

# Youth Partnership

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



## How to engage marginalized young people in politics?

Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth hosted a Symposium: “The future of young people’s political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities” at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg from 18-20 September 2019. Young people’s participation is central to our work – but who are the young people that participate in politics, and who would we like to engage? How to reach unprivileged young people?

Marcus Faustini, from Agency of Youth Networks in Brazil, works with young people in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, encouraging them to learn more about their rights and opportunities for political participation and creative expression.

Young people living in vulnerable areas of large cities across the world are frequently perceived by governments, media and society as deficient or dangerous. For many years, this view has brought about a scarcity of opportunities and frequent violations of these young people's rights.

Some young people, in particular black, gay, young women and foreigners coming from poor communities, have no access to education, they are injured or killed in armed police operations and don’t have any funds. These are the young people we need to prioritize when we talk about political participation. Civil society activists are working to reverse this situation, by promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, but this often reaches only middle class youth. Young people from poorer areas of big cities are still suffering from increasing inequalities in political participation, education and professional development. What can be done?

The methodology of the Agency of Youth Networks was created from the work developed with young people in 40 *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro and underprivileged neighbourhoods in the United Kingdom, in order to support young people to take a stand and change their

status in contemporary society. This starts by placing underprivileged young people and their personal desires, ideas and dreams at centre stage, hearing them and giving them the power to turn their ideas into reality. This is the foundation that makes real dialogue possible.

Over the last decade, through the Agency of Youth Networks' methodology over 100 innovative ideas coming from young people, have been turned into cultural, social and political actions led by youth.

This was only possible because actions were guided by three principles:

1. Young people are treated as creators, not just as pupils. The only way to address the systemic social inequalities is to bring in unprivileged young people as co-creators of the projects and cultural, social and political actions. It is not possible to change structures of society without bringing young people who are suffering from poverty.
2. We have confidence in young people and their ability to lead actions for change.
3. We offer all our city's networks to be their partners. Young people need to have access to support systems - networks and public budget in order to implement their projects.

By treating young people as co-creators, believing in their power to change their circumstances and providing them with support systems and resources, we can witness how they are transforming their lives and their communities.

For more inspiring stories, questions and thoughts on political participation of young people, visit:

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