

YOUTH IN EUROPE  
O F F E N B U R G  
T A L K S “ ”



# #5

IDENTITIES AND BELONGING:  
WHAT DOES YOUTH WORK AND  
YOUTH POLICY NEED TO KNOW  
ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY?

## CALL FOR PAPERS

## THEME OF THE 5<sup>th</sup> EDITION OF YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS

In 2022, the series of expert-workshops YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS will focus on the topic *'Identities and belonging: what does youth work and youth policy need to know about young people today?'*. At the workshop, 30 European experts from the fields of youth policy, practice and research will discuss which identities and sense of belonging young people (seek to) have today. It will be explored, how these aspects are generated and which transformations they undergo, which influence individualism, solidarity and communities have, which role youth (sub)cultures and youth milieus play in this process and what 'home' in its diverse aspects means to young people today. The findings of the workshop shall inform youth work and youth policy to better support young people in their challenging quest of finding themselves and their home in an increasingly challenging and complex world.

### FOCUS OF AND QUESTIONS FOR EDITION #5<sup>1</sup>

Young people (as all individuals) are subject to different economic, social, cultural, and political conditions. In particular identities of young people develop between individualism and group belonging in diverse (sub-)cultures and milieus. Recent studies show that many young people suffer the negative impact of individualisation<sup>2</sup> and the Covid-19 pandemic additionally reveals the fragile status of mental health. Young people feel an "each-to-their-own"-mentality, are scared of (experienced) polarisation, hate and aggression in society and miss social cohesion. Studies also show that for a majority, decent living conditions are more important than social status, economic success, and professional career; instead, mutual support, solidarity, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom are the dominating values. However, 'young people' are by far not a homogeneous but a very diverse group, with many nuances.

When exploring the sense of belonging of young people, the concepts of 'home' or 'homeland' are also relevant, while not without controversy. However, what is meant by 'home' or 'homeland'? Is it more than a place or an attitude and position? 'Home' is often perceived as one of the places where a person feels safest, and as one of the places where one likes being most. A sense of feeling at home can be seen as one of the conditions of group identity (next to difference of others). The derived notion of 'homeland' usually refers to one's region of birth and the (assumed) ethnic/national affiliations and loyalties this entails. Especially for those in exile, 'homeland' plays a crucial role for those excluded by pushing the notion's part linked to the location away and considering homeland as 'non-location': a feeling, a hope, a desire. In this regard it is also to ask, what the term 'homeland' means to migrants and refugees, or more general, to those excluded from their 'homes'.

<sup>1</sup> More information you can find in the 'Conceptional Reflections' on YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS #5: <https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/ueber-jfe/projekte/YouthInEurope-OffenburgTalks/>

<sup>2</sup> Calmbach, Marc; Flaig, Berthold Bodo; Schleer, Christoph; Edwards, James; Möller-Slawinski, Heide (2020): Sinus Jugendstudie 2020 – Lebenswelten von Jugendlichen im Alter von 14 bis 17 Jahren in Deutschland <https://www.sinusinstitut.de/media-center/studien/wie-ticken-jugendliche-2020>



In positive terms, youth work aims at countering negative impacts and to contribute to better living conditions for young people, by “supporting spaces for young people’s voice and autonomy and building bridges for the next steps in young people’s lives”<sup>3</sup>. In this regard the debate at YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS will be grouped around the questions how youth work contributes to young people’s sense of belonging (in milieus as well as in neighbourhoods and local, regional, national communities) and how it constitutes a safe space for exploring and building (positive forms of) young people’s identities, including the emergence of new youth cultures and affiliations.

From a perspective of ‘equal opportunities’ it will be of utmost relevance to ask how to make youth work inclusive to young people with non-mainstream identities and what it takes to make them feel safe and at home. This also requires looking at phenomena of ‘intersectionality’ as ‘the way in which different types of discrimination are linked to and affect each other’ in order to understand, address and prevent unfair treatment based on a person’s gender, ethnicity, etc. (see Cambridge Dictionary)<sup>4</sup>. Further it needs to be discussed in how far young people’s identity development needs are reflected in (European) youth policy frameworks.

The key questions of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS on ‘Identities and belonging: what does youth work and youth policy need to know about young people today?’ will be:

- Who are young people today? What do they think and feel and need?
- Which (diverse) identities do they have (or for which they are looking for)?
- Which youth (sub)cultures and milieus are relevant with regard to identity building and belonging?
- What does ‘home’ in its diverse and contradictory aspects mean to the different groups of young people?

Informed by this closer look at young people, the core of discussions will focus on the role of youth work in supporting young people, centred in the question:

- How do different forms of youth work (e.g. European or local youth work, open and detached youth work, outreach work with youth and youth social work, youth councils, youth-led movements...) affect and address the development of youth identities and the sense of belonging of young people?

## CALL FOR PAPERS (ABSTRACTS)

With the YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS #5 we would like to look deeper into the described questions and phenomena, to analyse the situation more in-depth, differentiate the picture and talk particularly about the position and role of youth work in this respect.

<sup>3</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> European Youth Work Convention (2020): *Signposts for the Future - Final Declaration*. [https://www.eywc2020.eu/downloads/doctrine/WebforumVeranstaltungenWebsiteBundle:Media-file-99/201021%20EYWC2020\\_Factsheet\\_Final%20Declaration\\_V09\\_mit%20Grafik.pdf](https://www.eywc2020.eu/downloads/doctrine/WebforumVeranstaltungenWebsiteBundle:Media-file-99/201021%20EYWC2020_Factsheet_Final%20Declaration_V09_mit%20Grafik.pdf); see also: Williamson, Howard (2017): *Winning space, building bridges - What youth work is all about*; in: Schild, Hanjo; Connolly, Nuala; Labadie, Francine; Vanhee, Jan; Williamson, Howard (2017): *Thinking seriously about youth work: And how to prepare people to do it*

<sup>4</sup> Cambridge Dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/intersectionality>



## WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

In regard to the above questions (and beyond) we are inviting experts, researchers, policy makers and practitioners to submit abstracts/papers/reflections of different kind. As a result of submitted and selected papers we will structure and cluster potential contributions and invite selected experts to thematic rounds of discussions. The selection of proposals will be based on short (0,5 – 1 page) abstracts which after selection should be further elaborated and presented in the talk. Invited authors will get a fee of 640 € each. The fee includes the submission of full scripts of the individual contributions to be published in a reader. Video recordings of the talks will be published online.

### Where to send abstracts to?

Papers in form of short (0,5 – 1 page) abstracts should be send per e-mail to Andreas Hirsch, JUGEND für Europa [hirsch@jfemail.de](mailto:hirsch@jfemail.de) . **Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

Selection will be managed by the steering group of the YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS. Submitters will be informed on results of the selection procedure by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022.

## DATE AND PLACE OF 'YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS'

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the 'YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS' will take place on **Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2022** in Reithalle Offenburg, Germany (25 km to Strasbourg). The meeting will start at 10h00 on the first day and end in the afternoon at 16h00 of the second day. Arrival for most participants should be on **Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> of September** in the late afternoon/evening.

## WHAT ARE THE 'YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS' ABOUT?

The series YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS are expert workshops on themes relevant to the youth sector and with an impact on youth policy, youth work practice and young people's life in general. Around 30-35 researchers, policy makers and practitioners, selected in relation to their expertise on the given theme, discuss controversial issues, explore new areas and phenomena and look at answers of the youth field. Discussions are stimulated by short inputs of experts, facilitated by moderators, documented by videos and summarized by rapporteurs. The YOUTH IN EUROPE: OFFENBURG TALKS are hosted annually in Offenburg, Germany by a steering group representing five National Agencies of Erasmus+ Youth. More information can be found here: <https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/ueber-jfel/projekte/YouthInEurope-OffenburgTalks/>

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