

E U R O S O C I A L 6 6 / 9 9

# POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH BELOW VOTING AGE

EXAMPLES OF EUROPEAN PRACTICES

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## **Political Participation of Youth Below Voting Age**

Political participation of youth represents a possible approach for more strongly incorporating the interests of youth in political decisions and thus for counteracting the marginalization of this group of the population. In order to study the relevance of political participation of youth below voting age in different countries an international research project coordinated by the European Centre was conducted. This publication summarizes the results of this project, which was financed by the European Commission and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Environment, Youth, and Family Affairs.

The first chapter provides a short overview of the developments on an international level. Here particular reference is made to the importance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as to relevant opinions of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. Subsequent chapters go on to describe and analyse the current developments in Austria, Finland, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The heterogeneity of the five national reports suggests that we are concerned here with an extremely new field of research that will hardly be able to rely on established definitions and existing preliminary studies. In any case, the analyses clearly reveal that forms of political participation of youth below voting age do exist in all of the countries included in this study, although in terms of conditions and extent there is relatively considerable variation. In the final chapter a typology of the political participation of youth shall be developed based on the national reports and the results of a conference of experts with representatives from 13 countries. The objective of drawing up this typology was to systematize the experiences gleaned up until this point and to create a firmer basis for future theoretical work on the political participation of youth below voting age.

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