

PANEL AND FISHBOWL DISCUSSION

Gunter Czisch**Youth and Democracy**

Results from the Thematic Tables
10th International Partnership Meeting of the Danube Networkers
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Our very lively discussion can be summarised in four points. First, youth encounters create fertile ground for democracy, Europe and freedom to have a future. Generations that experienced war, displacement and flight carry heavy memories. Young people, however, offer particular potential. International youth encounters and democratic education can become formative experiences from which future responsibility grows. The goal is not separation and exclusion, but a shared search for peace and freedom.

Second, civil society in authoritarian states is not automatically part of a confident democratic system. People often have to be encouraged to recognise their potential and room for action. Tolerance also means accepting different opinions. Becoming involved can include disagreement and conflict, provided that conflicts are handled peacefully. In many places along the Danube, much remains to be done before broad sections of civil society feel able to participate.

Third, many political leaders are too far removed from the lives of young people. We must go to the places where young people communicate: online, through influencers and through new formats. It is not enough for older people to invite young people only into existing structures. Young people need the freedom to develop their own formats and contribute their own ideas. That enables them to experience both personal and social effectiveness.

Fourth, we would like more young people to participate. It is often the same individuals who attend. Reaching a broad cross-section of society remains a major challenge in Germany and throughout the Danube region. The reasons for non-participation may differ, but the task is similar everywhere.

Editorial note: This contribution was corrected and edited on the basis of an automatically generated transcript. Obvious recognition errors, technical interruptions, repetitions and purely organisational remarks were removed. The substance of the contribution has been preserved.