ROBERT SCHUMAN ESSAY COMPETITION

YOU ARE THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

2023 TOP TEN PICKS

epp
group
in the european parliament

"WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS IN REGARD TO RAISING THE ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE?"

With the yearly **Robert Schuman Essay Competition**, relaunched in 2021, the EPP Group provides a platform for you, motivated and ambitious young people, to put forward your fresh and innovative ideas and concepts for your vision to create a successful Europe.

The amount of high-quality essays we received this year is impressive. I would like to thank all participants for taking the time and making the effort to put your ideas into writing and submitting your essays. I want to personally congratulate **Martina Ierardi** (Italy), this year's winner. Martina will join the EPP Group as a trainee in 2024, along with other finalists.

This year we asked: "**What are your ideas in regard to raising the engagement of young people in Europe?**" Our essay winners highlighted the many ways that this can be achieved: through involvement in decision-making bodies, political participation (running for political and party office), using new technologies and communication tools to reach out to young people, introducing a youth quota, nurturing a sense of civic duty, creating a culture of engagement and participation, as well as improving media literacy.

In September, I had the pleasure of meeting with six of our TOP 10 finalists at the EPP Group Youth Week in Brussels – our annual EPP Group flagship event for young people from across Europe. A platform to exchange ideas and inspire other participants as transforming Europe really starts with sharing great ideas, developing a common strategy and then putting those ideas into action. After the event, which was full of energy and innovative ideas from young people across Europe, I am convinced that Europe will be in good hands in the future.

Thank you to all participants who submitted entries and I hope you enjoy the selection of the 10 finalists, featured in this book.

Remember: Your Voice, Your Future, is Our Mission.

Manfred Weber
Chairman of the EPP Group
in the European Parliament

BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE: ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT IN YOUNG EUROPEAN GENERATIONS FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP.

Martina Ierardi
Age: 25, Italy

I. Introduction

Political participation among young people is facing a crisis in contemporary democracies, posing significant challenges to electoral politics and the relationship between citizens and political institutions. Compared to older generations, Generation Y exhibits lower levels of political engagement, especially in traditional forms such as voting and party membership. This disengagement and potential apathy towards politics among young individuals in Europe highlights the need to explore strategies to enhance their involvement[1].

Over the past few decades, political engagement levels have witnessed a decline across numerous EU Member States. Within the realm of politics, young individuals are frequently characterized as one of the least engaged demographic groups, displaying notably lower turnout rates in elections compared to other age cohorts. This trend is exemplified by the 2017 Bulgarian parliamentary election, where the turnout among young individuals stood at a mere 14.9%, according to Gallup International[2]. However, it is worth noting an exceptional case observed during the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014, when the inclusion of 16 and 17-year-olds as eligible voters resulted in a remarkable 89% registration rate among this age group in Scotland[3]. These contrasting instances highlight the varying degrees of youth participation across different contexts. Insights garnered from an EU-funded MYPLACE survey conducted in 14 European countries indicate that 42% of respondents aged 16–24 expressed an interest in politics[4]. It is evident that young people possess an inclination towards political matters and are often influenced by single-issue politics. However, it is crucial to recognize that this interest in politics does not automatically translate into tangible votes[5].

Additional research and empirical investigation are required to delve into the factors underlying youth political engagement in Europe, encompassing various forms of political involvement. Consequently, this paper aims to address the following questions: *What influences political participation among young individuals in the European Union*, and *How can we enhance the level of engagement among young people in*

Europe? It is suggested that the age of democracy plays an important role in shaping the way young individuals participate in politics. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the current underrepresentation of younger generations in EU institutions, which poses a risk of their interests being marginalized. To address this concern, one potential solution to enhance youth engagement in Europe is the implementation of youth quotas within the EU Parliament.

I contribute to the literature by offering other strategies for promoting youth participation in the decision-making arena, examples include: the establishment of youth advisory councils and the promotion of intergenerational dialogue and mentorship. Through such measures, we could ensure that the concerns of younger generations receive the necessary attention and are effectively discussed within the decision-making process.

In order to answer these questions, Section I of this paper will thoroughly analyze the extent of young people's participation, and compelling evidence to support our findings. Moving on to Section II, our focus will shift towards the underrepresentation of young people in European institutions. Ultimately, Section III will be dedicated to proposing effective strategies for promoting youth representation. This section will explore some propositions to address the issue of young people's disengagement in EU politics.

Section I – Young people's (dis)engagement in Politics: a general overview of the issue

The active involvement of young people is an important issue, and the problem of youth disengagement remains a significant challenge for modern democracies. Hence, it is crucial to gain a deeper comprehension of the factors that drive young individuals' political engagement. The primary objective of this section is to examine the factors influencing political engagement among young individuals and to explore the interplay between socio-demographic and contextual factors encompassing a diverse range of political activities.

Based on available data- provided by Magdelina Kitanova's[6] paper- a logistic regression analysis[7] involved a sample of 11,213 young respondents from 28 different European countries. The findings of the regression analyses indicate that age, education and social class are significant socio-demographic predictors of political participation among the young. Regarding contextual predictors, variations exist between countries, particularly between established and emerging democracies. The logistic regression results suggest that the level of political participation among young people is influenced by the maturity of the democratic system in their respective countries. Notably, the logistic regression results reveal that political participation among young people is not uniform across all democracies but varies according to the age of democracy. In general, the analyses demonstrate that respondents aged 18–24 exhibit a higher likelihood of membership in organizations. Furthermore, the findings indicate that even after "controlling for socio-demographic characteristics"[8], individuals aged 25–30 are more inclined to engage in formal politics compared to those aged 18–24, implying that the older individuals are more likely to vote and participate in any forms of formal political activities[9]. The impact of

the age of democracy on the political engagement of young individuals in various European Union countries is crucial, as political participation levels tend to be lower in newly established democracies compared to mature democracies. Established democracies often cultivate a culture where voting is seen as a customary practice, and individuals residing in such contexts may face greater social pressure to engage in politics. Consequently, the participation of young people in politics might be influenced by the specific issue in which they feel directly involved[10].

Section II – Youth participation in the decision-making process: the under-representation of young generations in the EU Institutions

The imperative for increased youth engagement in elections has been partially recognized through discussions on electoral law reform within the European Parliament. These efforts emphasise the implementation of "zipped lists or gender quotas"[11] to address the underrepresentation of women.

However, the issue of youth under-representation remains insufficiently addressed. While some progress has been made, there is still ample room for improvement in fostering the active participation of young people in politics. It is crucial to ensure that future decision-makers have a meaningful presence in European politics and are not marginalized by the current politicians[12]. This section delves into the topic of young people's underrepresentation in the EU institutions, specifically focusing on the European Parliament. It emphasizes the significance of adequately representing the younger groups, who are often been overlooked in discussions surrounding parliamentary composition.

The significant difference between the number of MEPs under the age of 35 and the overall population in the EU highlights a deficiency in descriptive representation, provoking substantial policy implications. Descriptive representation refers to the degree to which legislators share characteristics, experiences, and interests with the people they represent. It not only ensures a more substantive representation of different groups but also enhances the legitimacy of decision-making processes and public acceptance of policy results. By increasing the representation of younger cohorts, EU legislators could make them feel more listened to and foster greater acceptance of their decisions. The introduction of youth quotas is considered as a means to promote democratic values, equality, and social equity between generations, aligning with the principles of the European Union. Extensive research indicates that descriptive representation in legislative bodies can lead to improved policy outcomes on issues relevant to the represented group. For instance, an increase in the number of women in the legislature has been associated with advancements in policies related to their concerns, such as childcare provision. This positive impact can result from active advocacy or symbolic representation. While it cannot be guaranteed that younger MEPs would automatically prioritize issues relevant to young Europeans, descriptive representation is believed to benefit the represented group in terms of legislative action. Closing the gap in youth representation can have various favorable consequences for the European Union as a whole. Political institutions influence voting behavior, and better representation of young people could potentially lead to increased voter turnout in future European elections[13].

As a result, the introduction of youth

quotas in the European Parliament would guarantee social representation and address the specific needs and concerns of young individuals. It would create an inclusive environment, offering them equal opportunities to engage in the decision-making process. By doing so, it would also strengthen democracy and foster trust in EU institutions.

Section III – Other Strategies for Promoting Youth Participation in EU Decision-Making

To overcome the challenges and enhance greater youth participation in the decision-making process, several strategies can be implemented. Firstly, establishing youth advisory councils and ensuring youth representation in decision-making bodies. By instituting these formal platforms, young individuals are provided with a platform to express their viewpoints, suggest solutions, influence and shape policies. This inclusion of youth perspectives enables them to exert influence and actively participate in the decision-making arena. Secondly, it is essential to offer training and capacity-building programs that equip young people with the necessary skills to engage effectively in shaping policies. Leadership, advocacy, and policy-making training programs empower young individuals with knowledge and tools, enabling them to contribute meaningfully and confidently. Thirdly, it is imperative to implement youth-friendly policies, which entail lowering age restrictions, and ensuring decision-making processes are accessible and inclusive. By actively promoting and supporting youth participation, policies can create an enabling environment that encourages young individuals to engage in decision-making. Such policies help dismantle barriers and create

opportunities for youth involvement. Moreover, leveraging digital platforms and social media is a powerful means of engaging and involving young people on a broader scale. By creating online platforms for discussions, soliciting feedback, and facilitating collaborative decision-making, an inclusive space for youth participation can be established, regardless of geographical location. Social media campaigns and influencers can also raise awareness about decision-making processes and inspire youth to get involved. Collaboration with youth organizations and stakeholders is another effective strategy. By partnering with existing youth organizations and stakeholders, policymakers, educators, and community leaders can tap into existing networks and resources. This collaboration fosters a supportive ecosystem that amplifies the voice of young people and facilitates their active participation in the decision-making process. Promoting intergenerational dialogue and mentorship is important for bridging the gap between generations. By facilitating meaningful interactions and establishing mentorship programs, experienced professionals can guide and support young individuals, providing valuable networking opportunities. These initiatives not only foster mutual understanding but also empower young people by nurturing relationships that enable them to thrive.

Conclusion

The introduction of youth quotas in the European Parliament presents a participatory tool that can enhance a more significant representation of young citizens. This mechanism effectively bridges the gap in representation and facilitates a cultural shift. By implementing youth quo-

tas, the interests of young people will be amplified within the Parliament, encouraging greater youth engagement in EU politics. This institutional change will result in a more inclusive Parliament, that is better equipped to address the diverse concerns of European citizens and effectively tackle present and future challenges, ultimately benefiting society as a whole[14].

But, how to take concrete action? To promote and sustain youth participation in decision-making in Europe, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders should consider the following recommendations. Firstly, create supportive frameworks that actively promote youth participation, ensuring that decision-making processes are accessible, inclusive, and transparent. Secondly, allocate adequate funding and resources to support youth-led initiatives, providing young people with the necessary tools and opportunities for participation. Thirdly, foster collaboration between policymakers, educators, and youth organisations to create a supportive ecosystem that empowers young people and amplifies their voices. Lastly, increase awareness among young people about their rights, opportunities, and the importance of their participation in decision-making processes through targeted educational campaigns.

In conclusion, youth participation in decision-making is essential for an inclusive, democratic, and sustainable Europe. By embracing the benefits, overcoming challenges, and implementing effective strategies, we can empower young people and create a society that values and actively engages its youth. Through their fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and commitment to positive change, young people will shape a better future for Europe and beyond.

Bibliography

Bellato, Federica, et al. "This Time I've Voted",
but Am I Represented? Addressing the
Underrepresentation of Young Europeans
through the Adoption of Youth Quotas. 11
Nov. 2022, https://www.delorscentre.eu/
fileadmin/2_Research/1_About_our_research/2_
Research_centres/6_Ja cques_Delors_Centre/
Publications/20221111_FutureEUII_
YouthQuota.pdf

Kitanova, Magdelina. "Youth Political
Participation in the EU: Evidence from a Cross-
National Analysis." Journal of Youth Studies, vol.
23, no. 7, 3 July 2019, pp. 1–18, https://doi.org/1
0.1080/13676261.2019.1636951

[1] Kitanova, Magdelina. "Youth Political Participation
in the EU: Evidence from a Cross-National Analysis."
Journal of Youth Studies, vol. 23, no. 7, 3 July
2019, pp. 1–18

[2] The Gallup International Association is an
association of polling organizations registered
in Zurich, Switzerland

[3] Ibidem

[4] Ibidem

[5] Ibidem

[6] Post-doctoral Research Fellow at UCD

[7] "Logistic regression is used to obtain odds ratio
in the presence of more than one explanatory
variable. The procedure is quite similar to
multiple linear regression, with the exception
that the response variable is binomial. The result
is the impact of each variable on the odds ratio
of the observed event of interest", definition
via https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/
PMC3936971/#:~:text=Logistic%20regression%20
is%20used%20to,the%2 0observed%20event%20
of%20interest.

[8] Ibidem

[9] Ibidem

[10] Ibidem

[11] Bellato, Federica, et al. "This Time I've
Voted", but Am I Represented? Addressing
the Underrepresentation of Young Europeans
through the Adoption of Youth Quotas. 11 Nov.
2022

[12] Ibidem

[13] Ibidem

[14] Ibidem

Beppe Lauri
Age: 22, Malta

Engaging with youth is a crucial step towards shaping the European Union's relevance for the future. This can be done in various ways. It is recommended that a strategic model is followed to gain as much engagement as possible with the resources being invested in order to increase efficiency and reduce the waste of resources. This essay will focus on education, employment, methods of communication, multiculturalism and emerging technologies.

Methods of Communication:

Using the correct method of communication is the first step towards building bridges between youth and European discussions.
Digital Platforms are typically the initial line of communication to engage youth since they have become an integral part of the lives of young people. Digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok offer rapid information dissemination, which can be used to foster participation in EU-related discussions and decision-making processes. Each platform caters for a particular age group, and it is important to disseminate information in the most

attractive way for these age groups. The largest demographic for Instagram is the 18-24 age group. Studies show that Instagram posts have an average engagement of 2% to 3% of the number of followers that the page has. If the same video is posted as an Instagram reel instead of a post, engagement increases exponentially due to the explore feature. When disseminating information creating short videos, infographics and interactive quizzes can help simplify complex discussions and make them more captivating. Collaborating with popular influencers and activists who are knowledgeable about EU affairs can greatly enhance youth engagement at a European level. Individuals follow influencers because they feel like they can relate to them or want to be like them.

Employment:

After establishing the right method of communication, the next step would be to discover the pertinent issues that youth face in their day-to-day lives. Employment among youth has always been an important talking point. The European Union can continue to expand

youth employment opportunities by offering quality apprenticeship programs, mentoring schemes, and entrepreneurship support networks. The European Union should also revise policy and put pressure on the private sector to further safeguard the well-being of youth unemployment and offer better job opportunities. These endeavors will provide young people with practical skills which are sometimes lacking at the university level. It will also instill a sense of ownership and economic independence. According to the European Commission, 75% of youth who participated in concrete projects at a European level found that the projects helped them identify opportunities for their personal or professional future, and 67% believe that their job chances have increased thanks to the project experience. From this study, we can conclude that youth that do engage with the European Union have had a very positive experience. The next step would be to analyze how these individuals became aware of the project they were engaged in so that we can market through the same lines of communication.

Strengthening Education:

One of the main objectives is to make the demographic realize how important it is to be aware of current affairs and political issues, which will affect them at some point in their lives. This needs to be tackled throughout our educational systems by revitalizing civic education in schools and universities. This could include incorporating courses and extracurricular activities that emphasize active citizenship, critical thinking, and social responsibility. By equipping young people with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values, we can foster a sense of civic duty, encourage political participation, and cultivate an informed and engaged citizenry. Additionally, educators should promote digital literacy and media literacy so that young people can navigate the information landscape responsibly. Not all information is factual, and it is important for youth to distinguish between a reliable source and a non-factual one to foster constructive criticism and well-opinionated minds.

Multiculturalism:

The European Union is very diverse, housing 27 countries and cultures. All of which are crucial elements towards the identity of the European Union itself. "Interculturalization is the process of making organizations 'culture-sensitive'. This means being aware of and recognizing cultural differences and individual identity" (Jan Booij 2006). Cultural diversity needs to be embraced by encouraging intercultural exchange programs such as student exchanges, cultural festivals, and volunteer opportunities abroad. This will help foster mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect among people from different backgrounds. Providing financial support and scholarships to make opportunities like travelling, studying, and following a traineeship is important, this should be accessible to a broader range of youth.

Emerging Technology:

Virtual and augmented reality experiences can be used to create immersive experiences that engage young people. The development of virtual tours of historical sites, interactive simulators of policy making processes and AR apps that provide information and encourage exploration of local communities can bring learning back to life and spark interest in various topics.

The European Union should organise hackathons for youths, focused on addressing pertinent issues within society whilst promoting innovation. Students studying programming, design, social entrepreneurs, and people from diverse backgrounds should be grouped together to work and develop an innovative solution towards a pertaining issue. Initiatives like these instil value in youths and gives them a sense of belonging because it allows them to showcase their skills and build relationships with like-minded individuals.

Empowering youths through data is crucial to provide youths with insights and information that can help them in their decision-making process. With the creation of data driven platforms that offer information on education, social and employment issues, youths can make informed choices and navigate challenges that actively shape their future. This can complement the creation of online learning spaces where young people can use educational resources and collaborate with peers from different European countries. This fosters knowledge sharing between youths and by tracking what courses are being followed, data scientists can gain a better understanding as to which topics interest youths most and how to go about addressing them.

In conclusion one can understand the importance of youth engagement in Europe through different tools that are available. This requires efforts across various sectors by taking advantage of the methods of communication, using emerging technologies, and strengthening efforts in education, multiculturalism, and employment. Europe can create an environment that empowers young people to become better versions of themselves and become responsible citizens. By involving youths in decision-making processes their perspective can help mould policies that are representative of the demographic which ultimately contributes to an inclusive European society.

FOSTERING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE: EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

Stefanie Eracleous
Age: 22, Cyprus

Introduction

During the past years, young people faced countless challenges and crises that traumatized them and let's say awakened them. It is true that, the European Union has been hit by a series of financial, economic, migratory, health crises in recent years and from 2021 they also have to face the consequences of the war in Ukraine. Young people want to have a voice, they want to see Europe drastically change and the European Union including them in their agenda and the decision-making.

Including young people in the decisions concerning Europe during the upcoming years is critical for constructing a dynamic, inclusive, and prosperous future. By harnessing the enthusiasm, ideas, and abilities of the younger generation we can address societal concerns, stimulate innovation, and shape a better tomorrow for Europe. The future of Europe is the youth, the younger generations who are ready to fight for their values, their freedoms, and their rights and we must include them and motivate them to actively participate. This paper investigates several techniques for increasing young people's engagement in Europe, with a focus on education, empowerment, technology and digital transformation, political participation, and media literacy.

Education

First of all, the key to the increase of youth engagement is to develop their skills and education with the needs of today's world. We can achieve that by equipping young people with the tools they need to surpass in the modern world by combining practical skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving into the curriculum. The traditional school system must convert, as to make it more compatable with the needs of the modern world, a world that drastically and continuously changes.

Traditional methodologies should be reinforced with practical skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving to prepare young people to handle the complexities of today's environment. An entrepreneurial mindset is crucial for students, by including entrepreneurship education into the curriculum, they will have the opportunity to stimulate their creativity, their risk-taking, and

adaptation. Furthermore, opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and ex-periential learning help to bridge the gap between education and employment by giving young people the practical information and experience they need to thrive in their chosen industries. Young people must be empowered to become active contributors to the economy and society at large by matching education with job market needs and establishing a culture of lifelong learning. They will not just be equipped with the skills and information they require to thrive in the future, but they will also be motivated to engage in shaping it!

Empowerment

In addition, encouraging young people to contribute actively to decision-making processes is paramount for the shaping of the future of Europe. To do so, the establishment of programs that facilitate their involvement of Youth empowerment programs would be beneficial and valuable. These programs will provide platforms and opportunities for young individuals to take an active role in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. By encouraging their participation in community projects, civic activities, and volunteering, young people will be empowered to make a tangible impact and contribute to the betterment of their communities and not only. Young people will be given the tools, resources, and support what they need to develop their leadership abilities and raise their voices through youth empowerment programs. These initiatives will encourage inclusivity, diversity, and equitable representation, ensuring that all young people have equal access to engage and be heard. Furthermore, youth empowerment

programs foster civic involvement and social responsibility. By involving young people in discussions on policy-making, social issues, and sustainable development, their understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by their generation will be nurtured. This participation gives young people a sense of agency and equips them to be active agents of change. Furthermore, these activities promote collaboration, teamwork, and the exchange of ideas among young people. Youth empowerment programs build networks and communities that allow learning, mentorship, and peer-to-peer support by fostering a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. This allows young people to form relationships, improve their skills, and have access to chances for personal and professional development. Finally, youth empowerment programs are critical in developing the potential of young people in Europe. By empowering them, they can become leaders, innovators, and changemakers in their communi-ties and they also achieve opportunities for involvement, skill development, and networking. As engaged and empowered young people contribute to the deve-lopment and progress of society as a whole, these initiatives generate a positive circle of empowerment.

Technology and digital transformation

Moreover, we live in the digital age, the development of technology is tremendous, and digital transformation continually evolves. Nowadays, techno-logy is pivotal in engaging Europe's young people. The creation of new platforms where young people could engage, and exchange ideas would allow them to freely express their thoughts on numerous problems that affect their

life. These digital places allow young people to connect with others who share their interests, promoting a sense of belonging and community. Furthermore, the anonymity and distance provided by internet platforms frequently encourages young people to express themselves more freely, resulting in honest and diverse interactions without fears.

What's more, with the help of technology and social media, the European Union could engage more with the youth by creating more events where young people could have a voice, like for example the EYE which is happening every year and thousands of young Europeans participate. To summarize, digital platforms and technology provide a plethora of opportunities for engaging young people in Europe. We can harness the potential of digital tools to connect, inspire, and empower young people by creating inclusive online spaces, fostering interactive learning experiences, providing platforms for creative expression, and informing them about the creation of upcoming youth events.

Political participation

Another important aspect of youth empowerment in engaging more in the future of Europe is political participation. By promoting and facilitating their active involvement in political processes, we promote a sense of civic responsibility and empower people to shape the future of their societies. Promoting political involvement can be accomplished through campaigning for voter registration and encouraging young people to utilise their right to vote. We can enhance voting turnout among young people by conducting voter registration drives, educational campaigns, and con-

necting with them through social media channels. Furthermore, educa-tional activities that teach young people about the political system, the value of their voice, and the significance of their vote can improve their comprehension and urge them to vote. Plus, creating forums for direct involvement between young people and officials, such as youth councils or advisory boards, helps guarantee their perspectives are heard in the policy-making process. That enables young people to create outcomes and contribute their unique insights by incorporating them in the formulation and execution of policies that directly affect them. Conjointly, schools and communities, civic education and poli-tical literacy initiatives can be helpful for young people as they could benefit them to comprehend the political system, democratic values, and their rights and obligations as citizens. This knowledge gives students the tools they need to participate in informed debates, critically examine political issues, and actively participate in democratic processes. Last but not least, the European Union could include youth representations and youth councils in decision-making, where young advisors could participate and make their voice and their perspectives heard. Policymakers can tap into the experience and ideas of youth organizations, NGOs, and student associations by cooperating with them, promoting a collaborative approach to youth involvement. They can work together to create and implement projects that address the special needs and aspirations of young people.

To conclude, encouraging political involvement among young people in Europe is key to the development of an inclusive and democratic society. The empowerment of young people to become active participants in political processes enables their voter registration, hosting

discussions, developing forums for direct interaction, providing civic education, and fostering grassroots activism. Engaging young people in politics not only promotes their personal development, but it also ensures that their ideas and goals are considered, resulting in a more representative and responsive political landscape.

Media Literacy

More than that, the European Union must act when it comes to promoting media literacy. We live in the world of social media and the spread of many misinformation and fake news is a phenomenon that the European Union has tackled for many years. Integrating social media literacy and critical thinking education into school curricula and youth programs, provides young people with the skills they need to navigate the vast digital landscape, allowing them to identify reliable sources, challenge misinformation, and engage in constructive dialogue on societal issues. Young people can learn to critically analyze information, recognize biases, and discern reputable sources through interactive workshops, seminars, and online tools. They can acquire fact-checking skills, comprehend the impact of fake news and disinformation, and develop a healthy skepticism about online content. By providing these skills to young people, they can become active participants in creating public discourse, engaging in informed debates, and making well-informed decisions. Young people are empowered by media literacy to traverse the wide digital realm responsibly and ethically, encouraging an engaged and educated citizenry that contributes to a healthy democratic society.

Recognition and celebration of youth achievements

Last but not least, recognizing and applauding young people's accomplishments extends beyond recognizing individual accomplishments; it is a means of cultivating a culture of empowerment, resilience, and innovation. In addition to developing national or European-level prizes, comprehensive support networks for young achievers are required. Mentorship programs, networking opportunities, access to resources and financing can all be part of this. Likewise, harnessing digital platforms and social media can increase the visibility of youth accomplishments, reaching a larger audience and motivating even more young people to participate in their communities. By aggressively promoting and honoring young people's unique abilities and accomplishments, the European Union not only fosters their self-confidence and ambition, but also builds role models for future generations. Recognizing their achievements shows that their contributions count and that their voices are important in determining the future. In this way, European Union encourages the development of a culture that motivates and rewards active engagement of young people through this acknowledgment, paving the path for a brighter and more inclusive future for Europe.

Conclusion

To conclude with, by applying these techniques, we can unlock the potential of the younger generation, foster their abilities, and empower them to contribute to their communities and build their own destinies. Let us prioritize youth engagement as we work toward a more inclusive, wealthy, and harmonious Eu-

rope. Let us hear their views, recognize their efforts, and provide the essential platforms and chances for their development and empowerment. By doing so, we prepare the path for a brighter, more promising future in which the potential of the younger generation is fully realized , and they become the leaders and changemakers that our world requires. As Robert Schuman said in the 1950s: "Europe needs a soul, an ideal and a political will to serve this ideal". The new generation undoubtably has a great soul and the willingness to make Europe great again, it only needs to trust them and to include them and everything is possible.

References

Will the new generation be up to the task of succession? (n.d.). https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0648-will-the-new-generation-be-up-to-the-task-of-succession

European Parliament. (2021). European Youth Event 2021 Report Booklet (Accessible Version). Retrieved from https://european-youth-event.europarl.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2021_EYE_Report-Booklet_A5_20-10-Accessible.pdf

FOSTERING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE: INITIATIVES FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Danijel Bačan
Age: 23, Croatia

Young people play a vital role in shaping the future of Europe. Their active engagement in societal matters, policy-making, and community development is crucial for building a prosperous and inclusive society. To ensure their participation, several ideas have emerged that can effectively raise the engagement of young people across Europe. This essay explores a few key initiatives that can empower and involve the youth in shaping their own destinies.

Firstly, these are youth-led initiatives. One of the most effective ways to engage young people is by empowering them to initiate and lead their own projects. Encouraging the formation of youth councils, organizations, and clubs can create spaces where young individuals can voice their concerns, advocate for their interests, and collaborate on projects that address their specific needs. Supporting these initiatives with funding and resources can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among young people. Secondly, this is enhanced civic education. Strengthening civic education in schools is paramount in equipping young people with the knowledge and skills necessary for active citizenship. By incorporating subjects such as democracy, human rights, and critical thinking into the curriculum, educators can nurture a sense of civic duty and encourage young individuals to participate in debates, discussions, and community activities. A well-informed youth is more likely to engage meaningfully in societal affairs. Then we have youth participation in decision-making. To foster youth engagement, it is essential to provide young people with opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. Establishing youth advisory boards or councils at local, regional, and national levels can enable young individuals to contribute their perspectives, ideas, and solutions to policy discussions. Moreover, involving young people in policy consultations and decision-making bodies can empower them to influence the issues that directly impact their lives. Digital platforms and tools are also important tools for youth. In today's digital era, utilizing online platforms and tools that are popular among young people can significantly enhance their engagement. Social media, for instance, can be leveraged to create virtual spaces for discussion, organizing events, and sharing information. Governments, organizations, and communities can

establish online platforms where young individuals can connect, exchange ideas, and collaborate on projects. These platforms can also be utilized for e-participation, allowing young people to provide input on policies and initiatives. Then, there are also a lot exchange programs and mobility opportunities. Promoting exchange programs, internships, and mobility opportunities within Europe can broaden young people's horizons, foster cultural understanding, and encourage active engagement. Programs like Erasmus+ have already demonstrated the positive impact of educational and cultural exchanges on youth engagement. By enabling young individuals to experience different countries and cultures, exchange programs facilitate networking, cross-cultural collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. It is also important to have skills development and entrepreneurship support. Empowering young people through skills development and entrepreneurship support is an effective means of increasing their engagement. Offering training programs, mentorship, and resources in areas such as leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship equips young individuals with the tools to initiate and sustain their own projects. By nurturing their talents and aspirations, society can harness the energy and creativity of young people to address societal challenges. In the end we need to address social and economic issues. Tackling pressing social and economic issues that affect young people directly is crucial for raising their engagement. Addressing issues such as youth unemployment, affordable housing, climate change, and mental health demonstrates that their concerns are being heard and acted upon. By involving young people in the development and implementation of policies and initiatives, their trust in institutions is strengthened, and their commitment to societal progress is enhanced.

Raising the engagement of young people in Europe requires a multifaceted approach that combines youth-led initiatives, enhanced education, participation in decision-making, digital platforms, mobility opportunities, skills development, entrepreneurship support, and addressing their specific concerns. This essay explores various ideas to raise the engagement of young people in Europe. It emphasizes the importance of youth-led initiatives, where young individuals take the lead in organizing projects and events. Empowering young people through leadership and project ownership fosters a sense of responsibility and commitment. Enhanced civic education plays a crucial role in empowering young people with the knowledge and skills necessary for active citizenship. By incorporating subjects such as democracy, human rights, and critical thinking into the curriculum, educators can nurture a sense of civic duty and encourage participation in community activities.

Introduction:

Engagement of young people in Europe is essential for the development and progress of the continent. The youth of Europe represent the future of the continent and their engagement is critical for the growth and prosperity of the region. Unfortunately, many young people in Europe are disengaged from politics and other important issues. In today's world, young people are the future of our society. They have the potential to bring about positive change and contribute to the development of their communities. However, young people in Europe are facing several challenges that hinder their engagement in society. These include a lack of access to education, limited job opportunities, and a lack of representation in decision-making processes. It is crucial that we find ways to engage young people in Europe and empower them to participate in society. By engaging young people, we can tap into their creativity, energy, and enthusiasm, and harness it towards building a better future for all. This is especially important in the context of the European Union, where the engagement of young people can help to strengthen democracy and promote social cohesion.

Problem: Lack of access to education

Solution: Providing more opportunities for education and training, including vocational training and apprenticeships, and improving access to higher education. One of the most important ways to raise the engagement of young people in the EU is through education. Schools and universities should focus on teaching students about the importance of civic engagement and how they can make a positive impact in their communities. This can be achieved through courses on political science, history, and social studies. Teachers and professors should also encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities that promote civic engagement, such as student government, community service, and volunteer work. In addition, the EU can support education initiatives that promote civic engagement, such as funding programs that provide civic education resources to schools and universities across the region. The EU can also develop and support programs that provide young people with opportunities to learn about the workings of the EU and how they can get involved in shaping its policies. In terms of education, access to higher education

is still a challenge for many young people in Europe, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. According to Eurostat, only 40% of people aged 30-34 in the European Union have completed tertiary education. This can be outdone by creating more youth councils, where young people can come together to discuss issues that affect their communities. Youth councils can also provide a platform for young people to voice their opinions and concerns about local and national policies. In addition to youth councils, there should be more opportunities for young people to participate in local and national elections. This can be done by lowering the voting age to 16, as has been done in some countries. By giving young people the right to vote, they will feel more invested in the political process and will be more likely to engage.

Problem: Limited job opportunities

Solution: Creating more job opportunities and promoting entrepreneurship, particularly in areas with high youth unemployment, and providing support and resources for young people to start their own businesses. Moreover, the youth unemployment rate in the European Union was 17.2% in 2020, which is significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate. This indicates that young people are facing challenges in accessing job opportunities. Youth organizations can play an important role in raising the engagement of young people in Europe. These organizations can provide young people with opportunities to participate in community service, volunteer work, and political activism. Youth organizations can also organize events such as debates, seminars, and workshops on important issues.

Additionally, youth organizations can provide mentorship and leadership training to young people, which can help them become more engaged and active in their communities. The EU can support the development of youth organizations that promote civic engagement, such as funding programs that provide resources for the development of youth-oriented civic engagement initiatives.

Problem: Lack of representation in decision-making processes

Solution: Increasing the representation of young people in decision-making processes at the local, national, and European levels, through youth councils and other forms of youth participation. According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2019, only 23% of young people aged 15-24 feel that they have a say in decision-making processes at the local level, and only 13% feel that they have a say at the national level. This highlights the need to increase the representation of young people in decision-making processes. The future of Europe depends on its youth, and it is essential to involve them in the decision-making process. Unfortunately, many young people in Europe feel disconnected from politics and civic life. According to Eurostat, only 34% of young people aged 18-24 voted in the 2019 European Parliament elections. This is a worrying trend as it means that young people are not taking an active role in shaping their future. They often see no relevance in participating in political activities and feel that their voices are not heard. In the year 2019 European Parliament elections saw a significant increase in youth voter turnout, with many young people getting involved in campaigns and debates.

Problem: Limited access to information and resources

Solution: Providing young people with access to information and resources, through digital platforms and social media, to enable them to engage in society and make informed decisions.

Another way to raise the engagement of young people in Europe is to improve their access to information. Young people are often bombarded with information from various sources, but they may not know how to decipher what is relevant and what is not. Therefore, it is essential to provide them with reliable sources of information on political and social issues. This can be done by creating online platforms where young people can access information on various topics. These platforms should be interactive and allow young people to engage in discussions and debates with their peers.Technology can be a powerful tool. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be used to spread awareness about important issues and events. Online forums and discussion boards can also be used to facilitate discussions and debates on various topics. Additionally, mobile apps can be developed to provide young people with information about upcoming elections, political parties, and candidates. Public campaigns can be also an effective way to raise awareness about important issues and encourage young people to get involved. These campaigns can use various forms of media, such as television, radio, and print advertising, to reach a wide audience. They can also use social media and other online platforms to engage with young people directly. Public campaigns can focus on a variety of issues, such as climate change, social justice, and political participation.

Problem: Social exclusion and discrimination

Solution: Addressing social exclusion and discrimination through policies and initiatives that promote social cohesion and diversity, and providing support for marginalized groups, including young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is necessary to ensure equality and the inclusion of diverse young people. Even those from socially disadvantaged families, where they would be offered a scholarship. Varaždin, Croatia is the European Youth Capital this year. This will provide opportunities for young people to shape the city's cultural and social agenda.

Problem: Lack of awareness and understanding of European institutions and policies

Solution: Increasing awareness and understanding of European institutions and policies among young people, through education and outreach programs, and promoting opportunities for young people to engage with European institutions and participate in European decision-making processes. Interest in politics has declined among young people. Why? In the days of the Greeks, political science was considered the main subject of teaching, but today it is considered a non-subject. Greater initiative could be achieved by involving young people in political parties, where the voice of young people would be represented and defended by young people.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, raising the engagement of young people in Europe is critical to

the future of the continent. There are several ways to achieve this, including providing more opportunities for civic engagement, improving access to information, making politics and civic life more relevant, providing leadership development opportunities, and creating a culture of engagement and participation. By implementing these ideas, we can empower young people to become active citizens and leaders in their communities, and ultimately build a brighter future for Europe.

Anna Renzi
Age: 26, Italy

As a graduating student in European Studies and International Relations, I firmly believe in the engaging process of the EU. One of the crucial factors in attracting young students to European projects, is integrating education for active citizenship into school curricula to raise the engagement of young people in Europe. It is true that it is already integrated in some schools across the continent, but it is also true that not all the teachers and not all the educators understand the deep importance of this subject, therefore it is even more difficult for young students to engage in the process.

Education for Active Citizenship is about equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to become active participants in their communities and contribute to the democratic processes of their societies. By integrating this type of education into school curricula, young Europeans can develop a deeper understanding of democratic principles, human rights, and civic responsibilities.

The integration of education for active citizenship involves incorporating relevant topics and activities into various subjects such as social studies, history, political science, and ethics. It goes beyond theoretical knowledge and emphasizes practical engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Through this education, young people learn about the foundations of democracy, including concepts such as the rule of law, separation of powers, freedom of speech, and the importance of

protecting human rights. They also explore topics related to social justice, tolerance, respect, and inclusivity.

Educating the students to search for information and pushing them to get involved in projects, provides the young pupils with opportunities to actively participate in their communities and apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. It can involve engaging students in debates, mock elections, and community projects that address local issues. This hands-on experience helps them understand the impact of their actions and develop a sense of agency. Furthermore, by integrating education for active citizenship, schools can foster collaborative learning environments where students engage in group projects, discussions, and simulations that simulate real-life scenarios. This approach enhances teamwork, communication skills, and the ability to work collectively to solve problems.

In addition to the academic aspects, education for active citizenship can also involve experiential learning through field trips, visits to local institutions, and meetings with elected representatives. These experiences expose students to the practical aspects of citizenship and governance, enabling them to connect theory with real-life situations and encouraging them to become active participants in society.

Overall, integrating education for active citizenship into school curricula helps

young Europeans develop a strong foundation of knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active participation in their communities. It empowers them to understand their rights and responsibilities, think critically, and engage in shaping a better future for Europe.

The integration of education for active citizenship

Actively involving young people in decision-making processes is a key step towards promoting their engagement and ensuring their voices are heard in shaping policies and initiatives. This involvement can occur at various levels of governance, including local, regional, and national. To achieve this, governments and institutions can establish platforms such as youth advisory boards or councils where young people can actively participate and contribute their opinions, proposals, and ideas. These platforms would provide young Europeans with the opportunity to have a direct say in matters that affect their lives and communities. Moreover, policymakers can engage young people in policy consultations, seeking their input and perspectives on issues that directly impact them. This can be done through surveys, focus groups, or online platforms that enable young people to share their opinions, ideas, and suggestions. By actively involving young people in consultations, decision-makers demonstrate that their viewpoints are valued and considered in the decision-making processes. Collaborative policy development is another approach that actively involves young people. This involves working alongside policymakers, experts, and stakeholders to co-create policies and initiatives. By participating in this co-creation process, young Europeans can ensure that policies and initiatives

reflect their needs, aspirations, and unique perspectives, making them more relevant and effective. Increasing youth representation in formal decision-making bodies is also crucial. Governments and institutions can advocate and create opportunities for young people to have a seat at the table in parliaments, local councils, or advisory committees. This can be done through the establishment of reserved seats or quotas specifically dedicated to young people. Having young people represented in decision-making bodies ensures that their voices are directly influencing policies and decisions that shape their societies.

Additionally, establishing transparent feedback mechanisms is important. It allows decision-makers to inform young people about the outcomes of their contributions and provide updates on how their input influenced decisions or policy changes. This transparency fosters trust, accountability, and encourages continued engagement from young people.

In summary, actively involving young people in decision-making processes ensures that their perspectives, ideas, and solutions are considered when shaping policies and initiatives. It empowers young Europeans to contribute to their communities, instills confidence in democratic systems, and strengthens their sense of ownership and responsibility in shaping a better future for Europe. I therefore think that digital platforms serve as valuable tools for fostering youth engagement in decision-making processes across Europe. They offer young people numerous opportunities to actively participate, collaborate, and contribute their unique perspectives and ideas.

The role of digital platform

Firstly, dedicated online forums and platforms provide spaces for young Europeans to engage in discussions, share ideas, and propose solutions. These digital spaces promote meaningful dialogue, allowing young people to express their opinions and collaborate with like-minded individuals.

Secondly, social media platforms play a significant role in youth engagement. They provide avenues for young people to connect, communicate, and engage with a broader audience. Through social media, young Europeans can initiate campaigns, leverage relevant hashtags, and parti-cipate in online movements to raise awareness and mobilize collective action.

Additionally, digital platforms enable virtual consultations, allowing young people to contribute their input on policies, initiatives, or specific projects. Online surveys, polls, and interactive tools make it easier for young Europeans to share their opinions, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Moreover, online workshops and webi-nars create opportunities for young people to learn about specific topics, acquire new skills, and interact with experts and decision-makers. These digital learning experiences foster knowledge-sharing and capacity-building among young Europeans. Furthermore, digital platforms facilitate crowdsourcing and co-creation, empowering young people to contribute their creativity and expertise to the development of policies, programs, and initiatives. Collaboration with peers and experts enhances the quality and relevance of these collective efforts.

In addition, digital platforms serve as hubs for collaboration and networking. Young Europeans can connect with like-minded individuals, forming digital communities, sharing experiences, and collaborating on projects and initiatives that drive positive change.

Lastly, online awareness campaigns offer young people the opportunity to leverage digital platforms to raise awareness on issues they are passionate about. By creating engaging and shareable content, young Europeans can challenge misconceptions and mobilize support for their cause.

The role of digital platforms in enabling young people to launch and participate in online awareness campaigns. Digital platforms offer a powerful means for young Europeans to raise awareness and mobilize support for issues they are passionate about. Through online awareness campaigns, young people can leverage the reach and connectivity of digital platforms to amplify their voices and advocate for change.

By utilizing creative and engaging content, young Europeans can capture the attention of their peers and wider audiences. They can utilize various digital mediums such as videos, graphics, articles, and social media posts to convey their messages effectively.

Online awareness campaigns enable young people to challenge miscon-ceptions, debunk stereotypes, and educate others about the importance of specific causes or issues. They can share personal stories, facts, and statistics to highlight the urgency and relevance of their chosen topic.

Through these campaigns, young people aim to engage others in meaningful discussions, encourage empathy, and

inspire action. They can facilitate dialogue by initiating hashtags, organizing online events or live discussions, and encouraging individuals to share their thoughts and experiences.

Digital platforms also provide opportunities for young Europeans to collaborate with other like-minded individuals, organizations, or influencers. By joining forces, they can increase the visibility and impact of their campaigns, attracting wider attention and support.

Furthermore, online awareness campaigns enable young people to mobilize support for their cause. They can create calls to action, urging individuals to sign petitions, donate to relevant organizations, participate in events, or engage in specific actions that contribute to the cause. Digital platforms also provide valuable feedback mechanisms, allowing young people to measure the impact of their campaigns. They can track engagement metrics, such as likes, shares, comments, and participation rates, to assess the reach and effectiveness of their awareness initiatives.

Conclusions

During a brainstorming session, one could think of an enormous amount of ideas, one could be more engaging or functional compared to the other but what is fundamental is embedding in the minds of the young that there will always be a place for them and for their opinion. They have to clearly know that the world and the society are not static and it is their role to shape the world and society into what they think it could be, that they have the ability to do so, and that the European Union is the key to helping them to fulfilling their dreams.

Madalina Huzum
Age: 23, Romania

We need to create a new sense of partnership with young people around the world. What precisely is the level of youth participation (15–30 years old) in Europe? Why is it important for our societies, and how can we organize it in a way that is beneficial to both the youth and the rest of us?

It is frequently argued that organized civil society is the best setting to encourage youth workers to engage in more social and political action. Youth workers will frequently encounter numerous significant challenges that will put them in a challenging situation when it comes to young people who are at risk of social exclusion. Such youth groups run the risk of being vulnerable, further marginalized, and left behind if they are not given the chance to participate. In order to create peaceful, adaptable, and inclusive communities, it is essential to involve youth workers from all backgrounds, especially those who are not reached by more conventional approaches.

Young people made the decision to take action not just during the COVID-19 lockdown but also throughout the migratory crisis. Young people in large numbers flocked to the streets to show their support and hospitality toward migrants entering their nations. Intercultural activities were a common component of many young caritas initiatives in nations including Germany, Austria, France, Greece, and Italy. Young volunteers took on the role of warm-hearted "buddies" for immigrants and refugees wanting to start new lives in other nations. To increase public awareness of migration, volunteers organized "living libraries" and several other initiatives aimed at assisting immigrants.

The EU has launched a new program through its Youth Action Plan that is aimed at young people in third-world nations as part of its increased efforts to encourage civic engagement and political involvement.

In an effort to "increase the voice and leadership" of young people in decision-making within the bloc's external activities for 2022–2027, the EU Commission originally unveiled the proposal in October.

The Commission, the EU External Action Service, and the Member States were urged to "mainstream meaningful youth participation and engagement in international fora and at multilateral,

regional, country, and local level" by the EU Council, which reached an agreement on conclusions regarding the new initiative.

Young people may be ardent and very successful champions for equality and non-discrimination, regardless of their own experiences with it. Consider the awareness that Malala Yousafzai has generated, about gender equality in the classroom. Young people will be able to explore and take action to successfully develop their identities, interests, and aspirations around the themes of equality and non-discrimination if we treat them as champions of equality and non-discrimination and provide them with the tools that empower them as such. The potential of this has already been realized by a few national equality organizations in Europe.

When their opinions are heard and the injustices that impact their lives are addressed, young people feel more powerful. The EU will continue to support efforts to transform education globally, through investments in Global Gateway, as well as initiatives to increase young people's access to economic opportunities, build their capacity to contribute to sustainable development and lead the global transition to a green economy, promote their health, mental and physical well-being, and ensure their access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Children and young people living in conflict-affected areas will continue to get special attention from the EU.

Here are some objectives to be included in the plan:

* to encourage young people's political and social involvement at all levels —local, regional, national, and European— especially those who are at danger of social exclusion;

* exchange of effective civic education practices among nations, growth of National Youth Councils' and other stakeholders' skills in the practice and policy development of civic education;

* exchange of effective civic education practices among nations, growth of National Youth Councils' and other stakeholders' skills in the practice and policy development of civic education;

* create collaborations and efforts for civic education in partner nations.

The future of youth is in jeopardy

Additionally it is important to understand the necessity of the energy transition. The future of the European energy transition must take use of our young people's participation, expertise, legitimacy, and diversity in order to be conscious and motivated to bring about change. A series of suggestions can serve as a platform for the future to increase young participation in the energy market, in the education and professional training sectors, and in policymaking processes.

To sum up, I firmly believe that this inclusive and cross-generational consensus-building process puts mankind on the right track toward a competitive, secure, and sustainable European energy market.

Ivana **PRIGANCOVÁ**
Age: 26, Slovakia

Introduction

Civic engagement seems to be close-ly tied to the core of democratic government. Individual or collective activities such as volunteering, reading newspapers, and voting in elections enhance citizen's feelings of responsibility towards the community or country and common belief in collective decision-making. Participatory civic attitudes in turn foster the effectiveness of democratic governance (Hioruchi, Woodard, 2023). As a Slovak national, I am personally interested in civic society in Europe. Engagement of young people, on the municipal or community level in our country, is significantly lower than in the countries of Western Europe. Participating in student school councils, youth parliaments, or youth organizations that activate youth to solve public affairs are not considered attractive among young people, on the contrary, mistrust of representative democracy and leaning towards extremist political entities are increasing.

Civic engagement is very often discussed on a level of country comparisons. According to a survey from 2020, approximately 51 percent of asked European citizens are not engaged in any way with any civil society organisation. Because there is a considerable dispro-portion in civic participation related to various regions of Europe, I believe, that the matter should be approached regionally (Kantar, 2020). From this survey it is clear, that most citizens who are civically inactive do not know how to participate, what are the opportunities at hand or do not believe that their action can improve their environment. I propose that these problems should be approached locally within a framework of a multi-level European project aiming at raising civic engagement.

Education

I believe that the role of education in raising civic engagement is an extremely important one, especially if we talk about youth. After all, education level seems to play an important role in civic activity or inactivity (Lauglo, Øia, 2007). Respondents, who have achieved higher education participate more often than those who have finished their education (Kantar, 2020). I argue, that civic engagement needs to be incorporated into the school curriculum. Universities

should be the first, to lead by example and prioritize the concept in their overall philosophies. (McIlrath, Labhrainn, 2016). In many European countries a motivation letter and an interesting CV are required, potential candidates are therefore more motivated to engage in voluntary work, read newspapers and be interested in the political scene. Personal interviews reveal their personality, intellectual background and being well-read often correlates with being informed on the political, social, and regional situation. In other countries, on the other hand, entrance exams for universities are focused on knowledge of specific facts, while the personal motivation, moral qualities and overall intellectual and professional profile of a candidate are irrelevant. In these countries, the level of civic engagement is among the lowest in Europe. Agreement upon minimum requirements for entrance to all European universities, or even communicating these values to the respective establishments, would potentially produce moral intellectual leaders who are aware of their responsibilities. Also, at each university, a small department dealing with civic engagement should be established. This department would regularly inform students about volunteering opportunities related to their field of study and cooperate with university staff and professors to incorporate civic engagement into the curriculum as part of the practicum.

If we stay in the academic environment, the expansion of already existing successful European projects, like Erasmus+, could also help to attract students, who did not consider volunteering before. Currently, this programme offers support to interesting youth participation projects, but this only reaches students who are already actively interested in civic engagements, and young leaders who have a concrete project proposal. However, it does not motivate those who would potentially join already existing projects or a community. Offering slightly higher scholarships to the students who would participate in volunteering during their stay abroad and providing relevant information on civic engagement has the potential to change attitudes towards active citizenship.

Raising awareness

Only 8 percent of respondents said that they are well informed about civil society organisations and their activities, 41 percent said, that they were fairly well informed. In order to participate, the respondents said, that they need to feel that their engagement would have a real impact and that they need to be offered concrete activities to participate in. (Kantar, 2020). There is a considerable class gap in levels of civic engagement. On the one hand, members of the working class lack motivation for volunteering, on the other hand, they are often excluded from the volunteering community (Boyd, Edin, 2016). Living in Slovakia, I noticed that voluntary work and social engagement in general are a discussed topic mostly among closed communities of intellectuals.

Online campaigns and "marketing" of civic engagement through media could raise visibility of the core values among the public, but to motivate youth to actively take part in specific projects, communication should be more personalized. To reach wider audiences, cooperation with vocational secondary schools could be established, offering young people such opportunities, which would help them to further develop their professional skills. Voluntary work

on a project related to the field of study could be directly incorporated into the curriculum as part of a practicum. Later, young people should also be encouraged to participate in projects by their employer. A system of tax benefits or other financial compensation could be introduced for enterprises which educate their employees in civic engagement, introduce specific projects to them or even offer financial, or non-financial benefits for those employees, who participate in their free time.

personal values. For young people of working age, seminars and lectures on critical thought should be held in the workplace or in public spaces. These solutions could by applied by cooperation with debate associations, providing financial support for them to train teachers and lecturers, and to offer this education to schools, employers and the wider public.

Political participation

Civic engagement is more than just volunteering and participating in public manifestations. It starts with an interest in the political scene and awareness of civic responsibility. Most of the respondents, who said they are not engaged with any civil society organisation, at the same time admitted, that they are sceptical about the European Union in general. Low electoral turnout, either for elections on national or European level, is part of the problem. Because responsible voting demands, good insight into political scene, and the effort required to gather and critically evaluate information discourages many young people. Civic education has been an underrated channel for communicating civic responsibilities to future voters and citizens. (Galston, 2007). Educational lectures for middle and high school teachers, improving their classes to become more attractive and up to date with world events, might have a positive effect on the perception of civic engagement among youth. I strongly argue for debating becoming part of compulsory education curriculum, to stimulate critical thinking, respect towards those who have different opinions, and polite expression of

References:

Boyd, Martin, J., & Edin, K. (2016). Pathways to Participation: Class Disparities in Youth Civic Engagement. City & Community, 15(4), 400–422.

Horiuchi, Katsumata, H., & Woodard, E. (2023). Young Citizens' Civic Engagement and Civic Attitudes: A Regression Discontinuity Analysis. Political Behavior, 45(1), 265–284.

Kantar, Civic engament, June 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2020/civic_engagement/report/en-report.pdf, accessed on 8.6.2023 17:03

Lauglo, & Øia, T. (2007). Education and Civic Engagement : Review of Research and a Study on Norwegian Youths /.

Galston. (2007). Civic Knowledge, Civic Education, and Civic Engagement: A Summary of Recent Research. International Journal of Public Administration, 30(6-7), 623–642.

McIlrath, & Labhrainn, I. M. (2016). Higher Education and Civic Engagement: International Perspectives. Taylor and Francis.

UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL: IGNITING YOUTH ENGAGEMENTS ACROSS EUROPE

Thambi PRIYADARSHINI
Age: 27, Germany

Introduction

In the age of rapid advancement and growth in interconnectivity, it is important to provide encouragement to young people in Europe who are seeking a prosperous and bright future, otherwise known as the "Youth Renaissance." This movement sheds light on transformative initiatives that harness the collaborative potential of young individuals, allowing them to find their passions, pursue their hobbies, and contribute their knowledge to the healthy development of society. To create transformative change in society, there is always a need to explore and generate more innovative ideas in specific fields, sometimes going beyond traditional or customary solutions. This empowers young individuals as creators of society.

The main objective of this content is to outline the current advanced methodologies that promote young people's engagement across Europe and worldwide. Through these approaches, we can rebuild education, governance, and digital creativity. This represents another way of showcasing the potential and hard work of young people, fostering a society that is vibrant, strong, and empowered.

Therefore, the main focus is on rebuilding the education system and developing skills to transform the traditional education system into a well-versed modern world. We understand that developing people's thinking is crucial, but it is not impossible. Encouragement should be given to include critical thinking, interdisciplinary subjects, innovations, and entrepreneurship in the curriculum. The youth is encouraged to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and competence to recognize the difference between education and the real world. Additionally, guidance programs can be provided to facilitate collaboration with others and allow individuals to experience their capabilities. Participating in youth parliaments through collaboration and co-creation provides a better opportunity to express oneself and aids in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the establishment of digital creativity and games is considered a powerful tool to engage young people in developing society as a united community.

Therefore, this Renaissance will unlock the basic potential and strength of young people, which fuels progress towards a brighter future for all. These strategies would assist individuals in Europe in

shaping and transforming their culture and society into the modern world. Furthermore, we strive for the active participation of the maximum number of youths.

Integrated Education and Skills Development

Rebuild the education system to highlight integrated learning and skills development.

The first step to be taken is the rebuilding of the education system, focusing on integrated learning and skills development. We need to think as if we have already restructured the education system and are delivering learning skills more effectively to our society. This approach may surpass traditional and customary policies.

This includes fostering collaboration, communication, critical thinking, adaptability, and digital learning. By incorporating these integrated skills into the curriculum, students can develop themselves and prepare their skill set to face future challenges. These days, we can observe well-organized and structured teaching methods that have been updated for classroom practice. This enables students to understand subjects clearly and effectively, empowering them to grasp concepts and enhance their learning skills.

Furthermore, maintaining partnerships with industries, companies, and business start-ups is highly encouraged to comprehend the relationship between education and the real world. Applying theoretical knowledge practically increases the likelihood of deeper subject experiences, a skill that is valuable in all fields of education.

As an individual must be ready to solve the societal issues at any time by taking as his/ her privilege in developing the society.

Integrate collaborative subjects, analytical thinking, creativity and ambitious towards the curriculum.

When we integrate collaborative subjects, analytical thinking, creativity, and ambition into the syllabus, it is a good move towards fostering better thinking and comprehensive approaches to education. By implementing these elements, we create a learning platform that cultivates essential skills and mental abilities necessary for success in the 21st century. These collaborative subjects encourage teamwork, communication, and discipline in work and cooperation. By instilling ambition in students, we inspire them to achieve their goals and dreams, ultimately making a positive impact on communities and the world at large.

Equipped with these skill sets and thinking abilities, students can actively participate in the increasingly complex and interconnected world of technology.

Encourage participation with industries, business, and start-ups to flyover the gap space between education and physical world skills.

Yes, we all need encouragement at the correct time and in the right situations from the right people. These encouragements, when it comes to participating with industries, businesses, and start-up companies, can bridge the gap between education and real-world skills. In classrooms, there is always a need for practical teaching methods that involve collaborating and engaging with external stakeholders. Through such interactions, students gain valuable awareness and experience regarding

industry and business-related knowledge. It nurtures students' creativity, allowing them to come up with new and advanced ideas and suggestions, challenging old and outdated methodologies that have lacked interest thus far.

Connecting with knowledge in-depth is only possible through the practical applicability of the sources they have already acquired by understanding theoretical concepts. Applying this knowledge in real-world scenarios is what we all need to make things easier and for the betterment of society, as students are the leaders of tomorrow's nation.

CASE LAW:
Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

In this case, the United States Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation at public schools was unconstitutional. During that time, racial separation was widespread in many parts of the country. The case involved Linda Brown, a young African American girl who was denied admission to a school in Topeka, Kansas solely because of her race. The school was meant exclusively for white students.

This case was significant and set a precedent in the fight against racial discrimination, contributing to the progression of civil rights legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Its impact extended far beyond the realm of education, highlighting the need for fair and equal treatment in all aspects of society, ultimately promoting social justice.

These are the shortcomings we observe in the old education system, but in today's technologically advanced era, we can easily witness the drastic changes that have taken place over the years.

Promoting and providing the guidance, internships, and studentships to develop pragmatic knowledge and to gain experience in that field.

Promoting and providing guidelines for internships and studentships is a proactive initiative to nurture students' practical knowledge. By utilizing these opportunities as the primary source, individual students or young individuals can comprehend the expectations, key objectives, nature, and scope of any content. These types of internships and studentships bring together students, uniting them to work and think collectively for the nation, and aiding them in gaining experience by engaging with a diverse group of individuals. This practical collaboration proves highly effective in bridging the gap between academic studies and chosen industries.

For instance, the European Union has arranged internships and guidelines through the European Union Directive on internships, aimed at promoting good quality and fair treatment for students undertaking internships. They receive appropriate remuneration, social security, and fair and equal working conditions.

Collaborative and Co-creation

Setting up youth councils at community, regional, and national levels to enable active participation in administration.

By establishing youth councils at the community, regional, and national levels, the aim is to bring about transformation in how young participants are approached and encouraged to participate in governing and addressing societal issues. These councils provide a stable platform for young people to voice their opinions and contribute their ideas towards the

development of the country. Youths are considered as agents of an empowered nation, and such initiatives help in fostering their sense of responsibility as citizens.

Simplify policy co-creation for young people to collaborate with decision-makers, experts, advisors, and civil society.

This is a significant step towards inclusive and effective governance, allowing individuals to contribute their ideas and suggestions through the decision-making process. It provides an active platform for collaboration and facilitates meaningful work. The right to express different ideas without objection, as protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECtHR), should be followed.

For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was established to grant children the right to participate in matters or issues that affect them. It recognizes the importance of young individuals' participation and emphasizes their right to freely express their views and be heard when decisions are made, considering their age, maturity, and capacity to understand.

Furthermore, the European Youth Participation Charter, developed to promote meaningful youth participation, not only encourages active engagement in decision-making processes but also focuses on the development of policies, their establishment, monitoring, and assessment.

These examples illustrate frameworks and initiatives that have successfully promoted the involvement of young individuals in decision-making processes. It is essential to provide a solid foundation for young people to collaborate and

participate in societal and industrial decision-making processes as experts and advisors, shaping policies and ensuring their effective implementation in society to maximize their impact. A capable governing body is necessary to address all situations effectively.

It is very important to conduct surveys and gatherings with young people to gather ideas from their perspectives.

When discussing youth development, it is crucial to have a proper approach for conducting surveys and engaging with young people to gather their ideas and views in a group setting. Everyone has their own unique perspective, and it is important to provide a space where everyone can express their thoughts and be heard. Understanding and experiencing the viewpoints of others is the responsibility of a true advocate in society. Surveys play a significant role in collecting data on a large scale, providing valuable insights and a deep understanding of the views held by young people. Active participation and discussions, including the ability to voice objections to matters that may not be beneficial for society and its improvement, are encouraged.

This approach allows for the filtering out of undesirable policies that have proven ineffective for society. It should be considered a democratic decision-making process.

For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) places emphasis on the rights of children and young people to participate and contribute to the decision-making process. Article 12 of the UNCRC specifically states the right of children to freely express their views, with those comments being taken into consideration.

There must be clear-cut communication and straightforwardness when discussing the outcome of measures and simplifying the results of youth input.

Indeed, straightforwardness is crucial when discussing the outcomes of measures or policies and presenting them in a simplified manner is the desired result.

Transparency is essential, ensuring clear communication during decision-making processes. This transparency should be established with good faith, trust, and, most importantly, legitimacy.

Accountability comes into play when individuals may not be able to express themselves directly but are trying to share their views and contribute ideas. Perspectives may differ, but by encouraging open communication, it becomes easier to assess the genuine engagement of young people.

Learning and improvement are fostered when effective communication takes place. It is important for us to take on the role of a good speaker and knowledgeable individual, sharing, suggesting, commenting, accepting, opposing, and ultimately achieving results. This formula represents the pathway to learning and self-improvement.

Digital Creativity and cross-culture exchange programs

Utilizing the power of technology and digital creativity to empower young people. And one must develop mobile applications/software to interact effectively with society.

In today's modern world, it is highly beneficial to utilize technology efficiently, especially when it comes to empowering young people and promoting their contributions to society through the development of mobile applications. Accessibility and Reach: Mobile applications and software can reach a wide range of young people and other individuals, transcending geographical barriers and allowing for involvement on a large scale.

Amplifying Youth Voices: Technology can amplify the voices of young people, providing a platform for them to share their ideas and perspectives, even if they are unable to attend events or meetings in person.

Collaboration and Networking: Mobile applications facilitate collaboration and networking by connecting individuals and providing opportunities for communication and contacts. This is particularly important for those in remote or rural areas who may have limited access to facilities and platforms to express themselves.

Privacy and Data Protection: While using these applications, it is crucial to prioritize privacy and data protection. Sensitivity should be maintained when discussing matters that involve personal information, and proper measures should be in place to ensure data security, fostering trust among users.

Overall, leveraging technology through mobile applications can be a powerful tool in empowering young people, enhancing their participation, and ensuring their voices are heard while safeguarding privacy and data protection.

Motivate youth innovators to develop digital modelling solutions that address societal issues and establish public services.

Motivating young innovators to develop digital models and solutions for public

service not only enhances their critical thinking skills and shapes the community in a well-organized manner but also fosters technological expertise, promotes interdisciplinary learning, nurtures entrepreneurship, and creates economic opportunities for growth. It is crucial to showcase their work and provide essential support to inspire and empower these young innovators.

Collaborate intensively and coding boot camps to enhance digital skills and entrepreneurships.

Leveraging technology, particularly through mobile applications, can be a powerful and effective means of empowering young people and enhancing their participation. By conducting boot camps and providing platforms for collaborative idea-sharing, digital skills and latent entrepreneurship among young individuals can be nurtured. Specially tailored boot camps can focus on key topics, sparking interest and enabling informed decision-making when it comes to policy formulation. It is crucial to prioritize data privacy and protection, ensuring that young people's information is safeguarded throughout these initiatives.

Conclusion

From my viewpoint, increasing the engagement of young people in Europe can be achieved by empowering them through purposeful participation, offering quality education, and skill development programs that support youth initiatives, and leveraging technology to connect with others and magnify their voices.

THE LACK OF COMMITMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE: IS IT THE FAULT OF SOCIETY OR YOUNG PEOPLE THEMSELVES?

Yago Piera MARTÍNEZ
Age: 21, Spain

The limited social commitment of young people is a common problem across Europe. However, the lack of motivation and engagement of European youth may have its roots both in society and in the young people themselves.

Both society and young people need to address the problem about lack of commitment and propose brave and bold solutions.

I would delve into the question if this context cannot be solely attributed to young people themselves or to society at large, through the analysis of the result of a complex interplay of social, economic, and cultural factors.

The role of society

The question of whether young people in Europe lack commitment is a contentious one that has sparked numerous debates. Some argue that society bears the responsibility for shaping the behavior and attitudes of young people through various mechanisms such as education, media, social norms, and values.

Education is seen as a crucial tool in shaping the outlook and attitudes of young people. Through formal and informal education, young people are taught not just academic subjects, but also societal values and norms. The education system has a responsibility to instill in young people the importance of commitment and responsibility towards oneself and society at large. The media also plays a significant role in shaping the behavior and attitudes of young people, it provides them with role models and ideals that they aspire to emulate. Social norms and values also shape the behavior of young people. Society places a high value on individualism and personal freedom, which can sometimes come at the expense of commitment to others. Research has shown that social and economic factors such as unemployment, precarious work, and inequality have a significant impact on young people's sense of belonging and motivation to engage in the life of the community. For instance, a study by Eurofound[1] found that 25% of young people in the European Union are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This can lead to feelings of alienation and disengagement from society, as well as a lack of trust in institutions and political leaders.

Furthermore, youth unemployment rates remain high in many parts of Europe, with 14.3% of young people (aged 15-24) in the EU unemployed[2]. In addition, precarious work and low pay can also contribute to a sense of insecurity and a lack of belonging, as young people may feel undervalued and uncertain about their future prospects.

The fact that a significant number of young people in Europe are not working or studying is indeed a major issue that has significant implications for both the individuals themselves and society as a whole. There are several reasons that explain why this is a problem. First and foremost, young people who are not engaged in education or employment are at risk of social exclusion and long-term poverty. They may lack the skills and qualifications necessary to secure good-paying jobs, which can have a negative impact on their standard of living, well-being, and future prospects.

According to a report by the European Youth Forum[3] 40% of young people in the EU are employed on temporary contracts, which can limit their ability to plan for the future and engage in social activities.

It is essential to recognize that society plays a critical role in fostering young people's commitment to civic engagement. Providing opportunities for participation, recognition, and empowerment can lead to a stronger sense of belonging and motivation to engage in public life.

Studies have shown that young people who are actively engaged in their communities and have a sense of civic duty report higher levels of life satisfaction and are more likely to volunteer, vote, and participate in political activities; a study by the European Commission[4] found that youth who were involved in volunteer work or community activities were more likely to report feeling a sense of belonging in their communities.

Additionally, research has highlighted the positive impact of programs that encourage youth involvement in civic life. For example, a study by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement found that youth who participated in service-learning programs reported higher levels of civic knowledge and skills, as well as increased political and social awareness.

Despite these challenges, society can play a positive role in fostering young people's commitment by providing opportunities for participation, recognition, and empowerment.

The role of young people

Society plays a significant role in shaping the behavior and attitudes of European Youth through education, media, and social norms. Economic factors such as unemployment, precarious work, and inequality also affect young people's sense of belonging and motivation to engage in civic life. On the other hand, individual aspirations, values, and experiences also play a crucial role in shaping young people's attitudes and behaviors. The events of May 1968 serve as an example of young people's aspirations for societal change and political engagement.

The idea that young people are apathetic or disengaged is often perpetuated by media and political discourse. It should be said that almost the same generation has faced significant challenges in recent years, including the global

financial crisis of 2008 and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These crises have had a profound impact on the lives of everyone, both in terms of their economic prospects and their social and psychological well-being.

There are many examples of youth activism and social movements that challenge the idea of apathy. One such example is the Fridays for Future movement, which was started by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg in 2018. This global movement, led primarily by young people, demands urgent action on climate change from governments and corporations. The movement has gained significant traction and has inspired millions of young people to take to the streets in protest. Another example is the Black Lives Matter movement, which gained momentum globally in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd in the United States. Young people, particularly those from marginalized communities, played a crucial role in organizing protests and raising awareness about systemic racism and police brutality.

These examples demonstrate that young people are not inherently apathetic[6], but rather are often motivated by issues that directly affect their lives and communities. Additionally, youth activism is not a new phenomenon - throughout history, young people have been at the forefront of social and political movements, from the Civil Rights movement in the United States to the May 1968 protests in France.

The need for a holistic approach

The lack of commitment of young people cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy of society vs. young people.

This issue is far more complex and multifaceted than that. A more nuanced and integrated approach is needed to fully understand the dynamics at play. Structural factors such as economic instability, political disenfranchisement, and social inequality undoubtedly play a role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of young people.

Advocating for a more holistic approach that acknowledges the complex interactions between these various factors is crucial to create effective policies and initiatives that aim to increase young people's commitment to society. Such initiatives could include providing access to high-quality education and employment opportunities, creating spaces for participation and dialogue, and empowering young people through recognition and leadership roles.

One key strategy would be undertaking an education reform. By incorporating more participatory and interactive approaches to learning, such as project-based learning and service learning, schools can provide opportunities for young people to engage with their communities and develop a sense of social responsibility. Youth empowerment programs, such as mentorship programs, leadership development, and entrepreneurship training, can also play a crucial role in fostering commitment among young people. Furthermore, cross-sectoral collaboration is essential to addressing the issue of youth disengagement.

Conclusion

The lack of commitment and engagement among young people in Europe cannot be attributed solely to their own shortcomings. It is essential to

recognize the complex and interrelated factors that contribute to their attitudes and behaviors. Structural factors such as unemployment, precarious work, and inequality can lead to a sense of powerlessness and apathy among young people.

It is crucial to acknowledge the importance of individual aspirations, values, and experiences in understanding young people's engagement or disengagement. The May 1968 protests serve as a powerful reminder that young people have the capacity to shape society when their voices are heard and their actions are meaningful. Implementing policy recommendations such as education reform, youth empowerment programs, and cross-sectoral collaboration can help foster young people's commitment and participation.

However, to fully understand the complexities of the issue, further research and dialogue are necessary. It is imperative to listen to young people's voices and perspectives to develop effective solutions.

Therefore, the question remains: How can we create an environment that empowers young people and provides meaningful opportunities for their engagement in society?

Only by actively engaging with young people and listening to their experiences can we hope to find the answer.

[1] Eurofound (2019). NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics,
costs and policy responses in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
[2] Eurostat. (n.d.). Unemployment statistics. European Union
[3] According to the European Youth Forum (2021), young people in the EU face a range of challenges,
including unemployment and social exclusion.
[4] European Commission. (2020). Youth employment in Europe: Trends and challenges.
[5] Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. (2020). All in: Youth civic
engagement in the United States. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University.
[6] Youth Policy Labs. (2020). Young people and the future of democracy: The role of social media

epp group
in the european parliament