Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

There are no formal mechanisms of consultation. Most of the consultation takes place in an informal process. The only formal mechanism of consultation is the legal framework which encourages student’s participation in their educational institution. This is discussed in paragraph 5.7 Non-formal and informal learning.

At the top level, mostly by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, young people are being involved in consultations on topics that concern youth, but there is no law regulating this. The consultation by other Ministries is very limited, according to the director of the National Youth Council. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is now focussing on youth participation at local level so that measures or policies can be proposed if needed. Because of the decentralization of the social domain including youth policy and services, all municipalities are responsible for their youth consultation. But the degree of attention for youth participation in decision-making processes varies between municipalities.

A problem that municipalities encounter is how to stimulate youth to participate in decision-making processes. The Dutch municipalities are, however, required to monitor the transition of the youth domain. The Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten [1] (VNG) (Association of Dutch Municipalities) reports that in 2016 municipalities must work with client experiences studies Youth and the Wet
Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning (WMO) (Social Support Act). The outcome of this research provides an indication of the quality of help and support within the Social Support Act and the Youth care Act.

**Client participation**

A key principle of the Youth Law is based on the ability and strength of clients to give direction to their lives and solve problems independently as much as possible. Care professionals can provide support when needed. In line with this principle and bearing in mind the explanation of the Youth Law, it is stated that adolescents and parents are given more influence on the quality of care being offered to them. The underlying idea is that the influence of clients is necessary to organize appropriate care that meets the wishes and needs of clients and their social environment.

The extent to which the participation of clients is successful is strongly depending on the attitude of managers and professionals of youth care institutions. Also a shared view and vision on client participation and the way to carry this out are important factors.

**Other Mechanisms**

The Monitor Transitie Jeugd [2] (Transition Youth Monitor) (only in Dutch) is an initiative of six client organizations. These client organizations represent the participation and advocacy of clients in all relevant youth and family services, such as youth help, care for youth with physical and intellectual disabilities, chronic illness or mental disorders, and in education. This monitor, launched in January 2015, conveys signals of parents and young people concerning the changes in the field of youth, youth protection and juvenile probation to local interest groups, municipalities and government. The combination of signals from parents and young people provides valuable information for improving policies. Another level of mandatory consultation concerns youth care. The Youth Law (2014) (Jeugdwet [3]) (only in Dutch) prescribes the consultation of youth in youth care.

**Youth councils**

At the national level a few important councils play a role in consulting young people. As mentioned in chapter 3 Employment and Entrepreneurship, the FNV Young (FNVJeugd), a youth trade union, has a seat in the Social and Economic Council (Sociaal-Economische Raad SER). In this position FNV Young can advise top-level institutions on behalf of young people. Another council is the National Youth Council (Nationale Jeugdraad [4] NJR) (for more details see 5.3.1), which represents youth interests at the national and local level. The National Youth Council can be seen as a policy instrument [5] to achieve youth participation. This was one of the goals when this council was established. An example of activities organized by the National Youth council is the National Youth Debate (Nationaal Jeugddebat [6]) (only in Dutch) that was held in 2016. It took place in the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer) where young people under 18 met with Dutch politicians. The dialogue concerned topics of interest to young people. The politicians can subsequently consider including the wishes of young people in their policy choices.

The main methods for consulting young people vary at the national and local level. There may be more focus on participation within ministries and municipalities. The actors mentioned above can have some influence on activities, for instance through the National Youth Debate.

A good example is the Platform Onderwijs2032 [7] (only in Dutch) in which the future of the Dutch education system was discussed with a view to a better connection with the labour market. The director of the National Youth Council stated that this consultation process was helpful. The National Youth Council was asked for its view and the director claims that their perspectives were taken into account and their input will be used.
Youth participation at local level

At local level young people can participate in the municipal council meetings and debate topics that interest them. According to the director of the National Youth Council there is a problem with representation. Disadvantaged young people often participate less, so the outcome is not representative for the whole group of young people. The National Youth Council is cooperating with municipalities to design a consultation structure to tackle this problem.

A good example of a consultation method can be found in the municipality of Schiedam: The Little Embassy (De kleine Ambassade) (only in Dutch) is a foundation with several projects on child and youth participation and consultation. The foundation has organized a children’s town council. This was a first in the Netherlands. Children are invited to give advice to the municipality in different policy areas.

Actors

The following actors are involved in the mechanisms of consultation. However, according to the director of the National Youth Council, participation of youth is done on the basis of themes such as sustainability etc.

Youth actors:

- The National Youth Council (only in Dutch)
- Jeugdwelzijnsberaad (Youth welfare council) (only in Dutch); is an exchange between youth councils of youth care institutions in the Netherlands.
- Jongerenraad (youth council) (only in Dutch); According to the Jeugdwet (Youth Law) (in art 4.2.4 Youth law) Dutch youth care institutions are required to have a youth council. Student council (primary education and secondary vocational education); As of March 1, 2011, every school is required to have a central student council. This happens at local level.
- Taskforce Kindermishandeling (Taskforce Child abuse) (only in Dutch). The Ministry of Security and Justice together with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport have developed the Taskforce Child abuse to redirect the approach of child abuse.
- Het Landelijk Aktie Komitee Scholieren (LAKS) (National Action Committee Students) (only in Dutch).
- FNV Young (please see chapter 3 Employment and Entrepreneurship) (only in Dutch)
- CNV Young (please see chapter 3 Employment and Entrepreneurship) (only in Dutch)

Specific target groups:

- The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport does no longer have a policy focusing on specific target groups such as immigrants.

  The National Youth Council, however, does focus on immigrants and concerns itself with young disadvantaged people. The programme of the National Youth Council is a success with this target group because they participate actively.

Public authorities:
The municipalities are the key public authorities in youth consultation processes.

Additional stakeholders:

- Schools can play a role in consulting young people. As mentioned above, all vocational and secondary vocational school are required to have a student’s council.

- Youth foundations such as The Little Embassy (De Kleine Ambassade) and Raaz culture participation in the municipality of Zaanstad (Raaz Zaanstad) provide a link between the municipality and young people. Through their activities young people have an opportunity to participate.

**Information on the extent of youth participation**

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is collecting data on young people’s participation. The ministry has commissioned the task to Verwey-Jonker Institute (Verwey-Jonker Institute) to collect data on youth participation and consultation on local level. The new Youth Act calls on municipalities to involve young people in decision making processes. The Ministry wants an evaluation of the state of affairs and wants to know what kind of problems municipalities encounter. The first results of this research were presented on 2 June 2016 by the researchers. At this meeting they presented a few good practices, such as the activities of The Little Ambassade and Raaz Zaanstad (Raaz Zaanstad) in the municipality Zaanstad. Raaz supports young people wishing to set up a local initiative. Raaz also has a youth advisory council that advises the municipality on policy issues. In September 2016 the study ‘De staat van jeugdparticipatie in Nederland 2016’ (The state of youth participation in the Netherlands 2016) was published by Verwey-Jonker Institute.

**Outcomes**

The research conducted by Verwey-Jonker Institute included a questionnaire in 122 municipalities. Some findings:

- From 2015, after the transition of the social domain, more budget has become available for youth participation, especially in municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants.
- Municipalities that involve young people in designing or implementing public policies have doubled; from 40% in 2009 to 73% in 2016.
- The percentage of municipalities that involve young people in youth care has increased from 13% in 2012 to 52% in 2016.
- Part of the municipalities that still are not involving young people in youth participation, do have the intention to arrange this. But because of the transition in the social domain the municipalities needed to focus on this first.
- There are differences in the size of municipalities. Small municipalities are often less active and have less budget than larger municipalities.
- More municipalities are designing youth participation at a higher level. This means that young people have a real voice in it; participation and stimulating own initiative.
- As in 2009, youth participation shaped by a group of youth representatives in
municipalities and by organizing panels or debates.

- Social media are used more frequently now to reach the target group.

For more results please read the study ‘De staat van jeugdparticipatie in Nederland 2016’ [19] (The state of youth participation in the Netherlands 2016) (only in Dutch).

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

Idebate [20] is a large-scale initiative for young people who are difficult to reach. Idebate organizes debates at national and international level. It aims to promote mutual understanding and respect and to strengthen democracy worldwide. It does this by encouraging local debate and active citizenship through debate trainings and organizing (inter)national debate exchanges.