

CRITICAL YOUTH WORK?

INFOPACK

Rethinking and re-imagining conceptual approaches, (un)learning democracy and human rights under rapidly changing conditions

A networking conference for YOU(th) workers, EDC/HRE trainers, educators, facilitators, youth researchers, and activists

23.08.-28.08.2026

Weimar

CRITICAL YOUTH WORK?

Where did we start?

Conceptually Critical Youth Work tries to build a synthesis between (European) discourses on Youth Work as social, political, emancipatory educational practice as well as vast strands of emancipatory educational concepts that melt into critical pedagogy while acknowledging that the world doesn't stop turning. Do we find answers on today's challenges by non-questioning recipes and paths chosen yesterday?

Practice: in 2024 we organised an international (Non)Conference "Critical Youth Work? Rethinking and re-imagining conceptual approaches, (un)learning democracy and human rights in times of shrinking and contested civic spaces" at the European Youth Education and Meeting Centre Weimar (EJBW). Organised by the Arbeitskreis deutscher Bildungsstätten (AdB) and EJBW, in cooperation with various partners it brought together over 90 youth workers, educators, researchers and activists from around the world - horizontally, not hierarchically.

We aimed to critically examine and further develop the foundations - our foundations - concepts and methods of youth work, democracy education and human rights education - in a global context where civic spaces are shrinking, illiberal attitudes are growing, and democratic rights are increasingly under pressure. Form follows function - participatory (Non)Conference: the event a flexible, co-created learning environment. Participants in their own learning paths in diverse workshops, artistic and experimental formats, story circles, spaces for political reflection, and shared knowledge-production. Topics ranged from youth work in wartime, to democratic backsliding, to embodied and artistic practices - activities that helped to ask questions and to physically determine the feeling of disturbance. The event emphasised horizontal exchange, reflection, and collective (un)learning, while also creating a foundation for ongoing international cooperation. The connections & networks formed during the conference are intended to support the participants' work beyond the gathering itself.

A STEP FORWARD? "CRITICAL YOUTH WORK? 2026"

This follow-up gathering will again invite practitioners and thinkers from around the world for horizontal exchange and experimentation in a cosy summer university setting.

What's new? What stays?

Critical Youth Work – the non-conference aims providing a non-hierarchical space for challenges, reflection, conceptual and practical reasoning and experimentation.

When we started the format in 2024 we were clueless. Clueless in a sense that we witness the world turning, politics going mad, war, far right, polarisation and hatred leaving deeply disturbed societies, but how to act? How to act as educators for and with young people?

The geo-political situation seems a cataclysm, it has not necessarily become better. War in Ukraine is a fear monger not only for Europe. International law and the rule-based order seem to become wishful thinking of a generation of boomers in moral panic. The war over Gaza has split even the left in antagonistic fractions.

Digitalisation, AI – inevitable, climate change – politically not to counter?

Creating a culture of human rights, working for a more just society, yes. What do you do if even that is conflictive? In a situation where everyone's arguing with one's own violated sense of justice, how to build a basis for democracy work?

Where to go with youth work as non-formal learning practice - emancipatory, relational, human rights based - and rooted in the conviction to be instrumental for developing more democratic and more just societies for establishing and enforcing a culture of human rights?

Yet - can we as practitioners become everyday a little bit better? Can we make the world every day a little better? But how to work on that? Given as educators we are not only navigating between Scylla and Charybdis, but have on board already a pack of vultures and hyenas, just watching us fail? Do we want that?

When Democracy and Human Rights Education are fundamentally challenged, when confrontation is inevitable, how to react and what to prepare? How can we develop productive ways for political educational processes amid all these conflicts? How can we identify the niches of promising practice that work and develop strategies to expand?

(Too) many questions, many answers!

Critical Youth Work will stay interdisciplinary and non-hierarchical! We combine again body & soul! We welcome film, dance, music, activism, any artist interventions, any form of non-formal pedagogy, youth work, research, inputs, discussion & reasoning. Let us be open and let us use the untrodden paths and uncooked recipes!

In short:

Building on the international (non)conference “Critical Youth Work?” held in May 2024 in Weimar – which brought together over 90 youth workers, educators, researchers and activists to rethink democracy and human rights education in times of shrinking civic spaces– this follow-up gathering will again invite practitioners and thinkers from around the world for horizontal exchange and experimentation in a cosy summer university setting.

The 2026 follow-up will:

- reconnect participants and partners from the first conference and open space for new actors in critical youth work,
- deepen conceptual debates on democracy, human rights and civic education under pressure,
- share and co-create practices that address exclusion, authoritarian tendencies and global crises in/through youth work,
- continue the experimental, non-hierarchical (non)conference format with self-chosen learning paths, labs and artistic/political interventions.

What to expect?

- Six days (preference will be given to full duration commitment) in the city of Weimar, a park and a river - and an old royal riding house. EJBW - a residential learning space. A non-conference with multiple slots, spaces, phases and layers of interaction!
- We uphold the feedback from 2024. Things will partially change, partially kept.
- A committed team, an international forum of roughly 90 people from all over the world!

The programme will be discussed with the contributors during several stages of preparation & shared approx. two weeks before the event.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

We will reimburse the travel costs on the basis of the cheapest possibilities, e.g. second class railway tickets, economy class flights etc., within the provided limit, from place of residency to the venue of the activity and return, based on the rates of the “distance calculator” of the European Commission <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/de/node/2626> and related regulations as follows:

- 10-99 km: 28,00 EUR / Green travel: 56,00 EUR
- 100-499 km: 211,00 EUR / Green travel: 285,00 EUR
- 500-1999 km: 309,00 EUR / Green travel: 417,00 EUR
- 2000-2999 km: 395,00 EUR / Green travel: 535,00 EUR
- 3000-3999 km: 580,00 EUR / Green travel: 785,00 EUR

*Green travel: Travel where low-emission modes of transport are used **for the majority of the journey**, such as bus, train, bicycle or carpooling.*

CHECK LIST FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

1. Train/Bus tickets / Public transportation

- Train tickets: it is important that the **arrival and departure times** as well as **the price** are visible (in case using **German Railways (DB) invoices are required**).
- Any other tickets (bus, public transportation): invoices and /or payment confirmations are complementary to the ticket

2. Air tickets must be accompanied:

- By the **invoice** / receipt/pay order/proof of payment;
- Given with regular or electronical **boarding pass** (be sure to save your electronical boarding pass in advance).
- Not covered: travel insurance(s), priority boarding, seat reservation fees (seat selection)

NOTE: make sure to print out the E-mail you receive from the airline company upon the payment, stating how much and how you paid (in case issuing of an invoice is not possible)

Other important details:

- Missing or lost tickets are not reimbursed.
- Return tickets must be bought in advance before the journey.
- Costs for cab (taxi) are reimbursed only in exceptional cases

Following the guidelines of the program and internal regulations, participants are requested to travel on the **direct way within maximum 2 days. In case of longer pauses or indirect routes (holiday travel), there is no reimbursement of travel costs!**

Reimbursement is done in EUR by bank transfer **only on SEPA accounts**.

After the event please send us back all your paper travel documents (no electronic version available, originals as e.g. local transportation tickets) by post mail (**within 10 days max. after the event**) to:

Stiftung EJBW
Markus Rebitschek
Jenaer Str. 2/4
DE - 99425 Weimar

Solely electronic documents (e.g. online receipts, online/e-tickets, online booking confirmations, online/digital boarding passes) as well as your bank account details (name of account holder, name of the bank, IBAN code, BIC/SWIFT code) **can be send by E-Mail to rebitschek@ejbweimar.de (within 10 days max. after the event)**.

We will share further information on the reimbursement procedure by PM before or latest during the event.

VENUE, ACCOMMODATION & BOARD

Accommodation in double rooms, full board & activities will take place at the Stiftung Europäische Jugendbildungs- und Jugendbegegnungsstätte Weimar (Foundation "European Youth Education and Meeting Centre in Weimar, EJBW): <http://www.ejbweimar.de>

We would like to remind you that we expect your arrival on 23.08.2026 and your departure on 28.08.2026. We cannot accept any exceptions due to funding reasons - a later arrival than 23.08.2026 and/or an earlier departure than 28.08.2026 is therefore not possible.

TRAVELLING TO WEIMAR

Stiftung Europäische Jugendbildungs- und Jugendbegegnungsstätte Weimar
 Jenaer Str. 2/4
 99425 Weimar
 Germany
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/HvYVmMUyR19ABk3K6>

By Train:

To find a train connection to Weimar use official webpage of Deutsche Bahn, where you can find connection from inside and outside of Germany (<https://www.bahn.com/en/view/index.shtml>)

By Bus:

To reach Weimar by bus check possible connections via e.g. FlixBus (www.flixbus.com)

By Car:

From the A4 motorway take the exit to “Apolda”. Follow the B87 in the direction of Apolda until you reach the main traffic lights at Umpferstedt. Turn left towards Weimar on the B7 and follow the road into Weimar until you reach us on the Jenaer Straße.

By Airplane:

If you are reaching Weimar by airplane check flights to Berlin Brandenburg Airport, Frankfurt International Airport, Albrecht Dürer Airport Nürnberg, Leipzig/Halle Airport and in a few cases also Erfurt Airport (closest airport). Once you reach airport you will need to take a train or a bus to reach Weimar. To find the cheapest flight connection use websites such as Skyscanner (<https://www.skyscanner.de/>) or GoogleFlights (<https://www.google.com/travel/flights>). To check connection from airports to Weimar use websites of Deutsche Bahn (<https://www.bahn.com/en/view/index.shtml>) or FlixBus (www.flixbus.com)

NOTE: Please consider using more sustainable forms of travelling such as train and bus. European and North American societies already consume double or triple of the resources nature can reproduce. Showing respect to the natural basis of human life by choosing train, bus or ride sharing can offer you quality time, getting to know other people and a more fulfilling connection to the place where you are.

IN WEIMAR

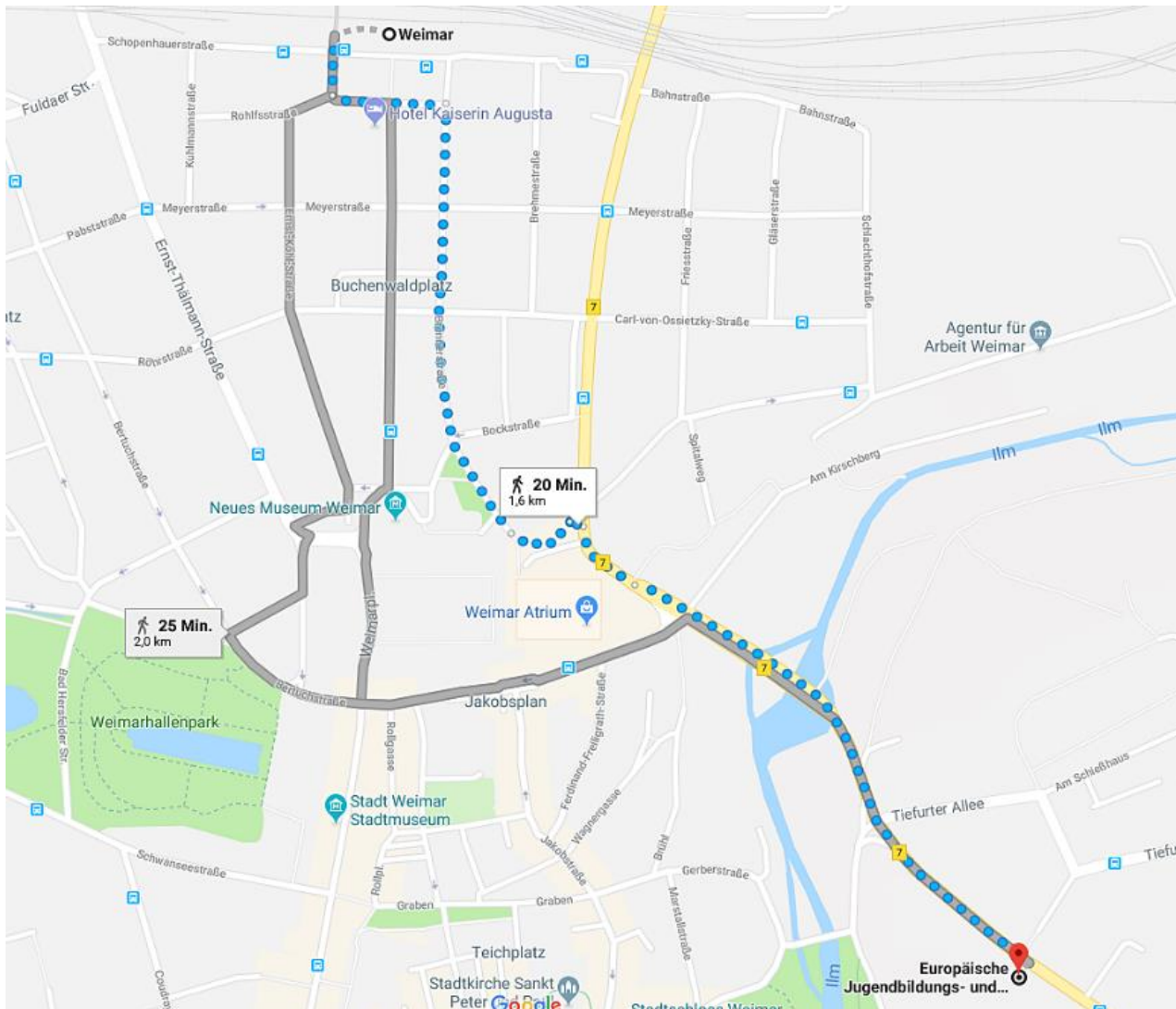
Accommodation, board (provided) & activities will take place at the Stiftung Europäische Jugendbildungs- und Jugendbegegnungsstätte Weimar (Foundation “European Youth Education and Meeting Centre in Weimar, EJBW): <http://www.ejbweimar.de>. To arrive to the venue and accommodation there are few options:

- In front of the train station take a bus no. 1 (direction: Ehringsdorf to the bus stop Goetheplatz – there change to a bus no. 2 (direction: Bodelschwinghstraße) till the stop “Hellerweg / EJBW”
- In front of train station take bus no. 2 or 9 (direction: Süßenborn or Bodelschwinghstraße) and get off at the bus stop “Hellerweg / EJBW”.
- Take bus no. 1 (direction: Ehringsdorf) till the bus stop “Friedensstraße / Atrium” from where you can reach the EJBW by walking (800m) following Jenaer Straße till you find the EJBW in your right-hand side
- Last option is to take 20min walk till the EJBW

The ticket for bus, you can buy on VTM machine inside of train station or inside of the bus (driver). Ticket prices for public transport in Weimar are:

- *Single fare – 2,90 Euro*
- *Single fare (4-ticket-set) – 10,40 Euro*
- *1-day ticket – 7,40 Euro*

NOTE: Buses in Weimar are accessible even if they can transport only a limited amount of e.g. wheelchairs etc.



INFORMATION ABOUT EJBW

The facilities include:

- 162 beds in single, two and three bed rooms with shower and toilet;
- 15 modern, fully-equipped seminar rooms;
- Sports facilities and playground;
- W-LAN on the whole area.

Note: You will share the room with other participant(s), single room accommodation is only available upon available capacities (limited) and request (surcharge payment required).

Please bring your own towel(s).

- Check-in time – 15:00
- Check-out time – 09:00

<http://www.ejbweimar.de/>

IMPRESSIONS



PARTNERS

The members of the Commission "European and International Educational Work" in the "Arbeitskreis deutscher Bildungsstätten" (AdB) and their international and European partners (<https://www.adb.de/kommission-europaeische-und-internationale-bildungsarbeit>)



SUPPORT



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