



# ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH VOTE

ACTION PLAN



Co-funded by  
the European Union

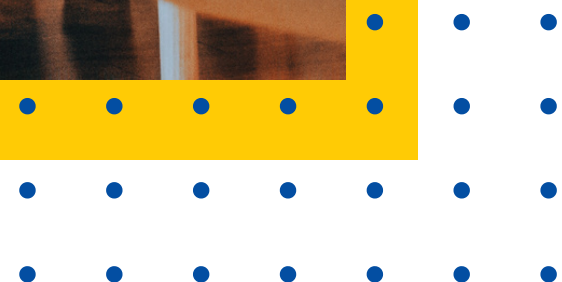




Project number: 101049718  
Call: ERASMUS-YOUTH-2021-PCOOP-ENGO

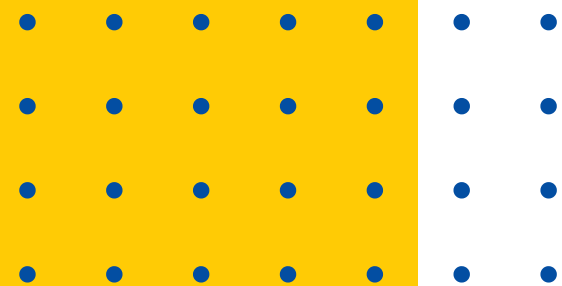
Consortium of JEF Europe, OBESSU, LLL-P, YEP, JEF Belgium (Young European Federalists Belgium), JEF Bulgaria (European Youth Movement Bulgaria), JEF Italy (Young European Federalists Italy), JEF Latvia (Klubs Maya – youth for a united Europe)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



# Content

- 04 Introduction
- 05 COYV: An overview
- 06 Needs Analysis
- 08 Why become a member of the Alliance?
- 09 Vision, Mission, Values
- 10 Suggested Actions/Activites



# Introduction

The “Alliance for Youth Vote” action plan is the the basis for the coordination of European and National youth-led organisations for the coming European Parliament elections in 2024.

## Purpose of the Alliance for Youth Vote

From the previous experience in campaigning all the partners have unanimously agreed that, with joined forces, the youth organisations will be able to reach out to a bigger number of young people. The informal civil society alliance with external partners and other youth organisations for the European Parliament elections in 2024 will work together with other civil society organisations, youth organisations and policy makers to encourage youth participation in democratic elections:

- To offer space for networking among youth organisations and exchange good practices on educational and communication actions
- To prepare an action plan of how youth organisations in partnership can reach out to as many first time voters as possible for European Parliament elections in 2024.

The informal alliance will also directly approach the Youth Outreach Unit of the European Parliament and invite them to also participate in the co-creation of the campaigns and approach with involving young people in each of the steps. The first meeting of the potential youth organisations (and other relevant civil society organisations) for the alliance will happen during the final conference of the project. At this meeting, invitees will work on the plan of collaboration and towards an action plan. With this activity the partners will ensure that the outputs of this project will extend beyond the project timeframe of 2 years.

## Long terms effects

The development of an informal alliance of civil society and youth organisations will work together with policy makers on youth participation in democratic elections and other connected processes. This network will remain active after the end of the project and have a positive impact when reaching out to youth for elections, as the wide variety of civil society organisations in the network will include political youth organisations as well as non-political organisations. Therefore, a huge audience will be addressed. This informal group will join other existing initiatives with diverse audiences and supporters promoting the strengthening of European civic education, in view of the next European elections.



# COYV: an overview

The project 'Co-operation Youth vote: Enabling future active European citizens' aims to offer a space for training in preparation for the 2024 European Parliament election campaigns. The project will prepare a set of outputs that the partner organisations and a wider network can use for the coming elections in 2024 ensuring that not only will young people be encouraged and incentivised to vote, but also to make politicians accountable for their promises and decisions. The initiative, supported by an Erasmus+ grant, is being implemented between March 2022 and February 2024 through the creation and use of a voting toolbox, a series of training sessions for multipliers, a social media campaign, and an Alliance of youth and civil society organisations.

## Aims and implementation of activities

The two aims of the project are to:

- 1. Understand the challenges of youth engagement and participation (voting)** following the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and develop tools to address it. The challenges and motivations of young people, especially first-time voters, to engage in European initiatives and their interest in voting in the 2024 European Parliament elections have been presented in the [report](#) published by our partner, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) earlier this year.
- 2. Develop an informal alliance of youth organisations that will work on encouraging youth participation in democratic elections** - together with other civil society organisations and policy makers. The objectives related to the second aim are: to offer space for networking and exchange good practices on educational and communication actions; to prepare an action plan of how youth organisations can reach first time voters ahead of the European Parliament elections in 2024 as well as campaigning towards an increase in the voting participation rates of young people.

The events and activities will all include young people, young activists and youth workers from a diversity of youth networks and will provide the basis for stronger cooperation and further projects. The geographical dimension is ensured by the diversity of the partnership and the depth of the partners with a wide set of expertise and experience.

## Partners and roles

### Core Partners:



**JEF Europe** is responsible for the overall coordination of the project and communication with the partners in each of the steps.



**OBESSU** (Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions) and the **Young Educators - European Association**, work in partnership with JEF Europe and the national partners to organise the educational/capacity building side of the project. They conduct desk research, try out the developed actions, and organise educational seminars and training sessions for multipliers.



**LLL** (Lifelong Learning Platform) coordinates the development of the informal network "Alliance for Youth Vote" as well as the final conference of the project.

**National Partners** are involved in each of the steps by bringing in the perspective from young people active on national and local levels. They will implement the pilot actions and multiplier events and participate in the expert groups to develop the tools. The partners are sections within the framework of JEF Europe and include:

- 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)

# Needs Analysis<sup>1</sup>

The general decline of voter turnout in recent decades worries policy-makers and intrigues researchers. Some speak of it as a 'crisis of democracy', others as a 'democratic deficit'. The decline is sharper amongst young people. The EU is not immune to this trend - in 2019, after a long period of decline, voter turnout for European Parliament (EP) elections climbed back up reaching 50% of the total eligible voters in the EU for the first time since 1994 (European Parliament, 2022). While this was hailed as a success, a small majority of eligible citizens voting actually poses a problem of legitimacy of both national and supranational political systems. But why is it that young people vote, on average, less than other cohorts?

Top reasons for abstention and/or uncertainty around voting pertain to a lack of representation, of trust in political systems and/or in information environments. Many young voters do not feel equipped to make an informed choice - a role, we argue, that will need to be filled by collective structures such as youth organisations, students' unions, and other forms of associationism. For many young people, participation in formal politics of the EU is still a privilege. To truly widen participation, all campaign strategies should start by investigating the target group for EP interventions and devising a needs-based approach to foster voter turnout. Amongst the most fundamental challenges to keep in mind is the knowledge gap on the EU and its functioning; the lack of confidence, or trust, in political institutions, lack of representation; and potential voters' low levels of political literacy.

Many of the challenges connected to low turnout manifest on the micro-level, but are ultimately caused by large-scale social, cultural, and historical shifts.

**What youth organisations and civil society organisations in general might want to focus on going forward is:**

- Connecting young people with the EU, highlighting the importance it plays in their day-to-day life, to foster their interest in EU affairs;

- Focus on the political issues that are most important for young people when organising events or activities that are meant to connect young people to the EU dimension;
- Provide accessible, clear, and factual information on the elections: who are the candidates, what they stand for; to support young people in their choice and develop their political literacy further;
- Organise events that are broadly focused on practising democracy in various ways, to counteract alienating and apathetic attitudes to voting, yet ultimately allowing young people to discuss and voice their opinions, however negative;
- Tailor the type of engagement intervention according to the profiles of those involved - alienated voters, apathetic voters, abstainers, and voters who lack confidence in their own decision making - they all need different support mechanisms to show up to the polls;

To support young people in casting their vote, the "[COYV Report - Why Vote?](#)" calls for a needs based approach to campaigning for the EP elections of 2024 - to account for the specific needs of different types of potential voters.

---

<sup>1</sup> Extracted from the document "[COYV Report - Why Vote?](#)" produced as part of the Co-Operation Youth Vote project (COYV), by : Gilda C. Isernia - [OBESSU](#).



# Why become a member of the Alliance?

The informal group is composed of youth and civil society organisations who possess strong experience and know-how in European civic education in order to disseminate good practices developed before the European Parliament elections in 2024.



**Encouraging youth participation in democratic elections: Outreach to as many first time voters as possible for the European Parliament elections 2024**

A small majority of eligible citizens voting poses a problem of legitimacy of both national and supranational political systems. Young people need to be equipped with the right set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes to make an informed choice related to their participation in democratic elections. Peer to peer encouragement is key in this endeavour. The alliance would give visibility to member organisations' current and future work. The overall aim of the alliance is to prepare an action plan of how youth and civil society organisations in partnership can better encourage youth participation in democratic elections.



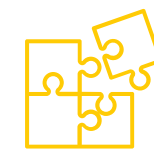
**Space for networking among youth and civil society organisations and exchange good practices on educational and communication actions**

There are a multitude of relevant initiatives across sectors and borders on the topic but they are very scattered. In addition, relevant tools can be found in different languages. Furthermore, initiatives already exist in many different contexts: in the formal education sector at all levels, in the non-formal and informal sector through NGOs fully dedicated to citizenship education or organising occasional projects on it. However, there are still low levels of coordination that would facilitate cross-sectoral discussion and dissemination of relevant tools and good practices across borders. The alliance would answer the need to share good practices and empower young people and stakeholders of different EU countries and sectors, as a unique networking opportunity on civic education.



**A voice in the European citizenship education policy debate**

To promote citizenship education and to encourage youth participation in democratic elections, it is important to be able to engage with policy and decision makers in one united front. Being ready and able to dialogue with policy stakeholders - through debates, consultations and other activities organised as part of policymaking processes - could be an important role of the alliance by drawing from the experience of its members.



**Expand the knowledge on Youth Vote: Moving away from silos and towards a more holistic approach**

The understanding of challenges of youth on the vote for the European Parliament elections requires systematic thinking and a holistic approach. The alliance would allow a better understanding among countries and at the European level to orient policies in the most adequate direction, supporting the research and collection of data on the attitudes, challenges, and views of engaging young people in democratic processes. The alliance would act as a space to help break silos.



**Participate in the different activities organised by the Alliance**

Offering space for young people to talk with MEP candidates or MEPs already in office to express their experience as MEPs (targeting also young MEPs to share their experience with members of the Alliance). The final COYV Conference in Brussels in February 2024 will also be an opportunity for the interested national and European organisations to work on the action plan that will be implemented for the 2024 elections and for the long term.



# Vision, Mission, Values

Any network needs a shared and clear mission, vision and values. This allows its members to work towards the same goal and understand each other. It also allows the network to present itself clearly to the outside world. The elements presented here are for further discussion, to be refined and agreed upon collectively with members of the Alliance.

## Vision

Young people are equipped with the right set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes to make an informed choice related to their participation in democratic elections and other democratic processes as active members of society.

## Mission

- Strengthen the synergies between local, national, European civic education initiatives.
- Provide a common and permanent space for sharing of experience and good practices; educational resources; the development of projects, tools, campaigns and other forms of collective action.
- Support the further development of civic education tools, their translation, dissemination, and uptake across sectors and borders.
- Promote the importance of and advocate for civic education integration across educational sectors (formal, non-formal and informal learning ).
- Counter misinformation at different levels.
- Unite the voice of different networks and campaigns with similar goals for better reach towards target groups and policymakers.

## Values

- Needs-based approach
- Open access resources
- Active citizenship



## Membership

Organisations at the local, national and European levels interested in and active in the field of civic education (NGOs, schools, universities, research institutes, think tanks). The organisation must be either youth-led or include young people directly in their work and/or governance.



## Geographical Coverage

EU Member States.



## Governance

LLLP will facilitate the actions and meetings of the Alliance, at least during the initial meetings, but the Alliance has a horizontal & participatory governance: all members are actively involved in all planned activities and provide feedback to each other. This is essential for the internal decision-making process within the network.

# Suggested Actions/Activities

## Short to medium term



### Events

Organisation of small to medium size events to share knowledge and skills about civic education. Events can take the form of conferences, training events, seminars and networking sessions.



### Policy And Advocacy

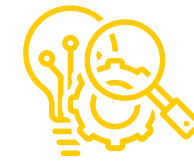
The 2024 European Parliament elections will set a path for five years, influencing the next College of Commissioners, and giving rise to new EU priorities which directly impact the youth and civic education.

The alliance can join forces on:

- the development of policy documents (notes, briefs) to inform policy makers at the national and European levels on latest practices in civic education, as well as on challenges and opportunities for fostering youth participation in democratic elections.
- direct interaction with policy makers at the EU level (including but not limited to DG EAC of the European Commission, CULT Committee of the European Parliament, and the Council of Europe). Coordination with other policy alliances on education (i.e. LLLP).

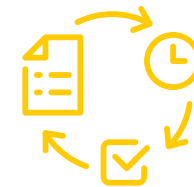
## Medium to long term

Based on the success of the Alliance, the available funding and the commitment of its members, the following activities/actions could potentially be considered in the medium to long term.



### Research

Support or directly engage in research in the field of civic education and EU citizen participation in electoral processes (facilitate the collection of data, develop surveys, push for more research on the topic).



### EU Projects

Participation as partner or leader in EU projects such as Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens, etc. In particular, in the capacity of dissemination leader, organiser of launch and final events, and advocacy work packages. The alliance can also work as a pool of potential partners for projects



### Online platform

Creating an online library of existing civic education resources, in multiple languages, with a search functionality, to facilitate the dissemination and sharing of these resources. Offering a dedicated space for members to exchange best practices.



YouthVote

