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## Young people and their digital future: an interdisciplinary task

**MUNICH.** “I hope this interdisciplinary task does not turn out to be a case of paralysis,” noted Prof. Dr. Lutz Frühbrodt from the University of Applied Sciences in Würzburg during the lively discussion of the topic “Is today’s youth adequately prepared for the digital future?” that took place last Thursday at the O<sub>2</sub> Tower in Munich. This question had already arisen on the dialogue platform [www.diskutiere.de](http://www.diskutiere.de) in recent weeks. The initiators Telefónica O<sub>2</sub> Germany and UPJ presented some early findings to the public last Thursday, as well as the demands that resulted from the many contributions. Prof. Dr. Lutz Frühbrodt discussed the results and resulting challenges with Dr. Florian Herrmann, MdL (Member of the State Assembly), and a member of the Bavarian Parliament’s Commission on Data Protection, Jutta Croll, Managing Director of the “Stiftung Digitale Chancen” (Digital Opportunities Foundation), and André Krause, Managing Director of Finances for Telefónica O<sub>2</sub> Germany.

“Children are preparing themselves for the digital future.” Although this contribution to the discussion summarizes a topic of debate that continually arises quite clearly, the participants in the online debate, as well as those who were actually present when these topics were discussed agreed that there is still much to be done in order to promote the media competence of young people in Germany. This ranges from selecting the appropriate curricula and the German states setting requirements on teaching about the media to sufficient educational offerings for teachers and greater involvement of parents, but also having each young person accept responsibility on their own: an interdisciplinary task, in other words.

“Each new type of technology brings immense chances that we must capitalize on, but also risks, of course. Here, it is up to politics to install crash barriers. Also when it comes to the topic of “Digital Divide”, we still have a long way to go. White spots on the broadband map are certainly nothing rare, therefore we need to expand fast Internet connections even into every last corner of the country,” said Dr. Florian Herrmann, MdL (Member of the State Assembly), and a member of the Bavarian Parliament’s Commission on Data Protection.

Jutta Croll, Managing Director of the Stiftung Digitale Chancen (Digital Opportunities Foundation), stated: “The younger generation, the so-called digital natives, has a better command of this technology, yet is unable to evaluate contents very well. We are now facing the challenge of creating a balance between the technological skills and how young people behave with respect to media contents.”

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The podium discussion held inside the O<sub>2</sub> Tower was obviously unable to come up with a patent solution. Nevertheless, the experts did agree that new technologies, more and more possible dangers, and, to some extent, a lack of experience among parents and teachers in dealing with new media present often prevent young people from using the media in a responsible and useful manner. "Besides schools, parents and politicians, it is also up to companies, social workers and youth centres to help improve the media competence of young people," André Krause said. "Here, all parties must pull together in one direction and react to new challenges and technologies in a flexible manner."

You'll find further information under [www.diskutiere.de](http://www.diskutiere.de)

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