



What is U18?

U18 is the vote for all children and young people. Nine days before the “real” elections, all under 18s can cast their votes under only slightly altered conditions. The results will be analysed and published. U18 can be carried out within the frame of regional and national elections as well as in the context of European elections. All children and young people of all nationalities under the age of 18 can participate.

U18 started in 1996 in a polling station in Berlin and has now grown into one of the largest political education initiatives for children and young people in Germany. At the last U18-election, the 2017 parliamentary election, 219,918 children and young people participated nationwide.

Aim

Young people should be helped to understand politics, to identify differences in party and election manifestos and to scrutinise the promises made by politicians. In this way, children and young adults should learn how to recognise and formulate their own interests, how to find their own answers to political questions- and how to actively help shape their own environment.

Organisers and Supporters

The U18 initiative is organised and supported by the German Children’s Aid Organisation, the German Federal Youth Council, regional youth councils, many youth organisations and the Berlin U18 network. The PR and advertising agency United Communications has supported U18 for many years with a lot of voluntary engagement.

You can organise a U18 election too!

How does U18 work?

U18 is based on a simple and logical concept. We have summarised the procedure of a U18 project here:

PHASE 1 – PREPARATION

The participating organisations, such as polling stations and coordination centres, begin their activities well in advance of the U18 election. This time is the focus of the campaign because during this period, children and young people become interested in politics and are provided with knowledge about elections. Also, discussions with/between the young people take place which lead them to the decision of which party to support. This job must be done by the staff at the polling stations that are sought out by the children and young people.

There is a great range of preparation activities which can be designed in very imaginative ways- U18 allows plenty of room for your imagination! The way in which you engage with democracy, political parties and elections, in order to prepare for the U18 election, is left up to you.





PHASE 2 – IMPLEMENTATION

Nine days before the “real” elections (a Friday), the U18 polling stations are open for all voters. The polling stations put the election documents on display. In addition to this, a ballot box, a voting booth, a handful of biros and the multiplied ballot cards are needed. And then it can begin! The children and young people receive a ballot card for their constituency in the polling station of their choice. They then choose a voting booth, tick off their first and second votes, and then cast the ballot into a ballot box. The polling stations close the elections at 6 PM. The counting of the ballots ensues publicly through the young people themselves. The results are transmitted to the election headquarters and the final result is published. The results can be discussed with young people and representatives from politics and the press at different election events.

Live Election Coverage

At the parliamentary elections in 2009, 2013 and 2017 as well as at the election for the parliament of Berlin in 2011 and 2016, politicians answered questions in interviews with the young people. People were informed about U18, suspense was created through predictions and projections, and many examples of the commitment of young people were displayed. It became clear that a television or radio studio following the elections live increases awareness: both among the young people as well as in the media. Furthermore, by doing this, the children and young people learn media skills in a playful way.

PHASE 3 – THE FOLLOW-UP

U18 inspires young people to discuss politics with each other and with their caregivers. Due to the newly awakened interest of children and young people in politics and social involvement, there are new opportunities for pedagogical institutions to implement their task of “political education” through further projects. In order to aid and strengthen the multipliers in this task, this website offers didactic support. Different materials are available for download. These include books to teach methods of political education, explanation and reasoning training in the face of anti-democratic confrontation, and handouts for the encouragement of political and social involvement.

For questions about the European elections 2019:

U18 Europe Coordination Berlin
c/o Stiftung SPI; Drehscheibe Kinder- und Jugendpolitik Berlin
Karin Bremer, Katharina Wengenroth
Tel: (+49) (030) 49 300 194 / Email: u18-berlin@stiftung-spi.de

