



Imagine the world is digital – and you can't get in!

Internet is a human right!

We, the undersigned, have been following the situation of children and adolescents in this country with concern. They were affected by the coronavirus restrictions from day one. Their schools, daycare centers, playgrounds, youth clubs, sports clubs and cultural institutions were closed – all the places where they could experience social life, self-determination and participation were suddenly no longer accessible. In this crisis, young people are more socially isolated than adults (with potentially drastic consequences for children's well-being) and their needs and interests are hardly heard in the current debate.

Educational injustices and existential threats are increasing

Under lockdown, youth (social) workers were quickly able to develop alternative digital programs. However, direct social contact – which is so important for young people and their mental health – is lacking.

Refugee children and adolescents in shared accommodation are particularly affected: space constraints, a lack of opportunities to find urgently needed privacy and a massive worsening of this situation under quarantine conditions are particularly challenging for this vulnerable group. In 2020, physical distancing does not need to mean social isolation. But that's exactly what happens for people without internet access.

Without access to the internet, there are no opportunities for children and adolescents living in shared accommodation to participate in digital lessons, exchanges and other programs. Without access to the internet, there is little or no support for homeschooling, because parents often lack the necessary language skills. Without access to the Internet, there are little to no opportunities to communicate with family and friends, including in the countries of origin.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child also applies in the crisis!

In the current period of homeschooling, shared accommodations are becoming educational institutions and it is not acceptable that children and young people are being systematically excluded from their right to education in times of purely digital teaching. The right to education enshrined in paragraph 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to everyone.

The UN Human Rights Council declared the internet to be a human right in 2016. In its resolution, it stated that the right to digital education should support and promote the general right to education. But when schools are closed, the right to digital education is the only available right, and if there is no internet connection available, educational inequities are willingly accepted.

School and education are considered to be a motor of integration, but in times of school closings, a lack of access to digital education means that the fuel is taken out of that motor.

Access to the Internet a basic requirement for successful integration, and not only in the current situation. For example, language courses from the Employment Agency and other institutions are



designed as online courses, many offers for tutoring are only available online and also the search for employment or housing and application processes are no longer possible without access to the internet.

Right to the Internet

The Federal Court of Justice (BGH) in Karlsruhe referred to having an internet connection as a fundamental part of life. A person only exists in the form of social relations. That is why a minimum level of participation in social, cultural and political life needs to be ensured. Considering the technical changes of the last 20 years, a minimum level of participation is only possible with internet access.

To preemptively respond to a possible criticism: This does not mean an iPhone for everyone.

A right to a specific device was not formulated in the BGH's ruling. But everyone – including refugees and welfare recipients – is entitled to a basic communication services and has a right to the internet. The Federal Minister of Economics Peter Altmaier has compared internet access with other fundamental rights. "Free access to the internet must be a fundamental human right that applies to all people worldwide", said the CDU politician. "Just as it is a fundamental right to have access to water, health care or education."¹

Internet as a prerequisite for other rights

Finally, internet access is a precondition for other children's and human rights, especially to make use of the rights to freedom of expression, information and assembly. Democratic life is increasingly taking place online, youth social workers try to stay in touch online and multilingual information on the crisis is distributed digitally. Without internet access, people cannot inform themselves, participate in the process and assert their democratically guaranteed rights to participation.

Act! Now!

Even if the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic appears to be under control, future school closures and lockdowns caused by new infections, especially in shared refugee accommodation, cannot be excluded. The risk of infection is particularly high there, as was shown in a study of Bielefeld University.² Furthermore, the lives of children and adolescents are becoming more and more digitalized.

We therefore call on the counties to act quickly and in an unbureaucratic way in order to provide WIFI in all shared accommodations.

¹ <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/netzpolitik-altmaier-freier-zugang-zum-internet-muss-menschenrecht-sein/25262432.html?ticket=ST-2042676-V69aXhKdfScvOjibI9cW-ap5>

² <https://pub.uni-bielefeld.de/record/2943665#fileDetails>



We call to the federal state of Brandenburg to include the access to WIFI in their minimum requirements for shared accommodation³⁴ and the associated financial support for the counties.

We demand that the Federal Government recognizes the fundamental right to the internet, and therefore also adjusts the Hartz IV rates in order to fulfill the principle of equal treatment before the law and guarantee the right to education for all children and young people.

Oranienburg, 10.06.2020

Kreisjugendring Oberhavel e.V.

Stadtjugendring Potsdam e.V.

Kreisjugendring Prignitz e.V.

Kreis- Kinder- und Jugendring Märkisch-Oderland e.V.

Kreis Kinder- und Jugendring Oder-Spree e.V.

Kreisjugendring Dahme-Spreewald e.V.

Landesjugendring Brandenburg e.V.

Arbeitskreis der Stadt- und Kreisjugendringe in Brandenburg

³ https://bravors.brandenburg.de/verordnungen/laufngdv_2016

⁴ https://bravors.brandenburg.de/br2/sixcms/media.php/68/GVBl_II_55_2016-Anlage-3.pdf