Opinion of youth in The Netherlands *in* 2020-2021

In 2021 we collected input from 25 youngsters with a variety of backgrounds and key youth organizations such as the Dutch National Youth Council. With the outcomes of previous consultations at hand, we conducted a series of sessions in order to present a visual summary of pressing topics regarding children's rights. Due to our focus on four specific topics, namely right to youth care, right to a safe place to live, right to privacy in the digital world and right to education and equal opportunities, we can provide an in-depth picture of what youth finds important today. But it doesn't stop there. The recommendations they make are based on their personal experiences and their keen insight into what is going on in society. They deserve a follow-up that is equally decisive.

➔ *This document was made possible by, among others, the Dutch National Youth Council and dozens of young people from the Netherlands.*

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Right to education and equal opportunities

Education must be available to all children and education should match the child's capacity. Children must be able to develop their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities as well as possible.

"With my disability, I do not have access to all secondary schools. For example, there is often no elevator available."

"Around me I notice that children with a migration background or another socio-economic status receive a lower school advice."

"There is little or no education offered in the institution where I live."

"I will only be allowed to go to school when I am in the next phase of my treatment. School is seen as a reward."

"I feel a lot of pressure to perform in school. I have a lot of stress because of all the exams."

"At school, no attention is paid towards mental health, while many children are unhappy because of COVID-19 or suffer from an eating disorder."

1

Right to youth care

Children have the right to be cared for, supervised and educated. A good youth care system is therefore very important.

"I don't exactly know what rights I have within youth care or how I can appeal to them."

"I need a sympathetic ear within my institution. I don't feel like I can speak freely".

"I've had twenty social workers in two years."

"More information about my rights should be provided. It would be nice if this was given by a young experienced expert."

2

Right to privacy in the digital world

Children are putting more and more personal information on the internet. It is for them not always clear who will see this personal information. The government must protect children against the unwanted or unintentional distribution of, for example, private images through internet or other media.

"The right to privacy goes beyond social media. At first I didn't realize that the supermarket app also stores a lot of my data."

"Information about your (right to) privacy is difficult to find. For example, the government website is a maze and not understandable for children."

"On the internet you can be completely slandered within a few days. For example you can be bullied or your nudes can be circulated."

3

Right to a safe place to live

Children are entitled to basic facilities in order to grow up safely and healthily. The right to a safe place to live is very important here. The responsibility for ensuring this rests primarily with parents, but the government must help them if necessary.

"I have lived in a crisis spot. Here I have felt very unsafe. For example, there used to be a schizophrenic boy who often threatened me with a knife."

"Due to a shortage of places, I had to live at home for a long time even though it was very unsafe."

"Everyone at my institution thinks that insecurity is being institutionalized."

"Rent for houses in the city is so high that my parents have little money for food and clothing".

"I lived in a place where boys convicted of transgressive behavior lived together with girls who have been victims of lover-boys."

4

Recommen-dations from youth in The Netherlands

in 2020-2021

Right to youth care

1 Look for a good match between young people, living concepts and social workers.

2 Provide young people with the opportunity to take control of their own process.

3 Keep assessing the quality of care on a regular basis and involve young people.

4 Provide young people with a social worker and limit changes between social workers.

5 Provide proper information on children's rights within youth care.

6 Ensure that the assistance provided is in line with different cultural backgrounds.

7 Limit the differences in youth care between municipalities.

2

Right to Education and Equal Opportunities.

1 More personalization in education is needed. Children have the right to receive education that matches their ability, even if extra guidance is sometimes required.

2 Many children suffer from pressure to perform in school. It is necessary to provide more attention to this problem and proper guidance.

3 Right now, the student's background often influences the opportunities the child receives. This must change.

4 Ensure that young people in youth care are encouraged to pursue education, as a degree provides young people with a long term perspective.

5 At school, more attention should be paid towards mental health.

1

Right to a safe *place* to live

1 Arrange an urgent procedure for young people who will be leaving youth care services.

2 Due to rising housing prices, many children currently live in houses that are too small and too expensive. As a result, tensions within the household rise and little money is left for other (fixed) costs. Therefore, provide affordable and sufficient housing. Provide sufficient crisis places for young people in vulnerable positions so that they do not have to wait unnecessarily long in an unsafe home. within youth care.

4

Right to privacy in the digital world

1 Provide information about (digital) privacy at school.

2 Make information about privacy on the Internet easier to find for young people.

3 Ensure that young people are being used as mediator in order to initiate conversations with pupils.

3