

Symposium 2006

Symposium 2006, 9–11 June, Berlin

Voting Rights from Birth – A chance for more intergenerational justice?

Introduction

One fifth of the German population does not have the right to vote. Especially given the demographic change, the question of whether children, youths and families are still adequately represented needs to be addressed. In order to highlight the needs of young people and families, and to give the political and sociological discussions a new impulse, the FRFG and the Project Office “Dialogue of Generations” created a symposium with the title:

Voting Rights from Birth – A chance for more intergenerational justice?

The central idea of the event was to discuss the opportunities for political participation for children, youths and families. The aims of the symposium were to bring the theme “Voting Rights from Birth” back into public awareness, to gather the expertise and experience of the lecturers and participants and to weigh up to possibility of incorporating these rights into the constitution. Over and above that, the event created the opportunity for political personalities (such as Dr. Lore Maria Peschel-Gutzeit [ex- Senator of Justice from Hamburg], Prof. Dr. med. Gunther Moll [University of Erlangen] and Dr. Wolfgang Gaiser [German Youthinstitut]) to exchange ideas.

Over 35 participants from various fields, including lawyers, politicians, psychologists and doctors found themselves working side by side. Their ages ranged from 20 to 75 years, making an intergenerational and multidisciplinary discussion possible. Many different suggestions of how to implement “Voting rights from Birth” were introduced and discussed through presentations, debates, podium discussions and workshops.

One of the central questions of the symposium was in how far under–18s should be allowed to vote themselves, or through their parents.

One of the highlights of the symposium was the awards ceremony of the Intergenerational Justice Prize 2005/06 .

The best articles are published in the book “Voting rights without an age restriction?” Considerations of constitutional law, democracy theory and psychological development.