

Generalist Youth Information Services in Germany in 1997

The attached pages constitute the chapter concerning **Germany** which is part of a 17-country study completed in 1997. Each chapter provides a summary of the situation in the country at the end of 1997 concerning generalist youth information and counselling, and the methods and structures involved in its organisation and distribution.

This study was conducted by the **European Youth Information and Counselling Agency** (ERYICA), to which all the author organisations belong as “Member Organisations” or as “Co-operating Organisations”. Accordingly, the study is limited to those countries where in 1996-97 there existed functioning networks of generalist youth information centres and services which were co-operating with ERYICA.

The 17 chapters of this study, in separate English and French versions, can be consulted on the ERYICA Internet site (“www.eryica.org” - see the section “Documents”, then “1997 Study”). Each file, which is in Word 2.0 for Windows / PC (varying between 4 and 20 pages in length), can also be downloaded from the site.

More recent information about each ERYICA national partner, its activities and its network can also be found on the ERYICA Internet site:

- a) **current addresses of national partners**: under “Discover ERYICA”, then “Members”, then “Country”
- b) **links to Internet sites of national partners**: under “Discover SERVICES”, then “Websites of ERYICA Partners”
- c) (when the organisation co-ordinates a network) **links to a list of addresses of regional or local centres**: under “Discover ERYICA”, then “Members”, then “Country”.

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GERMANY

INTRODUCTION

The practical responsibility for youth policy and youth services in the Federal Republic of Germany, as a federal state, rests with the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, with the Federal States (*Länder*) and with the local authorities. At federal level, the **Children and Youth Plan of the Federation** is the main instrument for funding the activities of youth organisations and youth service organisations. There are also children and youth plans for the Federal States and for major cities.

Although in recent years youth information has become a topic of growing importance in the framework of youth policy, there is no structure in Germany with political responsibility or authority which is exclusively and primarily concerned with youth information.

Since the responsibility for information and counselling is connected with expert knowledge in a variety of fields, the delivery of information services is organised in accordance with the federal and decentralised structure of the Federal Republic of Germany. Most of the questions and topics about which young people seek information fall within the competence of the Federal States and local authorities; a few fall within the competence of the Federation.

Specialist information centres exist at the regional and local levels, and are

distributed over the entire Federal Republic, thereby being accessible for every young person. Hundreds of municipal youth offices can also be of help should the needed information not be easily available.

In recent years youth information centres have been developed within local youth-work services, mainly with counselling functions. Founded to help in the solution of the personal difficulties and problems of young people, they are available to young persons and young adults as well as other groups, and offer counselling services about various problems and conflict situations. If necessary, they will refer users to specific services advising on issues related to drugs, alcohol, studies, AIDS, travel or difficulties in the family.

The information for this text has been provided by the "Internationaler Jugendaustausch- und Besucherdienst" (IJAB) which participates in a number of European youth co-operation programmes, including in the field of youth information:

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EUROPEAN SURVEY OF COMPUTER-ASSISTED YOUTH INFORMATION SERVICES

In 1992, in the framework of a project initiated by the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA), IJAB conducted a survey into computer-assisted youth information services in Germany.

Major existing computer-assisted information services included at that time youth-related issues. These data-bases had a specific professional orientation (like medical or social) and included youth-related issues with regard to very specific professional characteristics.

The number of computer-assisted information services which were specifically oriented towards young people was limited at that time. Only two services were identified. Most of the computer-assisted information services reviewed were literature databases for bibliographical references. They did not include analyses, trends and developments.

The Federal Ministry for Woman and Youth (since 1994 the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth) has grant-aided a number of projects with a view to building up youth information services, especially in the Eastern Länder. It has also supported computer-assisted youth information services in specific areas, such as the InfoMax project organised by the German Youth Hostels Association.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In connection with the European discussions about youth information and as a reaction to the specific information needs of young people, especially in the field of mobility-related information, considerable attention is given in the youth policy

discussion at the level of the Federation and of the Federal States, to developing adequate information and counselling services. Following the reunification of Germany, as a reaction to the very specific information needs of young people in the Eastern *Länder*, a number of youth information services have been established.

Consideration has to be given to the fact that information for young people in Germany is provided in connection with different specific areas of activity, such as job placement, vocational and careers guidance, services for gifted children, youth information centres, etc.

While specialised youth information centres are numerous, there are not so many separate "generalist" youth information centres. Most of those which exist are maintained by different bodies, have different organisational structures and work independently. There is no national youth information centre in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Federal Youth Council

In October 1992, the German Federal Youth Council (DBJR) adopted a resolution on youth information and indicated the importance of a national co-ordination with regard to a future co-operation at European level.

Since that time seven national conferences of youth information centres and services have taken place. On 1 December 1995 the German Federal Youth Council started a pilot-project "**Co-ordination of youth information services in the Federal Republic of Germany**" (*Jugendinformation, c/o DBJR, Haager Weg 44, D-53127 Bonn*), with the aim of building up a network of youth information services. In the context of this pilot-project, which will be completed at the end of 1997,

Jugendinformation has initiated contacts and informal co-operation with ERYICA. It is intended to continue these activities beyond 1997 and to institutionalise the co-ordination and networking in the field of youth information in Germany.

InfoMax

InfoMax, the youth information project of the Deutsches Jugendherbergswerk (*German Youth Hostels Association, Bismarckstr. 8, D-32756 Detmold*) was started in June 1992 and was completed in 1994. It was a pilot-project for the international work of the youth hostels, and sought to offer information services for young people through computerised kiosks placed in youth hostels. The idea has been developed to meet the information needs of young people which result from their increased mobility. Youth hostels throughout Germany have participated in the test phase, with a computerised kiosk installed in each hostel. Following the completion of the pilot-project, the InfoMax system has been extended to act as the data-base for the information network within the European Federation of Youth Hostels Association.

Since 1996, in accordance with a decision of the Governing Board of the German Youth Hostels Association, the **InfoMax** project is operated by InfoMax, c/o Bohm-Nonnen-Urhahn, Havelstr. 26, D-64295 Darmstadt.

IJAB

In 1996, IJAB has been mandated by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth to develop an information service on CD-ROM called **Data-bank for International Youth Work** (*“Datenbank für Internationale Jugendarbeit”*). This service contains information which is relevant to international co-operation in the field of youth,

and it will be available on CD-ROM and via Internet in 1998.

IJAB is also the German national operator for the **Eurodesk information service** which is part of the Eurodesk network established by the European Commission. Connected with the central Eurodesk server in Brussels, Eurodesk-Germany operates a telephone hotline (0228-9506208) to answer enquiries about the youth programmes of the European Union; an Internet version of the service will also be available in 1998.

In the Assembly of Members of IJAB, together with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the representatives of the Länder, an ongoing discussion is taking place since the beginning of 1997 on the creation of a **national Youth Server** (*“Jugendserver Deutschland”*). By this means it may be possible to create an institutionalised framework for co-operation in international networks in the field of youth information.

Since the founding of ERYICA in 1986, IJAB has actively supported its activities and has had observer status in the General Assembly of ERYICA.