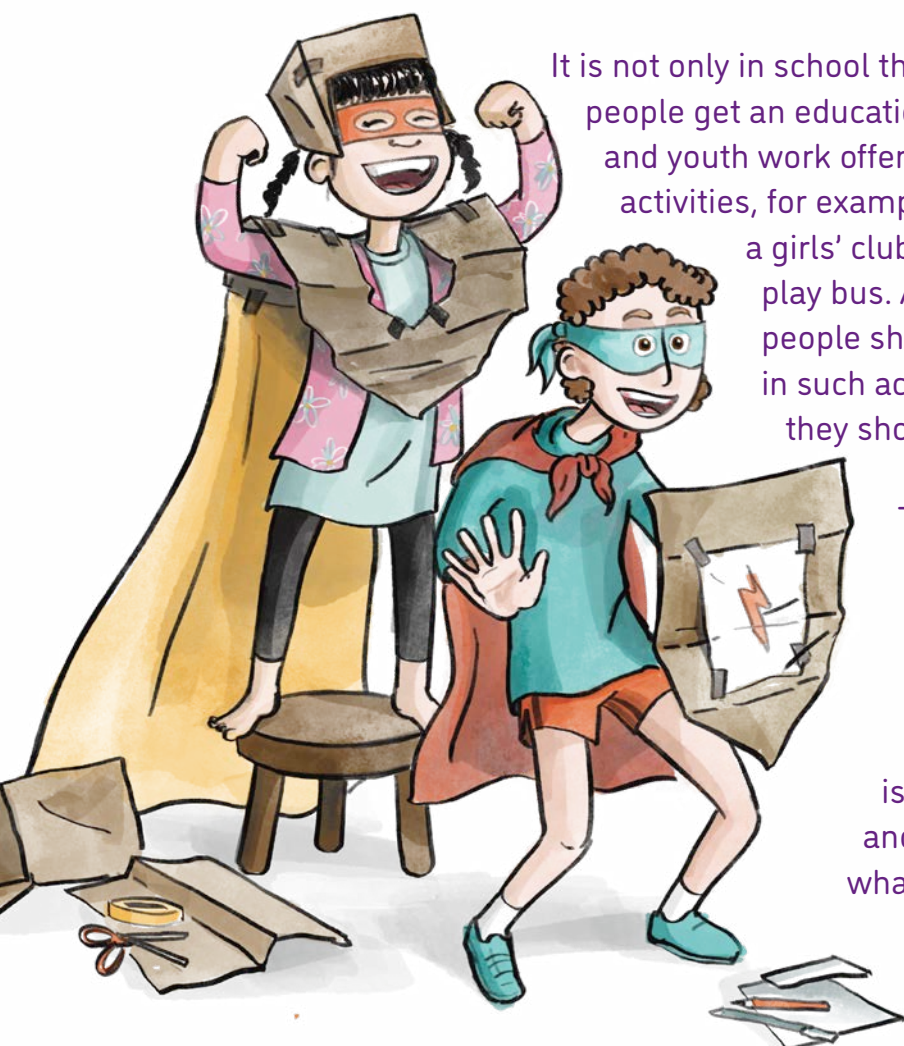
ARTICLE
31**Play and recreation**

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

People used to think that playing was all about having fun. Today we know that we can learn a lot through play – for the mind and for the body. In addition, children learn to interact with others through play, and also get to know themselves. For example, what they are good at or what they like, and what they don't. That is why the right to play is also included in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Just like a right to rest. This means sufficient sleep and breaks, which we need to release stress and pressure and not get sick.

It is not only in school that children and young people get an education and interact. Children and youth work offers a variety of leisure activities, for example in youth centres, in a girls' club, in a sports club or in a play bus. All children and young people should be able to take part in such activities. This means that they should be barrier-free.

There must be enough open spaces for children and young people. Such spaces provide locations and times where nothing is planned, where children and young people can do what they want.





“ So that I can play better in Berlin, I need basketball courts, and not a field combined with football. Abdullah, age 9 ”

“ I don't like homework. I think there should be less of it, and more time to play! Toni, age 10 ”



Luca-Finn and Mats

Luca-Finn (14) and Mats (13) live in a small municipality in the countryside. Despite many years of announcements and promises by the municipality, there is still no proper football pitch. The two of them investigated the problem in a film project, and looked for a solution. They spoke with various people in positions of authority from the region, including the mayor.

They made their voices heard through the film. The local council has now decided that a working group with adults and children should take charge of redesigning the football pitch.

Luca-Finn and Mats think that this should only be the beginning. Children and young people in their village should be consulted much more often when there are decisions to be made. Although it is quite exhausting and time-consuming to stand up for your own rights, it's worthwhile!

<https://vimeo.com/374425041>





Displacement and asylum

Article 22 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

How do people become displaced?

Wars and conflicts in the world, as well as environmental disasters or extreme poverty, are forcing many people all over the world to leave their homes. Some children and young people become displaced because they suffer violence in their home countries. Or they leave because they are afraid of being forced to become child soldiers. Once they have become displaced, families are unfortunately often separated, and children and young people are left to fend for themselves.

Special protection for displaced children and young people

Many families and unaccompanied children and young people have come to Germany as refugees in recent years. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, displaced children and young people need special protection. Unfortunately, there are many reports of them experiencing racism and discrimination, problems with access to education or daycare, difficulties when it comes to dealing with authorities and accommodation placements that are not suitable for children.



What is family reunification?



Children have a right to live with their families.

Families sometimes have to separate, for example when they are displaced. The parents often leave, and the children stay in their country of origin. Once the parents have arrived in a safe country such as Germany, they send for their children. Or a child leaves on their own and the parents stay in the country of origin with younger siblings. Then the older child reunites with the parents. This is called family reunification. There are rules for family reunification. For example, there are limits on how many people are allowed to join their families. Children therefore sometimes have to wait a long time before they are allowed to join their parents.



Nikita defying the war

It is 24 February 2022 – the first day of the war in Ukraine. Suddenly there is a loud bang outside the windows of Ksenia and Nikita's flat. The 14-year-old remembers it clearly: "At first I didn't understand what had happened," he says.

Nikita and his mother lived in the Nyvky district of Kyiv. Nikita also attended Dynamo Kyiv's children's and youth football school in the same neighbourhood. The two quickly pack up the most essential items: Nikita's training gear, some money, clothes and their most important papers. Then they seek shelter in the basement of a school, together with a dozen other people.



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They spend five days in the bunker, until they finally decide to flee: "I can still remember very clearly a bomb landing near us on the fifth day. That's when I got really scared and decided that we had to leave," says Ksenia. They ultimately reach Germany via Poland. In Berlin, Nikita and his mother are taken in by SOS Kinderdorf and live in a flat there. The families are closely supported in their daily lives by various SOS staff members, who help with things like accompanying them to doctor's appointments or on visits to the authorities.

Nikita is a blond, lanky, very cheerful boy. He grins a lot and has a mischievous smile. He adored playing football from an early age: "I love football," he says determinedly. SOS Kinderdorf Berlin found Nikita a club so that he could continue pursuing his passion in Germany. He has been training five times a week for the last few weeks in the under-15s team of a well-known Berlin club. The club in the west of Berlin is a good place for youth work in the capital city. From the new season onwards, Nikita will be allowed to play not only in test matches but also in official league matches in Berlin's top youth league, as he is now officially registered to play.

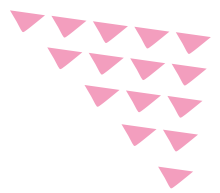


Making children's rights known

Article 42 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the state must make sure that all children and adults know their rights. Only people who know about their rights can assert them. So there must be enough information material about children's rights available, especially aimed at children and young people, such as this brochure.





Teachers and schools should be made aware. By this I mean that teachers should be informed that children's rights exist and that they can communicate them. And children's rights should also be given more media attention in general. This means that more media should draw attention to the fact that children's rights exist.

Bastian, age 20

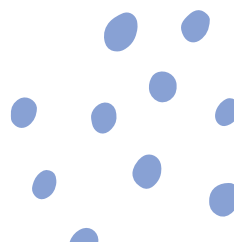


Information in simple language

You can find a lot of information about children's rights in child-friendly language on the website of the Children's Ministry: www.kinder-ministerium.de/

Children and young people report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child from their own perspective in the Second Children's Rights Report: www.netzwerk-kinderrechte.de/publikation/der-zweite-kinderrechtreport/

The brochure entitled "The Rights of Children in Germany – A Report to the United Nations" is a compilation in German of content selected from the State Party Report of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in language suitable for children and young people.





DID YOU KNOW ...?

You have learnt so far what your rights actually are. In this chapter, you can find out a bit more about the background of children's rights. What exactly is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? Who actually monitors whether children's rights are being observed? What does Europe have to do with it?





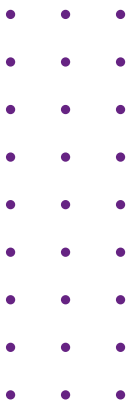
What is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Most countries around the world have signed a contract, a kind of promise, to make sure that children's rights are implemented and respected in as many places in the world as possible. This contract is called the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, abbreviated to UNCRC. It contains 54 articles setting out a large number of children's rights. The countries that have signed the Convention have been obliged since then to implement children's rights. The UNCRC has been in force in Germany since 1992.

What are the United Nations?



The United Nations, abbreviated to UN, is an organisation with almost all the countries in the world as members. Among other things, it works for peace and against poverty. It also wrote the UNCRC.

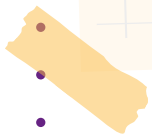
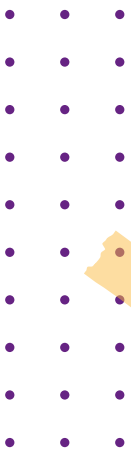




What do you think?

Even though it took ten years to finish writing the UNCRC, and a large number of people worked on it, a particularly important group of people, i.e. children and young people, did not have any sort of say. What do you think about that? Would it have been better to have got them involved?

Why? Write your thoughts down here:



The Optional Protocols

The UNCRC has improved the lives of lots of children around the world. It is as important today as it was when it was signed in 1989. However, 1989 was quite a long time ago. You weren't even born then, and your parents may still have been children themselves at the time. And of course a lot has changed in the meantime. The people who wrote the Convention were not thinking about some things at the time. Other topics, like the Internet or the climate crisis, didn't even exist yet. And still others simply needed a few new rules. That is why there are what are known as Optional Protocols. They apply alongside the UNCRC, and only to those countries that have signed them.





There are three Optional Protocols so far

1st Optional Protocol:

"The involvement of children in armed conflict"

The UN was founded in order to ensure peace and security in the world. Unfortunately, there is still war and violence in many countries and regions. Children are particularly affected by this. Children are injured or even die in armed conflicts. They experience terrible things, and often have to leave their homes.

Sometimes children also fight in wars. The UNCRC states that no one under the age of 15 can be a soldier. That means you have to be at least 15 years old to be allowed to fight as a soldier. Since 15 is still very young, some countries have tightened up this rule, and they say you have to be at least 18 years old to fight.

In order to protect children and young people even better, many countries have agreed on further rules to protect children in armed conflicts. They are contained in the 1st Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



What are child soldiers?

Child soldiers are children under the age of 15 who have to fight in wars and armed conflicts, walk across minefields or spy for armies or rebel groups. Approximately 250,000 children and young people are believed to be fighting in armed conflicts worldwide as child soldiers.



2nd Optional Protocol:**"Sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography"**

Many of the countries that have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child wanted to do more still to protect children from trafficking and exploitation. We speak of trafficking when a person gets something in return for handing over a child to another person. Exploitation means that people benefit from the violence inflicted on children, or from activities that a child has to perform.

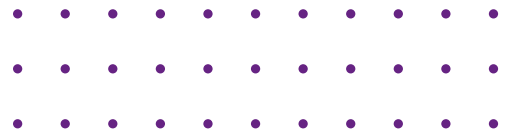
What is trafficking of children?



When parents live in extreme poverty, for example, criminal traffickers sometimes take advantage of this. They offer parents money for their children, and tell them that they can offer the children a better future. Some parents agree to this in their desperation. In most cases, the children are then taken to another country where they work for little or no money. Some children are sexually abused in order to earn money. Sometimes pictures or videos are also taken in order to sell them.

The countries work together and exchange important information so that these children can receive help as quickly as possible.





Watch out for the loverboy!

In the so-called loverboy method, adult men pretend to be boys on the Internet. They approach girls and pretend to be in love with them. They make sure that the girls distance themselves from their family and friends. Finally, the "loverboys" persuade or force their "girlfriends" to become prostitutes.

3rd Optional Protocol:

The "Communication Procedure" or "Complaint Procedure"

Children's rights are important, but they are not much use if you cannot complain when someone violates your rights. Until 2011, there weren't many ways to fight back, because countries were only obliged to report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on how well their country was doing on children's rights (see State Party Report procedure). While it is true that more and more countries are allowing children to write their own report for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (see Children's Rights report), that is just a report, not a complaint. This is exactly why the Communication Procedure has been in place since December 2011. This means that children can complain to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, individually or as a group, if their rights are violated.



What would you
complain about?

Write it down here:



What does the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child do?

It's great that almost all the countries in the world have signed the UNCRC. But that is only a promise on paper. The countries need to make good on this promise, i.e. they have to make children's rights known and real for every child in their country. A group of 18 children's rights experts from different countries, known as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, checks up on how well this is working. This Committee talks to governments, children's rights organisations and young people about what is already working well, and where countries still have room for improvement. Then the Committee writes recommendations. They are called concluding observations. You can think of them as the country having homework to do. You can find more about this in the section on the State Party Report procedure.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has another job to do: children and young people can turn to it if they want to complain and if they think that their children's rights are being violated. You can read more about this in the section on the Communication Procedure.





a) The general comment

Imagine you want to cook something, like tomato sauce. Of course you know that tomatoes go in it, but what else, how many of them, and how long does it actually have to cook for? To find out, you naturally look it up in a recipe.

It works in a very similar way with what are known as general comments and children's rights. We now know what children's rights are and what it says in the UNCRC. For example that children have the right to speak their mind, and adults should ask them for their opinion. But what does that mean exactly? When must a child be consulted? Only when it's about playgrounds, or do almost all issues perhaps also concern children? And is the age of the child important? What do adults need to do to support children so they can form an opinion? Especially when a child has a disability, for example, or is so young that they cannot yet speak. What needs to be done to make children feel comfortable sharing their ideas with adults? And what happens after a child has said what they think?

You can read about this and much more in the general comment. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child wrote it. This is where people like judges can look up what they need to take into consideration when talking to a child.





b) The State Party Report procedure

Because Germany has signed the UNCRC, the Federal Government is obliged to put children's rights into practice in Germany. This includes regularly reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on progress and difficulties in implementation. The Federal Government writes a report for this purpose, known as the State Party Report.

There is yet another report enabling the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to assess even better how the UNCRC is implemented. The Supplementary Report, or Shadow Report, is written by civil society. Civil society mainly includes non-governmental organisations, associations, alliances and initiatives. These organisations write the shadow report in a joint drafting process.

But civil society also includes children and young people. There has therefore been another supplementary report in Germany since 2010. The Children's Rights Report describes how children and young people assess the implementation of the UNCRC from their perspective.



“ The Children's Rights Report has enabled us children to participate in political issues that affect us.

We children have worked together in a diverse, varied group to shape our future.

Sena, age 13

”

The UN reporting cycle



These reports can be supplemented by other independently submitted contributions and reports. All these reports enable the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to obtain an overview of the situation with regard to children's rights. And what happens after the Committee has looked at all the reports? It identifies what needs to be done next to make improvements, and assigns tasks and recommendations to the Government to do so. This "homework" is then reviewed a few years later. It is therefore important that all stakeholders subsequently work together and implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child by the time the next report comes out.



What is the Children's Rights Network?

The National Coalition Germany – Network for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, or Children's Rights Network for short, is a network made up of more than 100 children's rights organisations. The Network promotes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, advocates for its implementation in Germany and strengthens the civil society network.

The member organisations write the shadow report together, and thus check up on how well Germany is implementing children's rights.



What is the Monitoring Body on the UNCRC of the German Institute for Human Rights?

The German Institute for Human Rights works to make sure that Germany respects and promotes human rights at home and abroad. The Institute also accompanies and monitors the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has established corresponding monitoring bodies for this purpose.

The Monitoring Body on the UNCRC monitors the implementation of children's rights in Germany. Monitoring means observation. This means that the body observes and monitors the implementation of children's rights.





CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE EU



The EU Member States:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

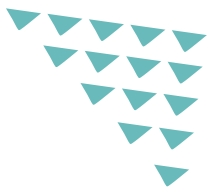
What is the EU?

The European Union (EU) is an association of 27 countries that have come together to make it easier to do things like trade with one another or to travel and work. The countries of the EU want to keep the peace and support one another, for example when some countries have less money than others. The EU countries share the same values, so they especially want to stand up for human rights and children's rights.

Children's rights and the EU

Children's rights play a major role in the EU. We find them in different places, for example the Treaty on European Union promises that children's rights must be protected (Article 3). Article 24 of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights also deals with children's rights. It is written in quite difficult language, but it says that children should be protected and encouraged. It also says that adults should listen to children when they want to say something. They should then think about what they have said and weigh it up against other ideas and reasons. When making a decision, an important point must be that it is beneficial for children. And this applies in all areas, i.e. at home, at school, in court or with public authorities.





The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee

The EU and its Member States have developed the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee in order to better address children's rights. One of the goals pursued by the EU here is to benefit all children and to ensure that no child grows up in poverty. All children are to have the same opportunities, be able to learn, be healthy and grow up without experiencing violence. No child is to be left behind. The EU Member States are to make more of an effort to achieve this. They should also explain more to young people, listen to them more and take their advice and put it into practice. The EU therefore intends to ask young people again and again over the next few years how well implementation is going in their countries.

The European Child Guarantee is implemented in Germany through the National Action Plan on New Opportunities for Children in Germany. Every disadvantaged child in Germany is to have access to good education and care, suitable housing, healthy nutrition and healthcare by 2030. The Child Opportunities Coordinator at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth makes sure that all those responsible work well together to achieve this goal. In order to do so, they will also talk to many children and young people, and listen very carefully to what is going well and where there is room for improvement.



Sena (13) has been championing children's rights for a long time. She is particularly passionate about the right to participation. She was appointed to the Eurochild Children's Council (ECC) in March 2022. We talked to her about her commitment.

Hello Sena! Congratulations on getting a place on the ECC!



Hi! Thanks!



What actually motivated you to apply there?



What motivates me most is the spirit of cooperation! We can achieve so much more if we all pull together. I started off being involved in Bielefeld, then all over Germany. Now, I also enjoy doing this at EU level, getting to know young people from other countries who have the same goals.



That sounds really exciting. Have you already met up?



Yes, we've already had several videoconferences. And we got together for the first time in May for a long weekend in Brussels.



And what did you do there?





The previous members of the Council gave us an introduction. And we did a lot of workshops and learned about what the ECC does.

So, what does the ECC do?



It gets together to look at where there are problems with the implementation of children's rights at European level, and then it tries to solve them together.



How do you work together, and how do you decide which topics are important at any one time?



We will be meeting once a month for the next two years so we can discuss our topics and activities there. We will definitely look at the school system and the situation of children from Ukraine and of children who have been displaced.

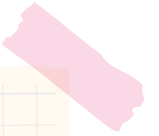


Many thanks for your commitment, Sena! We are looking forward to seeing what the ECC will do in the next two years. Have fun!



Thanks!





Germany has representatives in the European Parliament. Who is the Member of the EP from your region?

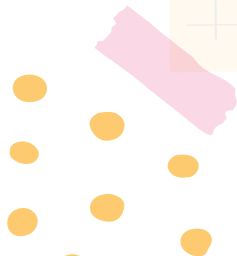
www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/de/home

Name:

How can you get in touch with your MEP?

Contact:

Write down a question you would like to ask your MEP:





THIS IS THE YOUTH EDITORIAL TEAM:



This brochure is published jointly by the Children's Rights Network and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, in cooperation with KiKA.

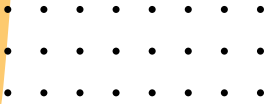
The brochure is primarily aimed at children and young people. This made it immediately clear that children and young people should make an active contribution to the brochure. A team of young people helped to design the brochure and its contents.



“ I think children's rights are important because children and young people need special protection and special rights. I am helping to produce this brochure to draw attention to these special rights and to claim them. ”
Charlotte, age 14

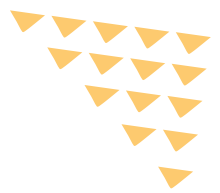


“ Live children's rights as they are, and say thank you for everything. ”
Luisa, age 15



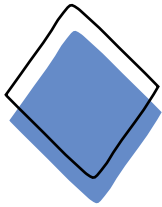
“ It is important that every child knows that they have rights: that they know they must be protected, involved and supported. No child can have a say in which family or which country they grow up in, and they should therefore not be placed at a disadvantage in life as a result. We children are the future! It is only if all children have good, fair opportunities, security and chances to develop freely that we can successfully shape the future of this world and find solutions to overcome the great challenges of our time. ”
Gloria, age 17





I'm really proud to be involved in such a project and to be a part of protecting and empowering our next generation and all those to come, but most of all to encourage them to take political action and speak up for our rights

Bastian, age 20



I enjoyed working on the brochure. I have worked on a book about children's rights before, and I showed it to my class. I think there should be a lot of material about children's rights so that children know that they have rights. A lot of them have no idea about this!

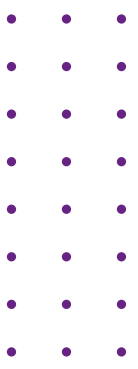
Mathilde, age 13



Children's rights are very important to me. Unlike human rights, they only apply to children, and their impact can address the specific needs of children. This provides a basis for a fulfilled life in this world.

Marisol, age 17



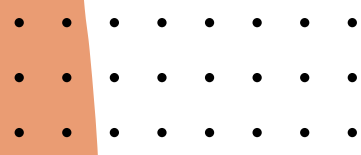
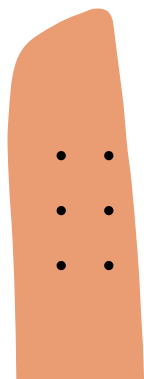


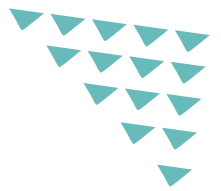
Franziska Breitfeld and Cora Ripking from the Children's Rights Network led the editorial meetings and interviews with the children and young people.

“
I find it so enriching every time I work with children and young people. It's a pity that this is not something that is already taken much more seriously, and not only on issues that so obviously affect children and young people, but actually with almost all topics.
”
Cora, age 32



“
I've been working for children and their families for almost 15 years. Children's rights from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are my trusted tool and guide my actions. But I am very clearly still not the expert in the room when it comes to working with young people.
It's the children and young people themselves who know best what they experience, where they stand, what they need and what they are demanding. I am immensely grateful that the young people were also willing to share their experiences, projects and messages with us in this important project.
”
Franziska, age 36





A CHILD-FRIENDLY VERSION OF THE UNCRC

UNICEF Germany has put together this version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in child-friendly wording. You can find the original (in German) at:

www.unicef.de/informieren/ueber-uns/fuer-kinderrechte/un-kinderrechtskonvention#pdf

UNICEF – for every child

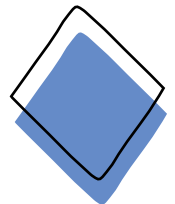
Every child has rights – the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations (UN) has made this binding since 1989. UNICEF is the UN's Children's Fund, and is charged with making children's rights a reality for every child in the world. Every child should grow up in health, freedom and peace. UNICEF works to achieve this in more than 190 countries around the world – including Germany, where UNICEF works with large numbers of schools, as well as with committed young people and adults. It is important that children learn about their rights at an early age and that their opinions are taken seriously.

You can find more information at:

www.unicef.de

www.unicef.de/youth

www.unicef.de/schulen



All children and young people have rights – and that includes you!

Your rights are set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

They are all connected, and equally important.

Almost all the countries in the world have promised to guarantee children's rights in their country.

Art. 1

Every person aged under 18 has these rights.

Art. 2

All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, where they come from, what colour their skin is, what their parents do, what language they speak, what religion they have, whether they are a boy or a girl, in what culture they live, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child may be deprived of any of the rights that have been adopted.

Art. 3

When adults make decisions about you, they are to first think about what is best for you. All facilities for children must support their well-being.

Art. 4

Your country must use all appropriate means to fulfil your rights. All countries are to work together so that children all over the world can exercise their rights.

Art. 5

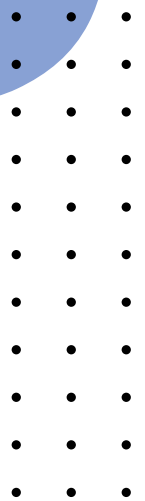
Your parents are to help you understand and assert your rights. They are to take into account that your own abilities are developing.

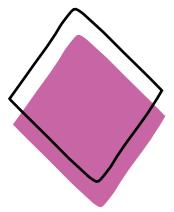
Art. 6

You have the right to live and develop to the best of your ability.

Art. 7

You have the right to a birth certificate, to a nationality, and you also have the right to know your parents and be looked after by them.



**Art. 8**

You have the right to an identity, meaning your name, a nationality and family relationships. If any of these are missing, the state must help to ensure that your identity is fully established.

Art. 9

You have the right to live with your parents unless it would not be good for you. If you are separated from one or both of your parents for any reason, you have the right to be in regular contact with them, unless this would put you at risk.

Art. 10

If you and your parents live in different countries, the countries are to help you to move back together.

Art. 11

No one is allowed to keep you abroad against your will. The countries must protect you against this.

Art. 12

You have the right to express your own opinion, and adults must take what you say seriously. Judges also have to listen to you regarding things that concern you.

Art. 13

You have the right to share what you think and feel with others by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way. But you must not hurt or offend anyone else while doing so. You have the right to know what is going on in the world.



Art. 14

You have the right to form your own opinion and to decide whether you believe in a God or not. Your parents should help you, but they should also take your opinion into account.

Art. 15

You have the right to associate with others, and you may assemble peacefully. But you must not violate other people's rights in doing so.

Art. 16

You have the right to privacy. No one is allowed to read your letters, search your room or do anything like that without asking. No one is allowed to embarrass or insult you.

Art. 17

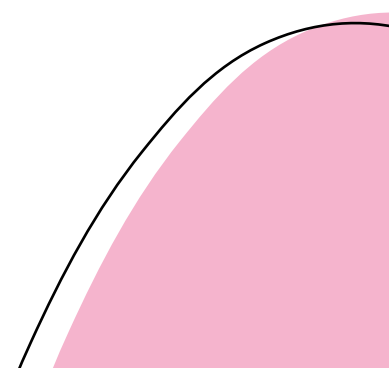
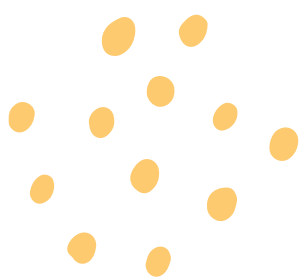
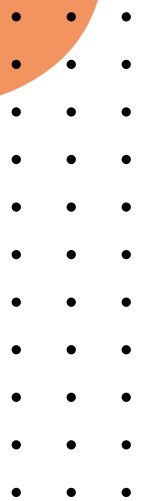
You have the right to learn everything you need to know for a good life from the radio, newspapers, books, computers and other sources. Adults are to make sure that the information you receive does not harm you. They should also help you find and understand the information you need.

Art. 18

You have the right to be raised and supported by both your parents. In everything they do, your parents have to make sure that you are alright. The state is to support parents in this task, for example by providing nurseries, healthcare services and the like.

Art. 19

You have the right to be protected so that you are not physically or emotionally abused, mistreated or neglected.





Art. 20

You have the right to receive special protection and help if you cannot live with your parents.

Art. 21

Your state must make sure that you can only be adopted if it is in your best interests.

Art. 22

Displaced children have the right to receive special protection and assistance. All other rights of the Convention on the Rights of the Child also apply to them in the country that they are currently in. The state, the United Nations and other organisations must help them to return to their family if they are unaccompanied refugees. If this is not possible, they must be treated like other children who have no parents.

Art. 23

You have the right to special support and assistance if you have a disability. In this case, you are also entitled to all the rights of the Convention, so that you can lead a good life and take an active part in society.

Art. 24

You have the right to the best health possible, and to medical treatment, clean drinking water, healthy food, a clean and safe environment, protection from harmful customs, and the right to learn how to live healthily.

Art. 25

If you are in a foster family or living in a home, you have the right to be checked up on regularly to see if you are okay there.



Art. 26

You have the right to receive support from your state's social security system.

Art. 27

You have the right to grow up in living conditions that allow you to develop well. Your parents are primarily responsible for this. If your parents cannot do this, the state must help to ensure that you have what you need, especially food, clothing and a place to live.

Art. 28

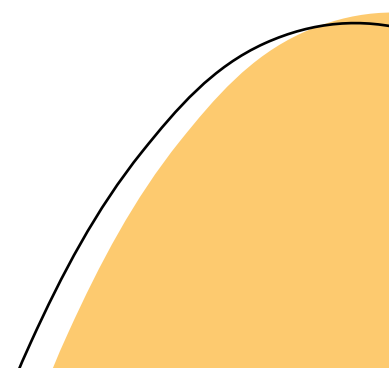
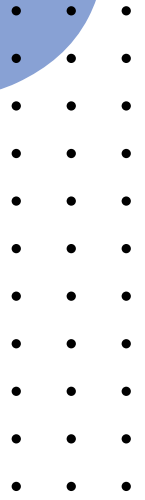
You have the right to a good school education. Basic education should cost nothing. You are to be supported in obtaining the best education and training qualification that you can manage. The state must ensure that all children go to school and that no child is treated badly there.

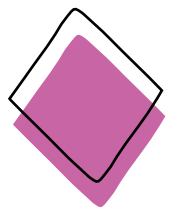
Art. 29

Your education is to help you to develop all your talents and abilities. It is also to prepare you to live in peace, protect the environment and respect other people and their rights, including if they belong to different cultures or religions. To do this, you are also to learn about human rights and children's rights, and respect them.

Art. 30

Every child has the right to practice their own culture, language and religion, regardless of whether all the people in their country do so or not. Minorities and indigenous people need special protection for this.





Art. 31

You have the right to leisure, to play, to relax and to be creative.

Art. 32

The state must set age thresholds for children to work. It must protect you from work that is bad for your health or your education. If you are doing work that is permitted, you have the right to be safe at work and to be paid fairly.

Art. 33

You have the right to be protected from drugs and drug trafficking.

Art. 34

You have the right to be protected from all forms of sexual abuse.

Art. 35

The countries of the world must protect all children from being abducted or sold.

Art. 36

You have the right to be protected from any kind of exploitation.

Art. 37

No one may punish you in a cruel or inhuman way. The death penalty for children must be abolished everywhere. Only in rare exceptional cases may children who have reached the age of criminal responsibility be locked up in prison. If this does happen, they must be treated in a child-friendly manner and immediately have access to a lawyer. They must be able to stay in touch with their parents.



Art. 38

You have the right to be protected in the event of war. An additional contract stipulates that no child may be called on to play an active role in armed conflicts.

Art. 39

You have the right to receive help if you have been abused, neglected or exploited. The state must help you get back to living a normal life.

Art. 40

You have the right to receive legal assistance, and to be treated fairly in court if you have reached the age of criminal responsibility, and the laws must respect your rights. The state is to set up separate youth courts and offer different ways to enable young people who have broken laws to return to the community.

Art. 41

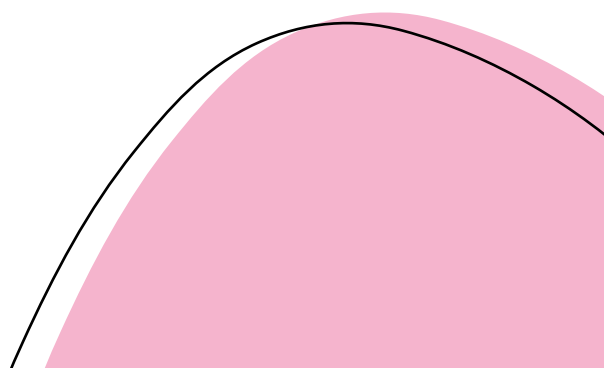
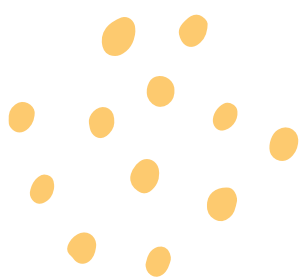
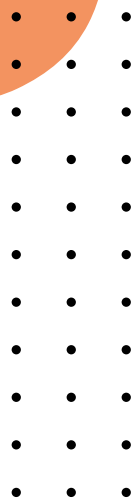
If your country has laws that protect your rights better than the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they are to continue to apply.

Art. 42

The state is to ensure that all children and adults know about children's rights.

Art. 43 to Art. 54

These articles explain how the United Nations work together with international organisations such as UNICEF to ensure that children's rights are respected.





Imprint

Published by:

Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth
Public Relations Division
11018 Berlin
www.bmfsfj.de



National Coalition Germany – Network for the Implementation
of the UN-Convention of the Rights of the Child.
Steinstr. 13, 10119 Berlin
www.netzwerk-kinderrechte.de

Available from:

Publikationsversand der Bundesregierung
Postfach 48 10 09, 18132 Rostock
Tel.: 030 18 272 2721, Fax: 030 18 10 272 2721
Sign language telephone: gebaerdentelefon@sip.bundesregierung.de
Email: publikationen@bundesregierung.de
www.bmfsfj.de

Article number: 5BR549

Version: September 2022, 1st ed.

Editing, content and text: Franziska Breitfeld and Cora Ripking

Editorial advice: Bastian, Charlotte, Gloria, Luisa, Marisol and Mathilde

Concept and design: © zweiband.media GmbH

Illustrations: © Francesca Sciarmella

Printed by: MKL Druck GmbH & Co. KG

Photo credits:

Pages 7–8: Lisa Paus – Bundesregierung / © Steffen Kugler

Page 55: Nikita – © Sebastian Pfützte / SOS-Kinderdorf e. V.

Production and manufacture:

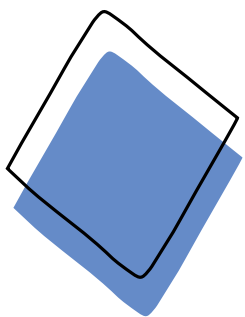
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Children's rights – on KiKA of course

What KiKA thinks:
Children absolutely need to know that they have rights of their own! You will find clips and exciting reports on this topic on kika.de.

