WORKSHOP ‘YOUR IDEAS FOR OUR CITY’

City of Oldenburg

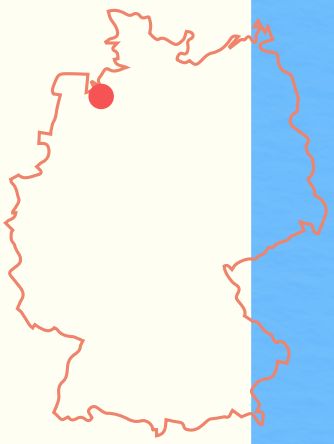
INTRODUCTION

The **workshop 'Your Ideas for Our City'** took place on May 9, 2025, as part of **FAIRDAYS** in Oldenburg. It was organised by the City of Oldenburg's Coordination Office for Participation, in cooperation with the BBS Haarentor vocational school.

The aim was to **actively involve young people in discussions about sustainable urban development** and give their perspectives real visibility, with a focus on UN Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Seventeen students from the vocational school took part, using the workshop as a space for dialogue, exchange, and creative idea development. They **discussed local challenges** and turned them into **concrete proposals** on education, sustainability, and urban development. Through active engagement, the students brought valuable insights and ideas shaped by their own experiences and concerns, showing how participation can genuinely work at the local level.

Their input now **feeds into future participatory formats** and **supports Oldenburg's ongoing sustainability initiatives**. By connecting young people with local planning and development processes, the workshop showed just how much youth engagement can contribute to shaping the city's sustainable future.



GERMANY

ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

- ○ Inform
- ○ Consult
- ● **Involve**
- ○ Collaborate
- ○ Empower

Participants actively engaged in discussions and generated their own ideas and proposals on local sustainability and urban development topics.



MANDATE

The workshop was organised by the City of Oldenburg's **Coordination Office for Participation**, as part of **FAIRDAYS**. Its results aren't tied to a formal political decision-making process. It simply wasn't designed to feed directly into policy. Instead, the mandate here was **exploratory**: to test new participation formats for young people, and see what an **informal, low-threshold approach** could reveal.

For citizens, the mandate was equally clear from the start: adolescents were **invited to share their perspectives and ideas**, not to make decisions. Their input **feeds into future participatory formats and discussions** on sustainability and urban development in Oldenburg, rather than into a binding outcome.

RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Participants were **recruited through the school itself**: **seventeen students** from the BBS Haarentor vocational school took part, in cooperation with the school. This route made it possible to reach a target group that often participates only to a limited extent in traditional engagement formats.

No specific measures for diversity or representativeness were taken beyond this school-based approach, and **no additional support** (such as compensation, travel reimbursement, or translation) was offered, since participation took place within the regular school context.

The **small group size** allowed for **intensive discussion and active involvement** from everyone present. The school setting itself functioned as a **safe, familiar space** for dialogue, making it easier for the students to openly share their perspectives and ideas.

PROCESS DESIGN

The workshop lasted around **90 minutes** and moved through **several interactive phases**.

It opened with a short 10–15 minute **introduction**, presenting the city, the topic of sustainability, and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

Next, students spent about 40 minutes at so-called **"Talking Tables"**, a method built around open discussion in small groups. Alongside this, participants could write **slogans on tote bags**, a creative element meant to spark discussion and make the young people's messages visible.

In the final phase, the groups **presented their results in a plenary session** lasting about 30 minutes, a chance to exchange ideas and spot common themes across the groups.

OUTPUT

During the workshop, students developed **numerous ideas and proposals around education and sustainable urban development**. On education (SDG 4), suggestions included mentoring programmes, volunteer learning support, help with completing forms or applications, instructional videos on everyday challenges in multiple languages, and passing on old schoolbooks to younger students. On sustainable cities (SDG 11), ideas ranged from more green spaces in the city centre to energy-saving projects at schools, a dedicated climate day for Oldenburg, and community gardens. The workshop also revealed a strong interest among young people in equitable access to education, sustainable consumption, and local markets.

The workshop was **facilitated by staff from the City of Oldenburg's Coordination Office for Participation**, in cooperation with **BBS Haarentor vocational school**.

FOLLOW-UP

All results were documented and can serve as inspiration for future participatory processes and sustainability initiatives in Oldenburg, helping to bring youth perspectives into local development and planning.

RESOURCES

The workshop relied mainly on **staff time** rather than a dedicated budget. It was facilitated by staff from the City of Oldenburg's Coordination Office for Participation, who took on both the organisation and facilitation of the session. Taking place within the regular school context meant that **no additional costs** were needed for venue or materials, and **no extra support** such as compensation, travel reimbursement, or translation was offered, since the school setting already provided a familiar, low-threshold environment for the students to take part in.

IMPACT

An **internal evaluation** indicated a very **positive atmosphere** during the discussions. The students **engaged enthusiastically** and contributed numerous ideas. Their **interest** in topics such as educational equity and sustainable consumption was particularly evident.

STRENGHTS

- **Active participation** from everyone in the room.
- An **open, respectful discussion.**
- **Creative methods** like Talking Tables and tote bag slogans.
- **High motivation** and **political interest** among the students.

CHALLENGES

- **Limited time** for in-depth discussion.
- Difficulty addressing **complex topics** thoroughly within such a short timeframe.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Interactive, creative methods work well with **young people**.
- **Schools** are an effective way to reach youth target groups.
- **More time** for discussion and presenting results would improve the quality of the exchange.



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