Voting Toolbox

A MANUAL FOR YOUTH WORKERS AND FIRST-TIME VOTERS

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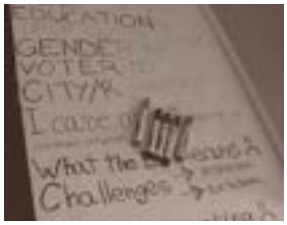

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CHAPTER 01 - INTRODUCTION

What is the project about?

The project 'Co-operation Youth vote: Enabling future active European citizens' seeks to encourage and strengthen youth participation through education and communication actions in preparation for the next European Parliament elections in 2024. The project is built on a strong coalition of youth-led civil society organisations focusing on the following target group: first-time voters and young abstainers.

The first phase of the project sought to understand the challenges and motivations of young people to actively participate in European initiatives in the (post) pandemic period, through desk research and a survey.

The results were considered for the preparation of this Toolbox. Additionally, this Voting Toolbox, aimed to encourage young people's participation in European elections in 2024, is born as a result of collaborative work and diversity of the partnership and the depth of the partners with a wide set of expertise and experience.

Which organisations are participating in the project?

The Young European Federalists (JEF Europe) is a political youth NGO advocating for the creation of a democratic European federation as a guarantee for peace, the rule of law and human rights. JEF Europe promotes true European citizenship, works for the widening and deepening of the European Union and strives for a more just and integrated society on the European continent and beyond.

Young Educators - European Association (YE) is an International non profit and non governmental for development organisation that stands for a world without borders, without racial or ethnic differences, a place where people can be different and diverse. Its work is focused on empowering young people to move the global society in a new direction, and promote human rights, equality, social inclusion, citizenship and knowledge.

Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe. It brings together Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations from all over Europe. All Member Organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations.

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Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP) is an umbrella that gathers 42 European organisations active in the field of education, training and youth, coming from all over Europe and beyond.

National partners

JEF Belgium (Young European Federalists Belgium)
JEF Bulgaria (European Youth Movement Bulgaria)
JEF Italy (Young European Federalists Italy)
JEF Latvia (Klubs Maya – youth for a united Europe, Latvia)

Who collaborated with the Toolbox?

This Toolbox was produced by *Young Educators - European Association* in the framework of Co-Operation Youth Vote, a Key Action 2 project sponsored by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union and in partnership with JEF Europe, Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) and the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP).

Author:

Mariantonelia Cedeño

Editors:

Margarida Malta and Félix Soares

Graphic design:

Laura Stafie

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What will you find in this Toolbox?

- To begin with, whether you know a lot or a little about the European Union, the first module will provide you with **basic and precise information about the EU**, its functioning, its main institutions and, in particular, about the European Parliament, to reinforce awareness of our role in the European system and the importance of our participation in it;

- You will know which are the **main political parties** that make up the EU;

- While each state has its own regulations and procedures for elections, there are some common guidelines that apply to all. Here you will find out what they are;

- Based on the study carried out for this project, we have highlighted some of the characteristics of the **potential profile of first-time voters** so that can serve as a basis for you to better define your approach. Knowing the profile of those who participate in the elections makes it possible to have a reference of the profile of those who do not, so that it can allow the multipliers to be identified and address what may be the main doubts and concerns of them regarding the next elections;

- **Activities** to empower (you) and feel completely safe and confident to promote the cast of young people vote in these upcoming elections.

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Who is this Voting Toolbox for?

First-time voters

It is your first time participating in elections and you have so many doubts! How and where should I register? How and where should I vote? Who are the candidates and political parties? Does my vote really matter? This Voting Toolbox seeks to clarify some of these concerns in a practical and simple way and guide you on resources that you can consult to obtain more information if it is of interest to you.

Youth worker/Facilitator

You work with young people in a community or an organisation and you know a lot of young people who are of voting age (or soon will be) but have many questions about it. In this Voting Toolbox you will find some practical information to answer the most frequently asked questions regarding the EU, its institutions, the European Parliament, the voting system as well as activities that you can replicate to empower them to participate in the next elections.

How to use it?

Find out
Be aware

We have compiled in this toolkit basic information necessary to dispel the most common doubts related to the EU, its institutions and in particular the European Parliament, decision-making and other frequent myths. As well as we have compiled other resources so that you can go further, if you wish.

Multiply

Use the tools and activities for groups of young people, so that through non-formal learning, they can improve their general knowledge about the EU, reduce doubts and empower them to make informed decisions by participating in the next elections.

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CHAPTER 02 - BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT EU

The EU System

- **What is the European Union?**

The European Union is a unique partnership between 27 European countries, known as Member States, or EU countries. Together they cover much of the European continent. The EU is home to around 447 million people, which is around 6 % of the world's population. Citizens of the EU countries are also EU citizens.

A simple way of defining the European Union as we know it is to think about it as a group of sovereign countries whose desire for a peaceful and common future. This was the main factor that led to its implementation after World War II.

- **How does the European Union impact your life?**

The European Union impacts the lives of its citizens more than they are sometimes aware of. The European Union is a system that has achieved greater benefits for its Member States, such as, for example, the maintenance of peace and security on the continent for more than 70 years, despite having gone through various crises that have tested the integration and cohesion of its members, such as the 2008 global financial crisis, a surge in migration from Africa and the Middle East, the complexities of Brexit negotiations, and the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

More recently, the bloc has had to swiftly respond to the aggressive actions of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Tensions escalated in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine, leading to the displacement of millions of people and the potential for a wider conflict. Despite this, the European Union remains to this day one of the most successful integration models of all time, one of the largest and strongest economies in the world and one of the most influential actors in the entire international system.

What are the main EU's achievements?

Likewise, direct benefits to its citizens include the freedom to travel, study, work and live in any Member State of the European Union. Some of the EU's achievements are:

- **Safe and easy travel**: As most EU countries and some non-EU countries have lifted their cross-border controls, travelling in Europe is much easier than it once was. This is thanks to the Schengen Agreement, thanks to which any EU citizen can travel freely through 26 countries in the union without the need for a passport. This is thanks to the Schengen Agreement, thanks to which any EU citizen can travel freely through 27 countries without the need for a passport.

- **A common currency, the euro**: The euro is the currency used by at least 75% of European citizens today, and is the official currency in at least 19 of the 27 Member States. This has brought multiple benefits to commerce since people can more easily compare prices locally, abroad and online. Companies can calculate and charge customers in one currency and are not at risk of exchange rate fluctuations. In addition, it has kept the currency stable

- **Free movement of goods, capital and services**: Thanks to the single market of the EU, not only individuals, but also commodities, services, and capital can move freely within the EU. These four elements are commonly known as the pillars of free movement within the EU. It is important to note that "capital" encompasses more than just money, as it includes investments and loans as well. This facilitates easier operations for EU businesses across multiple countries and enables them to compete on a global scale. Regardless of their size, companies in the EU have access to the national markets of all EU countries, providing them with approximately 447 million potential customers. Why is this significant? Increased competition results in lower prices and a wider range of products and services for consumers.

- **Study, work, travel and live anywhere in the European Union**: Thanks to the benefits of free mobility, citizens of the European Union can not only travel for tourism purposes, but can participate in training and study under the same conditions as nationals. The same possibilities apply to work; European citizens can enjoy a broad labour market throughout the EU.

- **Erasmus +**: Is an initiative by the European Union. This programme provides opportunities for individuals to go abroad for a certain period of time. It is available to young people, students, trainees, teachers, educational staff, and volunteers from different parts of the globe. Both university and vocational training students can receive financial and logistical assistance through Erasmus+ for their stays in 33 countries worldwide, including Europe.

- **The European Solidarity Corps**: If you aspire to make a valuable impact on society and demonstrate unity with your community, the European Solidarity Corps presents an excellent prospect. Individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 can engage in diverse endeavours, either through volunteer work or by pursuing employment opportunities. This experience may also serve as a gateway to future employment for numerous young individuals.

Learn more about the benefits that EU States have at the following link: HOW IS THE EU RELEVANT TO YOUR DAILY LIFE?

How does the European Union system work?

The European Union has its own legislative and executive body, as well as an independent judicial system and a central bank that are supported and complemented by other institutions and bodies, whose attributions are derived from the founding Treaties. With the passage of time and the different Treaties, the powers of the Union have evolved considerably, as have the decision-making procedures applied by the Parliament and the Council when they legislate on most of the Union's policies. The Union also has its own budget to be able to meet its objectives. The Lisbon Treaty put Parliament on an equal footing with the Council when deciding on the entire Union budget and the multiannual financial framework.

In summary, the European Union has 7 main institutions delimited by their executive, legislative, judicial and financial functions. Between them, we have the 4 main decision-making institutions which lead the EU's administration.

These institutions collectively provide the EU with policy direction and play different roles in the law-making process:

- **The European Parliament** (Location - Brussels/Strasbourg/Luxembourg) The European Parliament stands as the sole EU institution that is directly elected, with representatives being allocated based on the population of each member state. Diverging from conventional legislative bodies, it lacks the power to initiate legislation; however, no laws can be passed without its approval. Furthermore, it assumes the responsibility of negotiating and endorsing the EU budget, as well as overseeing the commission. Currently, the Parliament is under the leadership of Roberta Metsola, a politician hailing from Malta.

- **The European Council** (Location - Brussels): composed by the main political leaders within the EU: the president or prime minister from each member state. The summits held by the council establish the general course of action for the union and address pressing matters at a high level. The council's members choose a president, who can hold the position for a maximum of two two-and-a-half-year terms. Currently, the president is Charles Michel, the former Prime Minister of Belgium.

- **The Council of the European Union** (Location - Brussels/Luxembourg): The Council of the European Union, referred to as the Council of Ministers to prevent confusions, serves as a secondary legislative body that must also grant its approval for legislation to pass. This council is composed of government ministers from all member states of the EU, who are organised based on specific policy areas. For example, foreign ministers from all EU member states convene as one group, while agriculture ministers form another group, and so forth.

- **The European Commission** (Location - Brussels/Luxembourg): is the main executive body of the European Union (EU), holds the highest level of authority in day-to-day operations. Its responsibilities include suggesting legislation, overseeing the budget, executing decisions, enforcing regulations, and representing the EU globally in summits, negotiations, and international organisations. The members of the commission are chosen by the European Council and approved by the European Parliament. Currently, the commission is headed by Ursula von der Leyen, a former German Minister of Defense.

There are 3 other institutions and bodies that work collaboratively with the main institutions:

- **The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)**: serves as the highest judicial power in the European Union, responsible for interpreting and applying EU law while also resolving disputes. Comprising two entities, the CJEU consists of the European Court of Justice, which provides guidance on EU law to national courts and adjudicates cases involving alleged violations by member states, and the General Court, which handles a wide array of cases brought forward by individuals and organisations against EU institutions.

- **The European Central Bank (ECB)**: is responsible for overseeing the euro, used by nineteen countries, and implementing the monetary policy of the European Union. Additionally, it plays a role in regulating the banking system of the EU. During the European debt crisis that began in 2009, ECB President Mario Draghi made a controversial decision to provide emergency assistance to struggling economies within the eurozone.

- **The European Court of Auditors (ECA)**: is responsible for auditing the budget of the European Union, ensuring that funds are used appropriately, and notifying Parliament, the commission, and national governments of any fraudulent activities.

Want to know more about the EU and its institutions? You can find further information here: https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/eu-and-me/en/index.html.

How do the EU Institutions work together?

The democratic legitimacy of the European Council and Parliament is derived from elections in two ways. Firstly, the European Council, which establishes the overall political direction of the bloc, consists of democratically elected national leaders. Secondly, the European Parliament is composed of representatives, known as Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), who are directly elected by the citizens of each EU member state.

The European Council and Parliament collaborate to determine the composition of the European Commission. The European Council nominates a president for the Commission, and their appointments must be approved by the Parliament. The Commission holds exclusive authority to propose EU laws and spending, although all EU legislation requires the endorsement of both the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The European Commission also manages EU policies and the budget, and ensures that EU countries apply EU law correctly.

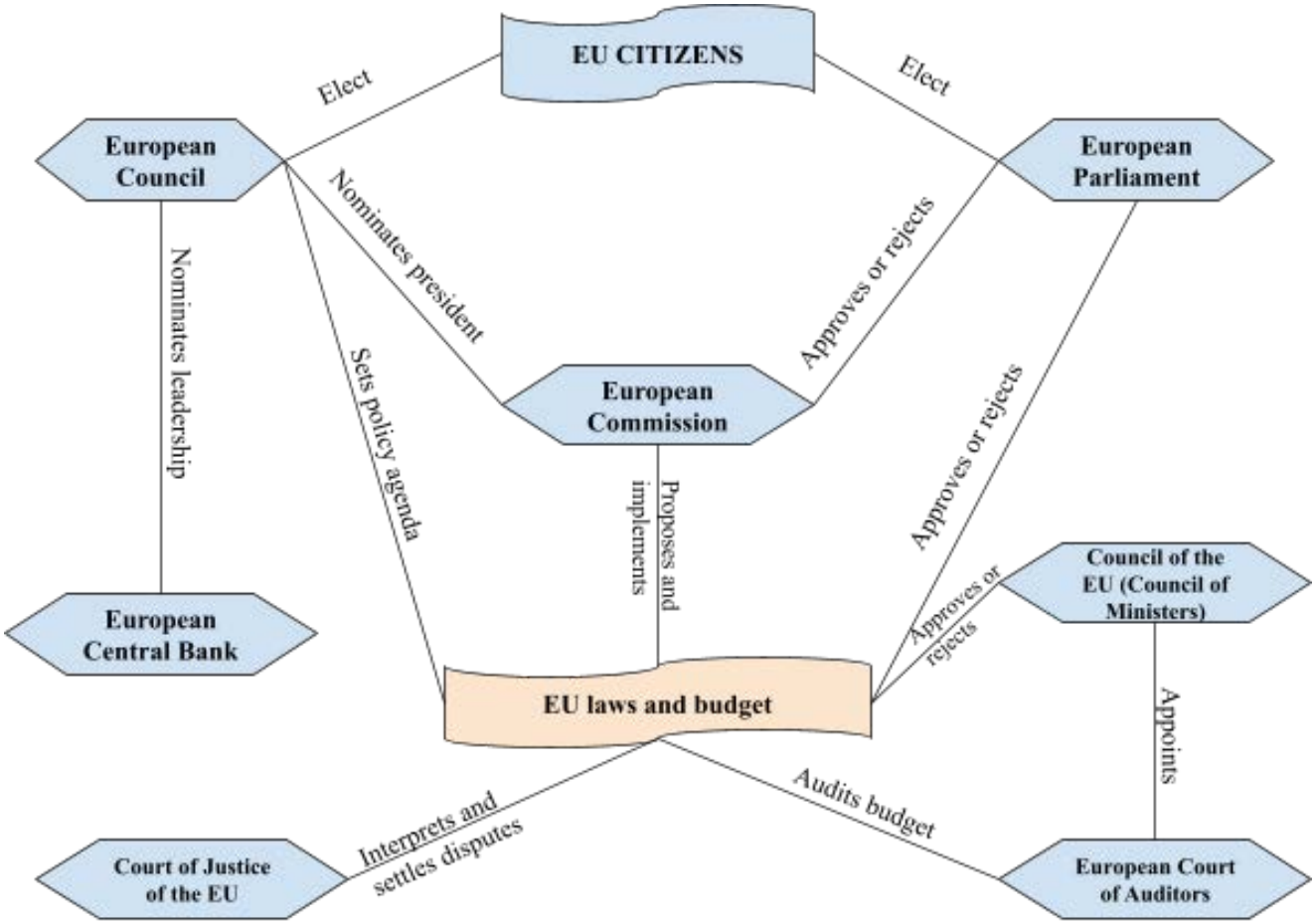
The European Council also appoints the The President, the Vice-President and the other members of the Executive Board, acting by a qualified majority, from among persons of recognized standing and professional experience in monetary or banking matters, on a recommendation from the Council, after it has consulted the European Parliament and the Governing Council of the European Central Bank. (Article 283, The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

The Council serves as one of the legislative bodies in the European Union. Its role involves negotiating and approving legislative acts, in collaboration with the European Parliament, using the ordinary legislative procedure known as 'codecision'. This procedure is utilised for policy areas where the EU possesses exclusive or shared competence with its member states. In such cases, the Council enacts legislation based on proposals presented by the European Commission. Additionally, the Council establishes and executes the EU's foreign and security policy, guided by the directives established by the European Council. Furthermore, the Council, together with the Parliament, adopts the EU budget.

The Court of Justice guarantees the consistent interpretation and implementation of the laws. If a national court has uncertainties in interpreting any of these laws, it has the authority to seek clarification from the Court of Justice. It is not uncommon for individual EU countries to fall short in fully applying EU laws. In such instances, either the Commission or another EU country can bring the issue before the Court. The Court, located in Luxembourg, is composed of one judge from each EU country.

Last but no least, The European Court of Auditors works to improve the European Commission's management of the EU budget and reports on EU finances. The Court's audit work focuses mainly on the European Commission – the main body responsible for implementing the EU budget. But it also works closely with national authorities, because the Commission manages most EU funds (around 80%) jointly with them.

In the graph below, you will see the interconnections between the functions of the institutions in the process of working together:



As you can see, at first it may seem very complicated and confusing, but all institutions have clearly defined and interconnected functions, ensuring a system of checks and balances where no institution is above another.

How are priorities set in the EU?

At the beginning of each new legislative term, which spans a period of five years for the European Commissioners and European Parliament, the heads of state or government from all EU countries meet in the form of the European Council with the purpose to establish the official political priorities for the European Union. These priorities collectively form the strategic agenda, which serves as a guiding framework for the EU institutions and outlines a guideline to achieving these objectives.

The strategic agenda also directs the Commission's own political priorities during its term, as outlined in its political guidelines. These priorities broadly outline the key policies and actions that the Commission plans to undertake in order to accomplish its political goals. The implementation of the strategic agenda is a collaborative effort between the EU institutions and EU governments, who work together towards its accomplishment.

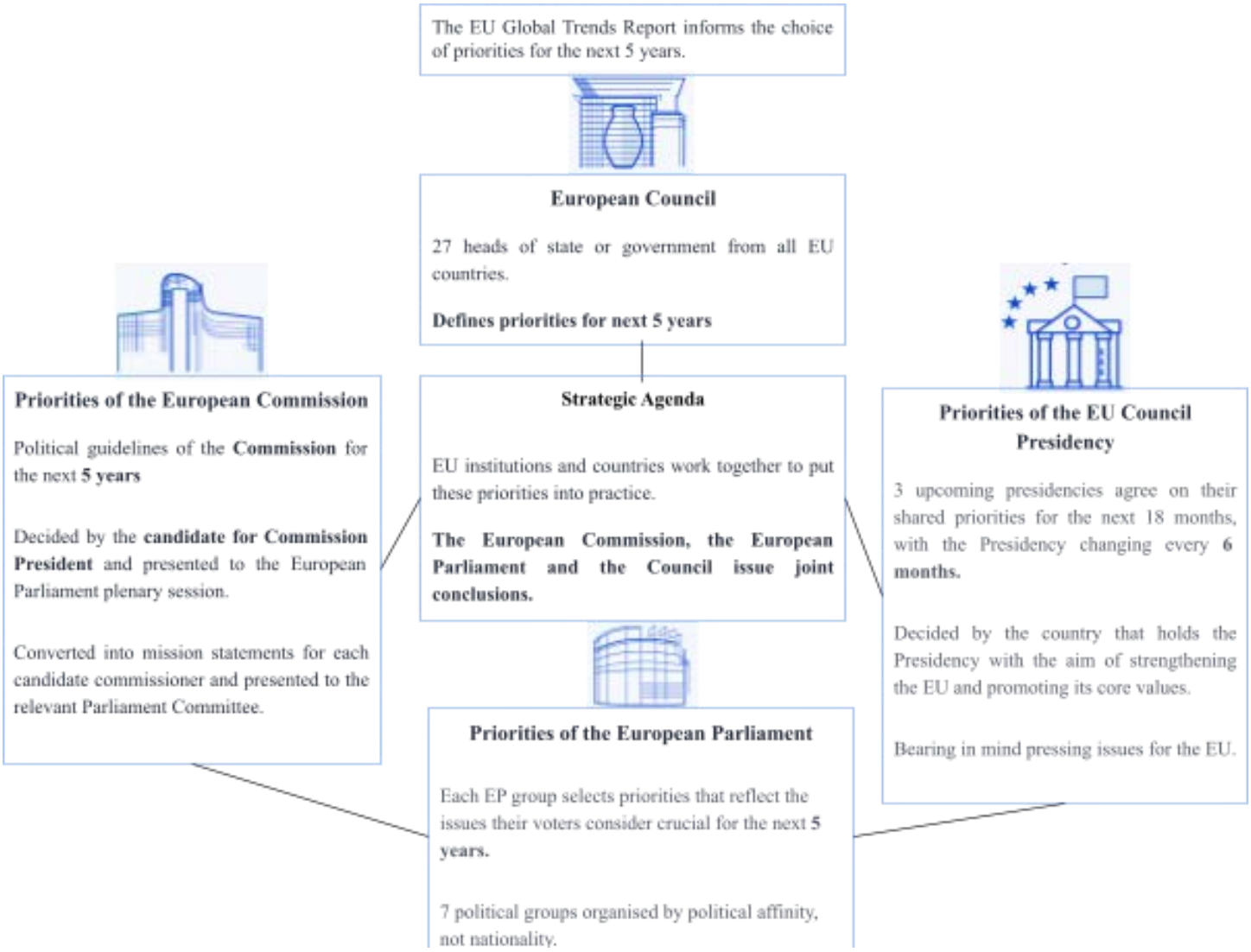
Once the candidate for President sets the Commission's priorities, they are presented to the entire European Parliament in plenary session. Additionally, they are converted into specific mission statements for each candidate Commissioner and presented to the relevant Parliament Committee. The political guidelines serve as the foundation for the Commission's annual work programmes, which outline the initiatives that will be undertaken to address these priorities over the next 12 months.

The process of developing the work programmes begins with the annual State of the Union address and its accompanying Letter of Intent. This initiates discussions with the Parliament and the Council of the EU to determine the priorities for the following year. Simultaneously, the Commission seeks input from the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Once the Commission work programme is finalised, a joint declaration is issued by the Commission, Parliament, and Council, outlining the EU's priorities. This declaration facilitates prompt action and ensures a political focus on achieving these priorities.

In order to facilitate planning for the long term, the three institutions of the European Union took a significant step at the beginning of the current term in 2020. They jointly agreed on policy objectives and priorities that will guide their legislative actions for the entire cycle, which extends until 2024. This marks the first time such joint conclusions have been adopted.

In **this infographic** you can see this process schematically:



https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/decision-making-process_en

For this Voting Toolbox, we will focus on the **European Parliament elections.**

Areas of EU Action:

The European Union can only act in those areas authorised by Member States through treaties. These specify in which areas laws can be proposed and approved and who can do so (the EU, national governments or both). There are 3 principles that determine the areas in which the EU can act:

- Conferral: The EU's authority is limited to what is granted to it by the EU treaties, which have been approved by all member countries.
- Proportionality: The EU's actions must be proportionate and not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the goals of the treaties.
- Subsidiarity: The principle of subsidiarity dictates that the EU should only intervene in areas where it can act more effectively than national governments.

Exclusive competences: There are some areas where the EU has exclusive competence to pass laws and Member States only apply them. For example: monetary policy for the Eurozone countries.

Shared competences: In other areas, both Member States and the EU have the authority to pass laws, so there is shared responsibility. For example: areas such as employment and social affairs, environment and consumer protection.

Supporting competences: There are areas in which the EU only has a complementary role and its action cannot exceed that of the Member States. Some examples: the areas of public health, culture and tourism.

Special competences: And in a few cases the EU is granted special powers to play a role that goes beyond what is agreed in the treaties. Some examples are: coordination of economic and employment policies.

EU parliament role

As the EU's only directly elected institution, the European Parliament is the collective voice of ordinary people. Members are directly elected by European citizens every 5 years. Anyone with EU citizenship is eligible to vote in these elections. In some EU countries where non-citizens can sometimes vote in sub-national elections, people who fulfil other residency conditions (such as non-citizens legally living in the country) can also vote in European Parliamentary elections.

(EU & ME | HOW DOES THE EU WORK?)

The Parliament reaffirms its institutional role in the development of European policies through the exercise of its different functions. Its participation in the legislative process, its budgetary and control powers, its involvement in the revision of the Treaties and its right of appeal before the Court of Justice of the European Union allow it to guarantee respect for democratic principles at European level.

The European Parliament, as the representative institution of the citizens of Europe, constitutes the democratic foundation of the European Union. With a view to ensuring the full democratic legitimacy of the Union, Parliament must be fully associated with the European legislative process and exercise, on behalf of the citizens, political control over the other institutions of the Union.

The European Parliament must be made up of a maximum of 751 representatives of the citizens of the Union (750 deputies plus the president). In addition, the representation of citizens will be proportionally decreasing, with a minimum of six deputies per Member State. No Member State can have more than 96 seats.

The concept of degressive proportionality means that, while the total number of seats is allocated on the basis of the size of the Member State's population, the more populous Member States is the more under-represented is (in percentage terms)., in order to favour greater representation of the less populous Member States: i.e. the larger the country, the smaller the number of seats relative to its population. For example: Malta, the smallest EU country, should have at least six seats (which is the minimum of seats a EU Member can have), even though it has less than half a million inhabitants. At the same time, Germany, the most populous country of the EU –with more than 82 million people– cannot have more than 96 representatives in the EP. Each MEP for Malta represents some 72,000 Maltese citizens, while each German MEP represents more than 854,000 Germans.

Political Groups of the UE

The deputies are not organised by national delegations, but in transnational groups based on their political affinities. According to the Rules of Procedure, a political group must be made up of Members elected in at least a quarter of the Member States and have at least 25 Members (Rule 33 of the Rules of Procedure). The political groups regularly hold meetings during the week preceding and during the part-session, as well as seminars to determine the main principles of their work. There are currently 7 political groups in the European Parliament.

Brief description of each political party

- ***Group of European People's Party (EPP)***: The EPP Group is the largest and oldest group in the European Parliament. A centre-right group, they claim to be committed to creating a stronger and self-assured Europe, built at the service of its people. It is chaired by: Manfred Weber. Some of the group priorities focus on: establishing more rigorous and strict border controls; fair trade agreements, which are why they assign great importance to the global dimension; job creation, especially for young people. **MEPs elected: 176**. Here you can find their website.

- ***Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)***: Center-Left Party. Since 1999 it has been the second largest party in Parliament. Chairs: Iratxe García Pérez. Part of the groups' objectives are to create a fairer society for everyone, where citizens work together to build a more sustainable way of life, by putting in place a new social contract at the heart of Europe. **MEPs elected: 144**. Its objective is to have an open, supportive, diverse and fair Europe; promoting opportunities for young people and reducing inequalities. To learn more about their goals and what they stand for, you can visit their website

- ***Renew Europe***: It is a liberal and pro-European party. This party is committed to a renewal of the European Union to be able to solve current problems, meet the expectations of citizens and offer what they call a tangible added value that allows them to understand how it positively affects their lives. It proclaims itself as a political group focused on citizens, who defend the values of freedom, individual rights, prosperity and sustainability in Europe and balanced economic and social development. Presided by: Dacian Ciolos. **MEPs elected: 103**. To learn more about their goals and what they stand for, you can visit their website.

- ***Greens-Europeans Free Alliances***: An alliance of 4 political parties made of green political parties, regionalist, minorities and pro-European ideology. It is chaired by Philippe Lamberts and Ska Keller. **MEPs elected: 71**. They stand for: Climate and environment, freedom of expression, poverty reduction, among others objectives that you can learn in depth on their website.

- ***Identity and democracy (ID)***: is the newest and a far-right political group, made up of far-right populist, nationalist and eurosceptic parties. It has **65 members**, which makes it the fifth largest Group in the Parliament. They are chaired by: Marco Zanni. To learn more about their goals and what they stand for, you can visit their website.

- ***European Conservatives and Reformist (ECR Group)***: constituted by far-right and right conservatives European political parties, established in 2009. They are presided by: Raffaele Fitto and Ryzsard Legutko. **MEPs elected: 63**. To learn more about their goals and what they stand for, you can visit their website.

- ***The Left GUE/NGL***: is a far-left wing political group. It comprises political parties of democratic socialist, communist and eurosceptic orientation. They defend social equality, a policy of peace, a policy of fair trade and human rights. Also, this group opposes the current form of constitution of the European Union but is in favour of integration. They are presided by: Martin Schirdewan y Manon Aubry. MEPs elected: 38. To learn more about their goals and what they stand for, you can visit their website.

- *Non attached or Non-inscrits MEPs* in the EP: 46

How decisions are made in the EU Parliament?

The main meetings of the European Parliament, also known as ‘plenary sessions’, take place 12 times a year in Strasbourg, France, and up to 6 times a year in Brussels, Belgium. The European Parliament has 705 members, also called MEPs, from all EU countries. The number of members per country varies: as we explained previously, based on the principle of degressive proportionality, where the most populated states can have up to a maximum of 96 MEPs and the least populated states a minimum of 6. Members from across the EU with similar political views work together in political groups just as in national parliaments, instead of forming groups according to their nationality.

The European Parliament takes decisions on EU laws together with the Council of the European Union. If the Parliament and the Council cannot agree on a piece of legislation, there will be no new law. The Parliament elects the President of the European Commission and has the right to approve or to dismiss the whole European Commission. It also approves the budget of the European Union.

Most of the 705 MEPs belong to a political group, of which there are currently 7, representing all ideological tendencies in the EP. Some MEPs are not affiliated to any political group and are thus known as 'non-attached' Members. It is the political groups that decide which issues will be discussed in plenary. They can also table amendments to the committee reports to be put to the vote. However, Members cannot be obliged by their group to vote in a particular way.

The European Commission and the Council of the European Union take part in the sittings in order to facilitate collaboration between the institutions in the decision-making process. If Parliament so requests, the representatives of the two institutions may also be called upon to make declarations or to give an account of their activities in response to questions put to them by Members. These debates may be wound up with a vote on a resolution.

Your representatives in the European Parliament

The European Parliamentary is elected every 5 years, and you might be eligible to vote by then. Your representatives work with other Members of the European Parliament in political groups. To form a political group, 25 members are needed, from at least one quarter of the 27 EU countries. At present, there are eight political groups in the Parliament. Members cannot belong to more than one political group at the same time. Other members do not belong to any political group at all and are known as non-attached members.

Have a look at the map available at the following link and see which parties from your country were successful at the last European elections and which groups they belong to: europa.eu/!mP79pm

Here you can see how members are seated in the plenary: europa.eu/!qp74Dm

Do you recognise some of the members from your own country?

National voting system

The elections take place every five years and are the largest transnational elections in the world. Following the elections, Parliament votes to elect the new head of the European Commission, which is the EU's executive body, and to approve the full team of commissioners.

How voting works

Although there are some common rules regarding the elections, some aspects can vary by country, such as whether it is possible to vote by mail or from abroad. This infographic made for last year's elections may be useful to know some aspects about the elections depending on the State where you are going to vote. Soon the official media of each State will begin to provide the necessary information, so don't miss it.

Some common rules for every country are:

- Elections take place during a four-day period, from Thursday to Sunday.
- The number of members elected in each country depends on the size of the population, with smaller countries getting more seats than strict proportionality would imply. Currently, the number of MEPs ranges from six for Malta, Luxembourg and Cyprus to 96 for Germany.
- The number of MEPs elected from a political party is proportional to the number of votes it receives.
- EU citizens resident in another EU country can vote and stand for election there.
- Each citizen can vote only once.

Read more about the common and national rules.

Profile of potential voters

Taking into account the results of the survey, the main demographic characteristics of the participants are:

Out of the 1928 individuals who participated in the survey, a little less than half (41.7%) were under the age of 18 at the time of the study. Around 37.6% fell between the ages of 19 and 24, while the remaining 23.6% were 25 years old or older. Also, most of the respondents (74.62%) belong to urban areas, only 16.06% belong to suburban areas and 9.31% belong to rural areas. Therefore, it is evident that young people belonging to urban areas are overrepresented in the results of this survey. Likewise, regarding the frequency with which they travel for work, study or leisure reasons, just over half (52.61%) of those surveyed indicated that they always or frequently travel.

Which makes us conclude that on average our target is around 18 years old, lives in an urban area and has the possibility of travelling frequently. That is, young people who are probably very connected to the EU and its benefits. Of course, these results cannot be taken as a representative sample of young people, much less those we hope to impact with our actions. It is quite possible that these are among the least represented profiles in the survey, among young people from suburban or rural areas with few opportunities and/or lack of knowledge of them to travel and enjoy some of the benefits of the EU.

CHAPTER 03

How to identify challenges

Some example of the main challenges identified in the investigation on the attitudes, challenges and views of youth on the vote for the European Parliament elections 2024 carried out for the COYV project are:

Social context

It is very important to emphasise, as many studies point out and this project also considers it, that young people should not be taken as a homogeneous group with the same interests and facing the same obstacles. In fact, what we have found is that depending on age, geographical location, relationship with their immediate environment, tendency of political participation of their parents and/or family members, the relationship with their peers, the education received in official institutions and/or at home (in relation to the EU and electoral processes), among other factors can considerably influence their perception about the EU, the effectiveness of voting, affinity with political parties and any other related issue.

Therefore, although in this Voting Toolbox you will find different resources, tools and recommendations that you can apply, it is important that you do not take them all as applicable to all cases and to all groups of young people regardless of their context. For that reason, we have included some recommendations when carrying out the activities, whether in small or large groups, in online or offline format. But, the first step before deciding what to apply is that you know your target audience as best as you can.

In order to achieve more effective approaches to the youth community of voters, it is advisable to find out first-hand their opinions, comments and, in particular, their doubts, concerns and challenges they face, because this is mainly what can make the difference between reaching their support or not. In the *investigation on the attitudes, challenges and views of youth on the vote for the European Parliament elections 2024* that has been carried out within the framework of the project, you will find very important insights that can serve as a reference in this regard. However, if you would like to delve deeper into a particular point or want to further explore a community of young people you plan to approach, some tools you can use are:

- Surveys, questionnaires, quizzes and checklists: It is ideal for obtaining responses from a large and varied group. In addition, they can be applied anonymously, which can make people feel more open to give honest answers.
- Personal interviews: It can be useful to learn more about a person's opinion and point of view. In this case, it could be useful with key actors who work directly with young people and have a broad and comprehensive perspective on the main obstacles they face in relation to voting. For example: teachers, student advisors, representatives of student unions, social leaders, among other youth workers.
- Documentation review: It can be useful to explore scientific studies on the subject and complement the research. In the resources section of this Voting Toolbox you will find a list of the documentation consulted for the production of this material.
- Focus group: This is another interesting resource to receive more detailed feedback from a representative group of participants. Although the responses are not anonymous, usually the groups are not too large to ensure that the participants feel confident to speak.

Once you have decided on the tool that you consider most appropriate, you can start by approaching the institutions where your target audience is located. For example, if you plan to address some colleges and universities, you can start there in a way that allows you to follow up with the intervention.

If you plan to do this, it might also be useful to organise a talk to youngsters through Q&A sessions about it. This will allow you to clarify doubts at the moment and generate a climate of greater trust with the target audience.

It is advisable to do follow-up interventions and maintain a regular presence in these spaces, without being invasive, but expressing genuine interest in being present to clarify doubts or listen to young people in case they require it.

General Knowledge/Information

According to the results of the survey, the majority of respondents feel very confident about their knowledge about the EU. Around 35% say they know a great deal of or a lot about the EU and just over 44% say they have moderate knowledge. On the other hand, just over 20% say they know a little or anything about the EU.

However, just like the quiz carried out in the research, the self-confidence of the participants in their level of knowledge and their ability to make well-informed decisions is not a guarantee that they can actually do so.

Furthermore, there is an absence of a reliable and permanent source from which to receive information, with schools and universities being one of the main ones in disseminating theoretical and practical knowledge about the EU and voting, but poorly covered with only 50.5% by percent indicate having received theoretical training and less than 30% practical information in schools/universities.

Likewise, questions to explore the lack of representativeness and identification with the candidates and/or political parties as an obstacle with the intention of voting revealed a significant percentage of ignorance. Between 20 to 40 percent of those surveyed said they were not sure that there was a political party or figure that represented their point of view.

These factors vary widely, including but not limited to time availability, socioeconomic background, and access to crucial information. Such information encompasses practical details like polling station locations and any administrative requirements for voting, as well as political and electoral knowledge such as understanding political programmes and selecting candidates. As a result, youth groups, grassroots organisations, youth councils, and similar collective structures are in a favourable position to offer voters the necessary resources and motivation to participate in elections. This becomes especially challenging in the case of European Parliament elections due to the diverse electoral systems, varying attitudes towards the European Union among member countries, and the perceived gap between citizens and EU institutions.

Some questions you can ask to find out about the limitations and/or needs regarding access to reliable, safe and timely information by young people can be:

- What do you do when you have doubts or concerns about the EU, its institutions and how it works?
- Where do you usually look for information?
- Where do you usually hear about the EU?
- Do you feel that you have someone you trust to talk to about your doubts and concerns?
- Lack of political literacy
  - not included in the educational curriculum
  - not campaigned from political parties and institutions, governmental or others.

According to the 2021 Eurobarometer survey, when the participants are consulted about the communication channels most used to search for information related to political matters, the most mentioned are social media and news websites, each of which by 41%. This can be quite risky given the overwhelming amount of information that can be found online, which requires a deep capacity for critical thinking and tools to discern about the information that is received.

For this reason, it is important that when identifying this obstacle, one of the ways to address it is, firstly, to generate trust to make the person or group feel safe and normalise that it is okay to have doubts; secondly, offer guidance and orientation around the subject, emphasising the main information gaps or misinformation they may have. Also, if your time with the group is limited, it is advisable to make accessible and easy-to-understand resources available to them that they can use to deepen their knowledge. In this Voting Toolbox you will find various materials and resources that you can share with your audience.

It is important to promote European Civic Education in formal education, such as schools, and nonformal education settings like local youth clubs and civic organisations, where young individuals acquire theoretical and practical knowledge about democracy and participation. Additionally, encourage them to engage in activities through local and regional youth councils and parliaments. Educators in both formal and non-formal settings must be equipped with the necessary skills to foster motivation and competence for participation among learners. Moreover, it is crucial to investigate the potential of democratic and participatory teaching methods in both formal and non-formal environments. These methods allow learners to explore their interests, critically question what they are learning, apply their knowledge to their surroundings, and continue exploring further topics of interest.

Interest

This challenge could be related to:

- Hard to identify the impact of EU elections in their lives
- Hard to find their role:
  - due to the complexity of the topic
  - due to the disconnection
  - their own impact in the results

Despite the myths spread in the media about young people where they are seen as disinterested in political affairs, according to the results of the research and the survey carried out for COYV, actually young people do have great interest in politics and in participating. According to the survey for the *investigation on the attitudes, challenges and views of youth on the vote for the European Parliament elections 2024*, 72.64% of those surveyed feel interested in politics and the majority stay updated with the news frequently: always (33.48%) and very often (36.88%). However, the big question remains why this is not reflected in electoral participation. On the contrary, young people seek other forms of participation such as strikes, public demonstrations, signing petitions, among others that they consider to have a more direct impact.

This is also confirmed in the results of the 2021 Eurobarometer; it concludes that almost nine in ten (87%) respondents have engaged in at least one political or civic activity. Almost half have participated in a local, national or at the EU level vote or have created or signed a petition. Another significant percentage states that they have participated in other types of more direct participation such as street protests, demonstrations and even participation in online activities like posting opinions on social media about political or social issues.

Participation in these types of initiatives instead of traditional forms such as voting may be due to the fact that the majority of participants express a lack of influence in important decision-making processes, legislation, and policies that impact them. This feeling intensifies the more distant the level of governance: 53% feel they have little to no say in decisions, laws, and policies affecting their local area. This percentage increases to 60% for matters concerning their entire country and rises further to 70% for issues impacting the European Union as a whole.

All of the above seems to confirm that young people still seem to doubt the influence they have and the effectiveness of voting to effectively influence decisions. Part of this can be reflected in the feeling that their interests and the topics they would like to see addressed are not really being addressed. So, to address this challenge, it is worth knowing what are the topics that young people are interested in being addressed? From the survey carried out for the study, the following have been highlighted in order of importance: Climate Change (41,02%); Civil rights (32,50%); Social affairs - jobs and education (32,07%); International affairs (24,12%); Public health - physical and metal (20,11%); Home affairs - justice and corruption (12,60%); Populism and democracy (12,24%); Migration (8;45%); Rural/Local development (8;38%); and Other (3,87%).

But as we have mentioned before, each group of young people is different, so it is necessary to know the target audience well and identify which topic (or topics) are a priority for them, in this way is possible to better guide the approach. Likewise, it is important to identify how much they know about the tendency or position of the parties and candidates in relation to the topic of interest: For example, *which political parties and which candidates are in favour, which are against, and which have a neutral position in relation to measures to mitigate climate change?* As we have seen, it is possible that young people do not have much knowledge about whether or not a party or political figure exists that is in line with their point of view, or what their proposals or programmes are. This is where the role of youth groups, grassroots youth organisations, youth councils and similar collective structures, as well as facilitators, teachers and anyone working with young people who want to mobilise them for the next elections will be of vital importance to serve as a guide and address these information gaps.

Finally, it is pointed out that one of the elements that can influence the lack of willingness to participate is the distrust in the institutions and their interest in addressing the problems that interest young people. Young people have to be aware that with their vote they also make visible the issues that are important to them and that make the difference between a candidate who considers them and others who do not. The best way to address this obstacle is empowerment. Make youth aware of their important role and the influence they have, not only tomorrow but now, and provide them with tools to make them conscious and responsible citizens with their lives and for the rest of society.

Confidence

- Lack of literacy and knowledge
- Complexity of the topic
- Not being included in communitary/local groups (regardless of the topic), may lead to a feeling of not having a voice in a broader sense

Although the percentage of self-declared absentees in the survey is very low (3.25%), it is still striking that one of the 3 reasons mentioned for stopping voting is the lack of confidence in the political system. And this has been one of the issues that has not ceased to cause assumptions as a possible reason in relation to the low participation of young people in the elections. This lack of trust may also be associated with situations of instability at the local/national level, since the national political environment also influences the political decisions of young people. The lack of faith in the political system increases the chances of voter abstention, even at the European Union level.

Quite related to the possible barriers above mentioned, this distrust may also have its origin in the feeling that they do not have a voice in the decision-making process, that their opinions and the issues they consider important are not taken into account, and that politicians are only interested in periods of elections but then do not fulfil their promises.

The role of the media also plays a very relevant role. In the digital age that we live in with the overwhelming amount of information that can be easily obtained in a simple click and the advances of artificial intelligence capable of modelling any scenario, faces and voices practically to perfection, it is an increasingly difficult task not to fall prey to misinformation.

At this point it could be important to make them see that they have the power to decide and vote for those in whom they have confidence and that the participation they exercise is not exclusive. By participating in electoral processes and choosing who you hope will represent you in the European Parliament, it does not prevent you from exercising other forms of participation that contribute to demanding accountability from the chosen candidates.

Representativeness

When the participants are asked about whether they feel represented by political parties or political figures in their country, the results are divided almost in thirds: 40.61% feel identified, 34.68% do not feel identified and 24.71% are not sure. In relation to this point, it seems that one of the reasons young citizens are being deterred from voting is primarily the absence of political representation rather than a lack of trust in the democratic process.

The European Youth Forum (2022) has found that young individuals are the least represented in the European Parliament. While one out of every five Europeans falls between the ages of 18 and 35, only one out of every fifteen (6 percent) Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) belong to this age group. In contrast, one out of every five Europeans falls between the ages of 51 and 65, yet the number of parliamentarians representing this age group in the European Parliament is double that, at 42 percent.

The European Youth Forum cautions that age disparities between voters and politicians can have significant implications for political participation. Frédéric Piccavet, Vice President of the European Youth Forum, stated:

"You don't need to be young in order to support youth-related issues. However, if young people do not feel represented in parliaments, they are less likely to engage and exercise their right to vote. Political parties must prioritise the promotion of young candidates from diverse backgrounds and genders in the lead-up to the 2024 European elections, in order to attract and connect with younger voters."

The Greens/European Free Alliance, the youngest political group in the Parliament, has an average age of 48 for its MEPs. Following closely behind is Renew Europe, with an average age of 50. In the 2019 European elections, the average age of the elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) decreased to 49, which is four years younger than the average age of MEPs following the previous elections in 2014. Additionally, the youth in Europe played a significant role in driving up voter turnout, marking the largest increase since 1994.

https://www.youthforum.org/news/there-are-as-many-martins-as-meps-under-30

According to a study carried out by Daniel Stockemer and Aksel Sundström (2019), through interviews with young MEPs from the period from 2014 to 2019 they tried to identify what they considered to be the causes why other colleagues of the same age were not able to reach the European Parliament. The responses suggest the following conclusions: Young parliamentarians often believe that their underrepresentation can be attributed to two main factors: a lack of connections within the party leadership and limited experience. Additionally, many older members of the party seem hesitant to hand over their positions to younger colleagues. Furthermore, unlike other groups such as women, there appears to be a lack of proactive measures aimed at supporting and promoting young candidates.

Representation is also related to the willingness of political groups to address the issues that young people consider important. For example, as we have found in the study developed in this project, young people currently have great interest in topics such as Climate Change. On the other hand, what is the position of the political groups?

The report titled "Defenders, Delayers, Dinosaurs: Ranking of EU political groups and national parties on climate change" evaluated the voting patterns of former MEPs in regards to climate and energy issues. It discloses which political parties, both at the European and national level, take action to safeguard Europeans against climate change.

Out of the eight EU political groups, five score poorly or very poorly according to the report. The Europe of Nations and Freedom – ENF (15.2%), the European People's Party – EPP (14.3%), and the European Conservatives and Reformists – ECR (10.0%) rank at the bottom with an extremely low score of less than 25%. The Europe for Freedom and Direct Democracy – EFDD (40.9%) and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe – ALDE (38.1%) follow closely with a relatively unsatisfactory score of less than 50%. Only the Greens/European Free Alliance (84.9%), the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (66.5%), and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats – S&D (61.3%) achieve a 'good' or 'very good' score.

Although this report was carried out by studying the MEPs of the past period, it serves to establish a comparison and make projections to know how much political groups may have varied today in relation to this and other issues. In this sense, the primary recommendation that can be made to future young voters is that they are able to elect their next representatives in the European Parliament, and elect those with whom they feel most identified, who truly represent their interests.

Motivation

Lack of:

- Information
- Interest
- Confidence →*that leads to a lack of motivation*
- Connection
- Proactivity
- Context that promotes engagement

As we have already seen, in reality young people have great interest in political affairs and in participating, however, various factors such as any of those mentioned above can cause young people to lack motivation to participate in elections.

The lack of information and access to reliable resources to learn about the EU and the actions carried out that can impact their lives, can make them fall prey to misinformation or harmful information about the EU. In this Toolbox you will find in the Basic Information section some valuable resources to address the main information gaps about the EU.

Motivation can also be related to the feeling of a lack of transparency in the system.

Likewise, it may also be related to the inability to identify how the EU affects or impacts their lives. In this aspect, in the Basic Information chapter we have some data about the achievements of the EU and the benefits to its citizens.

CHAPTER 04

Myths about the EU

Disclaimer: Different conceptions apply, according to the country of origin.

Statements in the following table may be used for an easy quiz-style overview. A vibrant approach will create good energy and provide an opportunity to reward the best participants

Myth: *The EU decides/imposes on everything* **or** *Brussels decides*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: The European Union's institutional set-up is unique and its decision-making system is constantly evolving. The 7 European institutions, 7 EU bodies and over 30 decentralised agencies are spread across the EU. They work together to address the common interests of the EU and European people.

There are 4 main decision-making institutions which lead the EU's administration.

These institutions collectively provide the EU with policy direction and play different roles in the law-making process:

- The ***European Parliament*** is the EU Law-making Institution of the UE and represents the interests of European citizens. Is composed of 705 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who are elected every 5 years by direct election by European citizens.

What does the Parliament do?: The EU Parliament has 3 main roles:

- **Legislative**: For example, is responsible for “Passing EU laws, together with the Council of the EU, based on European Commission proposals”
- **Supervisory**: For example, “Questioning Commission and Council”
- **Budgetary**: For this case, Is responsible for “Establishing the EU budget, together with the Council”.

- The **European Commission promotes** the general interest of the EU by proposing and enforcing legislation as well as by implementing policies and the EU budget. It is alone responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation, and it implements the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

  What does the European Commission do?

  - **Propose new laws**: Can propose new laws to the European Parliament and the Council that protect the interests of the EU and its citizens
  - **Manages EU policies & allocates EU funding**: Creates annual budgets to be approved by Parliament and the Council.
  - **Enforces EU law**, together with the Court of Justice, ensures that EU law is applied in EU countries.

- **The European Council**, this institution brings together the leaders of the European Union, which are the Presidents and Prime Ministers of each Nation, who meet in meetings called "Summits" and define the general political direction and priorities of the European Union. The European Council meets at least 4 times a year. It represents the highest level of political cooperation between EU countries.

  What does the European Council do?: The main functions of the European Council are:

  - Decides on the general direction and priorities of the EU
  - Sets the EU's common foreign & security policy
  - Deals with sensitive and delicate problems and situations that cannot be resolved in other instances.

- **Council of the European Union**, it is informally also known as the Council. Government ministers from each EU country meet to discuss, amend and adopt laws, and coordinate policies. The ministers have the authority to commit their governments to the actions agreed on in the meetings.

  Unlike the other institutions that have been discussed, this one does not have pre-established members with a particular role. In fact, depending on the issue being discussed, each country will choose which representative to send who can make decisions on its behalf.

  Together with the European Parliament, it is the main decision-making institution in the EU.

  What does the Council of the European Union do?

  Its functions include:

  - **Negotiates and adopts EU laws**, together with the European Parliament, based on proposals from the European Commission
  - **Develops the EU's foreign & security policy**, based on European Council guidelines
  - A**dopts the annual EU budget** - jointly with the European Parliament.

How does it work?*

Almost all EU laws are the result of a negotiation between the three institutions: the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.

The starting point for any legislative activity is a Commission proposal. The proposal is negotiated and agreed on by the ministers who represent the elected national governments — the Council — and the members of the Parliament. A definitively agreed law is a balanced solution between the three institutions and their different viewpoints. Each approved EU law or policy is a step towards the big goals agreed by the leaders in the European Council.

Myth: *EU is all about the market/economics*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: The European Union is much more than the market and economy. It is an integration system with legal bases and a political agenda that address the main challenges facing the EU and its citizens. Currently the EU Agenda has 4 priorities:

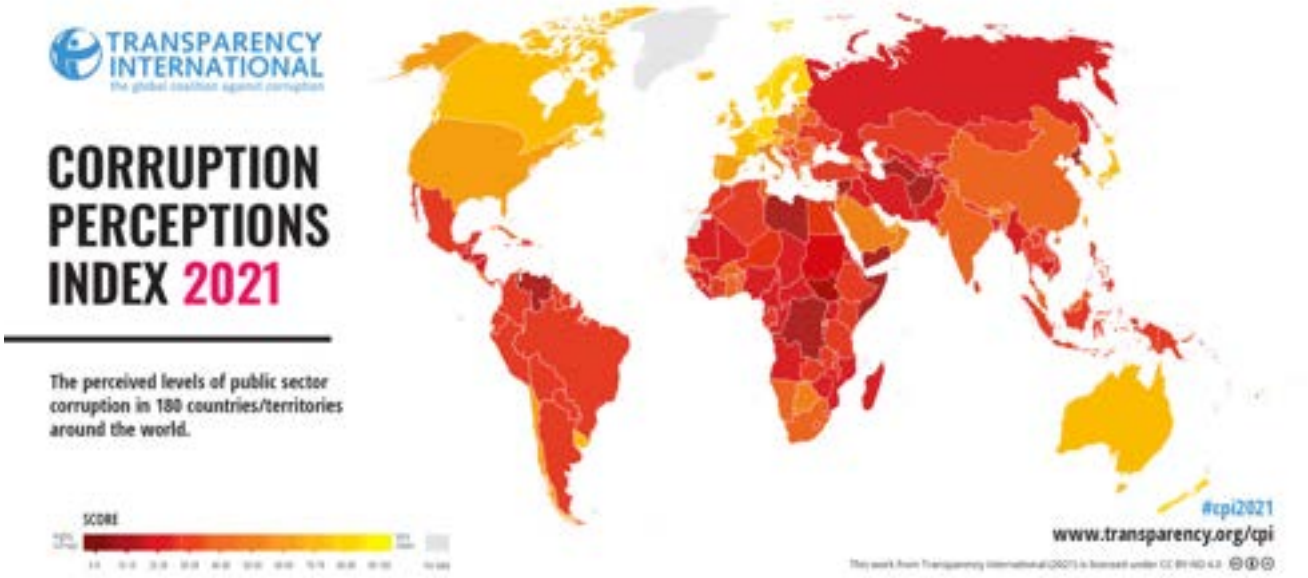
Protect citizens and freedom;
Develop a solid and dynamic economic base;
Build a climate neutral, ecological, fair and social Europe;
Promote European interests and values in the world;

Myth: *Corruption is a big problem in the EU*

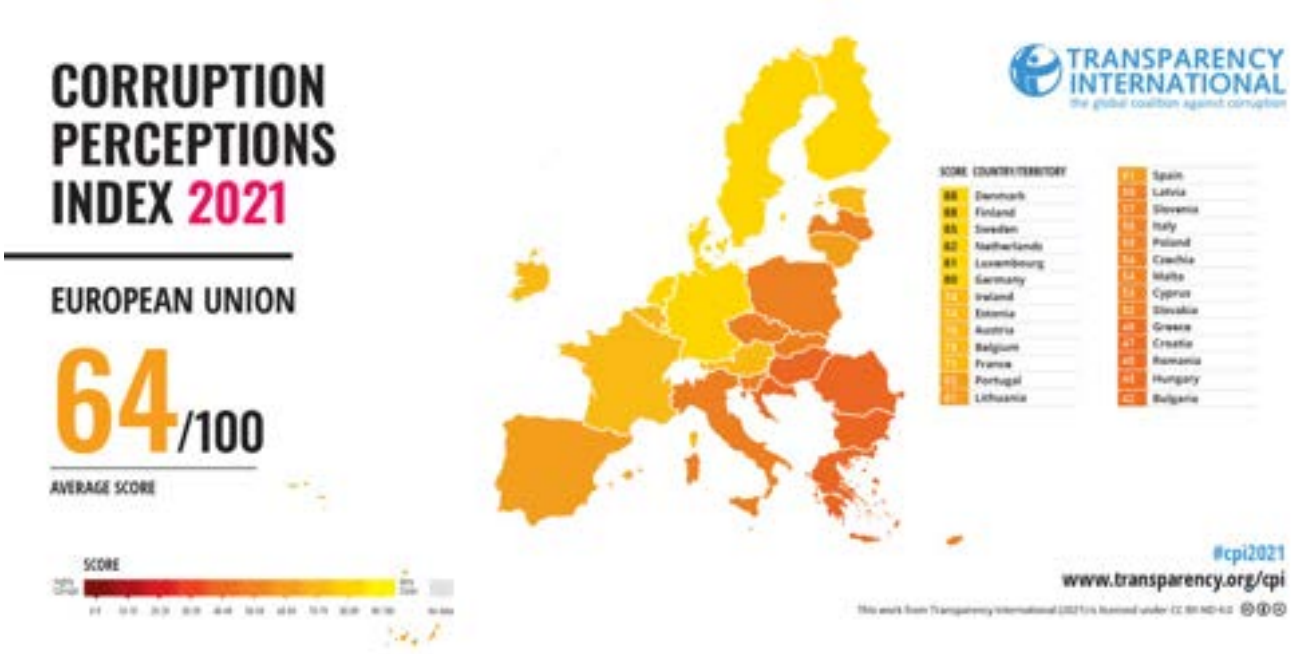
Answer: FALSE

Explanation: According to the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International NGO in 2021, Western Europe and the European Union are the best scoring regions with 66/100 points. In other words, the perception of corruption is low compared to other regions, for example, Sub-Saharan Africa, where the index was 33/100 points.

In this Index, 13 of the 20 world least corrupt countries are inside the European Economic and Single Market Area making Europe one of the least corrupt regions in the world.



However, none of the EU countries is fully free from corruption. Although its nature and scope may differ from one EU country to another, corruption harms the EU as a whole:



According to the most up-to-date data from the 2022 Corruption Eurobarometer Survey:

- Corruption is estimated to cost the European Union between EUR 179 billion and EUR 990 billion per year, amounting to up to 6% of its GDP.
- 68% of Europeans believe that corruption is widespread in their countries and 41% think that it has increased in recent years, while 43% think it has stayed the same. Although this percentage is still quite high, the truth is that there is a decrease (‘3 percentage points) compared to the results of December 2019.
- The police are the most trusted institution in 26 EU Member States, while in Latvia respondents most trust the specialised anti-corruption agency to deal with a case of corruption.
- Some variables such as age, level of education, employability or payment of bills, showed a relationship with the perception of corruption in the region. For example, respondents aged 25 and older are more likely to think corruption is widespread than those aged 15-24.

- Almost six in ten (58%, +5 percentage points) think these behaviours are widespread amongst political parties, and almost as many say this about local, regional or national politicians(55%, +6). Mentions of politicians and political parties have increased notably since December 2019
- In 13 EU Member States respondents rank political parties as the area where the giving and taking of bribes and the abuse of power for personal gain is the most widespread
- The socio-demographic analysis shows only a small minority in each group have experienced or witnessed a case of corruption in the last 12 months.

The European Commission's anti-corruption efforts are centred on the following main pillars:

- Mainstreaming anti-corruption provisions in EU law
- Monitoring efforts of EU countries in preventing and fighting corruption, and building dialogue with national anti-corruption contact points
- Supporting the implementation of anti-corruption measures at national level through funding, technical assistance and experience-sharing
- Improving the quantitative evidence-base for anti-corruption policy
- Promoting the fight against corruption globally, through the participation in relevant international anti-corruption meetings
- Updating and modernising the EU anti-corruption framework.

Myth: *Youth vote has no impact on the results*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: A study by Rekker, R. (2022) carried out in 21 democratically established Western countries between 1948 and 2019 showed that young people (under 25 years old) not only contributed significantly to the increase in popularity or even the triumph of some political parties in elections, but also set trends for future elections. In other words, those political parties that won the elections had a high percentage of the youth vote, which generated credibility and helped them to position themselves and increased the chances to have good results in the following elections. In the author's words:

"By supporting new and winning parties, young voters follow and strengthen electoral trends. Nonetheless, youths can only be seen as 'trendsetters' if their electoral behaviour eventually carries over to older voters. This study provided evidence for this idea by demonstrating that electoral shifts among young voters indeed predict similar changes among older citizens in the subsequent election. This article proposed three mechanisms that could explain this pattern:"

The author states that this is explained by:

1.- Tickle-up political socialisation: Young people begin to form their own opinions and express their preferences with their relatives, and it has been proven that they have the power to influence them

2.- Reputational boost for parties: Winning parties supported by young people are legitimised by other young people and in turn by other population groups, therefore, their chances of staying in the spotlight increase

3.- Generational replacement: The first time voters who have voted for a new or winning party, normally return to vote for the same party in their next elections and develop a sense of identity around their preferences and political beliefs associated with the party, thus perpetuating the trend.

In other words, the youth vote not only has an impact on the elections, but it can even, in the medium term, influence the vote of older people (over 25 years of age) and set trends in the electoral processes, being decisive for victory of certain political parties.

Now, if we look closer to the European case, according to DW data analysis, the proportion of first-time voters in the electorates of various EU member states ranges from 5% to 8%. And not only that, but the overall electoral proportion of people under the age of 30 represents a really significant margin. Simply put, young voters make up around 20% of the electorate in some EU member states, as this chart shows. In some cases it can be almost 25% and in none of the cases does the proportion fall below 15%.

If you consider that the youth vote is not relevant, you should know that the high turnout in the 2019 European elections was driven by a surge in participation by young people, according to a Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament in June 2019.

Myth: *Youth can not vote*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: The minimum age to be eligible to vote and to stand as a candidate in the European elections is established by national law. While the age to be eligible to vote is 18 years in all Member States, except Greece, where the voting age is 17, and Austria and Malta, where the voting age is 16.

Myth: *The EU is one single entity*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: All Member States remain sovereign and independent, however they have decided to pool some of their 'sovereignty' in the areas where it makes sense to collaborate, this means that Member States delegate some of their decision-making powers to the common institutions created by them to be able to take decisions on specific issues of common interest democratically and in the EU.

However, they keep some power of decision in this European decision-making institution by having elected, nominated and representative national members. The European Commission has one commissioner per EU country; the Council of the European Union has one member of the national government per state in each decision making meeting; the European Parliament has a proportional number of members elected per country, making every country part of the decision making in every matter decided by the European Union.

Myth:*Voting for EU elections is useless*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: Participating in the elections and being an active part of the decision-making processes generates a feeling of civic commitment. In addition, voting is a tool to generate changes, to make your voice heard and have the opportunity to choose who you want to be represented by. In addition, your vote has a great impact on the way decisions are made for the European Union within its institutions. For example:

- The European Parliament exercises a wide range of functions. Together with the Council of the European Union, they make decisions in relation to matters of great importance such as the laws and the budget of the European Union. If any of these institutions does not agree, it is impossible to make decisions.

- Also, each Member of the European Parliament (MEP) has a lot of influence. They represent the citizens of the EU (i.e. they represent you). Each MEP is part of a Committee, within which different topics are prepared that are later presented in Parliament sessions. In some cases, the MEPs present proposals of laws elaborated within the Committees of which they are a part.

- The MEPs have a great responsibility and great power in their hands, and together, the European Parliament. All the MEPs are elected by the citizens, and it is only by voting that you can decide who you want to represent you in the European Parliament in the next European elections.

Myth: *The Germans decide economically*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: The European Union as a whole is the most successful political and economic community of sovereign states of all time and constitutes a model for other integration schemes that have emerged in other regions.

In addition, its Member States are among the main countries with the highest income, quality of education, life expectancy, governance and democracy in the world. Membership of the EU brings great benefits, not only economically, but of all kinds for Germany and all EU member nations. Even some non-EU countries such as Switzerland and Norway have benefited from the exchange with the EU without necessarily being inside and having a voice and vote within it.

The success for this system to work is the willingness of the member nations to cooperate with each other, not only thinking about their individual gains but also about what they contribute to the community. For example, although the contribution of Germany to the economy of the European Union is significant, all the EU countries benefit from free trade, as well as benefiting from capital inflow or economic aid.

Furthermore, the amount that each nation contributes to the EU budget is calculated fairly: the larger the economy of a country is, the more it pays and vice versa. This approach does not intend to redistribute wealth, but rather seeks to meet the needs of European citizens as a whole.

The true purpose of the European Union is not economic, but the preservation of peace, democracy, respect for human rights, the free mobility of people and workers, as well as environmental protection to guarantee a high quality of life and personal development opportunities throughout Europe.

Myth: *MEPs chosen are no longer active politicians*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: In the period from 2014 to 2019, elected MEPs under 35 years of age only represented 11.4%. In the new analysis for the International Day of Democracy published by the European Youth Forum, it is found that the number of Members of the European Parliament under 30 years of age has a proportion of 1 in 15, which represents only 6% of the total MEPs of the European Parliament. The youngest MEP elected in the last term is 21 years old and is from Denmark. The average age of MEPs is currently 50 years and among member nations it varies between 44 and 60 years.

The MEP are chosen by the citizens of each country. If citizens decide to elect old, young, active or inactive citizens for each country's seats in the EP, it is each citizen's choice in democratic elections. And this decision must be respected.

Myth: *European Parliament has no power*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: The European Parliament takes decisions on EU laws together with the Council of the European Union. If the Parliament and the Council cannot agree on a piece of legislation, there will be no new law. The Parliament elects the President of the European Commission and has the right to approve or to dismiss the whole European Commission. It also approves the budget of the European Union.

Myth: *The EU is full of bureaucrats*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: For 27 nations to agree on common rules and regulations, where each has a fair and equal share, a complex system had to be created. The European Union system is designed so that none of the institutions is above the other, that is, by design, the European Union is organised in a way to create checks and balances, in order to guarantee that no country, institution or person can concentrate all the power.

Each institution must act in accordance with the powers granted to it in the treaties, respecting the division of powers between the institutions themselves.

Put at its simplest, this refers to the relationship between the three main EU institutions: the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. The dynamics between these bodies have evolved considerably over the years with the adoption of new treaties. The competences of the European Parliament, in particular, have expanded, giving it the right of co-decision with the Council (under the ordinary legislative procedure) in the majority of EU policy areas, as well as wider budgetary powers.

For example, let's say you want to create a new law, the process would be as follows:

Firstly, the European Council is the institution in charge of defining the general direction and priorities in the EU's agenda. Once defined, the political agenda is passed to the European Commission, the main European institution that proposes the laws but cannot vote on them. The government of each European country has a commissioner designated in the European Commission, so that there is representativeness. They debate a set of laws and once they have jointly decided which law will be proposed, it is sent to be discussed by two more institutions: The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, the only two institutions that have the power to adopt laws.

The European Parliament is the only institution whose members are directly elected by European citizens every 5 years. Each State has a fixed number of elected MEPs directly -yet decreasingly- proportional to its population, although this number cannot exceed 96 seats and cannot be less than 6, to ensure not too unbalanced representation between the largest and smallest States.

The MEPs will be in charge of debating the law proposed by the European Commission. The decision on whether a law is approved or not is not made in isolation by the European Parliament, it must be a shared decision with the Council of the European Union, which is the institution made up of the national ministers of each country (it is the only institution that does not have fixed members, but varies depending on the issue or decision being addressed; for example, depending on the case, an issue can be addressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister of Justice and Home affairs) that regardless of the case, they will advocate for the individual interests of their nation.

Myth: *Some countries pay more than others and receive fewer benefits/ there is an economic mismanagement*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: The amount that each member nation contributes to the EU budget is fair in function of its income. Likewise, all nations benefit equally from belonging to the European Union – like for example being a part of the single market, and addressing common challenges like migration, terrorism and climate change together – since the budget is invested thinking of European citizens as a whole, regardless of their country of origin, sex, age, but with a great sense of caring to those in vulnerable situations.

In addition, the EU budget should not be seen simply as a give and take transaction, some more than others, since the European Union was born as a system whose main purpose is to prolong peace, promote respect for human rights and promote quality of life and equally personal development of all European citizens.

Seeing it another way, it is important to think that the investment made in any member State, specially in those deprived, will have a positive effect for the community in general, since it will be a State that will activate its economy and will be open to commercial exchange and finally benefiting those economically stronger; a State that will also improve the quality of life of its citizens, a major quality education, better opportunities for personal and professional development, therefore it will be a human talent that can contribute anywhere in the European Union.

All EU budget programmes aim to create foundations for sustainable growth and resilient economies across Europe. Therefore the EU budget is key to boost growth and economic convergence. If you want to know more about the EU budget and how it is spent in each nation, you can get more information here and here for more general information about the EU budget.

Myth: *Misconception of EU migration policy*

Answer:

Explanation: The EU has adopted a series of rules and regulatory frameworks to manage the legal migration flows of highly-skilled workers, students, researchers, exceptional talents and families seeking reunification.

On the other hand, the EU has intensified its efforts to improve migration procedures to make them increasingly effective, humanitarian and safe. Based on the priorities established by the European Council, the Council of the European Union negotiates with non-member states for the creation of special programmes depending on the need, in order to alleviate migratory pressure. A practical example took place after the outbreak of the War in Ukraine, in which the EU decided to introduce a temporary protection scheme, with the aim of alleviating pressure on national asylum systems and allowing displaced persons to enjoy harmonised rights across the EU.

Myth: *Lack of transparency of decision making*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: The EU decision-making system, although it may seem complicated at first, is fully transparent and each institution has its powers. Here you can learn a little more about the functioning of the EU and the decision-making process in which each institution has its own capacities and powers.

To ensure that 27 different nations adhere to a system with common norms and regulatory frameworks, certain agreements and frameworks had to be created that ensure transparency both in decision-making and in any action that is developed in each of its institutions, otherwise, it would not be possible to create minimum trust among its members that ensures regular functioning as a political entity.

From its origin, it is possible to find in the founding Treaties provisions related to the transparency of community institutions, which were subsequently applied to other areas.

Subsequently, the institutions continued to approve the Codes for access to Council and Commission documents, the principles of which inspired regulations on this matter that were adopted by other community institutions, bodies and agencies. All this represented an advance in computer and internet systems that allowed access to European public information through any device.

Currently, two of the flagship products on the matter are the European Transparency Portal and the EU Transparency Register. Since 2012 the European Commission and since 2013 the European Parliament created a portal that includes:

- **Transparency of the European Commission:** Access to the documents of the European Commission, including the response they have given to requests from the public, records of the comitology committee (committees that supervise the adoption of implementing acts), registry of financing beneficiaries, register of interest groups (lobbies that try to influence the legislative process), among other documents related to the work of the European Commission. To access them you can visit this page.
- **Ethics and Transparency in the European Parliament:** Which includes the Code of Conduct for MEPs, the Transparency Registry and the Code of Conduct for members of interest groups

Myth: *EU websites not accessible/hard to navigate*

Answer: FALSE

Explanation: Totally the opposite. The EU website is fully accessible with plenty of educational and informational resources. Some of the main links we suggest visiting are:

Institutions of the European Union:

- Council of the European Union
- European Commission
- European Parliament
- Court of Justice
- European Economic and Social Committee
- Committee of the Regions

European Union agencies, institutes and centres:

- CEDEFOP: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
- Eurofound: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
- European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
- EUROPOL: European Law Enforcement Organisation
- EUROSTAT: Statistical Office of the European Communities
- Publications Office

CHAPTER 05

Activities to Promote Youth Engagement

The activities compiled in this section are the product of sharing, collecting and adapting various tools used by volunteers from local/national organisations to promote youth participation.

The activities are aimed to, through non-formal education and experiences, be able to address the identified challenges that affect youth voting. Likewise, it is possible to find offline and online activities depending on the case that is required, so they can be adapted to the environment, group, and issue that is intended to be addressed.

Some recommendations to take into account before conducting the activities:

- Get to know the participants you are going to address, try to have a profile of who they are, their educational level (formal and European Civic Education), values, attitudes and abilities so that you can adapt your approach to their characteristics;
- For face-to-face activities: make sure that the chosen place to carry out the activities is familiar to young people, in this way they will feel more comfortable to participate
- Make sure that everyone feels comfortable to talk about the topic to be addressed, from general knowledge about the EU to political parties and elections;
- Maintain an easy and understandable way of communicating, without fancy words and very complex technicalities. Remember that the topic may already be a bit difficult to address, so keep it as simple as possible;
- Try to focus on the topics that young people are interested in talking about, this way you will keep them interested, without losing the objective of providing comprehensive training
- Keep it fun, that is why we have incorporated activities into this Voting Toolkit so that, through activities and other forms of interaction, you can keep the attention of the participants at all times.

On-site activities

Political group simulation

Objective: Participants learn in greater depth about the political groups that are part of the European Parliament, their objective, purposes and position in relation to the issues that may be considered of greatest interest to young people.

Challenges addressed: Information; Confidence; Interest
Duration: 60-90 minutes
Age of participants: +15
Number of participants: 15-20
Materials needed: Cards/notes describing each EU political group. Additional: flipchart, board, markers, post-its

Instructions

1. Ask the participants to propose different topics of interest in the European Union. For example (discussions related to these topics can be found at the end of the resources section):

2.
   a. Social Inclusion
   b. Inequalities
   c. Climate change
   d. Unemployment
   e. Migration issues
   f. Health and well-being
   g. Quality education

3. Divide them into 7 groups and assign a political group represented in the EP. Use section 2 of Basic Information in this Toolbox where you will find a briefing of each EU political group that you can share with the participants

4. In their groups they will discuss each topic and decide their position according to the political group they are modelling.

5. Then, as a plenary session, each group will present its position to the rest as a representative of its party.

Debriefing

Some guiding questions you can ask participants:

- Did you know the political group you were representing?
- Did you know what their position was regarding each of the topics addressed?
- Do you feel represented by the point of view of that party on any of the issues?
- Was it difficult for you to put yourself in the position of a member of the party and try to understand its position on these issues?
- What would your position be?

EP simulation game

This educational activity enables participants to experience the democratic process in the European Parliament.

Objectives: Train participants through experience about everything related to the functions of the European Parliament, the decision-making process, what is the importance of the European Parliament. At the same time, the participants will learn more about the European Union in general, its institutions and policy areas.

Challenges addressed: Information; Interest
Duration: 45 minutes/1 hour
Age of participants: 15-25
Number of participants: +30
Materials needed: Internet, cards/tabs with proposal of the main parties, notepads and pencils (so they can make notes of their arguments)

Instructions

1. Distribution of the roles: lead the participants to choose their own party affiliation regarding the party's stance in depth by reading the programme. Or maybe another possibility is to assign them randomly so they can become familiar with each party, whether they feel identified or not.

2. Once the roles have been assigned, ask the participants to get into groups according to the party they are in. Invite them to start getting to know each other.

3. Make the participants begin to feel familiar with their role and with the values and proposal of their party.

4. Then, choose a controversial topic. (you can use some topic from the resources at the end of this chapter)

5. Ask them to start discussing in their groups around what their party's position should be, corresponding to its values and purposes and make a simulated Parliament discussions session. In the Basic Information section you can find a brief description of each political group, its political alignment and direct access to its website where you can find more information about its position on various issues.

6. Exclude several proposals by the election turnout percentage and vote again.

7. Repeat this process at least for 3 rounds of voting.

8. The last round includes every party having the same count of votes (proportionally) that the EP has.

Debriefing

- Ask the groups of each party how they felt during the exercise.
- Make them reflect to what extent do they think this actually happens at Parliament level and what effects do they think it has, depending on the issues that were put to the vote? That is, how it affects the discussion of certain topics in relation to the representativeness of certain parties.

Fishbowl method

Objective: This activity stimulates debate about pertinent issues around the EU amongst young people.

Challenges addressed: Interest; Information
Duration: 60 minutes
Age of participants: 15-25
Number of participants: 20-30
Materials needed: a flipchart, notebooks and pencils for the participants to take notes

Instructions

1. Participants are asked to think of a topic that is important to them or an issue that they would like to discuss;
2. Everyone can name one and write it down on the board, as a brainstorming;
3. When finished, organise all contributions into topics and categorise them if necessary with key words; For example, Mental health and Well-being could be included in a single topic;
4. In case there are not many contributions, here you will find some options. Some examples of topics, according to those that were indicated as priorities for the youngsters in the Eurobarometer in 2022:
    a. Fight against climate change
    b. Improvements in the educational system
    c. Fight against economic and social inequalities
    d. Unemployment (specially youth unemployment)
    e. Improvement of health and well-being
    f. Promote human rights and democracy
    g. Encourage rural youth
5. Promote a voting process and ask for the participants to vote for 3 topics that they would be interested in discussing/ debating further. Each category or topic can be assigned a number or letter to facilitate the process;
6. The votes are then counted and the most voted topic/issue should be used for the activity;ssion, while the participants in the outsider circle listen and take notes;

7. After selecting the topic, ask the participants to sit in a large circle and 4 of the participants are asked to join the inner circle on a voluntary basis. In the inner circle, the participants have a discussion, while the participants in the outsider circle listen and take notes;
8. The first time, it would be preferable for the facilitator to take the role of moderator until the participants have understood the instructions. Then, assign the role to one the person whose topic was chosen is assigned the role of moderator of the discussion i.e
9. The moderator should not intervene, but asks guiding questions to encourage discussion between the participants, to deepen the debate, and to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak. For example, if the chosen topic is fight against climate change then we could give some context:

"The fight against climate change is currently one of the priority topics for the EU, therefore it has proposed to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, that is, to be an economy with zero net emissions of greenhouse gases. Likewise, it constitutes the main objective of the European Green Pact and is in line with the commitments assumed as part of the global action in the fight against climate change agreed on in the Paris Agreement. Are the actions that are being taken so far effective enough to achieve the proposed goals? Are the Member States committed enough to achieve the goals? What measures would you propose to apply to achieve more effective results?"

10. Every 10-15 minutes rotate the participants in the circle (4 from the inner circle go to the outside, and 4 from the outer circle go to the inside). Keep this dynamic until all the participants have been in both circles.
11. Finally, divide the participants into 4-5 groups for the debrief. Ask them to share with each other the notes they took while they were in the outer circle, this way they may share feedback and recommendations with each other. Some questions that can be asked to each other:
    a. What did you hear that you could agree with?
    b. What did you hear that you might disagree with?
    c. How did you feel being out of the fishbowl?
    d. How did you feel being inside the fishbowl?
12. After the small group discussion, you can close with a general discussion for those who want to add something additional to the whole group. This can be an opportunity to ask participants who have been moderators how they felt. Some guiding questions for the group:
    a. <u>When they have been in the outer circle</u>:
        i. Did you hear something from the inner circle that caused you surprise?
    b. <u>When they have been in the inner circle</u>:
        i. What point do you feel you could have made more clearly?

Speed Dating: EU Youth Value edition

Objective: Stimulate their skills as speakers in addition to generating a rootedness towards the value presented as if it were their own.

Challenges addressed: Motivation
Duration: ~ 45 minutes
Age of participants: 15-25
Number of participants: 6-12
Materials needed: cards with EU values

Instructions

1. Prepare the cards with the EU values
2. Make the participants pick one EU value randomly. At least each participant should have a value. It is possible that if it is a big group, some may have to be repeated.
3. Divide the group in half. Make one half stay stationary while the other half must move.
4. They should do a *Speed Dating* presentation to others. Each couple will have a maximum of 2 minutes, meaning that each one will have 1 minute to present their value to the other person.
5. Invite them to present creatively, as if they were describing the value as a personal characteristic or a superpower in role-play games. For example: *"My value is Rule of law, therefore I am always guided by justice. I help maintain order and stability among States, under democratic principles"*
6. You can determine how the order will be to avoid confusion and delays in each partner change. In other words, you can decide and give the instruction that the person who remains in place is the one who speaks first. In this way, everyone knows how and when to start.

7. It’s advisable to use a timer/stopwatch to better keep the time of each round. Start the countdown when 10 seconds remain for each round and count 5 seconds before restarting time, so participants can also keep track of time
8. If the numbers are odd, one of the participants must wait until the next turn or the facilitator can join and listen to the speech of the participants, if he deems it convenient
9. Another alternative is for each person to present it to the entire group and then match those who have the same value

Debriefing

When all the rounds have been completed, the chairs can be arranged in a circle again and proceed to debrief. Some guiding questions to the participants can be:

a. How did they feel presenting their value and how did they feel listening to the other?

b. How much do they feel that their speech had changed from the first round to the last?

c. Did they feel like they improved it?

d. Could they learn from their classmates' presentation?

e. Do they feel that they were able to actively listen to their mates' presentation? Do they feel capable of presenting a value that is not theirs?

1 → 2 → 4 → All method

Objective: Have the participants find similarities with each other, showing that we can all have something in common

Challenges addressed: Motivation; Social Context
Duration: 25 - 30 minutes
Age of participants: 15-25
Number of participants: 15
Materials needed:

Instructions

1. Define the topic and context: To begin, you can choose a simple topic so that participants begin to feel safe to interact and understand the dynamics. For example: *games you liked to play as a child, favourite meal or favourite dessert, favourite holidays*
2. Everyone defines their opinion themselves and write it down in a paper
3. Then, ask the participants to find the similarities in pairs
4. Ask them to find the similarities in 4 (If it's a big group, then 8 too)
5. Finally, find similarities together
6. Some examples of topics you can propose are:
    a. A life changing experience
    b. Best experience as an European Citizen
    c. Places you have visited (inside and outside the European Union)
    d. Places you would like to visit (inside and outside the European Union)
    e. How many and which languages do you speak?
    f. Which languages would you like to learn?
7. To maintain time and prevent participants from extending themselves more than they should, define conditions for each participant's intervention so that they can be more specific in identifying similarities. For example: *Mention only 3 places you have visited; Comment in 1 minute your best experience as an European citizen*

Debriefing

- Ask the participants how they think the process of finding similarities was: Was it difficult? Was it easy? How did you feel when you finished?
- What do you think this influences when talking about the EU? Make sure to take notes of their answers.
- You can make a final reflection taking into account the comments of the participants, highlighting the fact that, despite the differences (countries, ages, knowledge and experiences) we all have something in common, something that unites us. And that many of these experiences, skills, knowledge that they have in common, can be related to our rights as citizens of the European Union. For example: mobility facilities allow us to discover common places, have significant intercultural experiences and to know at least one language different from ours.

Blind vote:

Objective: Generate awareness in the participants by making them understand the importance of knowing the candidates to make informed decisions.

Duration: 30 minutes
Age of participants: 15-25
Number of participants: 15 - 25
Materials needed: Photographs of fictitious politicians

Instructions

1. Generate a mock voting process and introduce participants to the candidates with fictitious photos. Don't give more context.
2. Give the participants time to analyse and then they must vote and choose their candidates
3. Finish the voting process and you can share the results if consider, but the main objective is to see them try to vote without knowing anything about the candidates

Debriefing

- Ask the participants how they felt during the activity and choosing the candidates: did they feel confident or doubtful? Was there something they based their choice on?
- How do you think the situation would be in a real vote? Would you dare to vote without knowing the candidate? How do you think it influences the election in general and the winning candidates?
- What do you think should be the essential information you should have about a candidate to make a conscious decision?

Change makers:

Objective: Promote youth engagement in solving general problems of the EU, encouraging them to think about possible solutions that they *realistically* have the possibility to do from their areas of action, thus demonstrating that there are no age or any other limitations for making changes in their communities.

Challenges addressed: Motivation; Interest; Social Context
Duration: 60-90 minutes
Age of participants: 15-25
Number of participants: 20-40
Materials needed: flipchart, board, markers, post-its

Instructions

1. Ask each participant what they consider to be the main problems that the EU is currently facing. You can propose the following, as mentioned in the *Special Eurobarometer on the Future of Europe*, the four most mentioned challenges facing the EU itself are:
   a. Social inequalities (36%)
   b. Unemployment (32%)
   c. Climate change (32%)
   d. Migration issues (31%)

2. The most named will be chosen to discuss them. If more are named or none is repeated, place all the issues and open a simple vote to choose 4 that can be discussed. (Or determine if some of the problems may be related, for example, pollution with improper disposal of solid waste, that are related to the causes of climate change).

3. Divide them into small groups equally, depending on the number of ideas to be discussed, however, it is advised not to be more than 5 groups.

4. Assign a topic to each group.

5. Each group must create an action plan to address the problem as a group, that is, how does a group of youth organise to address the problem? For example, promoting an online awareness campaign, workshops at school, discussion groups and other activities. The idea is that young people can reflect individually and collectively on their own resources, networks and contacts, knowledge, abilities and skills, etc. that they can contribute to address the problem.

6. At the end, each group presents the proposed solutions to the problem they addressed and promote interactions with the other groups to exchange ideas and collaboration between them.

Debriefing

- How did you feel discussing this topic? Do you consider it a priority for politics today? Do you think it is an issue that is currently being addressed as it should by the EU system or in politics at local/national level?

- How did you feel thinking about how you could contribute to solving this problem?

- Have you thought about that before? Do you think you can do it?

- How did you feel as a group when putting together the action plan to address the issue? Do you think they can pull it off?

Discussions: *This or that?*

Objective: Strengthen the abilities of participants to defend opinions and beliefs. Also, generate reflection on debate and argumentation as a tool

Challenges addressed: Information; Interest
Duration: 30-45 minutes
Age of participants: 15-25
Number of participants: 15-20
Materials needed: flipchart, board, markers, post-its

Instructions

1. Propose different topics to discuss with the participants and let them express their opinion;

2. Some topic examples can be:
   a. Compulsory voting or a free right?
   b. Should the voting age be lowered or raised?
   c. Should MEPs be elected on a decreasing proportionality or equal basis for all?
   d. Should there be quotas to guarantee the election of young MEPs or not?
   e. A more centralised but faster decision-making process, or a more decentralised but slower one?
   f. Do states with more income pay more or should all states pay equally?
   g. Should the European Union increase its areas of action or give them up?
   h. Should border controls increase or remain as they are?

3. Nurture the discussion by introducing provocative questions to encourage them to think further and generate arguments to reinforce their choice or even lean towards another answer. The idea is that the consideration of different perspectives can be encouraged before forming an opinion, so that in the end, it is sufficiently founded

4. Some other topic examples could be found at the resources section. You can ask them, for example, their position on Climate Change and the energy transition and have them debate it.

5. To make it more interesting, you can ask some of them to take opposing positions so that they can work on their argumentative skills.

Debriefing

Some guiding questions you can ask are:

- How did you feel debating the topic? Do you feel that your initial position changed?
- If you took a different position on the issue than yours, how did you feel about it? Was it difficult?
- What do you think this situation will be like in a debate at the European Parliament level?
- Do you feel that you are more prepared to defend your position with better arguments next time?

Politicians salad

Objective: Strengthen the confidence and ability of young people to decide between candidates and political groups, applying critical analysis techniques and reflecting on the speech and proposals presented

Challenges addressed: Information; Confidence; Interest; Representativeness
Duration: 30-45 minutes
Age of participants: 15-25
Number of participants: 15-20
Materials needed: Cards with information about fictional politicians. Additional: flipchart, board, markers, post-its

Instructions

1. Prepare the cards that contain basic information about fictitious politicians (name, political stand and other basic information)
2. Assign the cards randomly to the facilitators
3. They are given at least 5 minutes to think of a speech that can convince the students to vote for their candidate
4. Each representative will have a maximum of 1 minute to make their speech and convince the students
5. Conduct a vote to see which candidate wins

Debriefing

- You can ask the students that voted for the winning candidate, what motivated them to vote for this person. Reflect on the answers given by the participants and analyse if there are any relevant aspect
- Ask the same question to the participants who have voted for the other candidates.
- Ask how they felt when their candidate didn't win

Get to know the EP

Objective: Empower young people in the process of defining their own political interests, and in this way know their priority issues, the values with which they feel identified and how related or not they may be with existing political groups.

Challenges addressed: Interest; Representativeness; Motivation
Duration: 60-90 minutes
Age of participants: 15-20
Number of participants: 15-20
Materials needed: flipchart, board, markers, post-its

Instructions

1. Present to the participants a scenario in which the European Parliament is going through a reform and there are no more political parties and new ones must be created and they must collaborate
2. With this in mind, they should create a political party that aligns with their values, a party for which they would vote.
3. If the group is too large and you don't have enough time divide it into groups of no more than 5 people
4. They must write a purpose, values with which they identify and the causes they stand for
5. Each group should present its political party to the others
6. Promote the debate among political groups about common causes (for example: migration, climate change, inequalities...) and the way in which each political party would address them.

Debriefing

Some question to ask the participants:

- How did you feel in the ideation process of your political party?
- Do you think that there is currently a political party that is similar? Were you inspired by any one existing?
- Would you consider making it a reality or participating in the process of creating or reforming any current political party?

Law project

Objective: Promote understanding of the decision-making process in the European Union system and the role of each of the main institutions, specifically about one of the functions: the proposal of new laws, through a simulation

Challenges addressed: Information; Confidence; Motivation
Duration: 60-90 minutes
Age of participants: +16
Number of participants: +20
Materials needed: Support material about: the EU decision making system, EU institutions and their roles, template of law proposal. Additional: a flipchart, board, markers, post-its

Instructions

1. After a brief explanation/review of the functioning of the EU and its institutions, divide the group into at least 3 smaller groups of equal number of members

2. Assign each of them the role of one of the 3 main institutions involved in decision-making for the creation of a new law:
    a. European Commission
    b. European Parliament
    c. Council of the European Union

3. Explain to each of the groups their role and how the decision-making process works (in the resources section you will find descriptions that can help you)
    a. To the group that will play the role of the European Commission, they will be in charge of making the Law Project proposal. In the resources section you can also find suggested topics to address to give them context. They will have between 20 to 40 minutes maximum to prepare a law proposal (Click here to see the Law/Bill proposal template)
    b. Meanwhile, you explain the role of the groups of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Let them know the subject on which the proposed law will be presented so that they can familiarise themselves with the subject and discuss in their groups while the European Commission team works on their proposal.

4. Once the time has elapsed, the European Commission group will be asked to present its proposal to the Council of the European Union

5. Once presented, a negotiation process is opened between the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to decide on the law. Ask the members of these groups to approach it keeping in mind the functions, values and interests that each institution has.

6. After 40-60 minutes of debate, ask the teams to make a decision on the drafted law. Would they approve or reject it? Would they make more amendments? If yes, which amendments?

Debriefing

- In case there are amendments to the law, they do not have to go through the process again, just ask them to mention them.

- Close the activity by explaining and summarising again what the decision-making process is like when new laws are proposed and what happens once the laws are approved.

- Some guiding questions you can ask the participants are:
  - How did you feel about the decision-making process?
  - Do you think it is simple and efficient?
  - Do you feel that you understood well the role of the institution you represented in that system?
  - Do you think it could be done differently?
  - How did you feel about the law being approved/disapproved? Do you agree with that decision?

The European Parliament responds

Objectives: Generate rapprochements between young people and political groups/political figures to create common spaces for discussion, where participants can learn first-hand about the role of the MEPs, their proposals and main achievements for the EU.

Challenges addressed: Information; Representativeness; Confidence; Motivation
Duration: 60-90 minutes
Age of participants: +16
Number of participants: +10
Materials needed: pencils, markers, post-its

Instructions

1. With the support of European politicians, MEPs and candidates, organise a discussion where they'll have the opportunity to answer questions from young people

2. Have some initial questions ready to build trust. For example:
    a. What is your role and your main functions?
    b. Why do you consider this role important?
    c. How do you engage with young people, in order to effectively advocate for their rights at EU level?
    d. What would you say to young people who are hesitant to participate in matters of European politics?
    e. How would you respond to people who say that voting is not an effective way to participate or that the European Parliament or its members do not have the power to influence the decision-making process?
    f. You can ask participants to write down their questions and then organise them to ask them to the guest.

Some recommendations:

- Try to get the participation of several politicians from various political groups, in order to have a more interesting debate with the participants.
- Maintain control of the discussion by asking guests to stick to the questions and topic and asking participants to ask their questions clearly and respectfully.
- If due to availability or other factors it is not possible to coordinate a face-to-face meeting, it is also possible to ask the guest to participate virtually or to record some videos answering the questions and you can use this resource as part of other activities with the young people.

Debriefing

Some questions you can ask once the activity is finished:

- Do you feel that your knowledge about the role of MEPs, political groups, the European Parliament and the decision-making process is much better now? Do you feel that your doubts were clarified by the guest?
- What opinions do you have regarding what was discussed?

European quizzes

Objectives: Test the level of knowledge of your target audience in relation to the EU to identify misinformation gaps that you can address

Challenges addressed: Information
Duration: 15-30 minutes
Age of participants: +16
Number of participants: +10
Materials needed: In schools or streets using kahoot or other platforms to teach the basics of the European institutions.

Instructions:

1. Prepare your group, share the link with them and wait until everyone has joined or verified that they can open it without problem. You can use this example of an open online quiz that we created for this activity. The results will be shown to the participants and they will be able to see their answers once finished.
2. Make them feel safe, don't make it look like a competition, the important thing about the quiz is to reveal information gaps and try to address them
3. Before starting, you can ask them how they would self-assess their knowledge about the EU, so that you can compare it at the end of the quiz with the results

Examples of questions:

- How many countries belong to the EU?
  - A= 27 countries
- What institutions and bodies make up the European Union?
  - A=The 7 European institutions, 7 EU bodies and over 30 decentralised agencies are spread across the EU.
- How often are Members of the European Parliament elected?
  - A= It is directly elected by **EU voters** every 5 years. The last elections were in May 2019, which means that the next elections are in 2024.
- The number of MEPs for each country is elected proportionally to the population, however, in parliament they are grouped by political affiliation, not by nationality
  - *True or false?* A= True

- How many political groups are currently part of the European Parliament?
  - A= There are currently 7 political groups in the European Parliament
- From what age can you participate in the next parliamentary elections of the European Union?
  - A= You have the right to vote at 18 in all EU countries, except Austria and Malta, where you can vote at the age of 16, and Greece, where you can vote when you are 17.
- … represents the highest level of political cooperation between EU countries:
  - The European Council
- How is the European Commission made up?
  - The European Commission is made up of 27 Commissioners – one per EU country
- Which of the following can be a way in which european citizens can influence EU policies:
  - European citizens' initiative
- How many meetings ('sessions') does the European Parliament have throughout the year and where do they take place?
  - It takes place in Strasbourg, France, 12 times a year, and in Brussels, Belgium, up to six times a year.

Debriefing

Once the quiz is over, you can ask them if they feel safe sharing their results. If yes, you can make the following questions:

- Do they think they had better or worse results than they expected? Do they feel satisfied with their results?
- What questions made them doubt the most? Which questions made them feel most confident?
- If possible, you can delve a little deeper by asking where they learned what they know about the EU? Where do they usually look for information? Who do they ask or talk to about these topics?
- You can read a little more about this topic in section IV: How to identify challenges

At the end of the quiz will be distributed QR codes with the Flag of the EU links to a page where you explain how to vote.

Youth vote simulation

Objectives: Empower participants to become aware of their role as decision-makers, while they practise and become familiar with electoral processes.

Challenges addressed: Information; Motivation
Duration: 15-30 minutes
Age of participants: +16
Number of participants: +10
Materials needed: workshop presentation about the EP, cards with fictitious candidates information, post-its, pencils, markers, boxes or envelopes.

Note: It is important to highlight that each country has its particular procedures to carry out the elections, as well as its particular requirements. For example, while in most EU countries the minimum voting age is 18 years, there are some exceptions like Austria and Malta, where you can vote at the age of 16, and Greece, where you can vote when you are 17.

In some countries, voters can vote for groups of candidates, select their preferences in each group, or select their candidates in order of preference. We suggest confirming how the elections take place in the place where you make the simulation, or in any case, to facilitate the development of the activity, it is suggested to make a simple vote with the choice of individual candidates.

Instructions

1. Do a brief workshop of a maximum of 30 minutes where you explain to the students how the EP works, why it is important that they participate in the elections and how they can vote and the requirements according to the State where they reside, for example, minimum age to vote
2. Use cards with fictitious candidate name containing names, basic information, political group affiliation
3. Present them to the participants and allow them time to read and analyse them to make a decision.
4. Do a vote in which the participants choose at least 3 candidates of their choice

Suggestions:

- Specially for digital environments, you can use tools such as Google Form or other online voting tools;
- You can also applied in schools with a previous seminar in which we explain how to vote and how the EP works

Debriefing

Some guiding questions you can ask to participants:

- Had you participated before an election?
- Did you know what the procedure was like?
- How did you feel voting? Do you feel more confident about doing so in the next elections?

Online Activities

European Parliament Situations

Objectives:

- To experience how the European Parliament works and that decision-making in the European Union is a complex process
- To learn about what compromises involve
- To learn that lack of time can speed up political processes
- To get to know different political views on an issue

Challenges addressed: Information; Interest; Representativeness; Confidence
Duration: 2 hours and 30 min
Age of participants: 16-30 years old
Number of participants: 15-20 young people

Materials needed/Platforms:

- Google Drive
- Google Docs
- Miro (white board)
- Google Meet

Suggestions:

- Make sure the participants should have access to a directive, to a more general briefing with information about the issue they are discussing, to a position paper for each represented parliamentary group

- Prepare the material about the European Parliament (e.g. flow chart) and a procedure of the plenary debate

Instructions:

1. You need to choose a topic for the simulation, potentially you can also include the participants in the choice if you have the option of contacting them timely before the activity itself. Think about relevant events or discussions in Europe: digitalisation, climate change, European Defence, migration… and choose a topic that affects the participants themselves.

2. Choose a controversial topic and formulate the directive controversially: this ensures the students find enough points to discuss about. It is possible to combine two topics: e.g. European defence and data protection.

3. The team of facilitators either has to provide a comprehensive overview on the topic in form of a briefing, which then has to be researched and written, or – depending on the framework and the age and knowledge of the participants – this can be part of their preparation with specific instructions and clear lead questions for this task are prepared. It can also include contacting MEPs to learn about their stance.

4. The participants need to receive materials for individual preparation before the actual simulation. Realistically, a meeting for each parliamentary group of 45 minutes, the simulation of the plenary session of 60 minutes and a reflection meeting of 45 minutes should be organised.

Step-by-Step Methodology

Step 1. Implementation of the group meetings:

- The facilitator provides necessary basic information about the workings of the parliament.
- The facilitator then gives a short introduction of the topic, the parliamentary group and their stance on the topic (the set up of the activity confronts the participants with a given position and they are put into a group by draw).
- The groups should identify the most important problems and solutions based on the materials and write statements and divide tasks for the plenary.

Step 2. Implementation of the plenary:

- The session should be officially started by the president. Every parliamentary group should have an opening statement of about two minutes.
- Every amendment should be introduced by the corresponding group, then the amendment should be discussed by the parliament. The parliamentary group has the right to have the final comment, then the amendment is voted upon. This is repeated for each amendment.
- Every parliamentary group should comment on the final directive.
- Finally, the parliament accepts or rejects the final directive.

Implementation of the reflection meeting:

- The facilitator lets the participants first describe what the process looked like and what the result was, their feelings, etc; ideally, the facilitator gives them some individual reflection time through an online white board, the chat or similar.
- Additional information about the parliament is given, adding the comments of participants that reflect the information they had before and complements it with the learning experience.
- The facilitator transfers to how participants can learn more about the work in the parliament, and how they can get in touch (e.g. by showing them MEPs on Instagram, introducing more resources, videos, 360 degree online visit to the building).

Debriefing

After going through the different steps of the activity, you can close the activity by doing a debriefing. You can use the following questions:

- How do you feel? Are you satisfied with what you have achieved?
- What happened in the process, what were the steps?
- How was the experience for you?
- What did you like, what was maybe annoying or strange to you?
- What surprised you? What was new to you?

In a relationship

Objectives: To raise awareness about the importance of European Citizenship; To develop an understanding about European Rights

Challenges addressed: Social context; Information; Representativeness; Motivation
Duration: 45 min-1h
Age of participants: 6-14 years old
Number of participants: 2-30 young people
Materials needed/Platforms: Google Docs; Miro (white board); Google Meet

Step-by-Step methodology

Step 1.
The facilitator introduces the activity saying that its aim is to allow the group to discover more about the European Union and to reflect about what it means in their daily lives.

Step 2.
The facilitator divides the group in smaller working groups and asks them to discuss and find images that show:

- The most significant experiences they had at individual level connected with the European Union
- Symbols that are connected with the European Union
- Some of the challenges of being part of the European Union
- Some of the benefits of being part of the European Union

Step 3.
With the groups all together the facilitator asks each group to make the presentation of their results.

Debriefing

At the end of the activity the facilitator can close the activity by making a debriefing

- How did you find to think about yourselves as European citizens?
- Where did you find the images you chose to put in your poster? Was it difficult to find images that represented the challenges you decided to consider? And what about the benefits?
- What does European citizenship imply for you?

You can find more online activities like this in the Europe@Home: European Civic Education through the Mobile – Resource Manual

Priorities for your representative in the European Parliament

Objective: Empower young people in the process of devising proposals for Parliament and make them aware of the possibility they have of influencing in this regard.

Challenges addressed: Interest; Motivation
Duration: 60-90 minutes
Age of participants: +18
Number of participants: 15-20
Materials needed/Platforms: Google Docs; Miro (white board); Google Meet

Instructions

1. Divide the participants in small groups
2. Ask them to choose a topic that they would like their representatives to defend in the European Parliament
3. To guide them you can suggest reading about the Parliament's resolution to reduce plastic bag use in Europe here: europa.eu/!Bt79yQ
4. At the end, each group presents its resolution to the rest of the groups.
5. Promote discussion by inviting each of the other groups to ask questions or make contributions

Debriefing

Some guiding questions for debrief are:

- How did you feel as a group making the resolution?
- What do you think about the process? Do you think it would be easy to get this resolution to parliament and have your MEPs defend it?
- Would you feel a little more confident in trying to carry it out?

CHAPTER 06

Methods

Group discussion

Leading a discussion with very large groups is a challenging task, especially if the topic under discussion is controversial and the opinions on the matter can be very varied and opposing.

There are some points that you should take into account and it is important that the participants also internalise them:

- In group discussions it is not always necessary to reach a conclusion on the topic, a decision or a single answer. Group discussions are more focused on the debate of ideas, opinions and arguments than on a particular outcome.

- Group discussions usually do not have a very structured agenda, the discussion is formed based on the contribution of each participant. However, the role of the facilitator is essential to ensure that all participants have a fair opportunity to intervene and give their opinion, as well as to prevent the central topic under discussion from being diverted.

- The group should be a safe space to share opinions and ideas openly.

- Likewise, everyone has the right to give and receive feedback from other participants, whether positive or negative, but always in a respectful manner.

- Take care that the discussion is not dominated by a single person.

Steps to conduct a group discussion:

Prepare the stage

- If you have the possibility of choosing the place, it is recommended that it be comfortable, informal and accessible, that invites participants to organise themselves as they prefer, where they can easily see each other's faces and where the atmosphere allows them to stay relaxed.

- If you have enough budget, also try to provide participants with beverages and snacks. The creative process and debate can be very draining, so you don't want your participants to feel exhausted mid-discussion.

- Use materials that facilitate the discussion process, for example, flip-charts, markers, post-its, pencils and any other resources that are needed depending on the specific activity.

- If the topic under discussion is already defined, try to document yourself as much as possible about it, this way you will be able to ask better questions.

- It is also very useful if you prepare supporting material so that participants also have the opportunity to prepare in advance.

Introduction to the discussion

A good facilitator plays a crucial role in assisting the group in establishing its own set of rules. He or she ensures that every member actively participates without any one person dominating the conversation. Furthermore, encourage the development and expression of all ideas, even those that may seem unconventional. The facilitator also ensures an open and respectful process, where no conclusions are predetermined and everyone's opinions are valued. Facilitators adopt a non-directive approach and refrain from becoming too involved in the discussion, only when asking relevant questions or statements to move it forward. In most group discussions, striving to embody the facilitator role is highly beneficial.

- Make the group feel comfortable, especially if they don't know each other, it would be ideal to start with an icebreaker activity.
- Invite the group to establish common rules. If you set them, they will probably feel restricted or inhibited, but if they create them collectively, they will feel more integrated and will feel more willing to comply with them.

- If you see that it is difficult for them to propose rules, you can make some suggestions to encourage them to continue adding, for example: *“Don’t make arguments directed to people, only at ideas and opinions”*
- This can also be the space to define and verbalise some roles and dynamics, for example, designate a person to take notes during the discussion, define a maximum intervention time and time, among other aspects that you consider necessary to define and clarify.
- Write down the key points that you want to keep in mind for the discussion. Although it should not be very structured, it is important that you do not let the discussion stray too far from the agreed topic.

Lead the discussion

- Make sure that the topic is previously defined and that all participants are aware of it, this will avoid unnecessary delays that could take time away from the discussion.
- Promote an open process, that is, focus on the dynamics and relationships that are emerging in the space and reinforce them. Observe that there is not a single person or group monopolising the discussion, likewise, pay attention if there are people who are being left out of the discussion and try to involve them.
- Asking questions or presenting suggestions to push the conversation forward is crucial. The person in charge should be aware of the conversation's progress and offer information, insights, or present compelling arguments that encourage critical thinking and move the discussion forward. When participants encounter difficulty grasping the topic, becoming distracted by insignificant matters, or losing momentum, it becomes the leader's responsibility to steer the discussion in the right direction.

Note: It is important that in your preparation for discussion you can identify what points may cause participants to stagnate. They are usually hot topics on the subject that tend to arouse contrary opinions. Identifying them in advance allows you to prepare with strategies to prevent participants from getting stuck.

- Compile and summarise group discussions. This is a very important function since it will require that you have been very attentive to the general discussion that has arisen in the group. That is, you have captured the main ideas that have arisen, interrelate the ideas and draw conclusions from them.
- If everyone is satisfied with the conclusion, the discussion can be ended.
- Share the notes that have been taken with the rest of the participants, if they are interested

Role play activities

Set up

- For participants who are going to play a role, provide them with enough **context and information about the role** they are going to play, but of course also leaving some room for improvisation.

- **Define the topic** and the context on which the participants will act out their roles. You can ask them to give their opinion and vote on the ideas that have arisen. In this Voting Toolbox you will find different topic proposals that you can use for this. These options may vary depending on the type of Role play activity. For example, in activities like Politicians salad, whose context is a fictitious vote and the facilitators play fictitious candidates and must, according to the character of their character, make a campaign speech to win votes from the participants.

- Give participants the opportunity to **assimilate** their role, **practice and ask questions** if necessary

- As in other activities, invite the group to establish **common rules** before starting, to ensure a smooth development of the activity and make the participants feel comfortable and secure.

- It is important to make it clear to the participants that the opinions shared during Role Play do not necessarily belong to whoever says them but to the character or role they play, in this way they can feel more confident in experimenting.

- Make sure that everyone has a role or a task within the Role Play, some may be interpreting, others may be observers and taking notes and then giving feedback.

Execution

- As in other role-playing activities, debates and group discussions, promote an open process in which you let participants create their own learning scenario, intervening only when strictly necessary and when you feel that they have become stuck. For example, when the discussion diverts to secondary topics or discussions that make no sense for the main topic.

- Keep track of time. These types of activities can easily be extended if we do not keep track of time. Especially if the topic is of interest to the participants, such as if we choose that the topic of debate will be Climate Change, each person will probably have a lot to say (and very easily also get out of their roles) so keep an eye on this.

Debriefing

- Once finished, encourage participants to give feedback on the Role Play, whether about their own performance, about the group, about the activity in general or even about the role of facilitator. Some guiding questions for the ones interpreting a role:
  - What challenges did you face taking on these new roles? What was harder or easier than expected?
  - If you had to do it again, what would you change?
  - How did you plan for your role? What lead to the decisions you made in your role

- For those as observers:
  - What feedback would you give to those who were playing a role?
  - Was the interpretation convincing?
  - What do you think worked and what didn't?
  - What should they have done differently?

Simulation

** Activities that you can find in the Voting Toolbox about simulation: Political group simulation; EP Simulation Game; Blind vote; Law Project; Get to know the EP; Youth Vote simulation and European Parliament Situations*

Preparation

- As with a Role Play activity, it is also important that you provide participants with enough context and information for them to prepare appropriately. If the topic is not defined, you can help them define it and give them suggestions (you can help yourself with the suggestions you find in this Toolbox). Make sure it is a topic that everyone understands or that at least there are resources available to put participants in context.

- Assign each participant a role or have them choose it randomly. Also, give them context about the role, enough so that they know the main characteristics but also allows them to delve deeper into the role.

- Remember that everyone in the group must have a role. From those who will actively participate in the simulation, to those who will act as observers and give feedback. If time is enough you can do as many rounds as possible and swap roles.

- Give them time to internalise the role and instructions of the simulation, and if necessary (and possible) let them practise and ask questions. If the simulation requires forming groups, then assign them and give them time to agree on their individual and collective roles.

- Like the previous activities, have the group establish common rules or if there are already rules that have been discussed, take some time to review them and modify them if necessary.

- Make sure these rules and general simulation instructions always remain visible to the group.

- Use all the resources and materials available to generate a scenario that is as realistic as possible and make the discussion processes more fluid. From flip-charts, post-its, markers, to boxes and cards to make voting simulations.

Execution

- During the "staging", your role will simply be to promote an open process where the participants will execute their assigned roles and you will simply observe the dynamics and relationships that are generated between them. Intervene only when necessary and if you realise they have become stuck.

- If participants face any difficulties in finding solutions to particular problems during the simulation, you have the option to start a discussion that promotes critical thinking and problem-solving. The objective is for participants to learn from each other and serve as valuable resources. However, there might be occasions where you will need to offer extra assistance.

- Make sure you monitor the time and that participants stick to it.

- Manage group climate during the simulation. Depending on the topic and the roles assigned, the climate of the discussion may increase. Keep an eye on this and address it early. Remind the group of the rules, if necessary, and that the opinions expressed during the simulation do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the person and that they stick to the role and objectives of the activity.

- You can take notes of what you observe, as they will help you a lot when doing the debrief.

Debriefing

Once the simulation is finished, it opens a space for final reflections. Some guiding questions:

- For those interpreting a role:
  - What challenges did you face taking on these new roles? What was harder or easier than expected?
  - If you had to do it again, what would you change?
  - How did you plan for your role? What lead to the decisions you made in your role

- For those as observers:
  - What feedback would you give to those who were playing a role?
  - Was the interpretation convincing?
  - What do you think worked and what didn't?
  - What should they have done differently?

Suggested topics to address in some activities:

The following topics were chosen among the young people surveyed as the main problems of interest to them related to the European Union. Each topic contains a brief description of the problem, its current state (according to figures from the most up-to-date official sources) and the main actions being taken in the EU by the relevant institutions. The idea is that they serve as a basis to put participants in context to support arguments in possible debate and simulation activities. Of course, we suggest that it not be taken as the only source and urge participants to expand the information whenever they can.

Social inclusion

Due to some disadvantages related to gender, age, place of origin and/or residence, occupation, race, ethnicity, religion, citizenship status, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity (among other factors), some groups tend to face barriers to fully participate in political, economic and social life. This is not always due to legal and economic systems, but also due to discriminatory and stigmatising attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Neglecting this problem can make it difficult to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth for poverty reduction and can be costly.

At the individual level, the frequently assessed effects encompass diminished income, lifetime earnings, inadequate education, and unfavourable employment results. Racism and bias also impose both physical and psychological costs on health. On a national scale, the economic consequences of social marginalisation can be quantified through the opportunity cost of foregone gross domestic product (GDP) and human capital wealth. Exclusion causes some groups to leave or avoid certain markets and/or services, thus affecting individuals and the market. Over time, social exclusion also causes social tensions, confrontations and violence.

Rural areas in Europe are facing different challenges concerning poverty and social inclusion. A higher proportion of the EU-27 population living in rural areas face the risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to urban areas. In 2019, just over 23.6% of the population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion, while lower shares were recorded for people living in cities. To tackle these disparities, ENRD CP has given special attention to vulnerable groups such as young people, women, migrants, the elderly, persons with disabilities and minorities. For this topic you can consider giving special attention to vulnerable groups such as young people, women, migrants, the elderly, persons with disabilities and minorities.

Find out more about it in:

- Social Inclusion
- Information sources | The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)

Climate change

Climate change is a problem whose consequences are suffered by all countries worldwide. However, some of them, due to various limitations, are usually more exposed to suffering large losses. By 2050, climate change has the potential to force approximately 216 million individuals to migrate within their respective countries. The emergence of internal migration hotspots is expected as early as 2030, and these areas will continue to spread and become more intense over time. We still have time to reduce emissions and increase resilience. It is possible, but it requires major social, economic and technological changes.

The EU is confronted with various risks such as floods and extreme weather occurrences that frequently transcend national boundaries and are intensified by climate change. These disasters, whether natural or human-induced, have detrimental effects on stability and economic growth, resulting in injuries, loss of life, and adverse impacts on the environment and local social conditions. The cumulative consequences of climate change present specific challenges for various sectors in different regions of the EU.

In December 2019, EU leaders together with the European Council agreed that the EU should achieve climate-neutrality by 2050. Which means that European countries will have to drastically reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and find strategies to mitigate unavoidable emissions to achieve a balance of net zero emissions. A year later they decided to take a step further by proposing to reduce emissions by more than half (55%) by 2030.

Leaders have urged the European Commission to present suggestions that would enable nations to achieve the 2030 objective. These proposals include enhancing green finance regulations, bolstering the EU emission trading system, promoting innovation in climate-friendly technologies, and ensuring fairness and cost-effectiveness.

In June 2021, the European Council embraced the European climate law, which is a pivotal component of the European Green Deal. This law compels EU member states to fulfil the climate goals for both 2030 and 2050. Also, it establishes a framework for the European Union and its member states to gradually reduce emissions and ultimately achieve climate neutrality within the EU by 2050.

Furthermore, in June 2021, the Council granted approval to conclusions that endorse the new EU strategy on climate change adaptation, as presented by the Commission. This strategy outlines a long-term vision for the EU to become a society resilient to climate change, fully adapted to the inevitable impacts by 2050.

Find out more about it in:
Climate change: what the EU is doing - Consilium.

Inequalities

Countries that experience a growing disparity between those who have access to opportunities and those who do not, face challenges in sustaining economic growth and social stability in the long run. So far, no nation has successfully achieved a transition to a higher-income status while also maintaining high levels of inequality. It is crucial to address inequality today in order to ensure equal opportunities and social mobility in the future.

Some factors, such as globalisation, tax policies and economic crises, have exacerbated inequalities in countries. These inequalities impact economic growth, social tensions, reduce the participation in society of the most vulnerable groups and lead to social exclusion. Inequalities can be addressed from:

Income inequalities: Since the start of the crisis, there has been a rise in income inequality within the EU due to the halt in the process of income convergence between countries and the widening income gaps within individual countries. The issue of pay and income inequality continues to be a cause for concern, particularly with a significant number of workers in the EU falling into the category of the working poor.

Recent studies have also investigated the issue of individuals experiencing poverty despite being employed, commonly known as the 'working poor'. In addition to government initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities and boosting incomes, such as implementing minimum and living wages, progressive taxation, in-work benefits, and social assistance, it is crucial to focus on indirect measures that enhance the quality of life for these households. This includes promoting flexible work arrangements, providing housing benefits, facilitating skill development, and improving access to childcare.

Social inequalities: Eurofound's surveys on the quality of life in Europe, known as the European Quality of Life Surveys (EQLS), aim to examine disparities across a range of quality of life indicators. The EQLS 2016 findings reveal that while there have been improvements in certain areas, there are still persistent inequalities in others.

This highlights the challenge of ensuring that the post-crisis recovery benefits all individuals equally. Notably, those in the lowest income quartile experienced less improvement in their quality of life between 2011 and 2016 compared to other income groups. The survey also underscores the significant impact of unequal access to care and differences in care quality on employment opportunities, social participation, and overall quality of life. Furthermore, it emphasises the ongoing need for measures to address these inequalities, given the substantial variations in quality of services across Member States and different socioeconomic groups.

Social mobility: In the European Union, there is growing worry among citizens and governments that younger generations will have fewer chances for upward social mobility compared to their parents' generation, which is a concern shared by both low-income individuals and the middle class. A study conducted by Eurofound sheds fresh insight on the discussion surrounding social mobility in the EU and presents new evidence on the patterns of intergenerational social mobility. The study also identifies significant obstacles to social mobility and examines policies that aim to promote upward social mobility and equal opportunities, particularly in areas such as childcare, early education, schooling, and the job market.

Gender inequality: Numerous studies have examined gender equality, specifically focusing on the disparities in working conditions between men and women. Eurofound's European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) has contributed valuable insights into this area. Additionally, research has been conducted on various other topics related to gender equality, including the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, pay transparency, work-life balance, flexible working arrangements, and discrimination against men in the workplace. The European Quality of Life Survey emphasises that women still bear the brunt of unpaid household and caregiving responsibilities.

Find out more about it in:

- Inequality | European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
- Inequality and Shared Prosperity Overview

Employment and social affairs

Advances in technology, globalisation and demographic changes are changing the way European citizens live and work.

The European Union witnessed a fast and impressive recovery in its employment rate after the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic downturn. By the third quarter of 2021, the rate had returned to its pre-pandemic level. This resurgence in job opportunities is particularly noteworthy when compared to the decade-long unemployment crisis that followed the global financial crisis and recession in Europe. It took a staggering 8 years for the total employment rate to recover to its pre-recession level after 2008, with some European countries experiencing unemployment rates as high as one in four workers, notably Greece, Spain, and Portugal. However, there are still variations in employment rates among European countries. The Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany boast the highest rates, ranging from around 77 percent to nearly 83 percent. On the other hand, Italy, Greece, and Spain continue to have the lowest employment rates, at less than 65 percent.

In the first quarter of 2023, the overall employment rate in the European Union stood at 69.9 percent. Although there was a slight decrease compared to previous quarters, it remains one of the highest employment rates within the union since 2005. However, there is still a significant disparity between the employment rates of men and women. While the male employment rate hovers around 75 percent, the female employment rate is approximately 65 percent. The gender gap has narrowed over the years, dropping from nearly 15 percent in 2005 to the current 10 percent.

As of June 2023, the youth unemployment rate in the European Union was recorded at 14.1 percent, slightly lower than the 14.5 percent reported in June 2022. Notably, there has been a notable convergence between male and female youth unemployment rates over the past two decades. Prior to the global financial crisis and great recession, male youth unemployment was considerably lower than that of females.

In relation to Europe's job market, it has undergone a significant transformation over time, with a notable decrease in manufacturing and other labour-intensive industries. Many of these industries have relocated to developing regions with lower wages. Instead, there has been a shift towards the service sectors of the economy.

The emergence of the 'knowledge economy' - industries and sectors that prioritise digital or IT services over tangible products - has resulted in a shift in the desired skill set by European employers. Nowadays, employees are more likely to possess advanced skills, often requiring a university education for many job opportunities. In countries facing declining populations, governments have implemented retraining programmes to assist workers in transitioning from declining industries to the thriving sectors of the 21st century, such as technology.

Additionally, the retirement age has increased across Europe in response to longer life expectancies and the less physically demanding nature of non-manual labour. This change also reflects the growing dependency ratios in Europe, as there are fewer employed individuals compared to young people and retirees. Despite the trend towards longer working lives, the average weekly working hours for full-time employees have consistently decreased in recent decades.

Find out more about it in:

- Changing demand for skills in digital economies and societies
- Employment in Europe - Statistics & Facts | Statista

Migration issues

According to data from Eurostat (2022), as of January 1st of that year, the population of the EU stood at 446.72 million individuals. Among them, 23.8 million were non-EU citizens, accounting for 5.3% of the total EU population. Additionally, there were 38 million people who were born outside of the EU, making up 8.5% of all EU residents. Also, by the end of 2021, less than 10% of the world's refugees and only a small portion of internally displaced individuals resided in the EU. However, due to the conflict in Ukraine, the percentage of refugees living in the EU surpassed 20% by mid-2022.

According to data, if not for immigration, the European population would have experienced a decrease of half a million individuals in 2019. This is because there were 4.2 million births and 4.7 million deaths within the EU during that year. In both 2020 and 2021, the EU population actually declined due to a combination of reduced births, increased deaths, and decreased net migration.

The EU and its member countries are increasing their efforts to create a European migration policy that is effective, humanitarian, and safe. The European Council plays a significant role in this endeavour by determining the strategic priorities, and the European Commission continues to prioritise the development and implementation of the European migration policy in order to effectively address the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities presented by migration worldwide.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the integration of third-country nationals who are legally residing in EU countries. This focus is underscored in the new pact on migration and asylum, which recognizes that a successful integration and inclusion policy is integral to a well-managed and efficient migration and asylum policy. It is also crucial for fostering social cohesion and creating a dynamic economy that benefits everyone.

The integration and inclusion action plan for the period 2021-2027 promotes inclusivity for all individuals. It acknowledges the valuable contributions made by migrants to the EU and aims to address any barriers that may impede their participation and inclusion in European society, regardless of whether they are newcomers or citizens.

However, not all EU leaders and political groups point in this direction. Disinformation, prejudices based on erroneous beliefs, values and worldviews are used in an interested way by some political leaders to manipulate and accentuate the fear of, for example, being displaced in the labour market, or that resources are scarce and they will not be able to cover the entire population or that all those who are different from European citizens are bad and want to do harm, and other speeches that create division to gain the support of the most radical.

Migration is a complex issue. The safety of people who seek international protection or a better life has to be taken into account, as do the concerns of countries who worry that migratory pressures will exceed their capacities.

Education and training

Companies are confronted with a significant disparity between the necessary skills to thrive in an evolving economy and the skills that are currently in the job market. A substantial 75% of executives express that transforming the skill composition of their workforce stands as the utmost priority in adapting to future disruptions. However, only 17% believe that their employees have the necessary skills to navigate such changes. As a whole, approximately 40% of workers are required to acquire new skills in order to meet the evolving demands, as estimated in 2020.

In the European Union, there has been a gradual increase in the number of people engaging in training. However, it is still significantly below the target of 60% of the adult population participating in training annually by 2030. In most EU countries, less than half of the adult population takes part in training, with rates ranging from 25% to 50%. Romania has the lowest participation rate, with only 7% of adults aged 25 to 64 engaging in formal or non-formal education and training. The Netherlands, with a rate of 64.1%, and Sweden, with a rate of 63.8%, are the only countries meeting the 2030 target.

The majority (88.5%) of workers who engage in training in Europe do so in non-formal settings. This means that they attend classes or receive workplace training without a formal syllabus or official accreditation. In contrast, formal learning is structured and accredited, leading to recognized qualifications. Approximately 83.6% of this non-formal training is job-related, with employers sponsoring 87.9% of non-formal job-related training.

The disproportionate effect of low participation in training is particularly felt by disadvantaged workers. Individuals who are most vulnerable receive the least training, which can worsen socio-economic inequalities. Although the reasons that explain the lack of participation in training may vary in each country, some of the most mentioned are related to time limitations, economic resources, technological and connectivity limitations, deficient theoretical and technical bases in relation to the topic and some others related to the perception of not needing training or acquiring new skills.

Find out more about it in:

- Understanding barriers and resistance to training in the European Union

Health and wellbeing

Access to high-quality healthcare services is crucial for promoting social cohesion and reducing the risks of poverty. Additionally, providing long-term care facilities and services can alleviate the burden of caring for family members, freeing up time for other responsibilities. Despite the widespread implementation of health insurance or national health systems in Member States, significant health inequalities persist across countries, regions, and socio-economic groups.

Within the realm of healthcare, there are several key challenges that vary in nature and severity among Member States. These challenges include high levels of unmet medical needs, disparities in the availability and quality of healthcare, limited healthcare workforce capacity (both in terms of numbers and skill gaps), as well as inadequate facilities and equipment.

As expressed in a study by EIT Health and the EIT Health Think Tank (2023), Europe is currently facing a critical juncture. The cost of healthcare is continuously escalating, with a noticeable 24% surge observed in the European Union (EU) over the past ten years (European Commission, 2022). In 2021, over a third of European citizens disclosed experiencing long-term illnesses or health issues (European Commission, 2022). At present, our healthcare systems are not viable, and the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored how rapidly they reach their breaking point.

The consequences that the Pandemic has left behind on its population. According to data from Health at a Glance (2022), between 2019 and 2021, life expectancy decreased by more than a year in almost all countries in the European Union. Some of them even suffered more drastic declines. Likewise, the pandemic had a great impact on the mental health of young people, who were affected by the interruption of their academic activities. Likewise, their support needs in psychological care are being neglected twice as often as those of the average adult.

Find out more about it in:

- Inforegio - Health
- Health at a Glance 2022

Rural development

One of the primary goals of EU policy is to ensure the vitality of rural areas. However, rural economies continue to experience various socio-economic pressures. The European Commission has developed a long-term vision for EU rural areas until 2040, which outlines the necessary actions to create stronger, interconnected, resilient, and prosperous rural areas and communities.

Recent data indicates that rural areas make up more than 80% of the total EU territory and are home to 30% of the EU population. These areas serve as both nature reserves and agricultural spaces. Furthermore, living in rural areas can offer a safer and healthier alternative to densely populated cities, as well as foster innovative ideas for more sustainable business models. Nevertheless, numerous rural areas in the EU face similar challenges, including declining populations, low incomes, limited economic opportunities, inadequate access to services and connectivity, low levels of education and digital skills, and low employment rates, particularly among women.

The newly implemented regulations of the post-2022 CAP outline the interventions necessary for rural development that are eligible for funding through national CAP strategic plans. Each member state of the European Union will determine the specific areas where CAP funding will be allocated to attain predetermined goals such as employment, economic growth, gender equality, social inclusion, and local development in rural regions.

After initiating a public consultation in September 2020, the European Commission has released a document titled "A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040" on June 30, 2021. This publication marks a significant advancement in policy. The specific challenges and issues faced by rural areas are now at the forefront of a comprehensive range of actions that go beyond the rural development measures of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy).

The Commission's communication has generated significant interest and high expectations among stakeholders regarding its potential transformative role in the EU's approach to rural area development. Additionally, the European Parliament has taken the decision to create its own report on the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas.

Find out more about it:

- The future of the EU's rural areas | Epthinktank | European Parliament

Security and defence

The EU is facing worrisome scenarios due to the changing international landscape, with concerns about insecurity and competition on multiple fronts. Brussels has taken action in two ways to address this. Firstly, they have worked towards creating a more integrated and competitive European defence industry and market. Secondly, they have sought viable solutions to enhance the EU's strategic autonomy, as part of a broader effort to address new internal and external security threats. In essence, the objective is to transform defence matters from being solely a national pursuit to a European one, while establishing defence sovereignty in Europe.

This shift has led to a series of ambitious policy initiatives since 2016, following the publication of the EU's global strategy. These initiatives include the establishment of the European Defence Fund (EDF), which aims to promote an innovative and competitive defence industry base, as well as the creation of a Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS) within the European Commission, the executive body of the EU.

As part of its efforts to implement the global strategy, the European Union (EU) introduced several initiatives in 2017 aimed at strengthening defence cooperation within Europe. These initiatives focused on improving the joint planning, development, procurement, and operation of defence capabilities within the union. One of these initiatives was the establishment of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), which serves as a bridge between national defence planning and EU priorities.

Additionally, the Capability Development Plan was revised to provide member states with a crucial reference for capability development, ensuring alignment with NATO. Between March 2018 and November 2019, the Council of the EU approved forty-seven projects as part of the revamped permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) framework. These projects aimed to enhance training, capability development, and operational readiness in the defence field.

In February 2019, the commission introduced the European Defence Fund (EDF) as a timely catalyst for defence research and high-risk innovation in Europe. The fund's primary objective is to promote cross-border cooperation and coordination among member states, defence industry stakeholders, small- and medium-sized enterprises, and research centres.

EU security and defence policy does not have ready-made blueprints available. The union is currently facing important yet delicate challenges: how to strengthen European sovereignty in defence despite insufficient political and financial commitments, and how to foster a shared strategic culture within the EU while individual member states have different perceptions of threats.

The EU, or at least its member states, must take the initiative to present a legitimate and sovereign vision that meets the expectations of Europeans regarding security and defence. This new political endeavour is justified by the increasing international issues that test the EU's ability to respond to both internal and external security challenges. The success of this project lies in preserving the core values that have made the EU great: safeguarding democratic principles and promoting peace within its borders and beyond.

Find out more about it in:

- EU Security and Defence Challenges: Toward a European Defence Winter? - Carnegie Europe

Communication and technology

According to the first report on the State of the Digital Decade (2023), which includes an assessment of the EU's performance towards Europe's 2030 objectives and targets focusing on four main pillars: digital skills, digital infrastructure, digitalization of businesses, including the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digitalization of public services:

Digital infrastructure: Currently, only 56% of households have access to fibre networks, which are essential for providing gigabit connectivity. Meanwhile, 5G coverage extends to 81% of the population, but drops to 51% in rural areas. Shockingly, 55% of rural households are still without any advanced network services, and 9% remain uncovered by any fixed network altogether.

Digitalisation of business: If there is no additional investment and incentives provided, the expected path suggests that by 2030, only 66% of businesses will adopt cloud technology, 34% will utilise big data, and 20% will incorporate AI. Additionally, according to the most recent data, only 69% of small and medium-sized enterprises in the European Union achieve a basic level of digital intensity. Progress among Member States remains uneven and insufficient.

Digitalisation of public services: Numerous countries have a favourable position in achieving complete digitalization of public services and health records, along with the implementation of eIDs for their residents. Nonetheless, substantial investments are required to enhance the accessibility and efficiency of cross-border public services.

Digital skills: The EU has made a firm commitment to enhancing the fundamental digital skills of at least 80% of individuals aged 16-74, as well as striving to achieve a total of 20 million ICT specialists by the year 2030. Nevertheless, according to the report, if the current conditions persist, it is projected that only 59% of the population will possess at least basic digital skills by 2030, and the number of ICT specialists may not surpass 12 million.

Find out more about in:

- 2023 Report on the state of the Digital Decade

How to do campaigning in the framework of You(th) Vote

One of the main challenges that emerged when involving young people in political affairs is building trust, both in their role as agents of significant change, as well as in the system and the actors that interact with it. That is, the following questions arise:

- *Is my vote/voice significant ?*
- *Can I influence the course of things?*
- *Will others respect existing agreements?*

In this chapter you will find some advice that will help you address different groups of young people, after having identified with the previous chapter the main challenges that will allow you to make a more precise approach and help to dispel the most frequent doubts and concerns, especially those of abstainers and early voters

Step 1: Have a clear and simple message (link it to people's reality)

- Build your message and try to answer: What do you mean to say? What effect do you want to provoke in your audience? What action do you want them to perform fully and consciously after the intervention you do?

- When thinking about this, evaluate and analyse your audience and point out some important data such as, for example, the context of the people you are addressing is, their capabilities, their expectations, their knowledge. Because by knowing this you can weigh whether the action you expect from them is really feasible.

- Once you have defined all of the above, you have what is necessary to make your Pitch (as an Elevator Pitch). In addition to all of the above, some additional tips:

  - Be precise with what you want to say, since people tend to lose focus very quickly.
  - Try to capture their attention at the beginning with something that is of interest to them and that can be related to the topic.
  - Do not use fancy words to elaborated phrases, on the contrary, try to use a language as close to them as possible.
  - Be honest and open so they can feel free to ask questions if they feel it is necessary.

Step 2: Identify your target audience of 16-25/first time voters

First - Choose your approach:

- Where?
    - There are many spaces and means to reach your audience. Make sure you choose the right one to get the desired results. The ideal is to seek a space where participants can feel confident, comfortable and safe. A space that in itself is frequented by them. It can be a college or university, not limited to the classroom but also being able to make use of other spaces that invite movement and action but without losing the formality of what is expected to be achieved.

    - If you use a different space and invite participants to that location, the same tips apply. Make sure that the place adapts to the needs and characteristics of the participants (everything discussed above will also help you for this) as well as to the needs of the topics you want to address in the space, that is, try to have all the necessary resources, equipment and maybe some supplies that you can offer to the attendees to make them feel comfortable during their stay, for example, water and basic services such as toilets on site or nearby

    - If you decide to approach people in public spaces, it is important that you check with the pertinent institutions if it is possible to do this and what the necessary procedures are. Try to use some strategy so that people come to you if they want information.

    - On the other hand, if you address them directly, it is important to try not to be invasive. Always ask the person if they are interested and have time to hear what you have to say. Even if they say yes, try to follow the recommendations above and be precise. If the person expresses interest and asks more questions, you can provide the information they require. Finally, you can guide them to the available resources so they can report more on the subject if they wish.

- When?
    - Be strategic with schedules. Do not choose hours when your audience is very busy and focused on other matters. For example, if you are going to a college or university, do not choose the class hours or the evaluation periods, because it is very likely that you will not be able to have the space or attention that you require.

- The same applies if you do it outside. If you ask people to attend a place in a period of time where they are most likely in classes or working, it is unlikely that they will attend

- If you plan to approach them in public spaces, try not to choose crowded places at peak times, for example, when people enter or leave school, university or work, or lunch hours.

Second: Talk with as many people possible about the topic

- Talk to many people every day. You can use all of the above and create a schedule to cover as many gaps as you can, but you can also do some more informal processes, like talking to people in your closest circles, for example. Classmates, workmates, your relatives, neighbours, friends, among others

- One of the best ways you can reach more people is to add spokespersons. There will be some people who will dedicate time and attention to listening to you, but there will be some others that you will be able to captivate and connect with your message. This is what you should try, since they will be people who will replicate your message with the people around them, with their colleagues. from classmates, co-workers, family, friends and others who will help you broaden your reach

Third - Use already existing tools and materials

- One of the best ways to support your message is to make use of the tools and resources available. In this Toolkit you will find several focused on promoting youth participation, active citizenship and promoting their participation in political processes and upcoming European Parliament elections that may be very useful for you. Likewise, we have compiled and condensed other resources developed by the partners associated with the project that you can also find in this toolkit.
- If, in addition to this, you want to do your own online search, keep in mind that you preferably search on official pages, tools that adapt to the needs of your audience and tools that have been previously tested.

DOs and DON'Ts when campaigning in the framework of (You)th Vote

DOs:

- **Use social media:** In the digital era, social networks are your best ally (if you use them correctly). Social networks will allow your message to reach more people immediately, as well as receive instant feedback from your target audience.

- Make sure that your way of communicating is the same as in any other space, therefore, keep your message simple, authentic and natural.

- Ask yourself and make a research to know which social networks the audience you want to address usually uses, since the type of content and format usually varies depending on the social network you use, therefore, it is convenient to concentrate your efforts on the one that can bring you closer to your target audience

- **Do school interventions**: Schools are one of the best places where you can find your target audience and you can organise interventions to do workshops and some activities that promote the knowledge of young people about the EU, the importance of youth participation and address their main concerns around these topics.

- Be sure to arrange a time slot with the school authorities so as not to interfere with their regular activities.

- Do a levelling of expectations and knowledge with the participants, for example: what do they know about the EU? What are the main institutions? How does it work? Who makes the decisions? How can they participate?

- Use resources, tools and support materials. In this Toolkit you will be able to find many useful ones in the Activities section and in the Resources section

- **Give space for creativity**: In each activity that you do or propose to do, give the basic and necessary tools and instructions so that the participants know what the purpose and the expected results are, however, leave space for them to incorporate what they consider necessary and useful. Also, depending on the context, the characteristics of the group and even the resources available, feel free to adapt the tools and activities as appropriate.

DON’Ts:

- **Don’t lecture them:** Talking about duties and rights and the importance of youth participation in processes such as the European Parliament elections, or simply their involvement in political processes, may sound like a sermon and like an activity that nobody wants to do but has to do because it is an obligation and a duty as a citizen, if expressed in the wrong way. If you start making him look this way, you will lose his attention and interest very quickly. Therefore, do not lose sight of their needs and interests, since you want to find allies and supporters in them, not the opposite.

- **Don’t overflood them with information:** As we have mentioned before, the attention of people usually lasts very little, that of young people sometimes much less, in a world where information arrives in a matter of seconds and is increasingly condensed, you must know how to quickly capture the attention of your public and knowing that nothing guarantees you to keep it if you don't take advantage of it. That is, if you turn your speech into a never-ending monologue with countless facts and information, you probably won't achieve the desired result. You will lose their attention, leaving them more confused and less interested.

- **Don’t be boring**: Politics doesn't have to be boring! Usually it can be if you include too many irrelevant details. You can use different tools, resources and materials like the ones you find in this Toolkit to make your interventions more dynamic, entertaining and, of course, effective.

CHAPTER 07

Material + Resources

Videos

Videos are very valuable support resources to complement the information on a certain topic, especially for topics that may be long, complex or require little time to explain. Here is a list of videos that you can use, depending on the purpose and content you are looking to address:

To explain how the European Union and its institutions work

How does the EU work (and why is it so complex)? | DW News

How does the EU work? | CNBC Explains

The EU decision-making process

The European Union Explained (with Restaurants)

How the European Parliament works

How the European Parliament works

The role of Members of the European Parliament

How political groups work in the EU

EVERY EU Political Grouping Explained: What Do They Stand For - TLDR News

How European elections works

How do European elections work? | CNBC Explains

How do the European Parliament elections work?

Promote voting

Save the date: next European elections on 6-9 June 2024

Voting in European Elections

The next elections to the European Parliament will be held between 6 and 9 June 2024

What are the priorities of each party in the next elections?

Setting in motion the 2024 EU Elections

Links to partners' resources

The organisations participating in this project have extensive experience promoting youth participation, the development of activities with non-formal education methods and activities related to promoting youth voting. Therefore, we urge you to visit their website so that you can learn a little more about their activities and the resources they have available.

- **Young European Federalist:** https://jef.eu/
- **Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions:** https://www.obessu.org/
- **Lifelong Learning Platform:** https://lllplatform.eu/
- **Young Educators - European Association:** https://youngeducators.eu/

Articles and studies

- Rekker, R. (2022). Young trendsetters: How young voters fuel electoral volatility. *Electoral Studies. Vol.* (75), 13. Available at: Young trendsetters: How young voters fuel electoral volatility - ScienceDirect

Abstract: Sociological theory posits that social change occurs first and foremost among young people, who set trends that may eventually carry over to older citizens. This study examined to what extent this proposition applies to electoral shifts by comparing parties' electoral gains among young (age <25) and older voters (age >24) in 21 Western established democracies between 1948 and 2019. An analysis of 219 national election surveys revealed that winning parties typically gained disproportionately among young voters. This youth bonus was even stronger for new parties, whose electoral breakthroughs were importantly facilitated by youths. Electoral shifts among young voters furthermore predicted similar changes among older citizens in the subsequent election. This indicates that young people are not only more sensitive to electoral trends, but that they can also set trends that eventually carry over to older citizens. Young voters should therefore be seen as important drivers of electoral volatility.

- European Parliament, (2021). *Flash Eurobarometer: European Parliament Youth Survey*. Ipsos European Public Affairs. Available at: Flash Eurobarometer - European Parliament Youth Survey

Abstract: The European Parliament's Directorate-General for Communication has commissioned a new survey called Flash Eurobarometer. Its purpose is to collect data on the attitudes and behaviours of young people regarding politics, political engagement, and the European Union (EU). The survey focuses on various topics including the level of interest young people have in politics, the issues and values they believe should be prioritised, their participation in political and civic activities (including voting), and the barriers they face in engaging in such activities. Additionally, the survey aims to understand young people's attitudes towards the EU, their awareness of and experiences with the European Parliament's Youth Offer, their sources of information on political and social issues, and their perception of the credibility of different sources.

- Eželan, T. (2023). Young people's participation in European democratic processes: How to improve and facilitate youth involvement. *Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs*. Available at: Young people's participation in European democratic processes - How to improve and facilitate youth involvement

Abstract: This study, commissioned by the Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the AFCO Committee, examines young people's participation in democratic processes, with a special focus on the European elections. The study inspects the meaning of political participation for contemporary democracies and the dilemmas behind young people's participation and representation. It also assesses, from a youth perspective, the ongoing legislative proposals on European elections and the electoral participation of EU mobile citizens as well as the Citizens' Proposals adopted in the plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe in May 2022.

- General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, (2020). THE EUROPEAN UNION: Facts and figures. Council of the European Union. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45459/qc0420093enn_002.pdf

Context: A publication for information purposes about the European Union, its values, institutions and its EU Members.

- Archick, K. (2022). The European Union: Questions and Answers. *Congressional Research Service*. Available at: https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/RS21372.pdf

Abstract: This report addresses basic information about the EU such as its origin, its functioning and its institutions, as well as other relevant topics such as its foreign policy, its role in defence, in justice, in home affairs of its members, its role in the recent war between Russia and Ukraine and in particular focuses on the EU's relationship with key actors such as the United States.

- Haas, M., Hosli, M., Kantorowicz, J., Haas, M. & Nagtzaam, M. (2022). Turnout in European parliament elections 1979–2019. European Politics and Society, DOI: 10.1080/23745118.2022.2137918, Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2022.2137918

Abstract: The European Parliament (EP) has seen a gradual increase in its powers since the introduction of direct elections in 1979. Scholars have focused on both individual-level and aggregate factors to explain turnout rates in EP elections over time, including increased levels of EU politicisation and the rise in support for Eurosceptic parties. However, one strand of analysis seems to partially have been overlooked: Some earlier research on EP election turnout claimed that absolute turnout rates across the EU should be used with care, as a number of 'structural factors' influences these shares and with this, affects estimates of actual voter turnout. Are such structural variables still relevant in a time where European politics are becoming increasingly salient among the wider public, pro- and anti-EU sentiments may increase citizens' inclination to vote and trust in EU institutions may be getting increasingly important? Based on various estimates, we find that structural factors can still be characterised as determinants in EP elections, but that the power of structural factors to explain turnout at the EU level, compared to nonstructural factors, has decreased. Nonetheless, EU-wide (average) EP turnout rates, as widely reported, are not likely to be good reflections of actual trends in EP turnout over time.

- Stockemer, D. & Sundström, A. (2019). Youth's underrepresentation in the European Parliament: Insights from interviews with young Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Intergenerational Justice Review, 5(1), 4-8. https://doi.org/10.24357/igjr.5.1.730

Abstract: Why do political parties elect so few young deputies? Given that the quantitative literature has at best only partially answered this question, we decided to conduct a qualitative investigation. Taking the European Parliament as a case for study, we examined this question through interview research with some of the young MEPs who served between 2014 and 2019. Our respondents, who answered various open-ended questions, suggest that the young are so few in number both because they lack contacts within the party and are seen as lacking experience. In addition, it appears that few parties have established pro-active measures to promote young candidates.

Voting Toolbox - Youth Vote Project
Manual for Youth Workers and First-time Voters

ERASMUS-YOUTH-2021-PCOOP-ENGO
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