



Youth Parliament

**A Model for Child Participation
in Policy Making**

2021 Project Summary



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Message from the Executive Director of the Israel National Council for the Child about the Youth Parliament

The Israel National Council for the Child (NCC) Youth Parliament was established out of a desire to respect and realize the right of children to express their views and participate in policy making on issues concerning their lives¹. The Youth Parliament is grounded in a principle stand and in the belief that this participation may have a positive and significant impact on the quality of the policy itself and on its ability to have a beneficial effect on the lives of children and youth in Israel.

The Youth Parliament was developed in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), mainly Article 12(1) of the Convention which establishes the right to be heard (broadly conceptualized as participation) - a general principle of the Convention. This principle is one of the main shifts in the perception of children's rights, and in relation to children's involvement in policy making, and is intended to achieve two purposes. The first, to strengthen the recognition of children as having rights and a voice, and to provide a space for them to express their views on matters affecting their life. The second, to achieve optimal decision and policy making based on the recognition that children are 'the best experts on their lives', and that their participation will contribute to suitable and relevant policy making. Systematic integration of the participation principle is currently lacking in Israel: there is no clear policy requiring that children be heard nor a consistent practice of providing children a voice.

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Thus, the aim of the Youth Parliament is to realize the right to be heard in the Convention, to lay the foundations for child participation in policy making and to provide a platform for a meaningful dialogue between children and policy makers in the spirit of children's rights.

Child participation in policy making is a new and developing field in the children's rights discourse, and we believe is of significant importance for the children themselves as well as for policy making that benefits children, at present and in the future. We believe not only that children in Israel - especially youth - have the right to participate in decision making processes and policy making on issues concerning their lives, but that genuine

¹ While the right to be heard is recognized for all children, participation in complex legislative and policy-making processes has been especially recognized in relation to adolescent children and/or youth, among others, in light of their evolving capacities (see UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), General Comment No. 20 (2016) on the Implementation of the Right of the Child during Adolescence', par. 2, 23-25, 46, 6 December 2016, CRC/C/GC/20). Therefore, while the booklet refers broadly to 'children', it should be noted that the NCC Youth Parliament participants are 15-17 years old

participation significantly contributes to the development and empowerment of children, strengthens democratic values in society and enables real social change. At the same time, the opportunity for policy makers to listen to children contributes to the development of legislation, policies and services responsive to their unique needs and better suited to their lives.

Legislation and practice aimed at ensuring child participation in decisions concerning their life have developed over the past two decades, albeit to a limited extent. **The Youth Parliament aims to take the realization of the right to participate one step further - from the personal and local sphere to the state public sphere.** The vision of the Youth Parliament is **to develop a national and sustainable participation model**, and to integrate it in a way which ensures that policy makers will involve children in decision making processes routinely, systematically and in a structured manner.

The NCC has included children in the 'Negev Conference For Children', a policy conference dedicated to policy matters pertaining to children and youth, for many years. Children participate in the conference as a matter of routine, present the session topic alongside their position and pose questions to the participating policy makers. To a certain extent the Youth Parliament is a mirror image of the conference, in that the majority of Youth Parliament participants are children while the participating (adult) policy makers are the minority. In the Youth Parliament the (adult) policy makers are the ones who present the topic while the children offer recommendations and propose initial solution plans.

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This year, “the COVID year”, was replete with challenges, among them the significant ramifications of the COVID-19 crisis on children and youth, as well as on the participation process itself which, as required, shifted from on-site to online implementation.

One of the significant continuing activities of the Youth Parliament this year was consultation with representatives of the Prime Minister’s Office “Inter-Sector Roundtable for Children and Youth during the COVID-19”.

The important recommendations of the Youth Parliament participants were presented, inter alia, to the Knesset Children's Rights Committee and to the Minister of Education, in the aim of impacting the advancement of a national program to contend with the far-reaching ramifications of the COVID-19 crisis on children.

Youth participation in policy making is a process. This process is not bereft of difficulties and challenges, to the contrary. In fact, academic literature on the topic is filled with descriptions of difficulties, challenges and warnings lest children's participation will merely be ‘symbolic’ or tokenistic. The challenges have to do with supposedly technical (e.g., timetables and availability of children compared to adults) as well as material aspects (positions and perceptions regarding the seriousness and weight that should be attached to children's views and recommendations). We made an effort to address all the challenges, and no doubt we still have a long way to go before the vision of the model we initiated is realized.

We could not have achieved what we did without true partners to the idea and to its implementation, including the partnering government offices and local government over the years of the Youth's Parliament’s activity: the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry



of Justice, Privacy Protection Authority, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, Ministry of Immigration and Absorption, Child Online Protection Bureau, Children and Youth Complaints Commission for Out-of-Home Placement, Be'er Sheva Municipality, Rahat Municipality, New Dawn Association, schools, and first and foremost – the children themselves and their teachers who rose to the challenge and demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm, and did not shy away from the difficulties.

Special thanks and appreciation to the NCC staff, that was a partner to turning the idea into reality, studied the academic literature on the topic, initiated contact with experts in Israel and abroad, designed a training program, recruited partners, collected the process outputs, and managed the program from A to Z together with our partners.

Special thanks to Ms. Shoshana Langerman and her family who assisted in the establishment stages of the project and in doing so commemorated the worldview of the late Aharon Langerman, may his memory be a blessing. Aharon Langerman was among the founders of the NCC and its senior managers, and as early as the 1980s believed in the participation of the public to which a policy will apply, including children and youth, in policy formulation and setting.

At the Israel National Council for the Child we will continue to develop the Youth Parliament program in 2022, in the aim of realizing the principle of 'nothing about us – without us', in the hope that ultimately the Youth Parliament will not only be a national program, but also an accepted worldview and the modus operandi in policy making processes.

Adv. Vered Windman

2021 Youth Parliament – A Bird's Eye View and a Forward Looking View

The Youth Parliament this year, similar to previous years, introduced us to curious and opinionated children, driven by enthusiasm and passion to express their views and impact the issues that concern their lives. Our partners from the government ministries, civil society and professional experts demonstrated seriousness and interest in listening to the children and recognized the value and importance of what they have to say for policy making that is beneficial and best fits children and youth in Israel. However, contrary to previous years, the 2021 Youth Parliament took place in the height of the COVID-19 crisis, was conducted online and presented opportunities, challenges and new insights.

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First, owing to the COVID-19 crisis the preparations for the Youth Parliament were accompanied by concerns and uncertainty. At the same time, the right of children to participate in discussions on policy issues, and the value of participation, even more so in crisis and emergency situations, was unequivocal. Thus, we set out while the schools were physically closed and the students were at home. We met the children during difficult times, but they nonetheless mobilized, demonstrated flexibility and found it important to participate and to express their views in an online format as well. There was a strong desire to meet face-to-face, however this did not impede the genuine discourse or the sharing of their experiences and insights in the various consultation processes.

The participants also indicated that the online platform enabled, at least some of them, to feel more comfortable and to actively participate and express their views, noting that the consultation processes should be conducted in a hybrid model that combines on-site and online sessions. Furthermore, in the online model we combined interactive tools and surveys which enabled the participants to express their views and offer recommendations anonymously and in writing, thus increasing the sharing level and modes. We must take these insights into consideration when we return to 'routine times', and in planning the Youth Parliament model, as well as other general consultation and participation processes in the coming years.

Second, one of the unique and important aspects of the Youth Parliament is the inclusion of children from Be'er Sheva and Rahat in the discussions on policy matters pertaining to children and youth in Israel. This year for the first time, owing to the Youth Parliament's online platform, all the sessions included professional online written translation into Arabic which helped the Arabic-Speaking participants better understand the discussion and take part in the deliberations. Furthermore, the online discussion enabled the participants, who wanted to do so, to ask questions and write in Arabic when using the interactive tools



and answering the surveys². The impact of the written simultaneous translation also came up in the feedback provided by the participants from Rahat, who emphasized that they felt a sense of belonging to the group and to the discussion to a large extent and were comfortable expressing their views.

Third, the Youth Parliament continues to create numerous ripple effects which we intend to encourage and promote. Thus, participants noted that participation in the Youth Parliament enabled them to see how and in which ways they can create change and make an impact. As a result, one of the participants decided to promote the establishment of a student council in his school, and to achieve this he was assisted by an expert who participated in one of the Youth Parliament sessions. Moreover, the Youth Parliament led to important continuing projects, among them:

- Youth Parliament participants, together with representatives of Israel's National Student Council, took part in the Inter-Sector Roundtable for Children and Youth during COVID-19 (under the Prime Minister's Office). The outcomes of this meeting were presented to the Minister of Education, Ministry of Education senior officials and to the Knesset Education Committee, and the NCC continues to promote and present them in the appropriate forums.
- Representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services initiated additional consultation processes with the Youth Parliament participants regarding various services and in tailoring responses for children and youth during emergency and crisis periods.
- Youth Parliament representatives participated and expressed their views in a [news segment](#) regarding the plan for the return to school under COVID-19.

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Thus, the Youth Parliament serves as a platform for developing and driving processes and continued initiatives for consulting with children on policy issues pertaining to their lives, and we intend to continue to expand this undertaking in the coming years.

We hope that this booklet will contribute to advancing the recognition of the right, the importance and the value of children and youth participation in formulating policy on issues concerning their lives. We are confident that it will enable the readers to appreciate the participants' varied insights and recommendations which reflect their experiences and views – both similar and different. The words of the children speak for themselves, and can serve as a compass for us in promoting policy beneficial for children and youth in Israel.

Daniella Zlotnik Raz

**Adv., Deputy Legal Counsel and
Head of Legal Research and Policy**

Adi Naamat

**Adv., Head of Children and
Youth Participation**

² To clarify, along with the written simultaneous translation to Arabic there was also simultaneous spoken translation in cases in which it was required (as was the case in the Youth Parliament sessions in previous years), such that the words of the participants who preferred to express themselves in Arabic were immediately translated into Hebrew, fostering a shared discourse among all group participants

Israel National Council for the Child Youth Parliament

Youth Parliament Project

The Israel National Council for the Child (NCC) has operated the **Youth Parliament** since 2018: an innovative and unique program aimed at children and youth participation in decision and policy making processes concerning their lives.

The Youth Parliament aims to drive in-depth changes in legislative and policy making processes in Israel, recognizing the right of children – from diverse population groups – to participate, express their views and impact issues concerning their life, all in the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Youth Parliament has been held in the Negev region since its launch in 2018. Every year its partners include more than 100 children - ages 15-17 years old - from the Be'er Sheva and Rahat area which constitute a microcosm of sorts of Israeli society. Additional partners to the Youth Parliament are various government ministries, agencies, and civil society organizations whose work pertains to the lives of children and youth in Israel. As such, the Youth Parliament serves as a significant platform for children to have their voice heard and for a significant dialogue between them, government ministries and senior policy makers.





Youth Parliament Goals

- Realize the right of children in Israel to participate and to express their voice and their views on policy issues concerning their lives through a youth – government – civil society dialogue, in the spirit of Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Ensure appropriate weight is given to the experiences, insights and recommendations of children in policy making on issues concerning their lives, including legislation procedures, formulating national programs and plans, developing mechanisms and tools, and in monitoring and evaluating implementation of the policy.
- Develop the Youth Parliament as a sustainable model for children's participation in policy making and promote its adoption and implementation by government offices, ministries and State agencies when they set policies pertaining to children and youth.
- Introduce policy makers as well as civil society organizations and academia to the positions and views of children, and deepen their familiarity with the world of children and youth, their needs and aspirations on issues pertaining to their lives.
- Inform policy makers about the importance of including children in policy making, principles for meaningful participation and the best way to communicate with children and youth.
- Train children about their right to participate in policy making in Israel in the spirit of the Convention , thereby developing their skills and providing them with tools for formulating and presenting their views on policy issues concerning their lives.

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How the Youth Parliament Operates?

The Youth Parliament **consultation topics** are selected every activity year in cooperation with representatives of governmental ministries, agencies and civil society organizations involved in the Youth Parliament³. The selected topics must be concrete and current issues concerning the lives of children and youth in Israel, and that hearing their voices and positions can make an impact in their regard (e.g., prior to advancing legislation, developing policy and programs, formulating procedures, etc.).

To formulate their position and have their voices heard on the consultation topics the Youth Parliament conducts several meetings and activities, with the facilitation and guidance of the NCC. A highlight of the activity year is the meeting in which the children meet with representatives of governmental ministries, agencies and senior policy makers, relevant

³ Government agencies that were involved in the Youth Parliament program (2018-2021): Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services and the Children and Youth Complaints Commission for Out-of-Home Placement; Ministry of Justice and the Privacy Protection Authority; Ministry of Education; Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Immigration and Absorption and Ministry of Public Security.

civil society organizations and academia, to consult and discuss together before the children finalize the formulation of their positions and recommendations on the consultation topic ('summit meeting').

To enable significant children participation and impact on decision and policy making processes – the Youth Parliament framework and the various program activities and meetings include three main components:

1. **Learning:** the children receive information and guidance about the consultation topic, legislation procedures, policy making and how the Knesset operates. This training is conducted in an informal atmosphere by NCC staff and various experts.
2. **Consultation and dialogue:** the children meet with representatives of government ministries, agencies and experts regarding the consultation topic. They have an opportunity to ask questions, receive information and consult with the representatives before formulating their position on the consultation topic, as well as to raise ideas and offer relevant actionable recommendations to best ensure the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and youth in Israel. Furthermore, the government representatives and experts are afforded an opportunity to conduct a direct dialogue with the participating children.
3. **Formulating a position on the consultation topic:** after receiving information and conducting the consultation in the framework of the summit meeting, the children formulate their position and insights on the consultation topic and propose ideas and recommendations for continued action.





2021 Youth Parliament

Youth Parliament in the Shadow of the COVID-19 Crisis

The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) had a deep impact on the health, work world, social life and daily routine throughout the world, including Israel. Children and youth were exposed to the wide ranging negative ramifications of the COVID-19 crisis, and the various guidelines and restrictions aimed at curbing the outbreak of the virus in Israel especially affected them as they faced a new and unfamiliar reality. This reality created uncertainty, concerns and numerous difficulties, in particular the closing of schools and the transition to distance learning. Moreover, the social distance restrictions disrupted the daily routine of children and youth, their studies and social life. This state of affairs caused emotional and social harm to many children and youth and increased feelings of stress, anxiety and loneliness.

[\[For further information about the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on children and youth in Israel see, Israel National Council for the Child, 'Israeli Youth Talk About the COVID-19 Crisis: Advice, Thoughts and Coping in a Time of Emergency and the New Routine', 2020.\]](#)

At the NCC we maintain that, **particularly in times of crisis and emergency, there is great value to participation, hearing and conducting consultation processes** with children. Therefore, even at the height of the COVID-19 crisis the Youth Parliament continued all its activities. In light of the restrictions, and for the first time, the Youth Parliament sessions were moved online. As a result, the content, means of training and consultations were tailored to fit the digital platform, while integrating various interactive tools and enabling participants to also express their views anonymously (e.g., real time surveys). A taste of the digital outputs will be included in this summary booklet.

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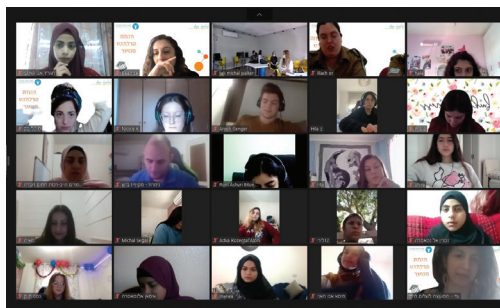
"I felt that I am a woman with status and of significance owing to the fact that I am at such a meeting. The mere fact that we are asked questions, that we answer these questions, and that they wait for our answers – this gives us something that makes us very happy [...] that we can stand in front of respected people who are experts in their field and tell them what we think, give them answers, that is very significant".

(Youth Parliament participant from Rahat, 2021).

"Over the past months I participated in Youth Parliament meetings and we spoke about the need and significance of the children's and youth's voice ...We, Israeli youth, want to take an active part in decisions as an equal entity, because we make up a large share of the State's population and we have new ideas in the spirit of progress and innovation on the appropriate issues.

After Knesset members were included in some of the sessions, I personally, as well my friends to the Youth Parliament, left feeling that there is indeed an interest in listening to youth..."

(Youth Parliament participant from Be'er Sheva, 2021)



Video clip from a consultation session of the inter-sector sub-roundtable at the Prime Minister's Office with children regarding the COVID-19 impacts and the needed responses

Link to the clip:
<https://youtu.be/DrRGJIHyfHw>



Including Children's Positions and Insights in a Comprehensive Report about Children's rights in Israel

The 2021 Youth Parliament was an integral part of the NCC's plan to publish a comprehensive and innovative report presenting the main issues, challenges and future steps in all matters relating to the implementation of children's rights in Israel.

The report's uniqueness lies in the combination of (a) An examination of the main issues pertaining to the implementation of children's rights in Israel with respect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); (b) Presenting the current situation in Israel, while examining the law and its implementation in the field; (c) Consultation with representatives of civil society organizations relevant to the report topics; and (d) Consultation with children and providing them with a space to be heard and impact the report's topics and recommendations (through the Youth Parliament). In this regard the consultation topics selected for the 2021 Youth Parliament were derived from the core issues of the report. The children's positions and recommendations presented in this booklet will also be included in the report chapters, and will affect the recommendations that will be presented.

The future report will be published at the beginning of 2022 in both Hebrew and English.



Consultation Topics and the Youth Parliament Process

Consultation Topics

Child Participation in Policy Making and Principles for Developing a Participatory Mechanism for Children

Equality in Education and the Attendant Effects of the COVID-19 Crisis

Children's Right to Privacy in the Digital World

Detection and Identification of Children in Distress and Crisis Situations, and Children seeking out help in Emergency and Routine Times

This year, similar to previous years, the 2021 Youth Parliament was the result of NCC efforts in collaboration with the Be'er Sheva and Rahat municipalities and 'A New Dawn' association. The Parliament was comprised of more than 100 children ages 15-17 –from diverse population groups – including Jews and Bedouins, secular and religious, boys and girls, new immigrants and Israeli-born. It should be noted that simultaneous translation into Arabic was provided in all consultation processes which included the participation of Arabic speaking children.

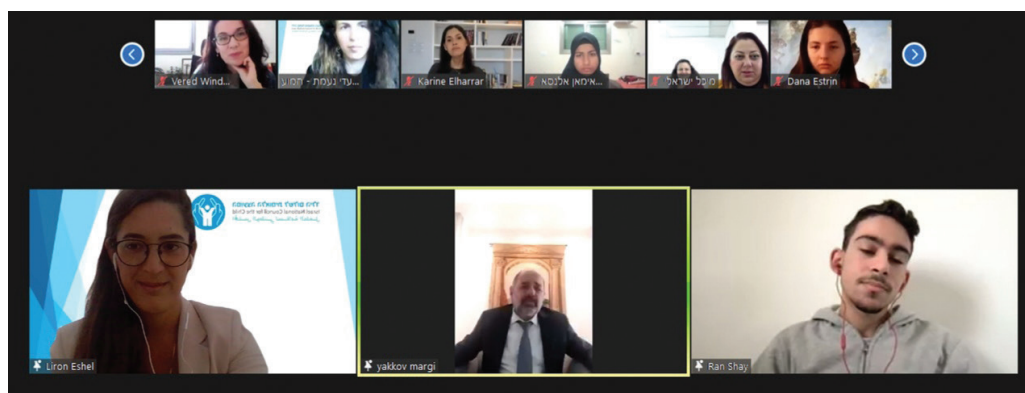
During the program the participants received accompaniment, training and guidance from the NCC staff, and as part of the consultation process they met for a 'summit meeting' with senior policy makers and experts on the consultation topics.

In addition to the training and consultation sessions, this year the Youth Parliament included the participants' experiential and learning online tour of the Knesset. The participants also met for a discussion with MK Karin Elharrar and MK Yaakov Margi in an online session, in which the Knesset members shared their work for children's rights, and how children and youth can be consulted and included in policy making and in the Knesset's activity.

This meeting was inspirational and aroused the interest of the Youth Parliament's participants. In their words:

"This meeting contributed to all those present, in encouraging the involvement of children in decision making. During the meeting I asked MK Margi how he thinks representatives of the public can involve children in decisions, and at the same time how awareness of the issue can be raised among children. I was very impressed by the fact that MK Margi and MK Elharrar support including the views of children and youth and have interesting ideas regarding implementation. For example, in making the Knesset committees accessible to various children and youth organizations, as well as online meetings and conferences in which children will be included and also raising awareness among children." (Youth Parliament participant, Be'er Sheva).

"I would like to say that the meeting today was really fun! It was especially enjoyable to hear the Knesset members, I don't think that in every place we would be able to share like this with Knesset members and ask them questions, and this was an amazing opportunity. I hope for more meetings like that". (Youth Parliament participant, Be'er Sheva)





2021 Youth Parliament Booklet

In **this summary booklet** we collected and organized the insights and recommendations from the various consultation procedures. The booklet is based on summaries written by NCC staff members, of the Youth Parliament sessions and the 'summit meetings' with experts, as well as on the online outputs collected from the interactive tools.

The summary booklet was written in collaboration with the Youth Parliament participants, and the booklet draft was sent to the participants for their reactions, comments and changes. Thus – the summary booklet faithfully expresses the voice, position and recommendations of the Youth Parliament participants, in the aim of contributing and helping policy makers formulate, develop and implement policy on the topics discussed in the Youth Parliament framework.

"I felt that my opinion carries weight, and that I provided my perspective ..This helped the understanding of how I and other children think ..I'm glad to have received this opportunity!"

(participant in the Youth Parliament 'summit meeting', 2021)

2021 Youth Parliament - who we are in numbers:

- **2021 - the fourth year of the Youth Parliament project;**
- **More than 100 youth participants, from 13 schools in Be'er Sheva and Rahat;**
- **More than 25 experts and policy makers who are partners to the consultation meetings, from 4 government offices and more than 10 civil society organizations.**
- **3 concentrated training and guidance sessions for the youth participants, including an online tour of the Knesset.**

Consultation Procedure 1:

Youth Discuss Child Participation in Policy Making and Principles for Developing a Participatory Mechanism for Children

About children and youth participation in policy making

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The right to participation of children and youth is a new and groundbreaking right in the child rights discourse, anchored in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Article states that parties shall assure a child capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, and that the views of the child shall be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. The Convention states that the right to participation is one of the four fundamental principles of the Convention and that this is an individual and group right. In other words, children have the right to express their view in specific procedures affecting them, as well as collectively on matters relevant to a specific group of children or to all children. Furthermore, the Convention states that the State must ensure that children will be involved in the development, implementation and oversight of legislation, policy, services and programs that concern their life, and this at the local, regional, national and international level.

Participation of children in policy making aims to fulfill two main purposes. The first, to strengthen the recognition of children as having rights and a voice, and to give them a place to express their views on matters concerning their life. The second, to drive policy making that is beneficial, suitable and relevant, grounded in the recognition that children are 'the best experts in their own lives'. Israel has not yet systematically implemented the child's right to be heard and express their views, particularly in all matters pertaining to the collective participation of children, and the consistent practice of giving children a voice in shaping their private and community life is lacking.

Summary of the Consultation Procedure

The discussion in the Youth Parliament presented the positions, views and recommendations of the youth on the matter of the participation of children and youth in shaping policy in



Israel. The discussion included an examination of the main foundations of this issue, among them – principles of a children participation mechanism in policy making and principles for meaningful⁴ participation, as well as ways to encourage children – from diverse population groups – to be involved in and express their views on policy matters concerning their life.

As part of the training the participants learned, among other things, about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 12 that anchors the right of participation, as well as about participation levels and modes of youth participation. The youth participants were also exposed to a range of questions pertaining to policy making, its stages, and the legal situation in Israel regarding children and youth participation. As part of the procedure the participants met with experts in this field for a direct dialogue ('summit meeting') in which they discussed the youth insights, views and recommendations on the procedure topic.

Main Insights, Positions and Viewpoints

The Youth Parliament youth who participated in the consultation procedure, including the 'summit meeting' with the experts, emphasized that the right of participation is highly vital and that its implementation is **essential for youth** on a wide range of issues. According to the participants, not hearing the unique point of view of youth in policy making was particularly conspicuous **during the COVID-19 crisis period**, during which the youth voice was hardly heard despite the numerous decisions that were made which pertained to them and that drastically impacted their life. In their opinion it should be established that children and youth will be heard through any possible medium, even if only online.

At the outset of the procedure the youth participants emphasized that in order to ensure the participation of children and youth in policy making, **additional rights must be ensured**, such as freedom of expression, freedom of thought and the right to protection (e.g., protection against violence and threats). The participants also noted the need for participation **at all levels**, from the local-community (school) through the regional, national and international level. In this regard, some of the participants viewed participation at the local-community level as more important for youth, and noted that in their opinion activity at this level is more 'practical' and enables more direct and rapid impact in the field. On the other hand, other participants thought that the international and national arenas are particularly important, as in their framework wide reaching and comprehensive change can be achieved.

⁴ In this framework the term 'mechanism' shall refer to a binding legal arrangement, whether through legislation or a procedure that regulates the issue of the participation of youth in policy making, including with respect to implementation aspects such as the manner of inclusion, the weight given to views that were accepted, the entity responsible for the inclusion, etc. The term 'youth participation procedure' shall refer to a procedure, one-time or multiple-time, physical or online, intended to enable the views of youth to be heard on a certain issue, in advance of and/or as part of a decision making procedure on policy matters and its implementation. In this regard, 'significant participation' shall refer to principles, practices and various aspects required for the youth participation procedure, including its various stages, such that it will be a quality and effective procedure with actual impact.

“Youth are a population bereft of rights. A population bereft of rights will not be a population that cooperates or creates a future or a good society”.

(Youth Parliament participant in the consultation procedure).

Among the youth participants there was broad agreement regarding the importance of **establishing an orderly mechanism** for youth participation in policy making at the national level. In this respect the participants indicated the importance of maintaining **inclusive and diverse** participation of all population groups, as well as hearing and consulting with youth on **any issue concerning their life**, particularly issues that have a direct bearing on their life, such as education, healthy sexuality and the digital world. In this regard, some of the participants maintained that it is important to have a ‘bold vision’ and a long-term stage-based plan for youth participation at the national level. Thus, the initial focus will be on implementing participation procedures with respect to policy matters with which children and youth have a high affinity, and after these are firmly established, youth participation and involvement should be expanded to general civic issues concerning their life (such as urban planning). Furthermore, the participants noted that **the main motivating factor for children and youth participation** is the recognition that their personal voice can make an impact, help others and create change, and this alongside the opportunity for personal development, advancement and learning. Moreover, most participants noted that their degree of affinity to the consultation topic (a topic that concerns them personally and is relevant to their life) serves as a motivating factor to participate - at least initially.

Throughout the process there was widespread agreement among the participants that it is not enough to promise ‘participation’, and that meaningful participation must be ensured, including the ability to impact, and this so that children and youth will want to participate in the procedure, will invest and persist in their participation. In this regard the participants indicated that they identified several internal and exterior participation barriers, among them: insecurity; stage fright; a feeling that adults do not consider the opinions of youth to be important; lack of information and absence of an orderly space and mechanism for expressing their views. The participants emphasized that there is a need to recognize the various barriers in order to act to reduce their impact (e.g., by providing information that is accessible to children and youth, conducting training, etc.), and that as a consequence will increase the effectiveness of the procedures for all participants.

Youth Recommendations:

As part of the consultation and discussion procedure with the experts, the Youth Parliament participants offered several recommendations regarding children and youth participation in policy making:

- **Develop a mechanism to establish youth participation and consultation procedures at the national level**

There was broad agreement among the youth participants regarding the importance of establishing the participation of youth as part of the activities of relevant government ministries and agencies that will be both binding and orderly, while allowing for



flexibility owing to changing needs. The participants noted a series of issues that should be addressed in formulating the mechanism for youth participation in policy making, among them: (1) Address the formulation of participation procedures and various modes of participation (physical, online, oral, written, open, anonymous); (2) Ensure that the participation procedure will not be representative, but rather open to all youth according to the consultation topic; (3) Recognize an 'open list' of topics relevant for participation and establish the participation requirement on topics of particular pertinence to children and youth; (4) Means of reaching and 'recruiting' participants for the procedure; (5) How to consider and assign weight to the views presented as part of the procedure. In this respect, in procedures directly pertaining to certain children and youth population groups (e.g., children in boarding schools, children from a minority group, etc.) greater weight shall be given to the views of the relevant participating group; (6) Set expectations and timetables in advance.

- **Develop a set of principles to foster meaningful participation of children and youth in the participation procedures**

The youth participants suggested formulating a set of principles for meaningful participation from the perspective of the participating youth and its dissemination to the relevant entities in this field. The participants proposed several principles in this regard, among them: (a) Ensure a friendly and pleasant atmosphere while including meetings in a professional-office setting (e.g., government offices, Knesset, etc.); (b) Conduct meetings in small groups so as to allow for in-depth dialogue and discourse; (c) Transparency in all matters pertaining to the structure of the participation procedure, its purpose and possible outcomes; (d) Continuity and establishing a genuine partnership that is not only limited to the specific procedure topic.

- **Train children and youth regarding the participation procedure**

Most youth participants noted that youth do not have sufficient tools for participation, and that dedicated training should therefore be developed for them. The training should be both theoretical and practical, providing knowledge and developing the skills needed for participation. The participants suggested addressing the following topics in the training: expressing oneself and conveying messages; promoting policy in Israel; how to reach out to relevant entities in this field; and skills for examining the reliability of information.

The participants also maintained that dedicated training should be conducted prior to every specific consultation procedure regarding the participation topic. This training will provide objective and relevant knowledge and will be tailored to the type of participation and its characteristics (e.g., procedure duration, procedure topic, outputs, etc.).

- **Provide training to policy makers regarding participation procedures**

The youth participants underscored the need to provide training for the experts before they conduct participation procedures with children and youth, in the aim of contributing to the quality of the procedure and avoiding situations and conduct which may impair the participation procedure. The youth maintained that this training should address, among other things, children and youth right to participation; conducting a dialogue with children and youth; and emphases for meaningful participation.

- **Develop ‘success’ metrics for participation procedures**

The youth participants noted the need to develop feedback and oversight mechanisms for participation procedures and to define metrics for measuring ‘success’ from the perspective of the participating youth. They indicated that the success metrics should address, among other things: (a) the actual impact of youth on the issue at hand and the steps taken as a result of the procedure. They noted that their point of view does not have to be accepted as is, but that it is important to demonstrate that it was given serious consideration, and that there were at least ‘small successes’ or initial steps taken on the issue; (b) the learning experience, self-development and enjoyment from the participation experience; (c) the extent to which the procedure can be ‘continuous’, such that it will enable genuine partnership and continued action also after completion of the specific procedure; (d) retention of the participating youth throughout the procedure (e.g., the number of participants that dropped out of the procedure); and (e) the extent to which the participation procedure will enable the participating youth to initiate and drive action on the topic, while providing the tools and knowledge needed to realize this goal.

- **Design a long-term stage-based plan for youth participation in policy making**

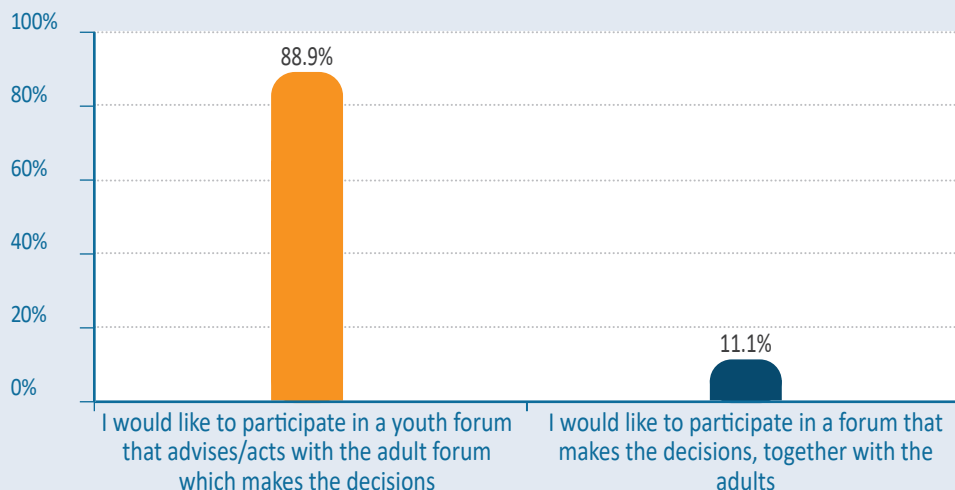
As indicated, some of the youth participants maintained that full implementation of the right to participation is a long process. Accordingly, it is important to promote a ‘bold vision’ and to develop a long-term stage-based plan for youth participation. Thus, in the initial stages the efforts and resources will mainly be devoted to promoting children and youth participation on specific ‘core’ issues directly and significantly concerning their life (e.g., education, the digital world, healthy sexuality, etc.). Going forward, following full and optimal integration and implementation of youth participation on these issues, their participation will be expanded to other and more general topics pertaining to their life.

- **Raise awareness regarding the right of participation in a manner that it is accessible to children and youth**

The youth participants noted that youth are not sufficiently aware of the right to participation, and therefore underscored the importance of disseminating information accessible to children and youth regarding this right. They recommended extensive publication of information about the right to participation as well as the participation and consultation procedures on various media channels and in a range of modes tailored to children and youth.

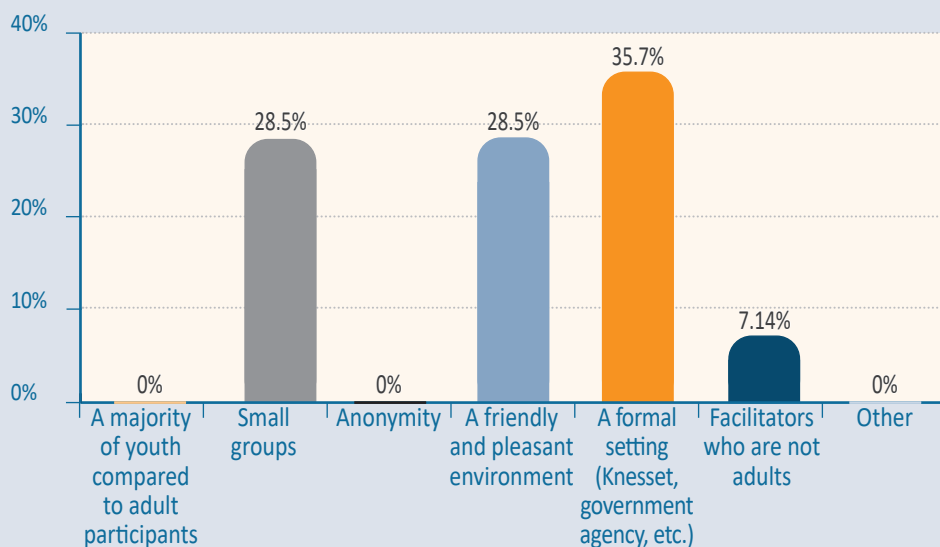


How would you prefer to participate in decision making procedures?



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What is important to you regarding the participation mechanism that will ensure your participation?



A taste of the ‘summit meeting’ with the experts

The experts were interested in the insights and recommendations of the Youth Parliament participants. They recognized the importance of developing a binding participation mechanism for government ministries, as this is a right and not a matter of charity, and humility is called for on the part of the adults when they come to discuss issues concerning the life of children and youth. Some of the experts noted the complexity of children and youth participation on every topic since, as they see it, there are topics in which their participation may create unwanted emotional ramifications for the children and youth. Several experts also stressed the importance of understanding that measures to establish an orderly participation mechanism are gradual and take time. The experts agreed that it is particularly important to reach youth whose voices are not heard as much - for example youth offenders or youth with disabilities. Furthermore, some of the experts encouraged the participating youth to express their voice and not wait for the adults. The youth partially agreed with this statement, noting that there are topics with which they are not familiar, or which they know are on the agenda of government ministries, and that it is the responsibility of the policy makers to reach out to them, consult with them and involve them in these matters.

An open question one expert asked the Youth Parliament participants:

What do you think is preferable, a participation mechanism in which children are part of the relevant committee or forum, in other words of the entity that makes the decisions and that is comprised mainly of adults, or a separate dedicated forum for children and youth?

“Youth must sit around the table alongside the adults”

Most of the participants thought that there should be a joint committee that will include children and youth, even if there are difficulties and opposition to their viewpoint. If they are part of the mechanism then this constitutes real participation and not just ‘checking it off’. The participants underscored the importance of training that will provide knowledge and an understanding of the procedure, before their participation in a joint forum. According to the youth, **“the adults should not shy away from and be concerned about sitting with youth in one group. The more you learn and gain experience – this brings with it the ability.”**

The youth who participated in the consultation process in the framework of the Youth Parliament: Madelaine Abu Farhan, Nur Alkrinawi, Nur Abu Farhan, Hila Lugasi, Roni Ashuri-Biton, Michal Sarodi, Orel Ben Naim, Yuval Alaluf, Shaked Haberman, Sonia Bolsonovsky, Istur Bazov, Elior Cohen, Shilo Asulin, Asaf Shukrun, Arie Genger, Kassem Tayeb, Yonatan Chernov, Hila Abekasis, Lian Amkias, Shira Vaknin, Andrey Serbryakov, Rita Yarmolinsky.



Participating experts: **Tova Ben-Ari**, Chief Supervisor for Implementation of the Students Rights Law, Ministry of Education; **Yuval Shkedi**, Public Participation Referent, Prime Minister's Office; **Zehava Harel**, Head of the Education Administration, Be'er Sheva Municipality; **Yifat Raveh**, Adv., Head of Cluster (Criminal Procedure and Evidence), Consultation and Legislation Division, Ministry of Justice; **Dr. Tamar Morag**, Chairperson, Public Committee Examining Treatment and Procedures regarding At-Risk Children according to the Youth Law (Care and Supervision).

Consultation Procedure 2:

Youth Discuss Equality in Education and the Attendant Effects of the COVID-19 Crisis

About Equality in Education

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The right to education and the right to equality in education were recognized as having constitutional status in Israel. The right to equality in education applies to all the education systems and schools, official and unofficial, and the State has the authority to take action against a discriminatory educational institution. In this regard the Students Rights Law (5761-2000) states that a local government, educational institution or individual acting on their behalf are prohibited from discriminating against students in any matter related to the registration, admission or expulsion from the educational institution; regarding the rights and duties of the students, including disciplinary measures and maintaining separate classes in the same educational institution.

However, in practice there are significant gaps between the different educational streams in Israel that are reflected in various areas, inter alia, with respect to: education budgeting⁵; dropout rates from education frameworks (e.g., there is a higher dropout rate in Arab education compared to Hebrew education, higher dropout rates in localities with a Jewish ultra-Orthodox and with an Arab population, etc.); gaps in eligibility⁶ for a matriculation certificate between various localities⁷; gaps in admission and study rates in higher education institutions⁸.

Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis significantly disrupted the education routine, exacerbated already existing educational gaps and increased inequality in education accessibility and

⁵ See for example, Ministry of Education – Economy and Budget Administration (2020) ‘Main Findings of the System Reflecting the Education Budgets – 2019’. <https://meyda.education.gov.il/files/MinhalCalcala/shkifut99.pdf>

⁶ Israel National Council for the Child (2020), ‘Children in Israel: Statistical Yearbook’, pp. 143-157.

⁷ Israel National Council for the Child (2020), ‘Children in Israel: Statistical Yearbook’, pp. 158-183.

⁸ Israel National Council for the Child (2020), ‘Children in Israel: Statistical Yearbook’, pp. 158-180; See for example the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2021), ‘File of Local Authorities in Israel – 2019’.



quality. The transition to distance learning created a digital gap between students with respect to end-user devices and internet connection, as well as technical assistance and support of parents or other entities as part of distance learning. Thus, for example, data show that the percentage of students in Arabic speaking schools who did not participate regularly in distance learning was double that of students in Hebrew speaking schools (41.4% compared to 22.2%); More barriers to optimal distance learning in Arabic speaking schools were reported, especially regarding access to end-user devices and internet connection; and the share of students in the Arab and the Jewish ultra-Orthodox school systems without a computer is particularly high compared to the percentage in the Jewish non-Orthodox education system⁹. This state of affairs is not compatible with the right to equality in education and requires comprehensive treatment and the development of suitable measures in order to narrow the gaps and increase equal opportunity in education in Israel, in routine and emergency times.

Summary of Consultation Procedure

The discussion in the Youth Parliament group focused on equal opportunity in education from the youth perspective, deriving from their experiences and experience and that of their peers. The participating youth presented their views, and proposed cross-sectoral and applicable recommendations on this issue. Specifically, the participants focused on the importance of the right to equality with respect to education, to existing gaps in Israel in this area, and to the impact of emergency situations and times of crisis on equality in education. In this regard, the participants focused on the example of the COVID-19 crisis, on the reality of distance learning and the digital gap, and on their ramifications for access to equal and quality education to all students in Israel. As part of the training the participants learned, inter alia, about the right to education as reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the relevant terms and definitions in this area, the relationship between education and equality and about various statutes in Israel pertaining to equality in education. As part of the procedure the participants met with experts in this field for a direct dialogue ('summit meeting') in which they discussed the youth insights, views and recommendations on the procedure topic.

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Main Insights, Positions and Viewpoints

The youth who participated in the consultation procedure, including the 'summit meeting' with the experts, were of the opinion that equality is an important value in Israeli society, and very significant for children and youth. Their position was that **the issues that must be urgently addressed in order to ensure equality in education are:** gaps between center and periphery; gender discrimination in school; discrimination and abusive relations between students, and discrimination pertaining to specific or vulnerable groups in society (e.g.,

⁹ See Israel National Council for the Child, 'Children in Israel: Statistical Yearbook: Data from the Corona Crisis', 2020, data compiled from the Statistical Yearbook, see Israel National Council for the Child website.

based on religion, language, etc.). There was also broad agreement among the participants that this issue directly pertains to children and youth, requires **a system wide perspective that takes into consideration their perspective** and that is attentive to their experience and experiences on this topic. They felt that the need to include youth was all the more evident in the COVID-19 period during which drastic decisions were made without the voice of children and youth being heard or sufficiently considered.

A large part of the consultation procedure was devoted to the impact of COVID-19 on education equality issues. The participants noted that the COVID-19 period impeded the right to education, and that the physical closing of school and the transition to distance learning brought to the **fore learning and emotional difficulties**, including a great sense of loneliness. They indicated that in the absence of 'eye contact', **the relationship with the teachers also weakened**, and they did not feel enough consideration on the part of the teachers. Furthermore, the participants noted significant difficulties regarding **the impact of COVID-19 on the quality of learning**. Among other things, they indicated that some subjects are very difficult to learn in distance learning such as mathematics and science subjects, and that they experience considerable difficulty concentrating and managing their time. Most of the participants also maintained that **parents are a significant supporting factor in distance learning**, but noted that in many instances parents are busy and preoccupied with their own matters and are not sufficiently available to help, or lack knowledge and skills with respect to technological systems. Moreover, some participants indicated that there are parents who regard distance learning as 'free time' of sorts, and ask their children to help in various tasks around the house (which were especially needed during the COVID-19 period), such as caring for their younger siblings, watching over them and helping them in their studies.

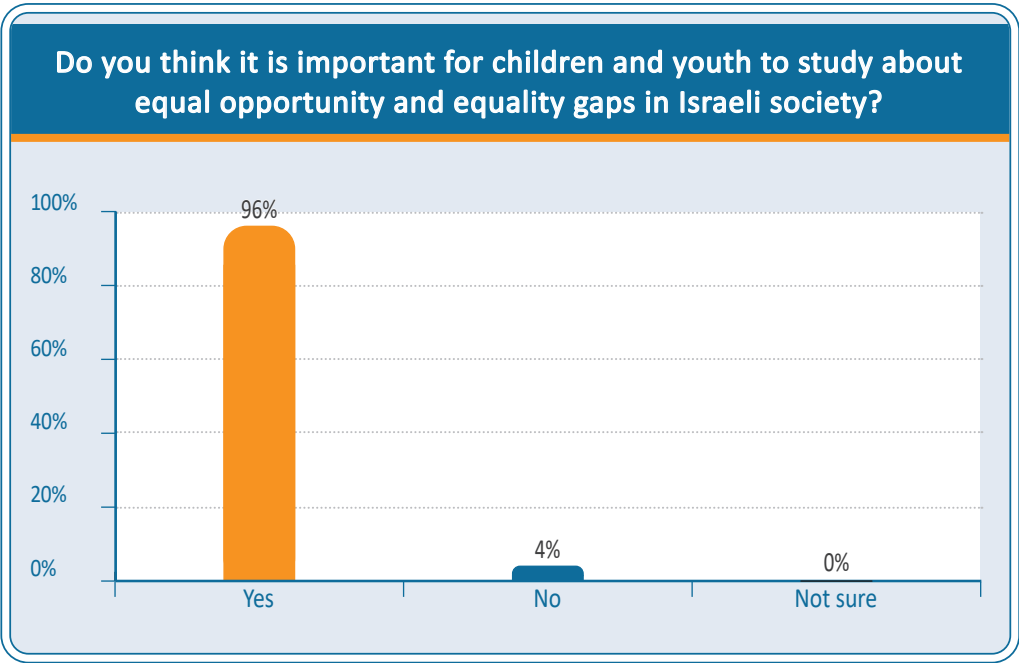
Regarding **access to distance learning** and the issue of **the digital gap** (lack of access to infrastructures and end-user devices such as computers, tablets and smartphones), some participants noted that they had **to contend with lack of internet access** or recurring reception and connection problems, lack of computers (none at all or not having the sufficient amount needed for all the children in the family), and lack of suitable conditions for studying at home, such as a quiet space. They indicated that, as a result, some participants could not connect to classes, which impeded their studies. There was also broad agreement that **a return to physically studying at school was greatly needed**, and this while taking into consideration the special circumstances of the COVID-19 crisis and providing the required solutions, such as bringing all students up to par and narrowing gaps in class, providing emotional support and conducting social activities. It should be noted that alongside the distinct difficulties some participants observed that **the experience of distance learning offered an opportunity to promote equality in education and to advance more quality learning** in routine times for all students, for example by enhancing learning through the integration of digital tools and the use of digital education sources.



Youth Recommendations:

As part of the consultation and discussion procedure with the experts, the Youth Parliament participants offered several recommendations to ensure equality in education:

- **Include the topic of equal opportunity in education in the school curriculum**
The youth participants called on the Education Ministry to include the topic of equal opportunity in education and socioeconomic gaps in Israel in the school curriculum, creatively and experientially. For example, through individual and group projects; conducting discussion round tables; and developing relationships with students from other schools or localities.
- **A mechanism for hearing and consulting with youth to promote equality in education**
The youth participants indicated the need to develop a mechanism of hearing and consulting with youth on the part of the relevant experts in this field with respect to a range of aspects pertaining to promoting equality in education, in routine times as well as in times of crisis such as COVID-19. They underscored the importance of youth participation together with entities that can impact and have the authority to make decisions in this matter, for example representatives from the Education Ministry and from local government in the education field, as well as Knesset members.
- **Raise awareness and provide information to parents**
The youth participants suggested conducting an information campaign for parents – accessible to all population groups – that will emphasize, inter alia, the significance of distance learning, student commitment to this learning and the need for a break between lessons and for leisure activities. The participants also suggested connecting parents to their learning experience by introducing them to the distance learning systems so that they will be able to help and support their children.
- **Promote a set of steps to enhance the quality of distance learning at the school level**
The participants proposed that the Education Ministry, in collaboration with the students, formulate procedures and guidelines for schools in order to enhance the quality of distance learning - and to implement and integrate most of them in routine times as well. Among other things, they suggested the following steps: (a) conducting study sessions in small groups; (b) reducing the study load and learning time management; (c) providing one-on-one time between teachers and students having difficulty; (d) establishing a fixed schedule that will include time dedicated to breaks; (e) conducting individual conversations on a regular basis with every student in order to air and share; (f) strengthening discourse and communication between students and teachers as well as with school management in order to discuss difficulties and formulate responses; (g) fostering social activities and get-togethers.
- **Increase digital access**
The youth participants underscored the importance of ensuring digital access for distance learning to all students, with an emphasis on a stable internet connection and providing cellular modems (such as a NetStick) if needed; providing end-user devices to every student; and tailoring study methods when required, such as printing and distributing study material.





"What advantages and opportunities did distance learning offer?"

"تعلمنا التعليم الذاتي"
"We learned to study independently"

"Technological learning, a future perspective, use of telephones and current day learning"

"خلتنا تطور من نفسنا ونستطيع أن ندرس لحالنا وإذا واجهتنا صعوبة نحاول ونستطيع نحلها بأنفسنا"
"Developed our skills/abilities to study on our own and if we had difficulty comprehending we will try and succeed in overcoming and comprehend on our own"

"Less material or subjects"

"You don't have to get up early in the morning"

"Studying in more pleasant ways – presentations, games, small assignments in groups, etc."

"In winter it is cold and you can sit at home and study instead of going out in the cold"

"Material made accessible to those having difficulty"

"أنه بنقضي وقت أكثر مع العائلة"
"Devoting extensive time to the family"

"التعليم عن بعد هو صعب بس أحنا راح نتخطاه"
"Distance learning is difficult, but we can overcome it"

"Applying all the creative tools"

"أحلى شيء نكون بالسريير وبناكل متى ما بدنا وما نستنى الفرصة"
"Great that you can study in bed and eat whenever you want while studying without waiting for the break"

"Not getting out of your pajamas in the winter"

"More in-depth understanding and study of the material with the help of assignments"

"Making the subject easier and making it easier for the students"

A taste of the ‘summit meeting’ with the experts

The experts were interested in the insights and recommendations of the Youth Parliament participants. They emphasized that the problems and difficulties which the youth participants noted are also shared by other youth throughout the country, and that the data also indicate worsening gaps as well as overt and covert dropout of youth from school. Some of the experts addressed the need for solutions with the return to school, and agreed with the youth participants that the return should not only focus on scholastic achievements, but also on strengthening personal resilience and devoting time to social activities. Regarding the participants’ comments about parents, some of the experts expanded on the complexity and noted that this period is also difficult for the parents. Accordingly, the experts maintained that the campaign which the youth participants had suggested may arouse guilt among the parents, and therefore thought it would be preferable to raise awareness at the local level through a joint discourse, rather than conveying messages by means of a campaign. Some of the experts recounted their efforts to promote equality in education among weakened or vulnerable population groups, such as children and youth with a disability, and also described programs for advancing gender equality (in response to the issue raised by some of the female youth participants regarding the routing of female students to non-science study tracks).

An open question one expert asked the Youth Parliament participants:

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Would you want children and youth from Rahat and Be’er Sheva to study together in the same school?

This question was raised as part of an open discourse with the experts that took place towards the end of the meeting, in which the experts were given the opportunity to ask questions from their perspective.

Several youth participants from Rahat responded that they would be happy to study in a joint school. They noted that joint learning would increase their confidence to speak Hebrew, while at the same time students from Be’er Sheva would become better acquainted with Arabic. Several participants from Be’er Sheva added that while getting to know a different culture and other people is not easy, it is of value and that it is good to become acquainted with different customs and cultures, besides learning the language and communication, which in itself is important. Another participant noted that such a school would increase awareness about equality and “would treat all of us as we are – equal to each other”.

The youth who participated in the consultation process in the framework of the Youth Parliament: Zynev Abu Smur, Nasreen Nasasra, Meisa Abu Hani, Anes Abu Lechye, Lian Alubra, Nagla Abu Medyem, Navers Abu Dabes, Hedil Abu Grara, Aiman Nasasra, Marva Abu Medyem, Haned Nasasra, Guy Mor, Talia Peretz, Roy Azulai, Adi Dayan, Naor Levy,



Inbar Amos, Reut Sharabi, Michelle Foxman, Ran Shay, Emily Shkolnik, Ariel Sulimani, Karlen Alvarez, Keren Reiff, Ronni Amano, Hodaya Cohen, Noa Nahon, Noam Gez, Gil Dor, Ori Partosh, Lior Azar, Agam Haliva, Nehorai Farangi.

Participating experts: Liat Uliel, teacher training R&D team member, The Academia-Classroom, and Head of the Equality Advancement Program, MOFET Institute; **Dr. Ali Alhuzeil**, Head of Education Division, Rahat Municipality; **Nachum Blass**, Education Policy Program Chair, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel; Adv. **Avivit Barkai Aharonof**, Director of the Right to Education, Bizchut; Adv. Michal Gold, Head of the Inter-Sector Roundtable on At-Risk Children and Youth During the COVID-19 Period, and Inter-Ministerial Coordinator for Juvenile Delinquency Prevention, Ministry of Justice; **Rachel Yifrach Turgeman**, counselor in the Gender Equality in Education Unit, Southern District, Ministry of Education; **Eylon Omassi**, Chairperson Youth and Community Committee, National Student and Youth Council; Adv. **Haran Reichman**, Head of the Clinic for Law and Educational Policy, Haifa University.

Consultation Procedure 3:

Youth Discuss Children's Right to Privacy in the Digital World

About children's right to privacy in the digital world

The right to privacy constitutes one of the most important human rights, and demarcates the line between a person's identity as an individual and their being part of the general public. In Israel the right to privacy is anchored in the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, and more specifically in the Privacy Protection Law, 5741-1981 and its regulations. However, legislation in Israel does not address issues and aspects relating to children and youth as a unique group, and is not updated so as to address the challenges posed by the digital world in order to protect privacy in general, and the privacy of children and youth in particular.

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Privacy in the online space currently includes myriad issues, among them privacy of databases held by various institutions (e.g., education institutions); privacy in public and private spheres; privacy on the internet; and photographing and monitoring for surveillance and security purposes. There are varied rationales for the right to privacy, and it is vital for children and youth who need a personal space for proper development and to form their self-identity and sense of self. This is particularly important in the current age, in which the internet and the online space come into play in almost all aspects of youth and children's lives and significantly impact them. This state of affairs is intensifying in light of 'digitization' processes in a range of areas concerning children, such as education and health. The online space presents numerous possibilities and opportunities for children and youth. At the same time however, it may entail complex situations and dangers for users, particularly for children and youth. Thus, children and youth in the online space may be exposed, among other things, to violence, sex abuse, cyberbullying and shaming. The unique characteristics of the internet (viral, anonymous, difficulty deleting content, etc.) only serve to exacerbate harm in the internet space, and must be addressed appropriately.

Summary of the consultation procedure

The youth who participated in the consultation procedure as part of the Youth Parliament discussed the right to privacy of children and youth in the digital world from their perspective and based on their experience and that of their peers. They presented their viewpoints and positions, among other things regarding the significance of the right to privacy for children and youth and the effect of various factors on their privacy, particularly parents. The youth



participants also discussed the ramifications of the COVID-19 crisis and the transition to distance learning and online activity for online privacy, and offered recommendations and ideas regarding the needed responses to ensure children and youth privacy protection in the digital world. As part of their training the participants learned about the various aspects of the right to privacy, including different views about and levels of privacy. The participants met with experts in the privacy field for a direct dialogue ('summit meeting') in which they discussed the youth insights, views and recommendations on the procedure topic and shared their own personal experiences.

Main Insights, Positions and Viewpoints

The Youth Parliament youth who participated in the consultation procedure, including the 'summit meeting' with the experts, noted that the issue of privacy in the digital world is **significant, important and very relevant** to the life of children and youth. Already at the outset the participants found it important to emphasize that **they were born into the online space**, and that through it they forge connections, obtain information and experience the world. Therefore, their starting point, also in the face of the challenges and dangers on the internet, is to strive for judicious and respectful use and not to limited online use. The youth participants agreed that children and youth have different **views about privacy** than those of adults, and some maintained that the perception of privacy among youth also changes and is forged dynamically and personally over time. Furthermore, the participants noted that, despite the knowledge that different entities collect information about them, they **do not understand its actual significance and ramifications**.

Throughout the procedure the youth participants strongly emphasized that **parents** are an important factor with respect to this issue, and that a large share of parents are not familiar with their children's digital environment and the unique challenges they face. The participants noted that some parents use monitoring and tracking methods. In this regard they shared that they feel that children's privacy is for the most part viewed as "parent privacy", and that sharing parent content (sharenting) – without their consent - hurts them and shames them. The participants also maintained that parents' choice to use tracking and monitoring methods is not the optimal way of contending, and does not necessarily help in situations of harm (definitely if it is not accompanied by communication and an open dialogue between parents and children). The youth participants indicated that in cases of online **violation of privacy**, children and youth will **first share this with their friends**. Most participants did not view teachers as persons with whom they can share and turn to for help. They also noted the significant effect of online use and their exposure to content that negatively affects their **body image, self-representation and self-confidence**, and to messages that encourage publishing and revealing information, such as social media challenges.

The youth participants devoted **a large part of the consultation procedure** to the **effect of COVID-19** on online privacy. They noted that their use of the internet increased dramatically during this period and indicated that **their right to choose the digital space**

must be emphasized, including as part of their studies (e.g., opening cameras during distance learning). They also indicated that while the transition of some ‘physical’ services online is considered to be convenient (e.g., a routine doctor’s appointment), for them the transition of emotional and mental services is viewed as contentious. Some participants noted the difficulty of revealing difficulties and distress in online relationships and sessions.

Youth Recommendations:

As part of the consultation and discussion procedure with the experts, the Youth Parliament participants offered several recommendations to protect the privacy rights of children and youth in the digital world:

- **Develop a mechanism for hearing and consulting with children and youth on the issue of privacy**

The youth participants raised the need to develop a mechanism for relevant experts to hear and consult with children and youth regarding privacy policy, as well as to develop responses tailored to the viewpoints of children and youth, owing to their unique perspective having been born into the digital age (“digital natives”).

- **Accessible privacy statements and information for children and youth**

The youth participants noted the need to develop easy to understand ‘privacy statements’, and to provide accessible and user-friendly information in a simple language for children and youth regarding the significance of information collection and its uses by various entities (commercial companies, healthcare services, schools, etc.); the ability to limit or reduce information collection; and possible privacy violation ramifications. Some participants maintained that providing such information should be legally required.

- **Provide information, raise awareness and conduct training for parents**

The youth participants noted the need to increase parental awareness regarding ramifications of their actions for their children’s privacy. They suggested creating a campaign targeting parents on the topic of sharenting. Some youth participants thought that a mechanism should be developed that would require parents to receive their children’s consent prior to sharing. The participants also noted the need to develop training for parents that would provide information and tools for protecting their children in the digital world, while supporting their right to participate and to be active online, not to prevent it. This training should include, inter alia, acquaintance with children and youth activities on the internet as well as with the challenges and dangers, while providing tools for optimal discourse and communication with their children.

- **Develop training for children and youth regarding the right to privacy in the digital world**

The youth participants emphasized the importance of developing dedicated training for children and youth regarding various aspects of the right to privacy that will also provide tools and skills for safely engaging in the online world. They suggested experiential training that will, among other things, impart knowledge and provide explanations of basic terms and concepts on this issue; highlight the significance of information



collection and possible ways it is used; recommend preferable engagement in order to minimize future negative effects; provide information about entities offering assistance in this field. The youth participants stressed the importance of training that should be delivered by experts in this field who will provide professional knowledge, alongside young people who experienced harm online and will recount their personal stories.

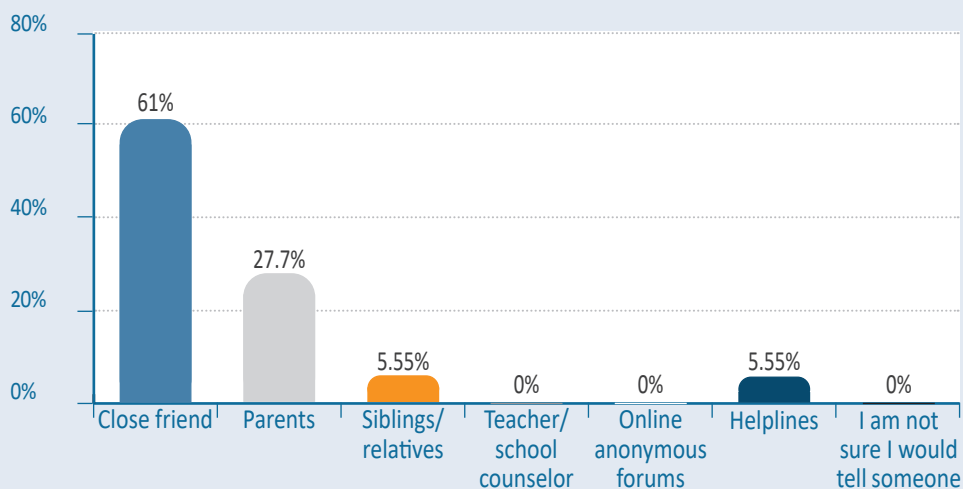
- **Conduct workshops in schools regarding body image content**

The youth participants called on the education system to place special emphasis on body image in the online space. To this end they suggested conducting several workshops during the school year. These workshops will aim to provide children and youth with suitable ways to contend with such content, foster resilience and self-confidence and provide information about entities providing assistance.

- **Raise awareness regarding help organizations operating in this field**

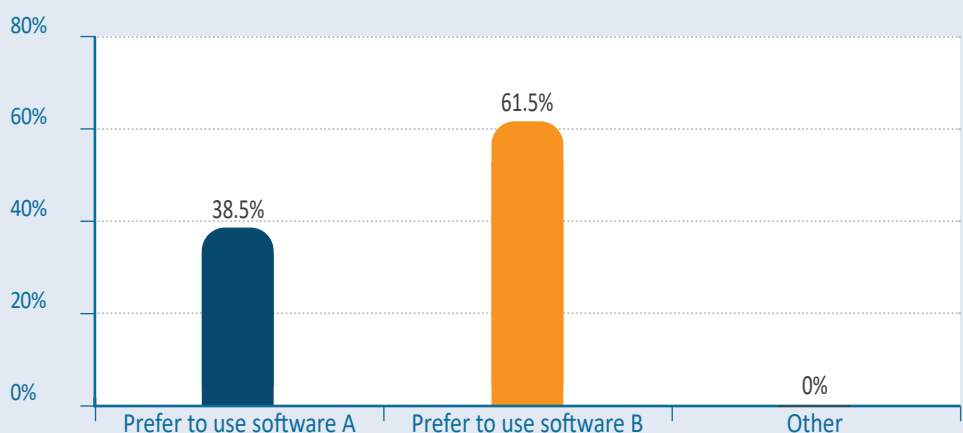
The youth participants stressed the need to examine diverse and creative ways to provide information to children and youth about help entities operating in this field and how they can be contacted, and this in light of the fact that most of them are not familiar with the main help organizations.

Who would you tell if you were/would be harmed online?



37

To listen to music I prefer using software that collects information about me and exposes me to advertisements, or similar software that does not collect data but also does not recommend music





Which issues must be urgently addressed regarding youth and children's online privacy?

"Anonymity"

"Pornographic content"

"All terms of use in English are unclear"

"Publishing information about someone"

"Parents' understanding of the ramifications"

"Publishing information about someone, pictures, personal information, parents' credit cards?"

"Invasion of privacy in various places on the internet, such as applications that collect personal information without our understanding or giving our consent"

"Use of personal information by commercial companies"

Screen shots of various stickers

"Sharenting, awareness of the dangers, access to information"

"Children's awareness regarding the ramifications of their actions online"

"Sending private things to other people or different companies"

A taste of the 'summit meeting' with the experts

The experts were interested in the insights and recommendations of the Youth Parliament participants. They recognized the need of youth for privacy and also emphasized various rights in this regard. Thus, for example, the Ministry of Education representative clarified that it is prohibited to require children and youth to open cameras during distance learning, and suggested that the participants conduct a dialogue on this issue with their teachers. Some of the youth participants also noted the difficulties and challenges in the online arena with respect to other youth – harm and shaming on the internet. The Ministry of Justice experts updated the participants that they are currently working on an amendment to the Privacy Protection Law and considering inclusion of a specific reference to children and youth, which is why it is particularly important for them to understand the position of children and youth on issues concerning their privacy in the online world. The experts were also interested in the issue of consent to publishing personal information online, and also discussed with the participants how to return the right to consent to children and youth. Towards the end of the meeting the youth participants asked, inter alia, how the policy

makers can include children and youth in policy making, and noted that youth have creative solutions and other viewpoints on this issue.

An open question one expert asked the Youth Parliament participants:

What would help you turn to your parents or to another adult in your life for support in the event of online harm?

One of the participants noted that this is not an easy question and that there is no 'magical solution', however one of the things she emphasized was that this is a psychological matter, and that when there is good communication and greater understanding between the parent and the child (or between the child and another supportive adult in their life), then it is easier to share. Many of the participants agreed with this, and noted that many times the parents' reaction to their actions is exaggerated, which creates apprehension and reticence to share. Therefore it is important for parents **to know how to contend with the situation calmly, how to handle and help, and not to react extremely.**

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The youth who participated in the consultation process in the framework of the Youth

Parliament: Liri Omer, Shimon Biton, Saron Wasa, Adel Leibovitz, Roni Haim, Ran Cohen, Avital Shlomov, Nicole Kryzhanovsky, Adriana Visidelco, Anita Kolmin, Guy Petalarsky, Tomer Sadihov, Adva Rosental-Aloni, Michal Segal, Osher Istachrov, Li-Ya Fortanov, Naama Ben Hamo, Liron Michaeli, Omer Yaron, Neta Shachar Shapira, Noam Avraham, Reuven Dorfman, Angela Aliagov, Liam Vaknin, Snir Abutbul, Maya Hertz, Liraz Mizrahi, Shirei Leib, Maya Nagar, Halla Shalabana, Shoham Kvitiger, Nestia Karasov, Ophir Gewindeschneider, Artium Varona, Ilai Mardechayev, Hanan Younis, Miriam Mamedov.

Participating experts: Orna Heilinger, Director of Netica – a project of the Israel Internet Association; Eyal Zandberg, Head of Public Law in the Consulting and Legislation Department, Ministry of Justice; **Doron Nitzan**, Chairperson of the Ethical-Legal Committee, the National Student and Youth Council; **Yossi Michal**, National Counselor for Implementing Student Rights, Pedagogic Administration, Ministry of Education; **Yaara Halperin**, parent guidance counselor and youth coach, Israel Adult Education Association; **Liat Yaakubovich**, Adv., Head of Family, Children and Social Affairs Cluster, Public Law - Constitutional, Counseling and Legislation Department, Ministry of Justice; Dr. and Adv. **Sunny Kalev**, Senior Research Coordinator, Innovation and Policy Development Department, Privacy Protection Authority, Ministry of Justice.



Consultation Procedure 4

Youth Discuss Detection and Identification of Children in Distress and Crisis Situations and Children Seeking Out Help in Emergency and Routine times

About detecting and identifying distress and crisis situations

Children and youth, who comprise about one-third of Israel's population, are more vulnerable to a range of risk and harm situations which may have long-range negative ramifications for their life, among other things because they are in a sensitive and fragile period of their development.

According to estimates in Israel, one out of five children is abused by an adult¹⁰. Prior to COVID-19 about 400,000 children and youth were known to social services in Israel, and about 50,000 new reports about minors were received for treatment by Youth Law social workers in light of various risk and harm situations (violence, sexual harm, neglect and abuse). Most of the reports and detection of the children and youth were received through the education system, hospitals, healthcare services and well-baby clinics¹¹. The COVID-19 crisis broke out in this difficult reality, deeply affecting the lives of children and youth as well as their emotional and mental condition. Many of the limitations and prohibitions that were imposed in the aim of curbing the outbreak of the pandemic particularly impacted children and youth, exposing them to and exacerbating risk situations. They also led to the closing (or to reduced activity) of the frameworks responsible for, inter alia, detecting and identifying at-risk children. Thus, education frameworks were closed, many informal education activities were cancelled and various treatment frameworks also operated in a limited capacity, or did not operate at all (in the first months following the COVID-19 crisis outbreak). Furthermore, many children were closed at home for long periods of time, due to lockdowns or quarantine requirements, reducing the ability to detect and identify at-risk children and youth. Thus, for example, according to reported data, there was a decline in the number of inquiries regarding suspected sexual harm and neglect¹². Furthermore, data

¹⁰ Prof. Lev-Wiesel, and Prof. Eisikovits, Z., 'Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Israel: Between Prevalence and Reporting' (2016).

¹¹ The data refer to 2019 data as published in 'Children in Israel: 2019 Statistical Yearbook', Israel National Council for the Child.

¹² The data refer to 2020 data (including COVID-19 data) as published in 'Children in Israel: 2019 Statistical Yearbook', Israel National Council for the Child.

were published regarding increased feelings of tension and worry, sadness and loneliness, anxiety and depression, among children and youth as from the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Updated data indicate that the number of minors treated by healthcare mental health services increased almost threefold compared to routine times, with a 40% increase in the number of children at suicidal risk treated by educational psychologists¹³. It was also published that one out of five children in Israel suffer from anxiety symptoms – threefold the number in routine times¹⁴, such that emotional difficulties that do not reach extreme conditions are more prevalent and require detection, identification and a response in order to provide the appropriate treatment and prevent deterioration.

Summary of the Consultation Procedure

This consultation procedure began at an earlier stage compared to the other consultation procedures and close to the COVID-19 outbreak in Israel. The procedure included advance and detailed explanation to the participants about the procedure goal, the process and its contribution to policy making. As part of the consultation procedure individual conversations were conducted on the topic, as well as a direct dialogue ('summit meeting') with experts in this field – senior officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Justice, and a representative of academia. In the joint session the participants discussed the participants' thoughts and recommendations regarding perceptions and practices in dealing with youth in distress and risk situations, what 'works' for them, and how assistance responses can be tailored to the unique circumstances of emergency times such as the COVID-19 crisis, as well as to routine times.

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Main Insights, Positions and Viewpoints

The Youth Parliament youth who participated in the consultation procedure, including the 'summit meeting' with the experts, indicated as a starting point of the discussion that in their opinion 'distress' should not be defined by means of a closed and specific list of situations (e.g., exposure to a violent event, privacy harm, etc.), but rather as a term relating to personal and **internal feelings** the child experiences (e.g., lack of control, helplessness, anxiety, etc.) in the face of certain situations that do not fit an exhaustive and uniform definition. Thus, for example, some youth exposed to harmful content on the internet will not feel distressed, while others may be exposed to the same content and will experience distress and difficulty. The participants also noted that, especially during the COVID-19 period, even a 'small' change can create a sense of instability and translate into feelings of distress and anxiety for children and youth. In this regard most of the participants agreed that **new difficulties and distress situations arose during the COVID-19 period** (e.g., lockdowns and quarantines and a transition to a new and online learning format), **while also exacerbating existing distress situations** (e.g., difficulties in the family, study gaps,

¹³ Maria Rabinovitz, The Mental and Emotional Condition of Children Following the Corona Crisis (Knesset, Research and Information Center, August 12, 2021).

¹⁴ See footnote 11 above.



etc.). The participants noted that there was a significant need for parent support during the COVID-19 crisis, yet at the same time parents also bore a burden, leaving children and youth to feel that they lacked sufficient support.

The participants **noted several general barriers** that hinder youth from seeking help, among them: fear of unwanted exposure; fear of rejection and judgement; fear of harming the family, and concern that sharing will develop in unknown directions and that the authorities will be informed without their consent. In this respect the participants noted that there is considerable **reticence among youth regarding social services agencies and the police**, and that they are familiar with the activity of social services only under threatening scenarios such as ‘removal from the home’. Furthermore, the participants maintained that a **precondition for requesting help** is **self-acknowledgment** that they are in distress. Some participants added that sometimes, even if a youth signals distress, it will be difficult to detect owing to the prevalent cynical and humoristic discourse among youth.

Most of the participants **preferred friends or their peers as the first persons they would turn to for help**, and noted that if a friend of theirs was in distress, **they would first try to help and handle it** as best they could, even if they did not have clear knowledge regarding the issues in which they could offer help by themselves. Some participants thought that reporting a friend’s condition to the authorities is ‘the last resort’ and that an additional entity should be involved only when there is real danger to the youth, otherwise trust will be breached and the situation will further deteriorate. At the same time, some noted that in certain cases, when they felt that their ability to help was limited, they would refer to close entities (e.g., a parent or an educator). Nonetheless, most of the participants indicated that they would try to encourage the friend to turn to a relevant entity.

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The youth participants differed in their opinion as to whether **an assistance entity should directly approach** youth in distress. Some maintained that such an inquiry would be proof that someone cares about this youth, and emphasized that this inquiry should be creative, appropriate and unobtrusive. The identity of the inquiring entity is also important, such that in certain cases an entity familiar to the youth from their close surroundings is appropriate (teacher, counselor, parent, etc.), while in other cases a neutral entity is advisable. Some of the youth participants maintained that the youth should be given the opportunity to take the first step in turning to an assistance entity, otherwise such an inquiry may add tension rather than benefit the youth.

In any case, the youth participants emphasized that **the departure point in helping youth** in distress and risk situations must be a **suitable and respectful attitude** and not labeling them as “helpless”. They shared their recommendations and guiding principles in encouraging youth to ask for help while minimizing the barriers to doing so. Thus, among other things, they indicated: providing security, time and space tailored to their needs; discourse and mutuality on the part of the assisting entity (e.g., sharing their own difficulties); ‘normalizing’ distress situations and removing labels; developing a personal relationship and showing interest in other areas in the youth’s life; joint consultation before taking any steps. The participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that the youth understands that the entity which they turn to can help them in their situation, as well as

the importance of providing an explanation about the assistance process and its possible ramifications, while maintaining the youth's privacy.

Youth Recommendations:

As part of the consultation and discussion procedure with the experts, the Youth Parliament participants offered several recommendations regarding detection and identification of children and youth in distress situations and turning to assistance entities for help:

- **Add regular meetings with treatment professionals as part of the school framework**

The youth participants called on the Ministry of Education to strengthen the inclusion of treatment entities in schools. These entities will conduct weekly discussions with students on emotional and mental issues, as well as regular individual sessions with every student (including online). According to the participating youth this suggestion is vital during routine times, and even more so in emergency times and during an 'emergency routine' such as COVID-19, as regular sessions can provide an anchor to the youth, while their referral may be easier and more natural based on the ongoing relationship.
- **Tailor diverse responses for children and youth**

The youth participants underscored the importance of diverse assistance mechanisms tailored to differing youth preferences. Thus, they suggested establishing a dedicated and friendly website for children and youth that will integrate the various inquiry channels for youth, including online correspondence through various applications (WhatsApp, Telegram etc.), telephone conversations, video chats, options to meet in person and online discussion groups with youth for sharing and support. They also suggested that the website provide written information, video clips and relevant publications on coping with distress and crisis situations that will also be available for youth who choose not to actively seek help. The participants also emphasized the need to provide an option to inquire anonymously, as well as tailoring responses for different groups, for example at-risk youth who do not attend an education framework on a regular basis, and youth who do not have access to digital means and to the internet.
- **Publish information and raise awareness about assistance entities in this field**

The youth participants emphasized the need to ensure that children and youth are familiar with assistance entities, both government and civil society, and this in light of the fact that most are not aware of their activities. Thus the participants suggested publishing information about assistance entities that will be 'eye catching' on social networks or through applications (WhatsApp groups, Telegram). This will be accompanied by information published in public spaces used by children and youth (with priority to hanging posters in more private spaces that will enable youth to delve into the information), as well as through schools, for example teachers. The youth participants stressed the importance of information about the assistance entity provided by trusted individuals (from the education world, etc.) who recommend the help entity based on their personal familiarity, and that the information should include examples of cases in which the assistance entities provided the best solution for a specific youth.



- **Provide training to youth in identifying distress situations and encouraging inquiries to assistance entities**

The youth participants recommended training for youth in order to enhance their ability to identify distress situations, their own and those of their friends. This training should include, among other things, acquaintance with distress signals; learning ways to normalize the situation and dissolve shame while increasing mental resilience; providing information about various assistance entities, including in-depth acquaintance with the social services system; and also learning how to best respond to friends who have been harmed.

- **Design an interim model of young people and youth who will provide initial assistance**

Some youth participants suggested training, through the school, of youth as first responders to children and youth who suffer harm. These youth teams will ‘mediate’ the case to an authority figure who will then find the most appropriate assistance. According to the youth participants, youth will find it more natural to turn to these first responders owing to their close age and similar interests, particularly if they themselves experienced a crisis. Some participants thought that it would be preferable for the assistance to be offered by young adults (such as young people in national service). As the case may be, there was agreement that those providing assistance must receive suitable training as well as close professional accompaniment.

A taste of the ‘summit meeting’ with the experts

The experts listened attentively to the youth participants, while providing comments, asking questions and giving explanations if needed. Thus, for example, after the youth noted the considerable reticence from social services and lack of familiarity with the range of existing services, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services representatives explained that the tool of ‘removal from the home’ is a last resort and only represents a small percentage of the cases, but “apparently this is the percentage that is most heard about”. They also provided details about the mandatory reporting duty, the work of social services in a range of treatment options, and rehabilitation procedures that do not entail police involvement and legal procedures (by means of Exemption committees). In response, the youth participants underscored the importance of awareness and familiarity with social services entities. A space was created during the consultation in which the youth participants shared their experiences and those of their friends, of distress situations in general, and in light of the COVID-19 period in particular.

An open question one expert asked the Youth Parliament participants:

In treating distress situations, what is the significance for you of a face-to-face meeting compared to online communication?

The youth participants maintained that a face-to-face session is important, but emphasized that in distress situations face-to-face sessions are associated with social services and the law, with considerable reticence and fear that the information will be transferred to entities that may create embarrassment and humiliation. One of the youth participants thought that it is important to clarify that the face-to-face session will not lead to 'unknown' ramifications, and another youth suggested a graded model that will enable an initial online conversation that will lead to an opportunity for a face-to-face meeting. At the same time, the youth participants emphasized the importance of a physical place where the youth can come to immediately when in distress – 'it is important to have such a place - the youth leaves home and reaches a safe place'.

The youth who participated in the consultation process in the framework of the Youth Parliament: Dana Esterin, Muchsan Alkrinawi, Eden Ben Simon, Shahar Bracha, Michal Sarodi, Florine Dahan, Lior Kogan, Avital Shlomov, Elior Cohen, Arie Genger, Adi Fremond, Golan Gold.

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Participating experts: Adv. **Michal Gold**, Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Coordinator, Ministry of Justice; Prof. Carmit Katz, Bob Shapell School of Social Work at Tel Aviv University; **Hava Levi**, Head Social Worker for the Youth Law – Care and Supervision, Senior Division Head Families, Children and Youth in the Community, Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services; **Iris (Menda) Ben Yaakov**, Head of the Sexuality and Prevention of Harm to Children and Youth Unit, Ministry of Education; **Naomi Abutbul**, National Supervisor (After School Programs and Support Unit – Professional), Children and Youth Service, Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services.



Schools that participated in the 2021 Youth Parliament

Representatives of the Local Government Youth Council, Rahat Municipality

Representatives of A New Dawn, Rahat

Menchel Makif High School A, Be'er Sheva

Makif School C, Be'er Sheva

Kohl Makif School F, Be'er Sheva

Neuman Ramot Multi-Disciplinary Makif High School G, Be'er Sheva

AMIT Makif Religious High School, Be'er Sheva

Tuviyahu Makif High School, Be'er Sheva

Gymnasia School, Be'er Sheva

Rager Makif High School, Be'er Sheva

Zilberman Hareches Makif High School, Be'er Sheva

Bnei Akiva Yeshiva Ohel Shlomo School, Be'er Sheva

Branco Weiss Beit Ariel School, Be'er Sheva

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The Israel National Council for the Child Youth Parliament is a unique and innovative project for the youth participation in policy making processes, providing an opportunity for a significant dialogue with government ministries and policy makers on matters concerning the lives of children and youth.

The Youth Parliament aims to drive in-depth change in legislation and policy making processes in Israel, recognizing the right of youth - from diverse population groups - to participate, express their views and impact issues pertaining to their lives, all in the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Youth Parliament was launched in 2018 with the aim of establishing it as an ongoing national program and demonstrating the potential of youth participation processes. The Youth Parliament takes place in the Negev, with the participation of more than 100 youth from the Be'er Sheva and Rahat area as well as various government ministries, civil society organizations and entities from academia whose work touches upon the lives of children and youth in Israel.

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