

5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

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Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

Consultation at state level

The National Council for Children is an independent national institution for children with the task of assessing and identifying conditions in the development of society in general that may have an impact on children's rights and opportunities for development in light of the provisions and intentions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The council is obliged to make the voice of children heard in the general public, which is achieved by the children and youth panels mentioned in section 7.3. In this way, children and young people are consulted indirectly.

The council must submit legislative consultation responses in relation to initiatives and legislation of importance for the conditions of children's upbringing. Furthermore, the council can present proposals for alterations in the

areas within the functioning of the council as well as advise the parliament, the government and authorities on all matters of a general nature that are important to the conditions of children in society to safeguard the rights, needs and interests of children.

The involvement of young people or youth organisations in the policymaking process in Denmark is consultative and [not legally binding](#).

Method

As a general procedure, organisations and authorities affected by a policy proposal are involved in a consultation process. Policy documents (bills, ministerial orders) are sent to relevant partners before the bill is discussed in parliament.

The deadline for statements submitted for consultations should be as long as possible, normally four weeks.

The only time the ministries do not have to have a consultative process is when the bill is based on a statutory instrument that has already been in a consultative process or in the case of a very short time frame. When a bill has not been in a consultation process, the ministry must provide an explanation.

In general, all public authorities and organisations affected by the bill should be consulted.

At the website [Høringsportalen.dk](https://høringsportalen.dk), ministries publish all relevant material regarding the consultation process (i.e. the bill, deadline for submission of consultative statements and a list of relevant organisations/partners). The material is also published on the ministry's website.

Regularity of consultations

Ad hoc whenever bills from the government (both the executive and legislative bodies) are sent out on extensive consultation and considered of relevance to youth.

Other youth consultation mechanisms at state level

At national level, the use of youth panels is widespread. A youth panel is typically a group of young people from a specific target group, for instance socially marginalised or chronically ill young people. The panels can be open to everyone in the target group or be composed of a handful of selected young people. Practitioners, politicians and other decision-makers use the panels when they need young people's perspectives. See [section 5.3](#) for a detailed description of youth panels.

Consultation at municipal level

At municipal/regional level, the consultation of young people takes place in the municipal youth councils and/or

the joint pupil councils mentioned in [section 5.3](#)

The method and regularity of consultation in the municipal youth councils and the joint pupil council vary.

Actors

Youth actors

At state level, the relevant youth actors involved in the consultation process vary depending on the content of the bill. Youth are represented through interest organisations or national umbrella associations.

[An example of relevant partners consulted in connection with a bill from the Ministry of Children and Education:](#)

[An example of relevant partners consulted in connection with a bill from the Ministry of Children and Education:](#)

At municipal level, the relevant youth actors are the municipal youth councils and the municipal joint pupil councils. (See [section 5.3](#))

Specific target groups

There are no top-level proactive measures to include specific target groups in policymaking. The very process of consultation is a mechanism to make sure that all affected sections of the population are consulted.

Public authorities

All ministries are obliged to consult all relevant public authorities and organisations.

Municipalities.

The Danish Parliament hosts the Youth Parliament (see section 5.3), and arranges other initiatives for dialogue (see below).

Additional stakeholders:

Examples of additional stakeholders involved in consultation processes:

Organisations:

The Youth Bureau ([Ungdomsbureauet](#)). The Youth Bureau is a non-profit organisation. Its mission is to build the most democratically active generation of young people. The Youth Bureau organises events, happenings, workshops, analyses and teaching material. The Youth Bureau organises the Youth Meeting, see below.

[YouGlobe](#): the association YouGlobe provides free teaching materials and dialogue meetings to primary, lower secondary, and general and vocational upper secondary educations. The focus of YouGlobe's services is democracy, active citizenship and other themes.

[NAU](#) (Network for Youth Councils): Nau is a cross-party umbrella organisation for municipal youth councils. NAU offers counselling, training courses, and exchange of best practice. The objective of NAU is to strengthen young people's democratic participation at local level.

Tuborg Foundation ([Tuborgfondet](#)): A private foundation that distributes 40-60 million DKK every year. The target group is young people in the 16-30-year age group. The foundation has four focus areas, with democracy being one of them. The foundation supports projects that focus on the inclusion of underrepresented groups of young people in youth communities and projects that focus on engaging young people in society and democracy.

Research:

The Centre for Voting and Parties, University of Copenhagen ([Center for valg og partier](#)): The centre provides research on Danish elections and the effect of election campaigns. The centre has published several reports on young people's participation in elections.

The Centre for Youth Research ([Center for ungdomsforskning – CeFU](#)) explores aspects of young people's lives and youth in Denmark.

Information on the extent of youth participation

No public authority collects data on the general consultation process.

In the children and youth panel established by the National Council for Children, about 3 000 pupils from primary and lower secondary education (Folkeskolen) are consulted, typically from the 7th to the 9th grade. The panel members are recruited for a 3-year period.

Outcomes

Main outcome

State level

At state level, the type of input usually requested from organisations is statements with pros and cons of a

specific bill in the perspective of a specific section of the population.

The ministry considers the statements and may change the bill when the argumentation is relevant and convincing.

Municipal level

Since the consultation process at municipal level varies greatly, the outcomes also vary. There is no national study on the influence and integration of the youth councils' opinions in the policymaking process. Overall, there seems to be four areas of responsibilities at the municipal level:

1. The youth council is responsible for the municipal youth house.
2. The youth council is responsible for cultural activities and events for the youth. For this purpose, the youth council has its own budget.
3. The youth council is entitled to be consulted in questions related to youth, e.g. often educational and cultural questions.
4. The youth council may recommend a fixed number of proposals to be discussed in the municipal city council.

(DUF, 2016)

Public availability of outcomes

In order to ensure public control of public authorities' administration, the Act on Transparency in Public Administration (lov om offentlighed i forvaltningen, [LOV nr 606 af 12/06/2013](#)) obliges all public authorities to be transparent in their administration. Everyone may request subject access to documents established or contracted by any public authority as part of case management. However, some files are excluded in the act.

At municipal level, all agendas, appendices and minutes from municipal city councils and municipal committees are publicly available at the respective municipality's website. Documents available to the public include meeting minutes, voting results and sometimes summaries. Thus, when a youth council is consulted this would appear in the minutes.

At state level, ministries are [not obliged to declare eventual changes to a bill](#) caused by consultative statements.

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

There are several large-scale initiatives for debate between the youth and public institutions.

The youth parliament (see [section 5.3](#)) is one of these initiatives.

The People's Political Festival ([Folkemødet](#))

Since 2011, a political festival is held in week 24 on the island of Bornholm. The People's Political Festival is a meeting of people and politicians. All events are free.

The leaders of all the political parties in Denmark attend together with government ministers, MEPs, as well as many mayors and councillors from Denmark and the neighbouring countries.

In 2011, 10 000 visitors participated in the festival, and 72 parties, associations, enterprises, municipalities, etc. arranged 250 events such as debates, seminars, talks and workshops. In 2017, approximately 100 000 guests visited the festival and more 3200 events were held.

Several youth organisations also participate, and in 2018 the youth had its own stage: the Youth Hill.

The festival hosts the civil parliament (civiltinget), where small organisations without the economic capacity to finance a stand can have speaking time for free.

The Youth Democracy Festival

The Youth Democracy Festival ([Ungdommens Folkemøde](#))

The Youth Democracy Festival is a democracy festival for young people. It is a free annual event in the first week of September. Through participation, conversation and collaboration, young citizens are offered a chance to rediscover what democratic engagement looks like in 2018.

Politicians and organisations give talks from the festival stages, and young people are able to give a three-minute talk at the 'beer crate stage'. School classes can also participate, and several organisations provide teaching material.

In 2017, 10 000 young people participated in the festival. The Youth Democracy Festival is organised by the Youth Bureau ([Ungdomsbureauet](#)) and is funded by several private and public partners.

The Day of Democracy

The Day of Democracy ([demokratiets dag](#)) is an educational initiative for pupils at vocational upper secondary educations. The pupils meet young politicians and they get the opportunity to discuss and develop their own opinion.

School Election

School Election ([skolevalg](#)) is a three-week teaching course provided by the parliament, the Ministry of Children and Education and [DUF](#). The course targets pupils in the 8th, 9th and 10th grade. During the course, the pupils learn about formal and informal democracy. At the end of the course, the pupils participate in a purely educational election with polling cards, voting papers and polling booths. The national voting result is determined during a TV-broadcast election night in the parliament, Christiansborg.

Politician for a Day

Politician for a Day ([Politiker for en Dag](#)) is a three-hour role play in the parliament provided by the parliament. The role play targets pupils in 8th and 9th grade. During the role play, the pupils learn about the parliamentary decision-making process and active participation in Danish democracy.

Your Democracy

Your Democracy ([Dit demokrati](#)) is a collection of 22 short films about Danish democracy provided by the parliament.

Democracy Under Development

Democracy Under Development ([Demokrati under udvikling](#)). During 2018, a national campaign was launched by the Ministry of Education (Now Ministry of Children and Education). Democracy Under Development is an educational campaign targeting pupils in primary and lower secondary, general and vocational upper secondary and adult education programmes. The teaching material is free. On the portal EMU targeted teachers from primary to upper secondary and adult education, teachers can find inspiration for teaching sessions. Week 12 is democracy week, a national theme week that focuses on community, democracy and active citizenship.

Young Voices – New Paths to Democratic Participation

Young Voices – New Paths to Democratic Participation ([Unge stemmer – nye veje til demokratisk deltagelse](#)) is a partnership between NAU, the Tuborg Foundation, and Mandag Morgen. The project investigates how young people participate in democracy in 2018. Forty civil society associations, municipalities, and other groups tour Denmark and visit municipalities and organisations that are successful in engaging the youth. The insights from the tour are included in an inspiration catalogue.

The Democracy Commission

The Democracy Commission ([Demokratikommisionen](#)). In 2018, [DUF](#) initiated the Democracy Commission with representatives from all political parties, media, civil society and researchers. The commission investigates ways to strengthen the Danish democracy.