

InterNational Network

Re-active Youth
for a new era
of Europe



Research

active citizenship and digital
citizenship in EU territories



Co-funded by
the European Union

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1. Introduction

The political participation of young people in Europe is an issue of paramount importance in today's world. As active citizens and future leaders, young people play a crucial role in shaping the political and social future of the continent. Their involvement in democratic processes not only promotes inclusive and representative decision-making but also enriches public debate with fresh perspectives and renewed visions.

In the dynamic European scenario, young people face several challenges to their political participation. Social changes, such as globalisation and cultural diversity, raise new questions about identity and belonging. Simultaneously, technological developments have altered the way we relate to one another and access information, creating both opportunities and risks for civic participation. Understanding how young people perceive politics and how their participation experiences are influenced by cultural, socio-economic, and educational factors is essential. Addressing these issues will enable us to develop effective strategies to involve young people in decision-making and to ensure that their voices are heard and valued in public policy-making.

In this context, this paper aims to delve deeply into the factors influencing young people's political participation in Europe and to identify successful policies and good practices that promote their active involvement. By analysing and understanding these dynamics, the goal is to foster young people's active and empowered citizenship, thereby laying the groundwork for a more democratic, inclusive, and just Europe both now and in the future.

This study proposes a comprehensive and comparative analysis of youth political participation across various European countries. The objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the factors shaping their civic engagement and to explore the similarities and differences in their participation experiences within different national contexts. The research will examine the social, cultural, and economic dynamics that influence how young people engage in the political sphere and how this engagement impacts democratic decision-making.

To achieve these goals, the study will extensively review the policies and programs that governments and organisations have implemented to promote young people's active participation in politics. It will analyse successful strategies and approaches that have proven effective in enhancing youth political engagement while also acknowledging the challenges that persist. Adopting a comparative approach, the research aims to identify patterns and trends that shed light on how each country approaches youth political participation and to draw lessons that can strengthen civic engagement among this generation in Europe. By doing so, this research contributes to fostering an informed and effective framework for encouraging the political involvement of young people, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and participatory European society.

It also aims to contribute to the academic and policy debate on the role of young people in European democracy and the need to develop inclusive and effective policies that promote young people's active participation in political decision-making. By better

understanding the motivations and barriers faced by young people, we will be able to build a more promising and participatory future for Europe. Our research will explore how young people's active political participation can influence the formulation of policies that are more sensitive and responsive to their needs, as well as promoting equal opportunities and representativeness in democratic institutions.

On the other hand, we will focus on understanding how the inclusion of young people in the political process can foster a strong and participatory democratic culture, where the diversity of perspectives and experiences contributes to more informed and equitable decision-making. Throughout the study, we aim to identify good practices and successful experiences that have led to greater empowerment of young people in the political arena. We will also examine the challenges and obstacles that still exist in this area and propose recommendations for promoting and strengthening youth political participation in different national contexts. This work aims to generate meaningful knowledge that can be used by governments, organisations, and relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of policies and programmes that promote the active and meaningful participation of young people in the political sphere.

In order to provide a comprehensive and coherent approach, we will consider different national and regional contexts across Europe, recognizing the diversity of realities and challenges faced by young people in each country. Additionally, our study will be based on a rigorous review and analysis of academic research and empirical data, as well as constructive dialogue with experts, youth organisations, and political leaders committed to promoting meaningful civic participation of young people.

Based on our findings, we will present practical and actionable recommendations that can be adopted by governments, institutions, civil society organisations, and key actors in the implementation of inclusive policies and programs aimed at strengthening youth civic engagement. By highlighting the relevance of this issue and providing concrete guidance, we hope that this work will serve as a valuable tool for those interested in creating an enabling environment for the active and meaningful participation of young people in building a democratic and sustainable future for Europe as a whole.

2. Methodology

In all social research, it is crucial to follow a correct methodological development that considers and adheres to all the stages involved. Each step contributes to the research process, providing an approach to the problem at hand.

In this regard, we have developed a methodology that allows us to comprehensively and thoroughly address the subject of our project. To ensure the research reflects the reality of young people's participation as active and digital citizens, we have employed various tools and techniques to gather data and resources.

Given the specific nature of our study's focus, it is essential to ensure the quality of the content and data obtained. By doing so, we can produce reliable results that are useful for other research and future work in this field.

The fact that this research will be conducted at the European level, encompassing fourteen countries, is an important factor that has been duly considered in the presented methodological approach. By including a wide range of countries and data from the European Union as a whole, the study aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

To ensure a sufficient and representative sample of the identified target groups, the research will utilise new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies (ICT). Leveraging ICT will enable the collection of data using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, which is especially beneficial given the geographical dispersion of the various actors and target groups involved in the study. This approach will help ensure a robust and diverse dataset that accurately reflects the perspectives and experiences of young people across the European countries under investigation.

The sources to be used for the research preparation will be categorised into the following types:

- **Primary sources.** These will directly provide data from the target groups of the research and the variables established by the research team. Similarly, the following techniques will be utilised:
 - Qualitative techniques: Those that will produce descriptive data, capturing people's own words, spoken or written, and observable behaviour. This research will employ discussion groups and interviews. Both techniques will be guided by a professional to gain insights into the problem under study and the perspectives of the groups involved. In the case of focus groups, participants will be selected beforehand to ensure a more specific and focused discussion.
 - Quantitative techniques: These are more structured and will enable the collection of numerical data that can be analysed in a more specific manner. Surveys will be conducted with the target groups involved in the research. The data obtained will be codified and analysed.

The aim of this study is to gather comprehensive and well-rounded data and to ensure that they reflect reality in order to address the problems at hand. To achieve this goal and utilising the techniques mentioned above, the following actions will be carried out to obtain data through primary sources:

- Discussion groups: A total of five meetings will be held to plan the research. They will be segmented as follows:
 - Two meetings will be held with young people between the ages of sixteen and thirty: one in person and the other online.

- Two will be aimed at youth workers: one face-to-face and one online.
- One focus group targeted at policy makers, to be conducted virtually.
- Surveys: Three surveys will be carried out:
 - A survey aimed at young people and targeting at least 1.000 young people in Europe.
 - A survey for youth workers, expecting at least 250 responses from people working in youth work across Europe.
 - An organisational survey to identify good practices and potential improvements in youth participation.
- **Secondary sources.** In addition to the data obtained directly through the aforementioned techniques, a review of data and information related to the object of study will be conducted. This will serve to complement the information we have gathered. The review will primarily consist of a thorough examination of academic and scientific articles related to our topic. Furthermore, this research will be completed with data obtained from Sociological and Political Studies Centres based in the countries involved in the study.

As mentioned above, the research will focus on studying a set of variables that are considered essential to the object of study. These variables include:

- Active participation of young people in political processes in their state.
- Digital participation of young people in political processes in their state.
- Influence of youth work on the active participation of young people.

Finally, this methodology will be compiled and presented in a document entitled “Consultation Framework”, which will consolidate all the consultation phases conducted during this research. The “Consultation Framework” will not only encompass the current phases but also lay the foundation for future stages that are vital to achieving a tangible impact on the target groups involved.

3. Target groups

Together with the methodology, we need to define the target groups that will be part of the research and towards whom the different information-gathering actions will be directed.

- **Youth:**

This group comprises people between the ages of 16 and 30. It was considered appropriate to include 16-years-olds as they will soon become part of the political systems of their countries and will actively participate in their societies. Recognizing that their opinions and perceptions of the subject under study will be essential to improve their active

engagement in society, their involvement in the research holds significant importance. Their input will be crucial in guiding the actions that may arise from the research results.

We have to be aware of the realities of this group, given their digital orientation and heavy reliance on social networks. Therefore, the proposed methodology has taken this factor into account in order to ensure optimal results and a sufficient sample for analysis.

- **Youth workers:**

Currently, youth work is acknowledged and recognized by various international organisations, including the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe's Youth Sector Strategy 2030 highlights the significance of youth work as a fundamental tool for fostering a society in which young people are actively engaged and involved.

In order to refer to this professional field, which is becoming increasingly well-known, we quote the definition given by the Council of Europe:

"Youth work is a broad term covering a variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature, carried out by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is carried out by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes with young people at the centre and on voluntary participation. Youth work is, par excellence, a social practice that works with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating the active participation and inclusion of young people in their communities and in decision-making".

- **Youth organisations:**

Youth facilities play a crucial role in providing young people with diverse opportunities for leisure and professional development. Moreover, they serve an important social function by expanding young people's possibilities and enhancing their prospects. In recent decades, the number of these organisations has grown across Europe, partly due to initiatives like Erasmus +. Their undeniable social impact is evident, as they offer enhanced opportunities to all participants. Consequently, they are a significant target group for this research, as they can serve as a pivotal avenue for reaching out to young individuals.

These organisations are directly involved in youth work, presenting an excellent opportunity to implement various actions that equip young people with tools and mechanisms to enhance their political participation. Within the research context, this group will be subject to diverse research techniques to gather more information on their influence on young people and the practices they already undertake in their daily activities, particularly those related to the project's theme.

- **Policy makers:**

The project in which the research will be conducted considers political decision-makers as one of the central pillars of modern societies. This is because they play a crucial role

in shaping policies that target young people, as well as other policies aimed at fostering active participation within society at large.

For the purpose of this research, a policy-maker is defined as any individual who is part of a governmental team within a public body and possesses the authority to implement public policies. This category includes members of the European Parliament and representatives from national chambers that serve the population of a country. Additionally, any person involved in the exercise of public service through a political office is also considered a policy-maker in this context.

As these definitions are not very specific, the analogous levels and institutions from which these policy makers may originate are mentioned:

- Municipal level: Municipalities and supra-municipal bodies.
- Regional level: Regional parliaments or bodies.
- National level: Chambers of People's Representatives and Chambers of Representatives by Territory.
- European level: European Union institutions (European Commission, Council of the European Union, European Council, European Parliament, etc.).
- International level: International organisations or informal participatory bodies.

It is worth noting that this research is not limited solely to the policy-makers themselves, but also includes public institutions involved in developing youth policies or representing this segment of society.

4. Theoretical approach

Political participation is an expansive field of study, encompassing various concepts and dimensions that shape the functioning of diverse democratic systems. In the context of this work, the objective is to approach the subject of this project from a theoretical standpoint. By identifying and developing the most pertinent concepts, we aim to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

- **European values:**

European values are perceived as a set of fundamental principles that guide and underpin the collective identity of the Member States of the European Union.

The European Union enshrines them in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty as follows:

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society

characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women.”

Any country wishing to join the European Union must share, respect, and promote these values, as expressed in Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union.

“Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply for membership of the Union.”

European values play an important role because member countries of the European Union are required to promote them, fostering greater societal involvement and instilling a sense of belonging among EU citizens. This represents one of the primary goals of the European Union.

- **E-inclusion:**

The use of ICT in daily and professional life is becoming increasingly prevalent, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital inclusion therefore aims to make Internet access more accessible and universal for all citizens, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable sectors and those who lack the knowledge and/or means to utilise it.

This concept encompasses two main aspects: first, ensuring access to digital tools, and second, fostering the development of necessary skills to use these tools effectively.

According to Sepulveda López (2018):

“The concept of digital inclusion has evolved beyond mere quantitative measures, such as providing access to the Internet and ICT tools. It now involves considering it as a social phenomenon, which includes an essential aspect: the process of digital literacy.”

The EU is taking concrete actions to turn e-inclusion into a reality. These actions include:

- Improving access to ICT.
- Supporting the development of ICT that helps people with disabilities to access the digital world.
- Empowering citizens.
- Promoting the participation of people at risk of exclusion in various aspects of public, social, and economic activities.

- **Active citizenship:**

The term “citizenship” denotes the status of belonging to a community.

According to the Council of Europe’s Handbook on Human Rights Education with Young People, “active citizenship” refers to the proactive engagement in community development and participation to enhance the quality of life for all community members.

Therefore, for the concept of active citizenship to thrive, citizens must demonstrate commitment and active involvement. This goes beyond merely voting in elections; it entails actively participating in different organisations and social movements that may exist in their region. By doing so, citizens contribute to addressing the various problems and challenges within their territory.

Jorge Castañeda's definition is a clear example of this:

"Active citizenship refers to the participation of individuals in public life and affairs. It can take place at local, national or international level. It refers to citizens who are aware of their membership of a local and global community and who take an active part in the life of that community by discussing its problems, promoting and supporting change and improvement, or resisting unwanted change."

- **Citizen participation:**

Citizen participation and democracy share a close relationship, as democratic governance acknowledges a foundation of rights based on freedom and equality, wherein citizens actively engage in the affairs of the state (Contreras and Montecinos, 2019).

The Ibero-American Charter on Citizen Participation in Public Administration (2009) emphasises that "Citizen participation in public administration strengthens the active role of citizens as members of their communities. It allows them to express and defend their interests, draw from their experiences, and enhance their capabilities, thus contributing to improving the overall quality of life for the population."

It holds immense importance to mobilise citizens and foster a high level of participation in all aspects of social life. Such involvement will lead to exponential improvements in public administration and various social movements and actions initiated by citizens.

- **Political participation:**

Political participation encompasses the actions undertaken by citizens to influence the political process, whether through established channels such as voting in elections or referendums, or through other means like demonstrations or mobilizations.

Araceli Mateos defines political participation as "any activity by citizens aimed at intervening in the selection of those in power and/or influencing state policies."

The most common form of political participation is electoral participation, which involves voting to appoint representatives. However, this type of participation typically concludes with the conclusion of an election. In recent years, the importance of new forms of political participation has grown, as they enable citizens to engage in decision-making processes between elections.

The existing forms of political participation are as follows:

- Election of representatives.

- Actions to influence decisions.
- Actions to demonstrate against or in favour of the decisions taken.
- Participation in associations of a political nature.

- **Digital Citizenship:**

As per the article “Digital Citizenship: Appropriate Technological Behavior,” citizenship can be defined as:

“The collection of behavioural norms associated with the use of technology.” These norms are categorised into 9 general areas of conduct, aiming to encompass the complete intricacies of the concept and the consequences of both positive and negative technology usage.”

The authors identify the following nine areas related to digital citizenship:

- Etiquette: The standards of behaviour or appropriate ways of dealing with electronic media.
- Communication: The electronic exchange of information.
- Education: The process of teaching, learning about, and using technology.
- Access: Full electronic participation in society.
- Commerce: The electronic buying and selling of goods and services.
- Liability: Responsibility for events and actions in electronic media.
- Rights: Individual freedom in the digital world.
- Ergonomics: Physical well-being in a digital technological world.
- Risk: Precautions to ensure safety in the digital environment.

This concept is of utmost importance with the emergence of new digital technologies, as it provides society with guidelines to act responsibly and appropriately.

- **Digital divide:**

This term refers to disparity in access to and utilisation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) among various social groups.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines the digital divide as: “The gap between individuals, residential areas, business areas, and geographical locations of different socio-economic levels in their opportunities to access new information and communication technologies and to use the Internet, reflecting differences both between and within countries” (OECD, 2001).

To mitigate the effects of the digital divide, the EU is implementing eInclusion through a range of actions.

- **Digital rights:**

The digital transformation that has unfolded in recent decades has profoundly affected people's lives, contributing to substantial economic and social development. Consequently, it has become imperative to establish and protect citizens' digital rights.

The EU, through the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade, outlines the fundamental rights to be safeguarded while accessing new digital technologies, products, and services.

The primary fundamental rights encompass data protection, the right to privacy, non-discrimination, gender equality, as well as principles like consumer protection, technological and network neutrality, trustworthiness, and inclusiveness.

- **Governance:**

The concept of governance is a topic of ongoing debate, leading to various definitions that possess subtle nuances.

Governance is perceived as a model of participatory government, wherein new actors participate in decision-making, creating fresh centres of power and decentralising the decision-making process.

The EU defines governance as "the rules, processes, and behaviours that influence the exercise of power."

Another definition provided by the RAE is: "An art or method of governing that seeks to achieve sustainable economic, social, and institutional development, promoting a healthy balance between the state, civil society, and the market economy."

It is essential to emphasise that governance aims to achieve development by bringing together different actors in the territory.

A third definition, introducing a new nuance to the term, is: "determines who holds power, who makes decisions, how other actors are involved in the process, and how they are held accountable." (Institute on Governance, 2014).

Here, accountability becomes significant, as it is closely linked to governance. Although those in power have the legitimacy to make decisions, they must justify their decisions to enhance democracy by acknowledging the diverse voices of actors in the political landscape. As Manuel Zafra (2017, p. 234) states: "The counterpoint to the independence of the representative is responsibility, accountability."

5. Contextualisation of the situation in Europe



European Union

Official name	European Union
Capital city	Brussels
Population	447 million
Population <30	73 million
Main official languages	English, French, and German
Coin	Euro
Surface	4.233.255 km ²
GDP	\$17.818 trillion
HDI	0.896
Average internet speed	90.56 Mbps
Internet access	90%

Type of state	Supranational Union
Administrative division	27 member states
Number of politicians in the parliament	705
Freedom house index	Moderate (no score)

In the European Union, active citizenship is defined as the active participation of citizens in the political, social, and economic life of the community. To promote active citizenship, the EU has implemented various measures and policies, including civic education, lifelong learning, and the utilisation of new technologies. These initiatives aim to encourage citizens' civic engagement, foster a sense of belonging to the European community, and stimulate their active involvement in decision-making processes, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and participatory Europe (Blanco, M.E. (2012)).

In the context of European higher education, a significant challenge lies in promoting the development of active digital citizenship, which encompasses students' engagement and participation in cyberactivism. Despite high levels of digital literacy, the use of the Internet for promoting active digital citizenship remains low, leading to a new digital divide. This situation underscores the importance of promoting strategies and resources that encourage students to use digital tools in a critical and responsible manner, facilitating their active participation in the digital sphere and contributing to the growth of informed, engaged, and empowered digital citizenship (Fernández-Prados, J.S., & Lozano-Díaz, A. (2021)).

In recent years, the European Union has taken a prominent role in promoting and advancing the Digital Single Market initiative. This initiative is strategically designed to address the rapid technological advancements and significantly impact economic relations within

the EU Member States and on the international stage. The primary goal of this strategy is to effectively respond to the emerging digital dynamics by facilitating seamless cross-border exchange of goods, services, and data. It also aims to foster innovation, enhance competitiveness, and establish a suitable regulatory framework for the digital environment. The Digital Single Market seeks to stimulate economic growth, bolster the competitiveness of European businesses, and instil consumer confidence in the digital sphere, thereby creating an environment conducive to the sustainable and prosperous development of the digital economy in Europe (Ramiro Troitiño, D. (2021)).

In the realm of citizenship education, the European Union has taken significant strides in promoting various initiatives, recommendations, and policies through both the Council of Europe and its own internal initiatives. A focal point of these efforts has been the promotion of European citizenship, which became a reality following the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Citizenship education plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with the essential skills necessary for active and committed participation in post-modern democracies. Through educational programs, it aims to instil knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, along with the values of solidarity, equality, and respect for diversity. The ultimate goal of citizenship education is to empower individuals by providing them with the necessary tools to engage in informed participation in collective decision-making, thereby bolstering the democratic fabric and encouraging citizen involvement in shaping an inclusive and participatory society (Cortés, Á.C., Gómez, J.F., & López, J.M. (2016)).

Indeed, there is a concerning trend towards de-democratisation in the current state context, both generally and within the European Union. Despite the emphasis on active citizenship and participation, there is a growing sense of scepticism towards institutions and the existing status quo. This sentiment can be attributed, in part, to the influence of neo-liberal governmentality and the growing dominance of private entities over citizen power. As a result, citizens' ability to influence decision-making processes has weakened, eroding confidence in democratic institutions' capacity to effectively address societal challenges and meet the demands of the people. To address this situation, it is crucial to promote greater transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Additionally, strengthening democratic checks and balances becomes essential to safeguard the fundamental principles of democracy and foster an active and engaged citizenry (Azkune Torres, J. (2022)).

The political participation of young people in the European Union has been a topic of concern in recent years, with several studies and surveys shedding light on their involvement in the political process. Notably, the 2019 European elections witnessed a record turnout, largely driven by a significant increase in young people's participation, especially among those under the age of 25 (+14 percentage points) and those aged 25 to 39 (+12 percentage points). The overall turnout for these elections reached 50.6%, the highest since 1994, and 19 Member States observed an increase in voter turnout. These data reflect a notable surge in political awareness and participation among young people in the European Union, signifying a positive trend towards strengthening democracy

and ensuring representation of this generation in decision-making processes (European Parliament (2019)).

Despite the significant increase in turnout for the 2019 European elections, the participation of young people in electoral processes in the European Union remains alarmingly low and falls well below the average compared to other age groups. Despite efforts to boost their engagement, challenges persist in motivating and empowering young people to actively participate in political decision-making and exercise their right to vote. It is imperative to promote strategies that encourage young people's political participation and empower them to have a meaningful voice in the democratic process. By doing so, we can ensure fair representation and inclusion of their interests and concerns in the EU's political agenda (European Parliament (2023)).

Over the past few decades, there has been a noticeable downward trend in turnout at European elections, declining from 61.99% in 1979 to 42.54% in 2014. This decline in voter turnout raises concerns about citizens' engagement and connection with the political process at the European level. It is essential to address this trend and promote measures that encourage greater citizen participation, enhance trust in democratic institutions, and ensure effective representation in decisions that impact the European Union and its citizens (Youth 4 Europe (2018)).

Across all European countries, it has been observed that young voters tend to abstain from voting more than the general population. An example is the 2009 European elections, where the youth abstention rate was nearly 65%. This high abstention rate among young people presents a challenge for civic participation and political engagement. It is crucial to investigate the underlying reasons for this trend and take action to encourage greater involvement of young people in electoral processes, thereby strengthening democracy in Europe (The New Federalist. (2023)).



Bulgaria

Official name	The Republic of Bulgaria
Capital city	Sofia
Population	7 million
Population <30	2 million
Main official languages	Bulgarian
Coin	Bulgarian lev
Surface	110,993.6 km ²
GDP	86 billion
HDI	0.796
Average internet speed	115.15 Mbps
Internet access	87.31 %

Type of state	Unitary Parliamentary Republic
Administrative division	28 regions
Number of politicians in the parliament	240
Freedom house index	79/100

In the case of Bulgaria, the use of digital media and the Internet has played a crucial role in promoting active citizenship. Online platforms and social media have been instrumental in organising spontaneous demonstrations in the country, driven by a sense of distrust in the political system and a desire for more impactful action. The use of digital media has amplified citizens' voices, transcending physical limitations and reaching a broader audience. Social networks and other online channels have also facilitated the dissemination of information, event organisation, and the creation of support networks.

These virtual demonstrations have sparked debates and brought citizens' concerns and demands into the spotlight. Bulgarian citizens have effectively challenged the status quo and exerted pressure on authorities to address their grievances. With the continuous development of digital media, it is likely that Bulgarian citizens will continue to leverage these tools to express themselves, advocate for change, and promote active citizen participation in decision-making. The strategic use of digital media will further enhance citizens' capacity to drive meaningful change in Bulgarian society (Gueorguieva, V. (2012)).

Computer-mediated intercultural communication (CMIC) courses have proven to be a potent tool for promoting active citizenship in educational institutions across the UK, Bulgaria, and Uruguay. These online courses facilitate exchanges of ideas and encourage intercultural understanding and mutual respect among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Integrated into educational programs at various levels, these courses offer students valuable opportunities to participate in debates, research projects, and virtual group discussions.

Beyond honing intercultural communication skills, CMIC courses also foster global awareness and empathy towards different cultural realities. They serve as a platform to address pertinent issues of social justice and human rights, empowering students to explore relevant topics and take concrete actions to effect positive change within their communities and beyond (Fay, R., Katsarska, M., & Stefani, M.D. (2008)).

CMICs and the use of social media have been very effective tools in promoting active citizenship in Bulgaria. CMICs aim to raise students' awareness of online communication and encourage global participation, and social media and other platforms have facilitated the organisation of local referendums and empowered citizens by providing a place for them to express their opinions and participate in decision-making. These initiatives promote intercultural awareness, citizen participation, and constructive dialogue (Zankova, B. (2018)). Although the results of the referendums were not binding on government bodies, they demonstrated the level of social activity in the country, supported by the internet.

It is also important to mention Bulgaria's participation in the EduMAP project, funded by Horizon 2020, which focuses on the study of social participation in the context of adult education in Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia. The main objective of the project is to analyse the diversity of practices and cultural contexts among learners in these countries, with a special focus on young citizens aged 16-30. The project aims to provide recommendations and guidance to policymakers and educational institutions to ensure that adult education policies and practices are appropriately designed and implemented to promote active, participatory citizenship among young people.

By examining in detail the specific characteristics and needs of these young people, the EduMAP project aims to identify the barriers and challenges they face in participating in society and to propose strategies and approaches to promote their active involvement. The project's findings and recommendations are expected to contribute to more inclusive and effective education policies that foster civic participation and participatory citizenship in these countries. Ultimately, the goal is to build more equitable and dynamic societies where young people can fully exercise their rights and contribute to the social and political development of their communities (Tóth, R. (2016)).

When it comes to interest in political participation among young people in Bulgaria, a study conducted by the Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sport in 2020 found that the majority of young Bulgarians, 73%, are not interested in politics, while only a small percentage, 3%, are very interested, and 22% are quite interested. Despite this high level of disinterest in political life, young Bulgarians say that they always or often vote. A Flash Eurobarometer 478 report conducted in 2019 revealed that a significant 71% of young Bulgarians had participated in local, national, or European Parliament elections at some point in their lives. This data raises the paradox of low political inclination among young Bulgarians but active electoral participation in democratic decision-making in the country (Youthwiki (2023)).

However, the 2017 parliamentary elections in Bulgaria recorded a remarkably low turnout among young people, with only 14.9 percent of them participating in the electoral process. This low level of participation raises concerns about the political engagement and civic participation of Bulgarian youth, as well as the need to address the factors contributing to this lack of interest in politics (Kitanova, M. (2018)).



Cyprus

Official name	The Republic of Cyprus
Capital city	Nicosia
Population	1 million
Population <30	431 thousand
Main official languages	Greek, Turkish
Coin	Euro
Surface	9,251 km ²
GDP	30.864 billion
HDI	0.896
Average internet speed	80.97 Mbps
Internet access	94 %

Type of state	Unitary Parliamentary Republic
Administrative division	6 Districts
Number of politicians in the parliament	56
Freedom house index	92/100

In Cyprus, programmes and projects have been implemented to promote active citizenship among young adults and students. These programmes focus on aspects such as environmental citizenship, responsible research and innovation, and digital citizenship. One example is the Education for Environmental Citizenship (EEC) programme, which develops the environmental engagement of secondary school students. A case study was carried out in Cyprus to evaluate the impact of an intervention based on the EEC pedagogical approach (Community Education Approach). Additionally, research, innovation, and digital education programmes have been implemented to promote active citizenship in various fields. These efforts provide young people with the necessary skills to become engaged and responsible citizens (Hadjichambis, A.C., Paraskeva-Hadjichambi, D., & Georgiou, Y. (2022)).

A study was conducted in Cyprus to evaluate the impact of a Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and Active Citizenship module on Year 11 Biology students. This research was based on the pedagogical approach of Socio-Scientific Issue Based Learning (SSIBL). The study highlighted the importance of integrating RRI and active citizenship into the educational curriculum to empower students as responsible and critical citizens capable of making informed and ethical decisions in relation to science and society (Hadjichambis, A.C., Georgiou, Y., Paraskeva Hadjichambi, D., Kyza, E.A., Agesilaou, A., & Mappouras, D.G. (2018)).

In terms of voter turnout in Cyprus, there has been a slight decrease in recent years, from 66.74% in 2016 to a slightly lower percentage in the most recent elections (IDEA (2023)).

The recorded turnout in the 2021 general elections was 65.73%. This figure indicates that there is room for improvement in terms of political participation of young Cypriots, which can be the subject of attention and action by the authorities and organisations to promote greater involvement of youth in the democratic process of the country (Christodoulou Makri, S. (2021)). This reflects the need to promote greater citizen participation, especially among young people, to strengthen democracy and ensure broader and more diverse representation in the country's political process (IDEA (2023)).

According to the Global Youth Development Index, Cyprus ranks 88th out of 181 countries in terms of youth political and civic participation. This position reflects the need to promote greater civic and political engagement among Cypriot youth, as well as to strengthen structures and opportunities that enable them to actively participate in decision-making and contribute to the development of their country (Nikolaou, S. (2021)).

On the other hand, we find a low level of interest in politics among Cypriot youth, according to the results of a survey conducted by the Peace Research Institute in Oslo, which found that 63.6% of Turkish Cypriot youth and 46% of Greek Cypriot youth showed little or no interest in politics. Furthermore, the survey revealed a widespread lack of trust in politicians and political parties among youth in Cyprus, indicating the need to promote greater participation and civic engagement among youth in both communities (Dizdaroğlu, C. (2020)).



Denmark

Official name	Kingdom of Denmark
Capital city	Copenhagen
Population	6 million
Population <30	2.1 million
Main official languages	Danish, German
Coin	Danish Krone
Surface	42,943 km ²
GDP	390.677 billion
HDI	0.948
Average internet speed	270.27 Mbps
Internet access	95.16%

Type of state	Unitary Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy
Administrative division	5 regions
Number of politicians in the parliament	179
Freedom house index	97/100

To begin with, one of Denmark's most important resources for promoting active citizenship among its population is the use of user-generated geotagged content on the Internet. This content provides information about collective memory and the importance of tagged places as a catalyst for citizen participation. It helps to understand the relationship between places and history, promoting knowledge, community connectedness, and heritage preservation. Furthermore, it serves as a platform for sharing experiences and strengthening Danes' sense of identity and belonging (Arrigoni, G., & Galani, A. (2018)).

In addition, Denmark has introduced civic and citizenship education as an integral part of the education system in schools, adapting to the use of online resources and platforms. These digital resources allow students to access up-to-date information, engage in collaborative discussions and projects, and develop critical skills for civic participation. This holistic and technologically advanced approach strengthens civic awareness and prepares students to be responsible and engaged citizens in the digital age (Bruun, J.V. (2021)).

Another factor to consider in this country is the Scandinavian welfare model, which promotes active citizenship through the choices citizens make in their daily lives, as well as promoting parallel governance and the empowerment of communities and individuals. Citizens are free to make choices based on quality information, with a focus on positively influencing their well-being, promoting participation in decision-making, and contributing

to society. This approach creates an inclusive and engaged society (Sivesind, K.H., Trætteberg, H.S., & Saglie, J. (2017)).

We should also be aware that collaborative digital platforms in Denmark, such as Refugees Welcome, promote social inclusion and active citizenship by connecting people offering accommodation with refugees looking for a home. These platforms foster social interaction, mutual learning, and the building of lasting friendships, contributing to a more supportive and welcoming society (Ferrari, M., Bernardi, M., Mura, G., & Diamantini, D. (2020)).

For these reasons, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play a crucial role in promoting active citizenship in this country. Through the Internet and social networks, they facilitate the dissemination of information, the mobilisation of citizens, and the raising of awareness of social issues. ICTs make it possible to organise collective action and amplify citizens' voices. However, there are also challenges, such as the digital divide and the manipulation of information. It is important to address these challenges and ensure an equitable and responsible use of ICTs to bring about positive changes in society (Papa, V., & Milioni, D.L. (2013)).

To meet these challenges, planning strategies in the age of active citizenship focus on promoting citizen participation and self-organisation in spatial planning. Denmark, the Netherlands, and England stand out for their successful citizen initiatives. These countries promote participatory planning projects, inclusive and accessible urban spaces, and environmental protection with the active involvement of citizens. Collaboration between communities and local authorities is key to shaping a sustainable environment, reflecting the needs of communities in public space planning and overcoming the obstacles they may face (Boonstra, B. (2015)).

Another major effort in this country is to promote children's digital citizenship in the context of a consumer culture. Public policies are continuously being developed to protect children's online participation and rights. These policies address issues such as privacy, security, digital literacy, and active participation. It is also essential to involve children in decision-making and promote cooperation between different stakeholders, creating a safe digital environment and fostering responsible digital citizenship from an early age (Tomaz, R., Guedes, B., & Martins, I., 2022).

On the other hand, young people in Denmark demonstrate remarkably high levels of political participation compared to other countries. According to the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Study, Danish young people are the most democratic of the 38 nationalities surveyed. This finding indicates their strong civic engagement and active involvement in the political process, reinforcing their roles as engaged citizens in Danish society (Raavad, J., 2023). In recent years, Denmark has maintained a consistently high voter turnout, exceeding 80%. The emphasis placed on education, civic engagement, and youth participation in political parties and international forums contributes to this high level of youth political participation in the country. These practices foster an active political culture among young Danes, who significantly contribute to the democratic process and the political and social life of the country.



Germany

Official name	The Federal Republic of Germany
Capital city	Berlin
Population	84 million
Population <30	24,8 million
Main official languages	German
Coin	Euro
Surface	357,592 km ²
GDP	4.031 trillion
HDI	0.942
Average internet speed	153.77 Mbps
Internet access	91.41 %

Type of state	Federal Parliamentary Republic
Administrative division	16 states
Number of politicians in the parliament	736
Freedom house index	94/100

In Germany, active citizenship via the internet takes various forms, such as political activism, participation in urban planning, and involvement in civil society movements. Digital tools enable citizens to express their opinions, discuss concerns, and mobilise for important causes. Social networks and digital platforms extend the reach and visibility of these efforts, facilitating wider dissemination of messages and goals (Schulze, H., Hohner, J., Greipl, S., Girghuber, M., Desta, I., & Rieger, D., 2022).

eParticipation tools have also been used in urban planning in the country to promote citizen involvement. These tools enhance transparency, spatiality, and interactivity, bridging the gap between citizens and decision-making processes. They provide access to relevant information about the urban fabric, promote clear understanding of urban development in physical space, and encourage interaction between citizens and planners. Consequently, these tools foster civic cooperation and contribute to more democratic and sustainable urban development (Damurski, L., 2012).

Civil society movements in Germany have embraced eParticipation tools to organise, inform, communicate, and disseminate public and political messages. These tools have revitalised social and political action, promoting new forms of engagement and participation among citizens (Mambrey, P., 2008). Furthermore, digital tools have strengthened young migrants' commitment to social justice and facilitated their inclusion in migrant communities. These tools allow young people to connect, share experiences, access educational and cultural resources, and promote empowerment and active participation in society. They also facilitate the creation of support networks between

migrants and local communities, fostering social cohesion and integration. Digital tools play a crucial role in raising awareness, promoting social justice, disseminating messages, and generating debates that challenge stereotypes and foster greater understanding of this group (Cecconi, A., Guarino, A., & Albanesi, C., 2022).

The use of digital tools and social media for political engagement has both advantages and challenges. While they facilitate participation and the exchange of ideas, they can also lead to distractions and the spread of misinformation. Distractions on social media may divert attention from important political issues and limit young people's real political engagement. To address these issues, promoting responsible social media use through educational strategies is essential. Additionally, combating misinformation and polarisation online requires media literacy and critical thinking skills to distinguish reliable information from disinformation.

Despite the challenges, digital tools and social media have great potential to increase political participation. These platforms offer an inclusive space where young people can express their opinions, connect with other activists, and mobilise for political causes. They provide quick access to information and opportunities for participation, fostering civic engagement and the formation of active communities (Matthes, J., 2022).

Regarding political participation in Germany, the 2019 European elections saw an overall voter turnout of 61.4%, with lower percentages among younger age groups. However, in the 2021 German parliamentary elections, the overall turnout increased significantly to 76.6%, and higher turnout percentages were observed among younger age groups compared to other population groups. These results indicate increased involvement of young people in the electoral process, signifying a positive change in their political participation in Germany (YouthWiki, 2023).

Nonetheless, like in other EU countries, voter turnout in Germany has shown a declining trend over time, with a peak in the 1970s and 1980s when turnout was over 90%. Since the reunification of the country, voter turnout has stabilised around 80%, reflecting a relatively high level of civic engagement among German citizens in the electoral process compared to neighbouring countries (Facts about Germany, 2020).



Greece

Official name	Hellenic Republic
Capital city	Athens
Population	10.5 million
Population <30	3.1 million
Main official languages	Greek
Coin	Euro
Surface	131,957 km ²
GDP	239.300 billion
HDI	0.887
Average internet speed	56.43 Mbps
Internet access	85.49%

Type of state	Unitary Parliamentary Republic
Administrative division	13 regions
Number of politicians in the parliament	300
Freedom house index	86/100

Active citizenship via the internet in Greece encompasses various forms, including political participation, involvement in local initiatives, and participation in educational programs. Research conducted during the financial crisis in Greece shows that users who engage in politics through social networks and other online channels are more likely to be politically engaged in multiple ways. Additionally, gender influences online political engagement, while age plays a significant role in offline political engagement, emphasising the importance of digital platforms in promoting active citizenship and political participation in Greek society (Papagiannidis, S., & Manika, D., 2016).

In Greece, digital platforms have proven effective in engaging citizens in local initiatives. For example, a digital platform was implemented on the island of Rhodes to allow the public to report sightings of feral goats, which posed safety risks and caused damage to agriculture and the environment. This initiative demonstrated how digital media can facilitate citizen participation in solving local problems and raise awareness of environmental and safety issues (Tsakmakidou, A., Stamatis, P. J., & Patta-Apostolidi, E., 2021).

The Roma Political School of Greece has been instrumental in empowering Roma women and promoting their inclusion and participation in social and political events. This initiative highlights how active citizenship promotion can address specific needs within society and take various forms (Konstantinou, A., Papakonstantinou, T., & Korres, M. P., 2022). The program aims to equip Roma women with the knowledge and skills necessary for active participation in their communities. Additionally, a revision of the Classics course at the educational level focuses on making the texts and context more accessible and relevant

to students, promoting greater intercultural understanding and active participation among students (Bird, J. L., Osborne, M., & Blagburn, B., 2022).

Regarding political participation, young voters in Greece constitute about 18% of the electorate. However, politicians face challenges in winning their support. A study by the think tank Eteron found that 82% of young Greeks intend to exercise their right to vote, but only 35% of them believe that elections can bring significant improvements. Economic growth and inflation are among the key issues they are concerned about (Tagaris, K., 2023).



Ireland

Official name	Republic of Ireland
Capital city	Dublin
Population	5 million
Population <30	1.8 million
Main official languages	Irish, English
Coin	Euro
Surface	70,273 km ²
GDP	516 billion
HDI	0.945
Average internet speed	151.32 Mbps
Internet access	94%

Type of state	Unitary parliamentary republic
Administrative division	4 provinces
Number of politicians in the parliament	160
Freedom house index	97/100

In Ireland, various forms of Internet usage, such as online participation, digital storytelling, and community-based learning programs, facilitate active citizenship. Digital connectivity holds significant potential for enhancing civic engagement and political participation among both young people and adults. A notable example of active online citizenship in Ireland is the use of adult education programs to promote civic participation, addressing social exclusion and marginalisation by encouraging active involvement in society. These programs equip individuals with the tools and knowledge to engage with community issues and contribute to collective well-being (Huegler, N., & Kersh, N., 2021).

Additionally, digital storytelling and community-based learning methods can be employed to explore development education, involving tertiary students and individuals with intellectual and neurological disabilities. These approaches foster inclusivity and allow diverse perspectives to intertwine, promoting active and compassionate citizenship. Digital storytelling enables participants to share experiences and knowledge, raising awareness and cultivating empathy for different realities. Meanwhile, community-based learning tackles social challenges and promotes positive change, strengthening civic participation and responsibility for collective well-being (Cotter, G., 2017).

This innovative approach enables engagement with social justice issues both globally and locally, employing technology-enabled methods to build empathy and understanding across diverse groups. Nevertheless, research shows that while young people in Ireland have high levels of social responsibility values, their participation in both online and offline civic activities is limited. This emphasises the need to explore effective strategies and

tools to encourage more active and meaningful youth civic engagement, leveraging the potential of digital platforms and initiatives that foster active citizenship (Silke, C., Brady, B., Dolan, P., & Boylan, C., 2019).

The social context plays a vital role in shaping young people's civic values and behaviour, influenced by parents, peers, schools, and the community. In this context, online platforms offer opportunities for young people to engage in civic activities and cultivate a sense of active citizenship, overcoming geographical barriers and encouraging participation in politically relevant matters.

Furthermore, the internet has served as a tool to gather relevant information and participate in political activities during election periods in Ireland, providing citizens with access to resources and opportunities for engagement in the democratic process. Such digital initiatives can stimulate civic participation and raise political awareness, empowering young people to exercise their voice and actively contribute to society (Sudulich, M.L., 2011).

According to a report on electoral participation by civil society organisations in 2011, 62% of 18-25 year olds exercised their right to vote in the general election, marking a significant increase from the 50% recorded in 2002 (YouthWiki, 2022).

The Irish Youth Policy Framework 2014-2020 defines young people as those aged between 15 and 24. However, Ireland faces significant challenges concerning its youth population, with the highest number of young people under 18 at high risk of poverty in the EU. Moreover, it ranks fourth among countries with the highest percentage of 15-24 year olds not in education, employment, or training, with 18.4% of the population in this situation. Despite this, funding for youth work services supported by the Department for Children and Young People has decreased by 30% over the last five years, from €73.1 million to €51.4 million. These services play a vital role in every community in Ireland, reaching almost 383,000 young people (Youth Policy, 2014).



Italy

Official name	Italian Republic
Capital city	Rome
Population	59 million
Population <30	9 million
Main official languages	Italian
Coin	Euro
Surface	301.230 km ²
GDP	\$2.169 trillion
HDI	0.895
Average internet speed	144.34 Mbps
Internet access	91.45%

Type of state	Unitary Parliamentary Republic
Administrative division	20 regions
Number of politicians in the parliament	400+200
Freedom house index	90/100

In Italy, the promotion of active citizenship through the use of the Internet and digital platforms has been recognized, emphasising the importance of digital and media literacy in building an informed and engaged citizenry, especially among young people. The National Plan for a Digital School in Italy, implemented in 2015, aimed to improve digital literacy and promote the use of the Internet as a tool for knowledge and civic engagement.

In general, Italian teenagers have demonstrated digital literacy and a positive attitude towards the media, with females, in some cases, even outperforming males in these skills. This suggests that young people take advantage of digital opportunities to inform themselves, engage in debates, and express their opinions on various online platforms. These digital skills and positive attitudes are key to promoting active citizenship in Italy, as they enable young people to interact effectively with the digital environment and contribute actively to society (Buonauro, A., & Domenici, V. (2020)).

Online platforms and digital collaboration tools play a key role in promoting active citizenship and social inclusion. A prominent example is the Refugees Welcome platform, which facilitates contact between people willing to offer accommodation and refugees looking for a place to live. This initiative not only promotes social inclusion by providing a safe and welcoming home for those in need but also active citizenship by involving all participants in collaborative and supportive activities. Through this platform, meaningful human relationships are created that transcend cultural barriers and promote a sense

of community and shared responsibility in society (Ferrari, M., Bernardi, M., Mura, G., & Diamantini, D. (2020)).

On the other hand, Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) was implemented in Italian secondary schools as a strategy to promote active citizenship among students. Over a period of two years, 43 secondary school students participated in this intervention, and it was observed that YPAR succeeded in reducing hierarchy, facilitating cooperation in group activities, and giving a voice to young people, generating a change in students' perception of their school environment, as well as their views on participation and active citizenship. This experience demonstrated that actively involving young people and empowering them to take part in decisions that affect their lives can have a significant impact on their civic development and on building a more participatory and engaged society (Albanesi, C., Prati, G., Guarino, A., & Cicognani, E. (2021)).

The CATCH-EyoU project aimed to investigate the formation of active citizenship in the European Union among young Italians, analysing the interrelationship between different forms of participation, mobility, and dimensions of global citizenship. The study sought to understand how young Italians engage in civic activities and how their participation is influenced by their mobility, both locally and globally, and how these factors contribute to the construction of active citizenship in the European context. The project collected data from Italian adolescents and young adults and examined several variables, such as age, gender, household income, immigrant background, mobility, civic and democratic values, empowerment, tolerance towards immigrants and refugees, organisational affiliation, social trust, individual and collective political efficacy, and different types of participation (online, civic, mainstream political, and protest). Through this comprehensive analysis, we sought to understand how these variables influence the construction of active citizenship and civic engagement of young people in Italy (Cicognani, E., Noack, P., & Macek, P. (2019)).

According to a study by the European Commission, the participation of young people in representative democracy in the Italian elections shows that voters aged 18-24 had a turnout of 43.60%, while voters aged 25-39 had a turnout of 57.20%. These data reflect the level of civic and political engagement of young people in Italy and their importance as a demographic group in the electoral process (YouthWiki (2023)).

With regard to data on young people's interest in politics, a study carried out in 2020 showed that around 15% of Italian teenagers were in the habit of informing themselves about politics on a daily basis. This data reflects the interest and concern of a significant part of the youth population to understand and be aware of political issues in Italy. Access to political information plays a crucial role in the formation of young people's opinions and civic participation, underlining the importance of promoting civic education and access to reliable sources of information to strengthen their commitment to democracy and political participation (Statista Research Department. (2021)).

On the other hand, a comparative study of political engagement and participation among young Italians of native and immigrant origin revealed differences in participation rates. The rate of political participation was found to be slightly higher among first-generation

immigrants, at 4.7 per cent, while subsequent generations showed lower political participation, at 1.3 per cent. These findings highlight the importance of understanding and addressing the dynamics of political participation among different groups of young people in order to promote inclusive and equitable democracy (Riniolo, V., Ortensi, L.E. (2021)).

According to the Italian National Statistics Institute (ISTAT), a study carried out in 2020 shows that around 14% of young people between the ages of 14 and 24 are actively involved in politics, showing particular interest and commitment in demonstrations and marches as a means of expression and civic participation.

Following this line, as pointed out by Reuters, the potential abstention rate among young voters in Italy is estimated to be around 34-38%, suggesting a possible level of political disinterest or apathy among this demographic group in terms of participation in elections (Armellini, A., & Fabbri, R. (2022)).



Martinique (France)

Official name	Martinique
Capital city	Fort-de-France
Population	354.800
Population <30	68.516
Main official languages	French
Coin	Euro
Surface	1128 km ²
GDP	\$9.61 billion
HDI	0.848
Average internet speed	28.7 Mbps
Internet access	75%

Type of state	Single territorial collectivity
Administrative division	4 arrondissement
Number of politicians in the parliament	51
Freedom house index	89/100

Active citizenship in Martinique is promoted through the Internet by participating in online platforms that promote social justice and political participation. These platforms allow young people to debate, exchange views, and coordinate actions to address social challenges. In addition, digital education and media literacy are key to empowering citizens and promoting their informed and responsible participation online. By harnessing the power of the Internet, active citizenship in Martinique will be strengthened, and positive social change promoted.

Online platforms offer young people in Martinique the opportunity to be at the forefront of social justice movements. Through online discussions, they can actively participate and share their views on social, political, and ethical issues. These platforms allow them to express themselves freely, connect with other like-minded young people, and learn from different perspectives. By participating in these online discussions, young Martinicans can raise awareness about important issues such as inequality, racism, and environmental protection. They can mobilize others and promote meaningful change in their community. Online platforms also provide access to educational resources, up-to-date information, and tools to help them better understand the issues they care about. These platforms are also spaces of empowerment, where young people can find their voice and build their confidence as agents of change. As they engage in collective action, they develop leadership, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills (Brennan, M., Dolan, P., & Smith, A. (2022)).

As we have discussed, the platforms that are emerging on social networks facilitate political participation and civic responsibility by providing a space for sharing news, opinions, and political information. These platforms democratize political participation and encourage dialogue between users. They also help to mobilize citizens and promote political and social change. However, challenges such as misinformation and polarization need to be addressed. By actively promoting digital citizenship in Martinique, citizens engage in online activities that contribute to their community and foster a sense of belonging and can contribute to the well-being of their community and promote social inclusion (Bhagat, S., & Kim, D.J. (2022)).

On the other hand, online education and training programs in Martinique help unemployed and low-skilled young adults to develop active citizenship skills. These programs encourage their social, political, and economic participation by providing them with relevant skills and strengthening their commitment to the community. They also promote the development of vocational skills, critical thinking, and the ability to make decisions based on information from reliable sources. In addition, these programs promote entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, enabling young people to contribute to the growth of their community (Zarifis, G.K. (2021)).

When it comes to quantifying this civic participation, we find that the availability of specific data on youth political participation in Martinique is not easily accessible. However, we can look at general rates of political participation in the region. In the 2010 referendum on the status of Martinique, 55% of the electorate participated, and of those who voted, 79% rejected the proposal for Martinique to become an overseas territory. These data provide an overview of political participation in the region, although more specific information, particularly on youth participation, is needed to get a complete picture (BBC (2010)).

The percentage of the island's population who exercise their right to vote is also quite low. The 2022 French legislative elections saw a remarkably low turnout, with an average abstention rate of around 75% across the island. This reflects a worryingly low turnout in the region, which may indicate a lack of interest or motivation among voters to exercise their right to vote (Ministère de l'Intérieur et des Outre-Mer (2022)).



Poland

Official name	Republic of Poland
Capital city	Warsaw
Population	38 million
Population <30	7.5 million
Main official languages	Polish
Coin	Złoty
Surface	312.696 Km ²
GDP	\$748 billion
HDI	0.876
Average internet speed	183.93 Mbps
Internet access	93.33%

Type of state	Unitary Parliamentary Republic
Administrative division	16 voivodeships
Number of politicians in the parliament	460+100
Freedom house index	81/100

Active citizenship in Poland via the Internet is closely linked to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). A number of e-services have been developed in the European Union to support and facilitate active citizenship, although the extent to which they are used depends on access to the Internet, ICT skills, and knowledge of citizens' needs.

However, the digital divide remains a challenge in the country, especially in rural areas of Poland. Those who are digitally excluded, i.e. who do not use ICT, become "second-class" citizens and face increasing marginalisation in social life. This marginalisation has both social and financial consequences, as citizens cannot access services provided by the state, local authorities, or society at large, such as social networks.

In order to promote active citizenship through the Internet in Poland, a number of actions need to be taken. These include ensuring access to ICT, providing training, and raising public awareness so that citizens can better understand their own needs and make the most of the digital opportunities available (Miłosz, M., & Miłosz, E. (2013)).

In the field of active citizenship, especially of women in Poland, it is crucial to note that civic participation is becoming a form of social action that drives the expansion of the public sphere, strengthens democracy, and promotes the development of civil society. This participation is influenced by a number of factors, among which gender plays a significant role, being a highly relevant socio-cultural construct in the country (Tomczyk, J. (2020)).

On the other hand, an increase in Internet use was observed in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a cross-sectional survey of 102,928 Internet users in the country. The results of the study showed that aspects such as older age, higher education, living in an urban area, being active at work, having at least one chronic disease, and having visited a doctor in the last 12 months were significantly associated with citizens' internet use. These findings suggest that the internet can play a crucial role in promoting active citizenship in Poland, especially in the context of health prevention, as it was key to maintaining a constant and reliable communication channel with the country's citizens during the pandemic (Mularczyk-Tomczewska, P., Żarnowski, A., Gujski, M., Sytnik-Czetwertyński, J., Pańkowski, I., Smoliński, R., & Jankowski, M. (2022)).

When it comes to political participation, according to a 2021 article by Harvard University's Accountability in Action, voter turnout in Poland has been consistently high in recent years, with more than 60% of eligible voters exercising their right to vote in the 2019 parliamentary elections. This indicates a significant level of civic engagement and political participation in the country.

In 2014, as indicated by the European Commission, youth participation in political parties was evidenced by the membership of 16,500 young people, representing 5.5% of all members. Furthermore, within the political parties themselves, there were youth organisations in which under-18s represented more than 7% of all members. These data reflect the presence and active participation of young people in the political arena and demonstrate their interest in participating in political parties and decision-making (YouthWiki. (2021)).



Romania

Official name	Romania
Capital city	Bucharest
Population	19.1 million
Population <30	3 million
Main official languages	Romanian
Coin	Romanian leu
Surface	238.397 km ²
GDP	\$348.9 billion
HDI	0.821
Average internet speed	260.97 Mbps
Internet access	89.41%

Type of state	Unitary Semi-presidential republic
Administrative division	41 counties and the municipality of Bucharest
Number of politicians in the parliament	330+136
Freedom house index	83/100

Active citizenship through the Internet in Romania manifests itself in various forms, such as the creation of online communities, cyberactivism, Internet radio, and the use of social media. These platforms have been used to promote civic engagement, address social problems, and encourage citizens' political participation. A prominent example is the 'Weeping Houses' project, initiated by architecture students in Bucharest to protect the city's architectural heritage. Through online communities, they organised protests and raised public awareness, making the preservation of historic buildings a matter of public concern (Visan, L. (2011)).

Another example is the RadioActive Europe project, which aimed to promote inclusion, engagement, and informal learning for people excluded or at risk of exclusion across Europe through the use of internet radio and social media. The project implemented a pan-European online radio platform, incorporating Web 2.0 concepts and features, and linked it to innovative community-based pedagogical approaches to address inclusion, employment, and active citizenship (Ravenscroft, A., Rainey, C., Dellow, J., Brites, M.J., Auwärter, A., Balica, M., Rees, A., Camilleri, A.F., Jorge, A., Dahn, I., & Fenech, J. (2015)).

In Romania, social media also played an important role in shaping public space and voting behaviour. Movements such as 'United we save Rosia Montana' and the protests against shale gas exploitation used social media as a powerful organising and coordinating tool to promote citizen participation in the decision-making process. Moreover, during

the 2014 presidential elections, the dissatisfaction of the Romanian diaspora with the organisation of polling stations led to a significant increase in participation in the second round of the elections, largely thanks to the influence and facilitation of social media (Matiuța, C. (2015)).

In Romania, on the other hand, digital tools have been used as a response to social injustice. One example is the mobile phone applications developed to improve access to food in the country. These innovative technological solutions aim to address the issue of food scarcity and facilitate support to people in vulnerable situations, thus contributing to the fight against social injustice (Ioniță, I. (2018)).

When it comes to the political participation of young people in Romania, it can be said that it has undergone significant changes in recent years. According to a study by the Romanian Youth Council, 39.48% of young people aged 18-35 participated in the presidential elections in November 2019, while 43.2% participated in the European Parliament elections in May 2019. However, turnout fell to 31.48% in the 2016 parliamentary elections and further to 25.9% in the December 2020 parliamentary elections. These data reflect fluctuations in the political participation of young Romanians in different electoral processes (YouthWiki (2022)). In general, young voters in Romania are less likely to exercise their right to vote compared to the general electorate. The turnout of 18-24-year-olds is on average 17% lower than that of adults aged 25-50. This disparity demonstrates a gap in political participation between different age groups in the country (OECD (2019)).

Despite the low level of political participation of young people in Romania, a number of initiatives are underway to address this problem. One example is the 'Ambassadors for Youth Political Participation' program, as well as other efforts by NGOs and political organisations. These initiatives aim to promote and increase the participation of young people in the political process by providing them with opportunities to get involved, to be informed, and to exercise their right to vote. These actions aim to bridge the gap and encourage greater involvement of young people in decision-making and in shaping the political future of Romania (European Youth Portal (2023)).



Sint Maarten (Netherlands)

Official name	Sint Maarten
Capital city	Philipsburg
Population	42.938
Population <30	15.989
Main official languages	English and Dutch
Coin	Netherlands Antillean guilder
Surface	34 km ²
GDP	US\$1.185 billion
HDI	0.702
Average internet speed	8.00 Mbps
Internet access	70.8

Type of state	Parliamentary Representative Democracy within a Constitutional Monarchy
Administrative division	No division
Number of politicians in the parliament	15
Freedom house index	97/100

Active citizenship in Sint Maarten is manifested through various community initiatives and the increasing use of the Internet for communication and information exchange. A prominent example is the establishment of a Construction Learning Centre, which aims to promote knowledge of hurricane-resistant construction techniques among Sint Maarten's communities. This centre aims to optimise and establish an autonomous disaster response on the island, which has historically faced challenges related to natural disasters and governance issues (Bozek, A.S. (2020)).

The digital revolution has left its mark on Sint Maarten, and the Central Bank of Curaçao de Sint Maarten (CBCS) has responded by organising seminars on financial innovation and regulation. These seminars examine how the digital revolution is affecting the financial system, consumers, the economy, and central banks themselves. The CBCS seeks to address the challenges and opportunities arising from this digital transformation in the financial sector (Matroos-Lasten, L. (2018)).

In addition, Sint Maarten stands out as one of the leading countries in the training of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in Family Medicine in the United States, which is relevant to the health sector. This situation demonstrates the active participation of Sint Maarten citizens in the global health community and positions the country as a major contributor to the global health arena (Duvivier, R. J., Wiley, E., & Boulet, J. R. (2019)).

When we talk about the political participation of young people in Sint Maarten, we have to cover various aspects such as involvement in political organisations, voting, and participation in the development of policies and programs. The Sint Maarten Youth Parliament is a remarkable organisation that provides training in government, politics, parliamentary procedure, debate, critical thinking, and leadership skills to young people aged 12-24. This parliament is dedicated to representing the interests of the island's youth and advocating for sustainable development. Ultimately, it aims to give youth a voice and promote initiatives that foster a sustainable future, taking into account the needs of the present and future generations. Through its work, the Youth Parliament aims to create positive change in the community and ensure that the concerns and aspirations of young people are heard and taken into account in decision-making (Breathe better air SXM (n.d.)).

On the other hand, the youth of Sint Maarten are experiencing a growing awareness of the importance of their participation and engagement in policy and programs that directly affect them. Both the government and youth stakeholders are taking a more structured approach to involving youth in the policy and program development process. In Sint Maarten, young people are defined as individuals up to 24 years of age, representing approximately 35% of the total population. This emerging generation is increasingly motivated to make their voices heard and actively participate in decision-making that affects their future and community development (Wilson, L. (2023)).

Also on the island is the Sint Maarten Youth Council Association, a non-profit organisation that plays an important role in bringing together the various youth organisations on the island and advocating for the interests of young people in Sint Maarten. The association works to promote the active participation of young people in society, encourage the development of programs and projects that benefit young people, and ensure that their voices are heard in decision-making spaces. Through its work, the Sint Maarten Youth Council Association contributes to the strengthening and empowerment of youth on the island (OCTA. (n.d.)).

At the government level, the Department of Youth, which is part of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport, makes significant efforts to facilitate the integration of young people into all aspects of life on the island, including social, economic, political, and cultural life. Through various initiatives and programs, the Department seeks to provide opportunities and resources for young people to actively participate in society, develop their skills and talents, and contribute to the growth and development of the community. In collaboration with other agencies and organisations, the Youth Department plays a key role in promoting the well-being and empowerment of the island's youth (Government of Sint Maarten. (n.d.)).

However, there are concerns that the political climate in Sint Maarten may lead to disinterest in politics among young people. Factors such as the perception of politics as a family business, the negative stigma attached to politicians, continued government instability, and the underrepresentation of youth issues may contribute to this disengagement. These issues pose significant challenges to promoting young people's active participation in politics and highlighting the importance of their voice and perspectives in decision-making (Bellot, K. (2023)).



Spain

Official name	Kingdom of Spain
Capital city	Madrid
Population	47.222.613
Population <30	7.431.973
Main official languages	Spanish
Coin	Euro
Surface	505,994 km ²
GDP	\$1.492 trillion
HDI	0.905
Average internet speed	248.25 Mbps
Internet access	94,5%

Type of state	Unitary Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy
Administrative division	17 autonomous communities and 2 autonomous cities in Africa
Number of politicians in the parliament	350 +266
Freedom house index	90/100

In Spain, the promotion of active citizenship has been facilitated through various online platforms and initiatives aimed at fostering civic engagement, education, and participation. Among these tools, e-learning has gained prominence in recent years, being implemented through national policies and lifelong learning programs. E-learning provides opportunities for training and personal development, allowing citizens to access knowledge and skills in a flexible and tailored way. Through these initiatives, the aim is to increase citizen participation and promote an active and engaged society in Spain (Page, K. (2006)).

An outstanding pioneering online service-learning program in Europe has been implemented in Spain to improve vocational training, career development, and active citizenship. This program consists of a virtual exchange between students from the National University of Distance Education (UNED) and the University of Porto-Novo in Benin. Through practical Spanish classes, this program promotes civic engagement, solidarity, and global citizenship. It encourages intercultural dialogue and strengthens awareness of the importance of cooperation and mutual understanding in an interconnected world (García-Gutiérrez, J.C., Ruiz-Corbella, M., & Armentia, A.D. (2017)).

Furthermore, young Spaniards aged 16-18 have been observed to use digital technologies and social media platforms to develop their digital literacy and engage in civic and democratic activities. These tools enable them to stay informed, express their opinions,

participate in debates, and mobilise on issues of social interest, thus contributing to their empowerment and the promotion of active and engaged citizenship in the digital environment. This includes the use of different devices, digital skills, and the Internet for formal and informal learning (Aranda, D.A., Mohammadi, L., Blasco, M.M., Estanyol, E., & Fernández-de-Castro, P. (2023)).

On the other hand, an analysis of the political participation and active citizenship of young Spaniards highlights their culture of participation and the role of social networks in their civic engagement. Young people actively use social networks as tools to express their opinions, mobilise around social and political issues, and connect with like-minded peers. This participatory online culture has generated new forms of political participation and facilitated access to information and debate on public interest issues, thus promoting active citizenship among Spanish youth. The study underscores the diverse forms of political participation and engagement among young Spaniards, both within and outside the political system and public administration (Castro, P.F., García, O.D., & González, D.A. (2020)).

Spain has also witnessed the emergence of the concept of 'place-based civic technology,' which refers to the use of citizen engagement technologies developed collaboratively by local government, civil society, and volunteers. This approach aims to promote the active participation of citizens in local decision-making and place-specific problem-solving, utilising digital tools and platforms that enable collaboration and information sharing between different stakeholders (Husain, S.O., Franklin, A., & Roep, D. (2019)).

In recent years, special attention has been given to the political participation of young people in Spain. The minimum age to vote and stand as a candidate in the country is 18, and the electoral system is proportional, with a 3% threshold for political parties. According to a study conducted in 2019, 2.2% of deputies in parliament were under the age of 30, highlighting the presence and representation of young people in Spanish politics (Council of Europe, 2019). According to the 2019 data, 41.5% of young people between the ages of 20 and 24 were found to have an active interest in the political sphere. This increase in interest shows a greater awareness and participation of young people in the political affairs of their country (Romero, T. (2021)).

It is important to note that younger voters are generally less likely to exercise their right to vote than the general electorate. It has been observed that the turnout of 18-24 year olds is on average 17% lower than that of adults aged 25-50. This disparity highlights the importance of implementing strategies to encourage young people's active political participation and ensure that their voices are heard in the electoral process (OECD (2019)).



Turkey

Official name	The Republic of Turkey
Capital city	Ankara
Population	85.279.553
Population <30	40 million
Main official languages	Turkish
Coin	Turkish lira
Surface	783.356 km ²
GDP	1.029 trillion
HDI	0.838
Average internet speed	64.52 Mbps
Internet access	94.15%

Type of state	Unitary Presidential Constitutional Republic
Administrative division	7 regions
Number of politicians in the parliament	600
Freedom house index	32/100

Active citizenship in Turkey through the Internet has experienced remarkable growth in recent years, with young people playing a prominent role in this development. The Internet has broadened the landscape of political participation by making it more accessible and less costly, providing unprecedented access to information from around the world and opening up new opportunities for political engagement. Social networks have been a driving factor in the political participation of young Turks who, although not members of political parties, are actively involved in civil society groups and express their views on specific issues. This situation provides new opportunities for young people to become politically engaged and mobilized. A study conducted in Turkey focused on analyzing the impact of the Internet and social media on youth political participation, as well as exploring how social media can motivate political participation among young members of political parties and civil society organizations (Döm, Ö.Ö., & Bingöl, Y. (2021)).

On the other hand, environmental activism has become another crucial aspect of active citizenship in Turkey, and its promotion has been facilitated by online platforms such as Twitter. These networks have played a key role in the emergence and development of an environmental movement in an increasingly authoritarian Turkish context, enabling the dissemination of information, the organization of protests, and the mobilization of public opinion in defense of the environment (Özen, H., Doğu, B., Özen, H., & Doğu, B. (2022)).

In the context of migration, the idea of ‘active citizenship’ has been put forward as an approach to strengthen the response of local communities to urban challenges such as mass migration, with the aim of promoting coexistence and improving the sustainable quality of life in cities. It involves the active involvement of residents, including migrants, in decision-making and participation in community life, the recognition of their rights, and the promotion of social inclusion. By embracing active citizenship, cities can more effectively address the challenges and seize the opportunities of migration, building more cohesive and resilient communities (Çopuroğlu, Ö. (2023)).

In the area of promoting the common good, digital platforms, such as those for volunteers, have been created with the aim of maximizing social impact and promoting active citizenship. These platforms provide an online space where people can find volunteering opportunities, connect with organizations, and contribute to social causes they care about. By facilitating citizen participation through digital tools, they aim to promote civic engagement and strengthen the social fabric by enabling people to contribute meaningfully to the well-being of their communities and the advancement of important social causes (Katsamakas, E., Miliarexis, K., & Pavlov, O.V. (2022)).

In Turkey, an example of large social mobilizations of young people is the Gezi Park protests in 2013, which were an important moment of youth political participation. Although the mobilization did not translate into an organized form of oppositional youth politics, the protests reflected widespread frustration and awakened the political consciousness of a generation. Although many young people returned to political lethargy after the protests, the spirit of resistance and the quest for systemic change persist among them. These protests also had a significant impact on the political landscape of the country (Uzun, B. (2019)).

In addition, Turkey has one of the youngest populations in Europe, with approximately 13 million citizens between the ages of 15 and 24 (Craner, I., Karadağ, Y., & Ateş, Z. (2022)). Despite having a large youth population, political participation among young people in Turkey has been historically low. According to surveys conducted in 2018, around 80% of young people were found to have no interest in politics (Baser, B. (2022)).

There are no official statistics on the specific participation of young people in elections in Turkey. However, electoral surveys suggest that youth turnout is similar to the overall turnout. Although the lack of precise data makes a comprehensive analysis difficult, it is suggested that Turkish youth participate in the electoral process in proportion to other demographic groups (YouthWiki (2022)).

6. Presentation of results

The research presented in this document has been carried out according to the stages of social research, in addition to the methodology outlined at the beginning of this paper. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized, resulting in a substantial amount of data, which will be analyzed in this section. All groups that were invited to participate in the research activities were successfully engaged.

The following section discusses the results obtained, organized according to the specific techniques used and the groups involved. The analysis covers both the discussion groups and the surveys. To facilitate comprehension, we will summarize the conclusions drawn from all the actions undertaken to better understand the findings.

Beginning with the focus groups, which were conducted in two formats (online and face-to-face in Spain), they provided a comprehensive overview of the topic at hand and yielded valuable insights for the research. Now, we will present the conclusions obtained for each target group:

Focus groups:

Young people:

The findings from all the focus groups conducted across Europe revealed that young people share common concerns and opinions regarding their active participation in society. The main points discussed are presented below:

1. **Disaffection with political parties:** Participants expressed a growing disaffection with political parties, feeling that they are not adequately represented by them. They believe that political parties are disconnected from the people and fail to address the real concerns and interests of citizens.
2. **Lack of access to participatory methods:** Group members expressed that they do not feel connected to traditional methods of political participation, such as elections and referendums. They perceive these tools as insufficient in making their voices heard effectively.
3. **Belief in the role of political parties in bringing about change:** Despite their dissatisfaction, participants recognized the importance of political parties in driving change in political and social landscapes. However, they emphasised the need for parties to embrace renewal and inclusivity by incorporating new ideas and perspectives.
4. **The need for more tools for participation:** Participants stressed the need for additional tools and opportunities for citizen participation. They advocate for more direct and effective involvement of society in political decision-making processes.
5. **Closer to local institutions:** The group members indicated that they feel more connected to and engaged with local institutions such as city councils and neighbourhood

councils. They perceive these bodies as being more accessible and responsive to the needs and demands of the community.

- 6. Suggestions for digital and youth-centred methods of participation:** Participants emphasised the significance of introducing digital participation methods that allow citizens to engage quickly and conveniently. They also highlighted the importance of these tools being youth-centric, as young people represent a significant part of the population and can offer fresh perspectives and solutions.

In conclusion, the focus groups demonstrated a general dissatisfaction with political parties and a desire for more effective and accessible methods of participation that closely align with the reality of citizenship. Participants expressed their willingness to promote digital tools and involve young people in political decision-making processes to enhance the connection and representativeness of the political life of society.

Youth workers:

The insights gathered from the focus groups with youth workers provided a valuable perspective on young people and their relationship with society. As professionals who work closely with young individuals, their viewpoints offer essential guidance on how to influence and involve young people in a more active manner. The conclusions drawn from these focus groups are as follows:

- 1. The need for more tools and resources for raising awareness among young people.** Youth workers emphasised the significance of having appropriate tools and resources to raise awareness among young people about political and social issues. While some initiatives exist, there is a clear demand for up-to-date educational materials that are tailored to the specific needs and interests of young people to encourage their informed participation.
- 2. Calls for greater cooperation with political institutions.** Participants in the focus groups stressed the importance of fostering greater cooperation between youth workers and political institutions to have a more significant impact on young people's political awareness. They believe that a collaborative approach can create synergies that enhance young people's participation in political decision-making.
- 3. Perceived disengagement of young people from the political system.** Youth workers observed a general disengagement among young people from the political system. They expressed that many young people perceive politics as distant and disconnected from their daily lives, which hinders their engagement and active participation in public affairs.
- 4. Call for more methods of youth participation.** The group participants emphasised the importance of expanding the methods of youth participation available. They argued that spaces and opportunities should be created for young people to express themselves and meaningfully participate in the design and implementation of policies that directly impact their generation.

In conclusion, the focus group with youth workers highlighted the necessity of addressing young people's political awareness more effectively. This requires the development of appropriate tools and resources, increased cooperation among stakeholders, and the implementation of innovative methods of youth participation. These actions can contribute to fostering greater interest and engagement among young people in politics and ultimately strengthen citizens' participation in decision-making processes that affect young people.

Policy makers:

One of the key groups with a significant influence on the research's outcomes and applications is the policy makers, who were consulted to understand their perspectives on youth participation and potential solutions they can implement in their daily actions. The main issues raised by policy makers regarding youth participation are as follows:

1. **Low participation of young people.** Young people show little interest and engagement in the political life of society. This is due to several factors: the youth's poor understanding of the political system, lack of effective participation mechanisms, high levels of distrust in the political system, a general lack of interest, etc. Young people tend to get involved in politics only when issues directly impact them, typically related to local or national matters, such as education or labour laws.
2. **Little knowledge of the political system and existing participation mechanisms.** Most young people lack knowledge of how the political system operates in their respective countries, making it difficult or even impossible for them to participate effectively in politics. As a consequence, young individuals who wish to participate often struggle to do so with the desired results, leading to higher levels of discontent and apathy towards politics.
3. **High level of mistrust and prejudice among young people towards the political system.** Policy makers noted that young people display strong aversion to political parties, extending their mistrust to the entire political system. This deep-rooted scepticism makes it even more challenging for them to participate in politics, given the overall lack of trust.

Based on the problems outlined, the focus groups discussed possible solutions with policy makers:

1. **Enhancing and Introducing new mechanisms for participation.** To facilitate and improve young people's engagement in politics, policymakers have discussed the necessity of introducing innovative models of political participation, particularly digital ones, to make them more appealing to the youth. These new models aim to increase both the quantity and quality of youth participation.
2. **Enhancing young people's education and knowledge about political participation.** The debate among policymakers has highlighted the low level of political literacy among European youth as a significant concern. To address this, they have explored various approaches to providing better access to education on different political systems, including electoral systems, national and European institutions, etc. This aims to

ensure that young people are well-informed about the functioning of political systems and can participate more effectively.

3. **Enhancing transparency.** In order to combat the existing disaffection towards political parties and, by extension, political decision-makers in general, this focus group focused on the importance of improving transparency to reduce young people's mistrust of the various policies being implemented. The discussion groups argued that transparency in decision-making and in the way public funds are invested could alleviate these negative feelings towards politics, creating a better climate for young people and increasing their political participation.

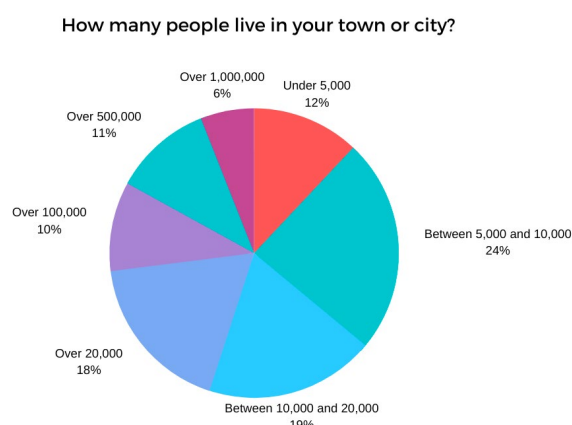
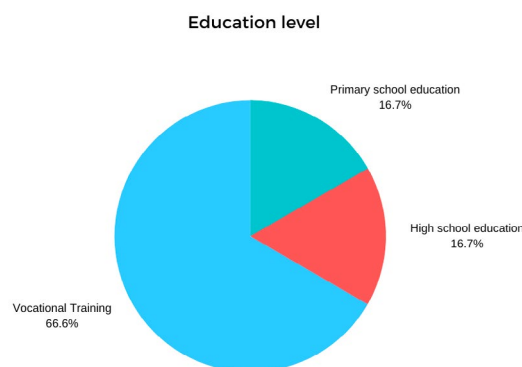
The focus group concluded that these solutions would seek to encourage greater political participation, improve young people's political knowledge, and enhance perceptions of European politics.

Surveys:

Young people:

Personal information

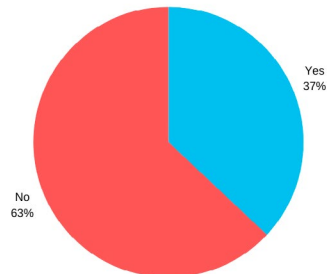
The majority of the young people surveyed are in higher education, accounting for 66.6% of the total. On the other hand, only 16.7% are in vocational education, and the remaining 16.7% are in basic education.



There is great heterogeneity in terms of the cities or towns of origin of the respondents, with the majority of respondents coming from cities with a population between 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants, accounting for 24% of the total. This is followed by 19% from cities with between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, and 18% from cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants.

Interestingly, 12% of young people come from towns with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, while 11% come from towns with between 500,000 and 1,000,000 inhabitants, and 6% come from towns with more than 1,000,000 inhabitants.

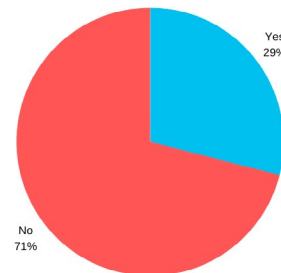
Do you belong to any associations or social movements where you live?



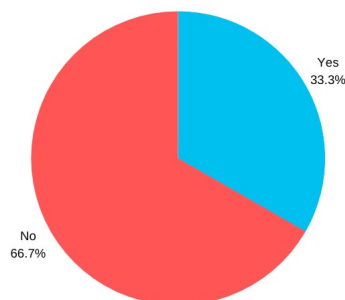
Most of the young people interviewed (63%) do not belong to any association or social movement, compared to those who do belong to one (37%). This indicates that there is a certain indifference on the part of young people towards the various social movements taking place in society.

Only 29% of young Europeans surveyed belong to a political party, compared to 71% who say they do not belong to any political party. This data reveals a clear rejection or indifference towards political parties and their involvement in political participation.

Do you belong to a political party?



If yes, are you active within the political party to which you belong?



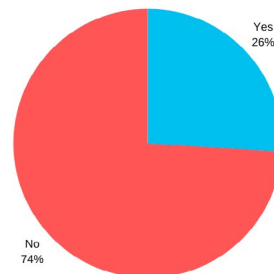
Within the low percentage of young people who belong to a political party according to the previous survey, only 33.3% of them consider themselves active and involved in the political party, while the vast majority (66.7%) do not.

In conclusion, we can observe that there is a low level of participation of young people through political parties.

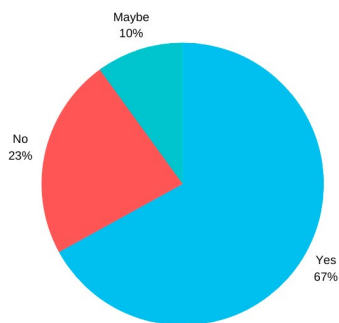
Basic knowledge of political participation

74% of young Europeans surveyed say they have not had access to training on the political system in their country, compared to 26% who have received such training.

Have you had access to any training related to the political system in your country?



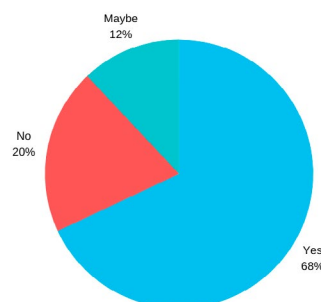
Do you know the political system in your country?



67% of young people claim to know their country's political system, compared to 23% who claim not to know, and 10% who have limited knowledge. In conclusion, around a third of young Europeans have a low level of knowledge about their country's political system.

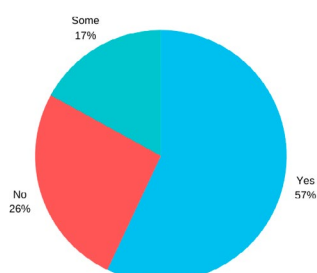
63% of young people know about the electoral system in their country, compared to 20% who say they have no knowledge at all, and 12% who have some knowledge of the electoral system.

Do you know how the electoral system works in your country?



Continuing the trend observed in the previous question, a third of young Europeans have little or no knowledge of their country's electoral system.

Do you know all the institutions where your interests are represented?



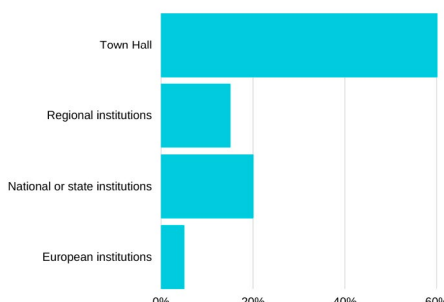
57% of young Europeans say they know the institutions through which they are represented, compared to 17% who know some of them and 26% who know none.

This finding contrasts with the previous questions, which showed a higher level of knowledge about the political and electoral system in their country.

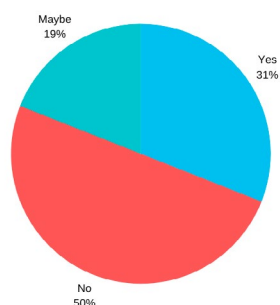
The administration with which young Europeans feel closest and identify the most is the local authority, with 60% of young people stating so. This is followed by national institutions at 20%, and regional institutions at 15%. On the other hand, only 5% of young Europeans feel most represented by European institutions.

This result indicates that young people feel a stronger sense of identification with their local communities and their country, while their connection and identification with political institutions at the European level are relatively lower.

Which political institution do you feel closest to?



Do you think politicians take young people into consideration?



31% of the young people surveyed feel that politicians do take them into account in their policy-making, while only 19% feel that they are only sometimes taken into account. Finally, 50% of respondents claim that they are not taken into account by political representatives.

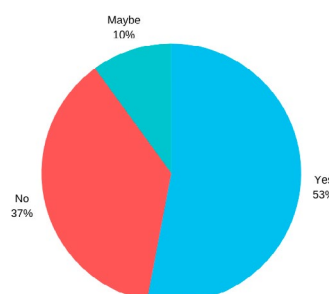
These results indicate a high level of disaffection and lack of identification between young people and politics across Europe, which appears to be common to all EU countries.

How to participate in society?

53% of young people consider themselves to be actively participating in society by being involved and contributing positively. In contrast, 37% of young people do not consider themselves to be active in society. Finally, 10% of respondents consider themselves to be relatively active.

This result highlights that half of the respondents consider themselves to be active in society, while the rest do not consider themselves to be active or only relatively active, indicating relatively high rates of low participation.

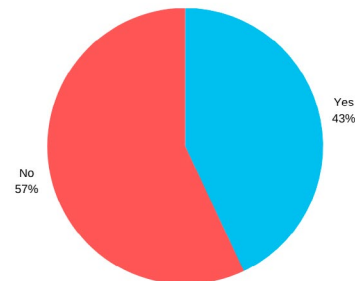
Do you consider young people to be active participants in society



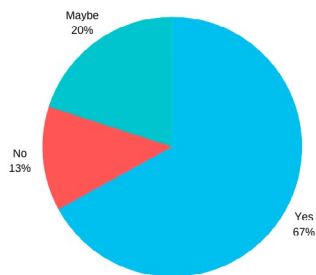
Most of the young people surveyed (57%) feel that they do not have the necessary mechanisms to participate actively in society, compared to 43% who feel that they do have the means to participate actively in society.

These results are consistent with the findings from previous questions, where about half of the young people surveyed do not actively participate in society.

Do you think young people have mechanisms to actively participate in society?



Do you think that digital participation mechanisms could improve youth participation?



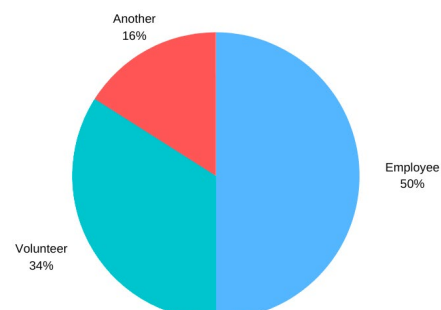
The majority of young people think that digital participation mechanisms would improve youth participation. In comparison, 20% of young people believe these mechanisms might improve participation, and 13% think they would not.

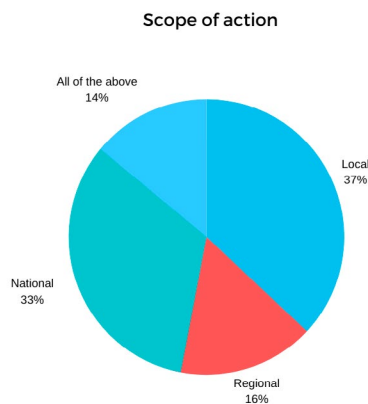
This result is significant because it shows that a large proportion of young people believe in the potential of digital participation mechanisms to enhance their engagement, while only a small minority holds a more sceptical view on their effectiveness.

Youth workers:

50% of the young workers surveyed are employees, while 34% are volunteers, and the remaining 16% are in other roles, such as managers of organisations.

Type of youth worker



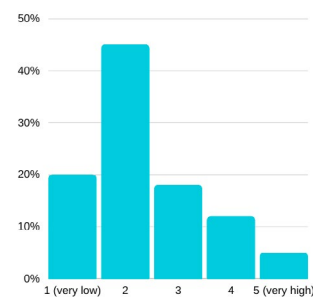


The work of young workers is mainly local in scope, with 37% stating so, compared to 33% who report a national impact. Additionally, only 16% of young workers say that the scope of their work is regional, while 14% indicate that their scope is diverse, encompassing both national, regional, and local impacts.

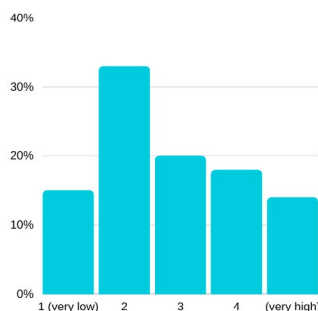
Vision of Youth Participation in Society

The majority of young workers state that the level of participation of young people in their field of activity is low (45%) or very low (20%), while only 5% state that the level of participation is very high. In conclusion, we can assert that the level of participation of young people in the fields of action of young workers is indeed very low.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very low and 5 is very high, how would you rate the level of participation of young people in your field of action?



On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very low and 5 is very high, how would you rate the level of awareness of the importance of democracy among young people?



33% of young workers rate their awareness of the importance of democracy as mainly low, followed by 20% who rate it as normal, and 18% who rate it as high. Additionally, 15% of young workers rate their awareness as very low, and 14% rate it as very high.

Although a low level of awareness still prevails among some young workers, it can be observed that a significant number of them have a normal to very high level of awareness regarding the importance of democracy.

Knowledge of the opportunities the European Union offers for their development as active citizens is very low among young people. Only 5% of young workers claim to have a very high level of knowledge, and 11% consider their knowledge to be high. In terms of medium knowledge, 23% of young people say they have a moderate level of understanding. However, the majority of respondents claim to have low or very low knowledge, with 27% and 34% respectively.

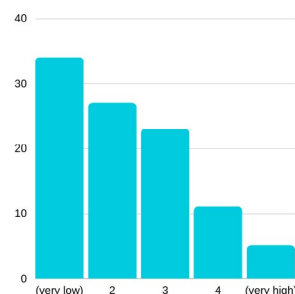
This data shows that the percentage of young workers who are aware of the opportunities offered by the European Union for their development as active citizens decreases as their level of knowledge increases. This highlights a significant lack of knowledge among young people regarding the opportunities provided by the European Union for their civic engagement and development.

Knowledge of the methods of participation available to young people is very low at 33%, and, as in the previous cases, there is a downward trend in the percentage of young people who are aware of the methods of participation, with only 15% and 5% respectively having a high or very high level of knowledge.

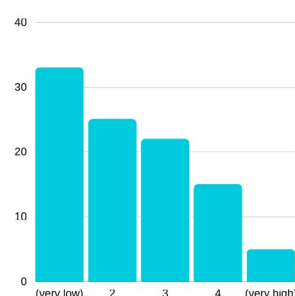
40% of young workers think that the low participation of young people in politics is due to a high level of dissatisfaction with it. This is followed by those who have a negative view of politics (26%), and finally, those who think that it is due to a low level of knowledge of the mechanisms of participation and the political system of their country (16% and 18% respectively).

We can therefore see that young people think that their low level of participation in society is mainly due to a negative view of politics and dissatisfaction with it, rather than to a lack of knowledge of the various political mechanisms or systems.

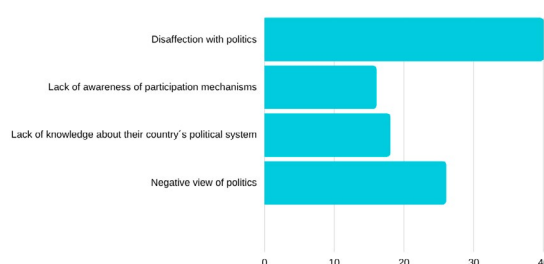
On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very low and 5 is very high, how would you rate the level of awareness among young people of the possibilities offered by the European Union for their development as active citizens?



On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very low and 5 is very high, how would you rate the level of knowledge of participation methods available to young people?



Several studies claim that young people do not have high rates of participation in society, what do you think are the main reasons for this?



Organisations:

Open-ended questionnaires were sent to various organisations involved in this project, seeking information about the good practices they implement and their characteristics.

Among the organisations, 80% reported conducting occasional activities, mainly of an educational nature, with a focus on workshops. These activities aim to provide young Europeans with knowledge and a culture of participation, encouraging them to take an active role in the social life of their communities.

The workshops explain the various participatory mechanisms available in the political systems of each country and the European Union. Additionally, they highlight different concepts of democratic participation and European values.

One example of a good practice is the development of workshops that teach participatory methods and tools during the project cycle. These workshops empower young people with the knowledge to actively participate in the elaboration and implementation of projects.

Another good practice involves implementing training activities to increase knowledge about the different European policies currently in effect and how young people can actively participate in them. These efforts contribute to fostering greater engagement and participation of young Europeans in shaping the future of their societies.

Promoting youth participation through active and digital citizenship is essential in contemporary society. However, it is crucial to take into account the diversity of contexts, including rural and island settings, when designing effective strategies. This has been highlighted by the participating organisations in this research and they emphasise this.

Young people living in rural and island areas often face unique challenges, such as lack of access to basic services and limited digital connectivity. To encourage their participation, it is essential to address these infrastructural barriers by ensuring they have access to high-speed internet and appropriate devices. This will enable them to participate in digital platforms and engage in civic life on an equal footing.

In addition, it is important to recognise the specific cultural and socio-economic characteristics of these communities. Effective participation should be tailored to their local needs and values, encouraging the inclusion of rural and island perspectives in decision-making. This may include promoting community projects, supporting civic education and creating local leadership opportunities.

In short, we cannot overlook rural and island environments when promoting young people's participation in active and digital citizenship. Only by addressing their specific challenges and respecting their cultural identities can we achieve inclusive and meaningful participation that benefits society as a whole.

7. Activities, Strategies and Public Policies

Youth political participation is a fundamental element in ensuring a good democracy. Young people represent a significant part of the population and their voice is essential in making political decisions that affect both the present and the future of our societies. In today's digital information age and the increasing complexity of global challenges has resulted in these digital tools being used to reach out in an easier and more accessible way to youth, as it is young people who demand greater use of them. However, youth political participation faces considerable obstacles and challenges around the world.

This research section focuses on examining twenty activities, strategies and public policies that have been designed and implemented with the aim of stimulating and enhancing youth political participation. As technology and communication transform the way people engage in politics, it is essential to analyse and understand how these initiatives can influence the active participation of youth in the political life of their countries. From innovative educational programmes to awareness-raising campaigns and social movements, an exhaustive search has been conducted to showcase a variety of approaches that seek to empower young people and encourage their engagement in the political and social process.

All these practices have provided examples that can be implemented by youth work experts in their local environments to enable the increased participation of young people in society, through active and digital citizenship. Furthermore, attention has been paid to the fact that these 20 examples represent the territorial diversity and realities that exist within the European Union, so that it can be a generic and global example.

1 - Barcelona City Council's Municipal Action Programme (Spain)

Barcelona City Council's Municipal Action Programme (MAP) is a document that sets out the municipal activity for the coming years and identifies the most important actions and projects to be carried out during the term of office. The participatory process for the MAP 2020-2023 began in February 2020, with the aim of enriching the document and gathering proposals, objections and suggestions from citizens, organisations and political forces present in the City Council. The "decidim.barcelona" platform centralises all the information related to the process and acts as a public forum for citizen participation.

Within this programme, the APIP-ACAM Foundation, which is a private entity dedicated to residential and day care for groups with functional diversity, as well as to assistance, guidance, training and social and occupational inclusion of groups at risk of exclusion, has created an initiative that consists of training, motivating and facilitating the incorporation of the centre's residents into discussion groups.

Thanks to this initiative, they have managed to improve the feeling of integration in the workshops of the group of young people in the neighbourhood where they live, raising

awareness among young people about their special problems and giving them the opportunity to develop their own proposals.

2 - Volební kalkulačka (Czech Republic and Slovakia)

Volební kalkulačka is an online application that helps voters make informed choices in elections. The concept comes from the Netherlands and has expanded to several countries, including the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Volební kalkulačka allows users to answer a series of questions and, based on their answers, shows them which candidate or political party best aligns with their views and preferences.

In the Czech Republic, the organisation KohoVolit.eu is a leader in the development of Volební kalkulačka and has introduced the term into the Czech and Slovak language. The app has been redesigned for ease of use on all devices and has added new functionalities, such as sharing results on social networks and managing user profiles.

During the 2023 presidential elections in the Czech Republic, a Volební kalkulačka was created specifically for the second round of the elections. Users can answer 20 questions to determine which presidential candidate best represents their interests.

3 - Jóvenes Conciencia2 (Spain)

Jóvenes Conciencia2 is a project of Asociación Solidaria de Corazón, whose main objective is to create social awareness of unity and solidarity among young people. The project seeks to encourage youth participation based on principles of solidarity, inclusion and respect for diversity.

One of the project's main activities is the Youth Awareness2 Camp. The first edition of this camp was held at the Agrocamping Invernaderito, located in Tejina, La Laguna. The proposal was designed for the participation of fifteen young people born on the island of Tenerife and fifteen young immigrants, all aged between 18 and 30, promoting integration and mutual understanding between them.

The Asociación Solidaria de Corazón uses different platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, to promote and share information about the project and its activities.

4 - European Youth Democracy Camp (Belgium)

The European Youth Camp for Democracy is an annual event that brings together young people from all over Europe to promote participatory democracy, the camp covers a range of topics such as climate, food, anti-racism and justice. Through workshops, debates and interactive activities, participants learn democratic principles and strengthen their civic attitudes. The camp promotes tolerance, intercultural dialogue and youth leadership, inspiring young people to become active and engaged citizens in their communities, offers young people the opportunity to learn about EU institutions, participate in activist activities and interact with like-minded people from different countries. The aim of

the camp is to empower young people aged 18-30 who are involved in activism or are interested in getting started but do not know how to do so.

It contributes to strengthening democracy and fostering active citizenship among young Europeans, creating a generation committed to promoting democratic values.

5 - International Youth Leadership seminar (Denmark)

The International Youth Leadership Seminar (IYLS) is a seven-day seminar focusing on developing youth leadership skills, facilitation, project management, communication, etc. The seminar is held in Denmark and is designed to help young people develop their leadership skills and become visionary leaders of the future. The seminar includes workshops, keynote lectures and expert-led sessions to help participants develop their leadership skills.

This is just one of many programmes available for young people interested in developing their leadership skills. Other programmes include the HOBY Youth Leadership programme, which is committed to continuing its legacy of youth leadership development, and the International Youth Leadership Institute, which aims to develop a new generation of leaders. It focuses on the development of leadership skills, project management, communication, group dynamics, conflict resolution, motivation and empowerment. The main objective of the seminar is to enable participants to lead and manage international volunteer groups, work camps and campaign activities in the field of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

6 - Young Volunteers Association (Turkey)

The Young Volunteers Association (YVA) is a Turkish organisation that aims to promote equal opportunities through volunteering and social responsibility projects. YVA is distinguished by the fact that it is youth-led, represents disadvantaged youth and is rooted in a low-income neighbourhood. Its activities include providing services to children in the neighbourhood and carrying out local initiatives important to residents.

The organisation initiated the Ayazaga People's Assembly, which involved 550 residents of the neighbourhood, provided free preparatory courses for high school and university entrance exams, benefiting 200 students who could not afford private courses, and collected the views of primary school children on how to make the city more accessible to them, and then passed the results on to city planners.

The organisation focuses primarily on promoting volunteerism and social responsibility among young people. The Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) has organised the Youth Volunteer Camp in Turkey in 2022 and 2023, which is a funded programme that covers local expenses for transportation, food and accommodation. The camp aims to promote volunteering and social responsibility among young people. Betul, from Turkey, participated as a volunteer in the 2022-1-TR01-ESC51-VTJ programme, a European Solidarity Corps project that aims to promote social inclusion and solidarity.

7 - Kosovo Innovations Lab (Kosovo)

The Kosovo Innovations Lab is a programme created by UNICEF to empower young people in Kosovo to become responsible citizens and community advocates.

The lab is a dynamic platform that fosters positive civic engagement of young people while supporting their initiatives for social change. The programme is designed to help young people develop their skills and knowledge in areas such as technology, entrepreneurship and innovation. The Kosovo Innovations Lab provides a space for young people to collaborate, learn and create solutions to social problems in their communities. The UNICEF Kosovo Innovations Lab has been successful in empowering young people to become agents of change in their communities.

The programme provides funding to selected projects and helps young Kosovars transform their ideas into concrete actions. Mentors, resources and workspaces are provided, and connections with institutions and an engaged community are fostered. The projects have an impact on Kosovo's society and youth, and some 1,200 young people are encouraged to participate. Each project has a specific objective, such as environmental awareness, and has achieved positive results in collaboration and care for the environment in Kosovo.

So far, they have brought people of different locations, ages and ethnicities together with a single goal: a clean environment for Kosovo.

8 - Movement Radio (Greece)

Movement Radio is a Greek radio station specialising in alternative, ambient, experimental and electronic music. The station also offers podcasts exploring different musical genres, such as extreme metal, contemporary electronic music and Greek gnawa. Movement Radio is a partner of Onassis Stegi, a cultural centre in Athens that promotes contemporary culture and the arts. The station features resident and guest artists, and aims to redefine disorienting data through its weekly radio programmes.

It was implemented through a combination of technology and community collaboration. The station used open source software to create its broadcast system and enlisted the help of volunteers to build and run its studio. Movement Radio also got involved in the local community, organising events and collaborating with other organisations to promote social justice.

It has served as a platform to give a voice to the marginalised and has helped create a space where people can freely express themselves and share their ideas. Movement Radio has also contributed to promoting social justice and has worked to create a more just and equal world.

9 - Tværpolitisk Ungdomsforum Vordingborg (Denmark)

Tværpolitisk Ungdomsforum Vordingborg (TUV) is a youth organisation based in Vordingborg, Denmark. It was founded in 2015 and aims to provide a platform for young people to participate in political discussions and activities regardless of their political affiliation. The organisation is known for its non-partisan approach and focus on promoting dialogue and understanding between different political perspectives.

TUV organises various events and activities throughout the year, such as debates, workshops and social events. The organisation also collaborates with other youth organisations and political parties to promote youth participation in politics. TUV's activities are open to all young people between the ages of 15 and 30 who are interested in politics and want to engage in constructive dialogue with others.

The forum is implemented by organising regular meetings, workshops and interactive activities that encourage the exchange of views and consensus building. Logistical support is provided and access to the resources and materials needed to run the forum is facilitated.

TUV is an important organisation in Vordingborg that offers young people a platform to participate in political discussions and activities in a non-partisan and inclusive environment. It has succeeded in strengthening the political participation of young people and promoting a culture of dialogue and cooperation between the different political parties.

10 - Mentoring programmes to support elected women candidates and MPs beyond training and study tours (Sweden)

Sweden has a long history of promoting gender equality in politics, and has implemented a number of measures to support women's political participation, including quotas for women in political parties. The launch of iKNOW Politics is based on providing online resources, organising events and trainings, and facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration among women politicians. This platform aims to empower women and promote their effective participation in global political decision-making.

Promote women's political participation and achieve tangible results in terms of capacity building, knowledge sharing and empowerment of women in the political sphere.

11 - A new chapter for EU democracy (European Union)

The campaign "A New Chapter for EU Democracy" is an initiative launched by the European Committee of the Regions and the Bertelsmann Foundation. The aim of the campaign is to promote civic education and strengthen democratic culture in Europe's regions and cities. The campaign aims to involve citizens in political decisions at all European levels and to develop and implement policies through citizen participation. The initiative builds on the "From Local to European" project from 2021 and in the run-up to

the European elections in 2024. The challenges facing the EU require strong democratic legitimacy at regional and local level, and cities and regions are important for the EU and vice versa. Citizen participation can help municipalities, cities and regions to develop and implement policies. The campaign aims to encourage citizen participation through modern and innovative mechanisms. This has been achieved through the use of digital tools and effective communication channels such as the establishment of mechanisms for consultation and dialogue with citizens, such as public debates, surveys or online consultations.

It has achieved significant results in terms of increased citizen participation, greater awareness and knowledge about the EU, greater inclusion and participation of young people, and greater transparency and accountability.

12 - Supporting Democratic Elections (Tunisia)

Tunisia has a history of democratic elections that began after the Tunisian revolution in 2011. Before the revolution, elections were held every five or six years and elected both the president and members of both legislative branches. After the revolution, elections were held for a Constituent Assembly to decide on a new constitution for Tunisia.

During its first democratic elections in 2012, a strategy was developed to reach out to young people before the elections in Tunisia through different actions. Firstly, a song called “Enti Essout” (You are the voice) was used and became the electoral anthem with more than 100,000 downloads. A voter education game called “DemocraTweet” was also created in conjunction with a Tunisian radio station, which had a great impact, reaching more than 10,000 people. In addition, voter education campaigns were carried out through different media.

Positive results have been obtained as young people have been made aware of the electoral process, which has resulted in a high voter turnout in the elections. In particular, 76% of the 4.1 million registered Tunisians exercised their right to vote.

13 - Youth engagement toolkit (UK)

Youth Engagement Toolkit is a resource designed to help engage young people in various aspects of society. It includes activities and strategies that can be used by elected and non-elected officials, staff supporting youth engagement efforts, and those seeking to put trauma-informed theory into practice. The toolkit offers tips and guidance for engaging 13-16 year olds in democracy, comprehensive school health, and youth violence prevention. Voice, Opportunity, Power: Youth Engagement Toolkit presents five possible engagement sessions that can be used with young people, and includes information on objectives, activities and timing.

Empowering young people to become active and engaged citizens in the democratic process is very important and the UK government has used a number of tools to facilitate their learning and participation.

The tools used have been various events, workshops and programmes tailored to the needs and preferences of young people.

These measures have led to increased participation at both local and national level, as well as increased interest and engagement of young people in civic and political affairs. There has also been an increase in the implementation of community projects. In addition, the leadership capacity of young people has been strengthened. Diversity and inclusion have also been promoted, ensuring that the voices of all young people are heard and taken into account in decision-making processes.

14 - AEGEE Election Observation Project (Belgium)

An election observation project has been carried out in order to find out young people's perspective on elections. To this end, teams of observers are formed and deployed in different regions to observe the electoral processes. Through the collaboration of different organisations and local partners located in each target country, a strategy is developed to guarantee the objectivity and impartiality of the observation.

The results obtained are the compilation of data on the electoral process in the observed countries, identifying possible irregularities and drawing up recommendations to improve the quality of the electoral processes. Furthermore, it also improves transparency and citizen participation, while raising awareness among young people about the importance of election observation and encouraging their active participation in this task.

15 - Parliament Watch (Germany)

In Germany, a project has been carried out for the implementation of a platform where information on the relevant activity of parliamentarians is collected and published, including voting records, public statements or political activity.

Citizens are also provided with interactive tools for the monitoring and evaluation of parliamentarians. Partnerships with civil society organisations and the media have been established to promote the platform.

This initiative has led to greater transparency in parliamentary activity and greater accountability of parliamentarians because their decisions are subject to greater scrutiny. Across the board, it has also substantially improved the political participation of citizens in both political scrutiny and the exchange of ideas between politicians and citizens through the use of this platform.

16 - Hubenil Parliament Aruba (Aruba)

The Hubenil Parliament has created a platform for young people to express their ideas and contribute their views to improve the future of Aruba, this platform promotes the development of civic and democratic skills among participants through different actions such as debates or voting.

The young people have improved political processes through their political participation, and this platform also offers different training related to the political sphere, explaining everything from the political system to the implementation of workshops to improve different skills such as leadership or public speaking in debates.

Thanks to this activity, a high level of civic skills development has been achieved among young people by promoting their interest in political participation and creating greater active participation in all political processes on the island.

17 - Take Action (UK)

In the UK, a project has been set up where groups visit the British Parliament so that they can learn about how it works in national politics.

During this session, participants have the opportunity to identify and debate different relevant issues, understand the political process involved in any initiative and learn about the role of MPs and Lords in Parliament.

There are three actions that can be taken during this interactive session.

Firstly, you can register to take a vote.

Secondly, you can contact an MP to discuss an issue of interest.

Thirdly, you can start or sign a petition.

This action has a very positive effect as it allows young people to learn about the functioning of the British parliament, increasing their interest in the politics of the country and therefore increasing their political participation in the different political processes that take place, taking into account that they also learn different mechanisms to be able to achieve a more efficient participation.

18 - Youth participatory budgeting in Colle Di Val D'Elsa (Italy)

Youth Participatory Budgeting in Colle Di Val D'Elsa, Italy, is a project proposed by the municipal administration to bring young citizens closer to the responsibilities of local government by inviting them to participate in the budgeting process.

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process that allows citizens to decide together how to spend public money. The practice of creating and developing participatory budgets for youth is also being implemented in Europe. The participatory budgeting project aims to improve the effectiveness of political budgeting and to solve major problems in the area. Participatory budgeting is a way to reach out to young people and encourage them to participate in local government budgeting processes.

School participatory budgeting is an innovative civic process that allows community members, including young people, to propose and vote on the allocation of public funds.

Young people have the opportunity to make decisions on a part of the municipal budget and to propose specific youth activities. An innovative aspect of this process is the use of the lottery to ensure diverse participation and to motivate young people who would otherwise not participate.

A direct consequence of this initiative has been the increased participation of young people in the local decision-making process, increased awareness of the needs and priorities of youth in the community and the implementation of youth-targeted projects and activities. In addition, civic participation and empowerment of young people was promoted, building their capacity to influence local policies and decisions.

19 Escola de Participação de Palmela (Portugal)

The Escola de Participação de Palmela is an initiative of the Palmela City Council in Portugal that aims to foster citizen participation and participatory democracy in the region. The school offers a variety of courses and workshops on topics such as active citizenship, participation in decision-making and community project management. In addition, the school also organises events and activities to involve the community in the political and social life of the region.

The Escola de Participação de Palmela was founded in 2001 and has been a model for other similar initiatives in Portugal and other countries. The school has been recognised for its innovative and effective approach to involving the community in decision-making and in the management of community projects.

Each local authority, in collaboration with the coordinator and other volunteer members of the platform team, implements a dynamic called “Reality Shocks” to motivate young people to participate. This dynamic seeks to reflect the needs and feelings of young people, enabling the creation of an action programme consisting of several stages: identifying needs, determining the necessary responses, exploring the ways in which each individual and/or group can contribute, and seeking collaborations and partnerships. Through this programme, the needs, opinions and proposals identified by local young people are collected and then presented to the Municipal Chamber or other relevant bodies, according to their competencies. In addition, the platform also fulfils additional functions, such as organising an information space and sharing resources between local associations, including the provision of training.

The results achieved have been increased active participation of young people in local decision-making, increased awareness of community issues and problems, generation of innovative proposals and solutions, and reinforcement of young people’s confidence and leadership skills.

20 Simulation for the Spanish Congress Youth Association (Spain)

In Spain, a simulation of the Congress of Deputies is carried out in which young people take the position of the parliamentarians of different political groups and of the Congress table itself in order to be able to correctly direct the session.

This simulation follows a structure similar to the real one, with both plenary sessions and committees on different topics. The allocation of parliamentary groups is random, so the young people may be assigned to groups or topics with which they do not agree. In this way, it is possible to exponentially improve public speaking, debate and critical thinking skills, as well as fostering respect and active participation.

In order to improve this activity, an evaluation is carried out at the end where the learning obtained is assessed and proposals are made for improvement in future editions.

Thanks to this, many young people gain a better understanding of the functioning of the Spanish political system, which will give them a better political culture of the country and lead to an improvement in their political participation later on.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of youth political participation in several countries, including Spain, Martinique, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sint Maarten, Turkey, and the European Union reveals a diversity of patterns and variations in this area. Some countries stand out for having high levels of civic participation and engagement among young people, while others face significant challenges in terms of political engagement. These findings underline the importance of examining national contexts and the specific circumstances that may influence youth political participation in each country. It is crucial to implement appropriate strategies to promote greater civic participation and empowerment of young people at all levels by strengthening civic education, fostering trust in democratic institutions, and promoting spaces for active participation and constructive dialogue. This can contribute to strengthening democracy and developing more inclusive and participatory societies.

In general, higher levels of youth political participation can be observed in Western European countries such as Germany, Ireland, and Denmark due to the existence of strong participatory structures and an embedded political culture. These countries have implemented effective policies and programs that promote youth civic engagement by providing opportunities for active participation in local governance and decision-making. These initiatives have proved successful in fostering greater political participation among young people, strengthening their sense of citizenship, and contributing to the development of democratic and participatory societies.

On the other hand, countries such as Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania face significant challenges in terms of youth political participation. These challenges are influenced by various factors, such as lack of trust in political institutions, socio-economic inequality,

and limited opportunities for effective participation. These issues highlight the importance of implementing policies and programs that promote the active involvement of young people in the political sphere, foster trust in institutions, reduce social inequalities, and provide meaningful platforms for young people to express their voices and contribute to the development of more inclusive and democratic societies.

As for the outermost regions and EU candidate countries, such as Martinique and Turkey, there are different realities concerning young people's political participation. Martinique, as an overseas territory of France, shows greater integration and access to the political and participatory systems of the European Union, which can have a positive impact on youth political participation. On the other hand, Turkey faces unique challenges as a candidate country, along with internal political and social dynamics that may affect youth political participation. In the case of Sint Maarten, as an autonomous territory of the Netherlands, there is a distinct reality in terms of youth political participation, influenced by its geographical and political situation. Each of these situations requires a specific approach to promote meaningful political participation and empower young people in the political arena.

In some southern European countries, such as Spain, Italy, and Portugal, there has also been an increase in youth political participation compared to previous periods. This increase in participation has been driven by several factors, including the socio-political context, the role of new technologies, changing attitudes among young people, and initiatives by political parties to engage this demographic group. These changes reflect a greater civic awareness and engagement of young people in the political sphere in these countries.

Moderate levels of political participation among young people were observed in Cyprus and Greece. These countries have faced economic and political challenges in recent years, which may have a significant impact on political participation.

Within the framework of the European Union, there are significant differences in the political participation of young people between the Member States. Although initiatives and programmes have been implemented at the EU level to promote youth civic participation, their success and effectiveness can be influenced by the specificities and national contexts of each country. It is important to recognize that there are several factors that can influence young people's political participation, such as political structures, social attitudes, opportunities to participate, and levels of trust in institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt an approach tailored to each national context to promote young people's active and meaningful participation in the political sphere.

The political participation of young people varies widely across the countries and regions studied. While some countries have been successful in promoting young people's active participation in the political sphere, others face significant challenges in this regard. It is crucial to continue pushing for policies and programmes that promote youth civic participation, with the aim of strengthening democracy and ensuring effective representation of their interests in political decision-making. This will build a more inclusive and empowered society where young people play a key role in shaping their future and that of their community.

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