

What is a youth council?

Youth Council is an arena for youth to be heard.

The youth council shall be the voice for young people to the politicians and decision-makers, and shall have an advisory role for the municipality and the county municipality.

The council represents the interests of the youth in the municipality or county and have the right to express their opinions in all matters concerning youth. Youth councils can also raise their own issues.

The members of the council are elected for up to two years at a time. This is stated in the Local Government Act.

Functions of the youth council

The youth council shall give advice to the municipality or county municipality so that the municipal council or county council has a better basis for taking decisions, according to the Municipal Law.

The council has the right to express its views, it is not a duty. It is up to the council to consider whether it should state an opinion on a matter. The council can thus decide which issues they want to get involved in.

Speaking on behalf of young people

The youth council members are elected by the people, which means that they are elected to represent young people in their municipality or county. The youth council shall represent and speak on behalf of all young people. Youth councils should therefore ensure that they have good contact with different groups of young people, and create meeting places where youth councils can receive input from the young people they represent.

Open to all

The right to participate in the municipal council / county council

The municipal council and the county council may allow members of youth councils to participate (right to attend and speak) in other elected bodies, for example in the municipal council or the county council. If there is a specific issue that the council would like to raise in a meeting with the municipal council, they can ask for speaking time, but it is up to the municipal council to decide whether they should be given this opportunity.

Broad, open and accessible participation

The youth council shall ensure a broad, open and accessible participation from young people in the municipality or in the county.

The youth council is invited to comment on many different issues in the municipality or in the county, therefore the people elected as members of youth councils should have different ages and backgrounds of experience

With open and accessible participation means that the municipality or the county must ensure that the councils receive all relevant cases where the councils can issue a their opinion. The council can also raise issues on its own initiative. The meeting of the councils shall be open and accessible to anyone who wishes to be present. The statements of the council shall be public

What can the council decide?

The youth council shall give advice to the municipality or to the county. This does not mean that the municipal council or the county council always must follow the advice from the youth councils, but that they must know the opinion of the youth council before they make a decision.

The municipal council and the county council can give the youth council the authority to distribute grants. This means that the municipal council or the county council gives the council the task of deciding how they will spend money, for example which events or organisations that will receive support. This is called delegated decision-making competence.

What issues should the council work on?

The youth council has the right to express an opinion in all matters concerning young people in the municipality or the county. Here are some examples:

- cultural and leisure activities
- school issues
- health services
- transport and public transportation
- climate and environmental issues
- the annual budget and financial plan
- spatial planning
- municipality plans

If the municipality or county municipality in doubt about whether a case is relevant for the youth council, they should ask the youth council if they want to comment on the case.

The municipal council and the county council shall ensure that the youth council as early as possible have the opportunity to influence the decisions. The statements from the council shall follow the case documents of the municipal council and the county council..

According to the Planning and Building Act, the municipalities have a special responsibility to ensure active participation in planning activities or policies for children and young people. It gives the councils a The guide for participation in planning discusses is a good examples of how participation in municipal and regional planning processes can take place.

Activities and tasks

The youth council needs knowledge of topics concerning young people in the municipality or in the county, and discuss these topics in the meetings.

In addition to this, the members of the youth council can for example:

- be invited to speak or speak in various contexts
- arrange gatherings for young people in the municipality / county
- try to influence politicians by promoting their views in the media or elsewhere

Why participation?

Since young people under the age of 18 do not have the right to vote or can stand for election themselves, they have few opportunities to express their opinions and influence political decisions. Only young people themselves know what young people think about various issues. It is therefore important that young people are not represented through others, but speak for themselves. That is why we have youth councils.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states: "The child has the right to express his or her views in all matters relating to him or her and the views of the child shall be considered". Youth councils are a way of giving young people the opportunity to express their opinions on matters that are to be decided by the municipal council or the county council.

- Inclusion in democracy: Being allowed to state your opinion, and be taken seriously, is important for everyone. The fact that young people are allowed to participate and influence society can help to create trust in the institutions of society and build up a better democratic understanding.
- Better services for young people: In order for the municipality and the county municipality to develop good services, it is important to listen to young people. The fact that young people participate and state their opinions contributes to more knowledge about the needs and wishes of the youth. Thus, the municipality can arrive at better and more accurate services for the group.