

Youth Partnership

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



Symposium

The future of young people's political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities

Call for participants

Information about the symposium

On 18-20 September 2019 the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth will organise a symposium bringing together up to 120 participants to explore questions, tensions, challenges and opportunities regarding the political participation of young people in today's changing world and to create a space for learning and inspiration among actors involved in this topic.

Main topics

Political participation, very broadly understood as people's activities affecting politics, the government or the state, is a crucial aspect of pluralist democracies. This includes people's ability to express their political opinions in diverse ways and to be heard, to vote and stand in elections, to engage in civil society organisations or in thematic movements, to demonstrate or protest, to engage in issue-based activism or online activism. Forms of and attitudes to political participation change over time and it is important to understand current trends to be able to adapt support tools and help overcoming barriers to wider democratic participation, which in turn can help strengthening democratic values and attitudes in European societies.

One of the challenges in understanding current developments, difficulties and opportunities in youth participation is that young people are a non-homogeneous group with diverging trends in attitudes and habits:

- While some young people are very engaged politically, others are disinterested or disillusioned and do not participate, possibly because they feel their voice is not taken into account. Is that "youth apathy" or a crisis of democracy as such? In some repressive contexts, obstacles seem to be placed in front of young people to prevent or discourage their participation.
- Among those who engage, some young people choose conventional forms of participation, such as electoral processes or civil society organisations. Other young people choose

unconventional forms, including artistic expression or consumer boycotts. Still others opt for illegitimate or even illegal forms of participation, such as destruction of property or violence, signalling a loss of trust in public institutions and democratic processes.

- At different levels, from the local to the European, there are different ways in which young people engage and those may vary from a context to another. Specific approaches, tools, or supports that work at one level, may not be suitable for others.

There is a need to understand better what young people see as political participation today, how they choose to engage or not to engage, and how different actors, such as organisations, movements, etc., can work with young people in appropriate ways to support their political engagement.

Objectives and results

The symposium will aim to:

- offer space and possibilities for participants to share and explore examples of young people's political participation in a changing world
- empower participants from different fields and levels to address this theme in their work on supporting young people's democratic values and political engagement
- connect different actors working on these themes, from within and beyond the youth sector, to continue, develop or innovate in relation to that work
- produce knowledge relating to the trends of youth political participation, their reasons and implications.

The symposium will strive for the following outcomes:

- mutual learning, inspiration and motivation for future actions for the participants
- a compendium of good practices and stories of success highlighting the actions to be taken for supporting youth political participation analytical papers on young people's political participation in a changing world
- practical conclusions on how diverse actors can support young people's democratic values and political engagement.

Symposium programme

While the overarching theme is set, a key feature of this symposium is that sessions within the programme will be designed in a participatory way. In the application form, participants will have the chance to indicate what issues or questions are most pressing for them in their work as it relates to the main theme of political participation. The answers will inform the topics that will be covered throughout the symposium. Here come some examples of issues to be explored:

- How do young people engage in political participation in a changing world of economic tensions, crisis of democratic institutions, digitalisation, social media, fake news and other manipulations of the public opinion, etc.?
- What are the trends in young people's political engagement and the underlying values? How do young people see their own political participation?
- What determines young people's political actions?
- What is the space for young people's engagement in civil society and citizen movements?
- What conditions for young people's political participation may be influenced by the youth sector and how?

Timeline and venue

The symposium will start on 18 September at 9:00 and end at lunchtime on 20 September 2019. The symposium will be held at the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg, France.

Before the symposium, as an opportunity for learning and exchange, the organisers have foreseen four to five webinars for the participants and the wider public on some key themes of youth political participation. Webinars will last one hour each, and will begin in early May.

Call for participants

We are calling for participants with the following profiles:

- politically engaged young people, young political activists/leaders
- members of political organisations and (youth wings of) political parties
- representatives of civil society organisations and movements, including youth organisations
- influencers and persons active in the media
- young artists or activists using other public engagement forms
- policy makers
- youth workers, educators and teachers
- researchers.

Interested applicants should be able to work in English and reside in Europe.

Application procedure and selection of participants

Interested applicants are invited to fill in an online application form at the following link by **22 April 2019, 23.59 CET**: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/application-form>

The results of the selection will be announced by 15 May 2019.

Travel, meals and accommodation costs

Travel costs, meals and accommodation will be covered by the EU-CoE youth partnership. Specific information will be sent to successful candidates.

Further information and contact

For further information, please contact youth-partnership@partnership-eu.coe.int