

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



Study on political participation of young people

Concept note

Background

In 2019 the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership held a symposium “The future of young people’s political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities”, with more than 120 participants from across Europe, to explore the landscape of young people’s political participation in a changing world and produce knowledge relating to the observed and anticipated trends, their reasons and consequences.

The EU-Council of Europe youth partnership broadly defines political participation as “any activity that shapes, affects, or involves the political sphere” (EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, 2019). This refers to every opportunity and space where young people have influence on anything that affects their lives- politics, decisions, relationships, or active engagement of young people in their communities. This broad definition highlights that political participation has many diverse forms. It can be conventional and unconventional, including activities such as voting, being members of political parties, serving on a local youth council, engaging through a youth organisation, or taking part in online political activism, boycotts or a protest movement. All these activities are aimed at influencing political decisions.

Political participation today is taking place within the context of a shrinking space for civil society, rapid digitalisation, advancement of populist ideologies, increased inequalities, and a rise of global youth movements. Young people seem to be more interested in joining loose interest groups rather than NGOs and political parties, and they use social media and digital tools to organise and share information. They mobilise around issues such as climate change, violence and social injustice. Contemporary forms of young people’s political participation may not always be recognised as legitimate. Effective ways to encourage and strengthen voices of those young people who are “invisible” and to build bridges between youth voices and authorities need to be better understood and further promoted.

The knowledge gathered and produced throughout 2019 ahead of and as a follow up to Symposium includes: the [literature review](#) on political participation, young people’s [Visions of the Future](#), the Compendium of practices, [report](#) from the Symposium, [videos](#) and [animated videos](#), infographics and

webinars. This is also complemented by a range of publications on the topic from the previous years, including EU-Council of Europe youth partnership's [Revisiting youth political participation - Challenges for research and democratic practice in Europe](#), Council of Europe's [New and innovative forms of youth participation in decision-making processes](#), European Youth Forum's [YOUTH & POLITICAL PARTIES: A Toolkit for Youth-friendly Politics in Europe](#), and a 2018 publication from the SALTO-YOUTH Participation & Information Resource Centre (SALTO PI) "[Closer to the edge of participation and activism](#)".

In order to build up on the wealth of the knowledge and resources already available, the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership will continue working on this topic through a new research study. The outcomes of the study will be shared with a wide public in a range of ways, including through publishing the analytical study, policy briefs, reflection papers in the [Perspectives on Youth](#), and, if appropriate editing a new Youth Knowledge Book. Collaboration will be sought with further reflections on the phenomenon of a shrinking space for civil society within the Council of Europe youth sector and overall [Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030](#), [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#) and the work on young people's participation in political life to be undertaken by the German Presidency of the Council of the EU. Cooperation with other relevant stakeholders will be ensured. The study will also take into due account data from Eurobarometer, as well as the upcoming EU study on landscaping of the youth sector actors.

The process aims to:

- contribute to a better understanding of the phenomena linked to youth political participation, identified at the 2019 Symposium,
- formulate and disseminate the implications for all relevant actors, including those in youth work, youth policy, education etc.

The study aims to examine the following questions:

- What is the current state of play when it comes to youth political participation?
- How do young people engage in politics and at which levels? What type of political participation, both conventional and unconventional are most popular?
- What are the main themes/topics or areas of youth political participation today (e.g. gender activism, climate crisis, social inclusion)
- What skills and competences do young people and other stakeholders need to engage in politics?
- What is the future of youth political participation?

Steering Group

The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe is organising an exploratory inception meeting on 31 March 2020 in Strasbourg, France, followed by a meeting of researchers on 1 April 2020 in order to bring together the relevant expertise in the field and inform the development of a study on political participation of young people.

The Steering Group includes different types of organisations working on the theme of youth political participation at different levels, youth researchers and members of the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR), European Commission, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), and the Advisory Council on

Youth (CCJ) of the Council of Europe, European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) of the Council of Europe, youth political parties, movements and citizens platforms. The composition of the group intends to reflect the diversity of work being done on the topic of youth political participation.

Tentative timeline

- Preparatory meeting of the expert group, 31 March 2020
- Meeting of the researchers, 1 April 2020
- April- August: literature review, collecting statistical data, analytical papers, relevant examples and further reflection on the findings, phenomena and trends
- Study will be completed by the end of September 2020