



# Youth Political Participation:

## Literature and Policy Review 1980–2023

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**WYDE**  
Civic Engagement



European  
Partnership for  
Democracy



Funded by  
the European Union

# YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: LITERATURE AND POLICY REVIEW 1980–2023

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On behalf of:

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# List of abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific Countries
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and other countries
CARICOM	The Caribbean Community
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CYDAP	The CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan
DFID	Department for International Development
DG-CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG-EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth Sport, and Culture
DG-INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnership
DG-NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EDC/HRE	Education for Democratic Citizenship/Human Rights Education
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EPD	European Partnership for Democracy
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
G20	Group of 20
G7	Group of Seven

IANYD	United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development
ICMYO	International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITO	International Parliamentary Union
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals MDGs
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MP	Member of Parliament
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAS	Organisation of American States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	Socioeconomic Status
UN	The United Nations
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	UN Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN International Children’s Emergency Fund
UN-MGCY	UN Major Group for Children and Youth
UNV	UN Volunteers
USMCA	United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement
WHO	World Health Organization
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth
Y7	G7 Youth Summit
YAP	Youth Action Plan
Youth-SWAP	System-wide Action Plan on Youth
YWCA	Young Women’s Christian Association

# Methodology

The aim of this research was to conduct a literature review of landmark research pieces and major policies in the field of youth political participation to support the design of EPD programmes. Undertaking a desk review to identify landmark research pieces and policies relating to youth political participation led to the creation of this report, which presents a chronological literature and policy tracker. The report is divided into two sections: the first covers academic literature related to youth political participation, and the second describes four distinct epochs of policymaking relating to youth political participation.

Three dimensions of youth political participation were taken as conceptual basics of this literature and policy tracker. They are youth in political affairs (representation in elected office and involvement with government or public administrations), youth in elections (participation in elections), and youth in civil society. Where relevant, the topic of youth economic and social rights was included. It should also be noted that all policies, practices, and mechanisms described within this report are based on democratic environments. This is a key, albeit sometimes implicit, assumption of youth political participation: it is based on democratic principles and conducted in democratic environments.

The desk review considered documents produced between the years 1980 and 2023 and focused on key academic pieces and international policy documents which shaped discourse on youth political participation. Given that conceptually youth participation has been rooted in foundations of child participation, and no fixed or universal age categorisation between children and youth exists as of 2023, key policies and literature relating to child participation were also included. In addition to treaties, conventions, and other mechanisms of “soft law” (quasi-legal or non-legal instruments that are not fully binding, such as opinions, recommendations, etc.) governing states, policies considered also included internal policies, and guidelines and frameworks developed by international and intergovernmental institutions to guide youth participation in their own programming. Broader youth policies (e.g. UN Youth Strategy, EU Youth Strategy, EU Youth Action Plan), and non-youth policies (e.g. gender policies, refugee conventions) with a significant focus on youth participation were also included. As were national policies that had an international dimension, such as overseas development policies (e.g. DFID Youth Agenda and Youth Participation Guide, USAID Youth in Development Policy) and other foreign policies relating to youth and youth participation.

During the academic literature review, an online search using the engine Google Scholar, as the biggest provider of the academic papers, was conducted using Boolean operators “AND, OR, NOT/AND NOT, “”, (), and \*”. The following keywords were used in the search: “youth participation, youth engagement, youth involvement, youth agency”. The following supplemental keywords were also used: “concept, term, decision-making process, society, polity, community, conventional, institutional, formal, unconventional, non-institutional, informal, digital, online, individualised, political, research, empirical, study, data, survey, method, research question”. The review was limited to peer reviewed texts, though a limited number of pieces of grey literature were included, recognising their significant impact.

In policy document review, relevant actors that have prominent youth programming were first identified as follows:

- ACP, including ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
- African Union
- APEC
- Arab League
- ASEAN
- CARICOM
- Council of Europe (including Venice Commission)
- (EU and former European Communities) / European Commission including, DG-EAC, DG-NEAR, DG-INTPA, and DG-CLIMA
- G20
- G7
- IPU
- La Francophonie
- Mercosur
- OAS
- OECD
- OPEC
- OSCE
- The Commonwealth of Nations
- UN, including, UN General Secretary Envoy on Youth, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCHR, UNESCO, UN-HABITAT, UNEP, UNV, OHCHR, ITU, and ILO
- USMCA (formerly NAFTA)
- WorldBank

Additionally, donor governments with large international development programming policies with a focus on youth and their corresponding foreign affairs or development agencies were also identified:

- Australia
- Brazil
- Canada
- China
- France
- Germany
- India
- Norway
- Russia
- South Africa
- Sweden
- The United Kingdom (FCDO, DFID)
- The United States

Subsequently, websites of the aforementioned relevant bodies were searched using the following search string: "'child\* partici\*' OR 'youth participat\*' OR 'adolescent\* partici\*'". Adaptations to the search string were required depending on the technical capabilities of individual website-based databases. When the built-in search within a website was inadequate, the Google operation to search within a single domain (e.g. "site:") was used.

Once the literature and policies were collected, each was assessed to determine its inclusion by answering the following questions:

- Has this piece of literature or policy signalled a major breakthrough in the field of youth political participation, in that it presents something new and significant not previously presented before? (Novelty)
- Was this piece of literature or policy published by a highly influential scholar or publication (literature), or institution/agency (policy), with potential to shape practice internationally? (Influence)
- Does this policy take the form of a legal or quasi-legal instrument with enforcement and/or reporting mechanisms, to increase its likelihood of adherence? (Enforceability)
- Does this policy have a direct relation to democracy development programmes, overseas development, and human rights, and/or focus on sub-Saharan Africa? (Relevance to EPD programmes)

Furthermore, absolute exclusion criteria included:

- Literature and policies relating only to individual decision-making about a child/young person's life (e.g. judicial proceedings, medical decisions)
- Literature and policies relating to political participation and engagement of citizens broadly, without substantial focus on youth or mention of youth
- Policies only relating to youth participation at a national level

Once the list of included policy documents was created and the scanning of these documents was completed, an analysis focused on determining key trends in different epochs was conducted. As a result, key policy documents were identified, and four distinct epochs of policymaking related to youth political participation were highlighted. This report reflects the results of this policy analysis and presents policy documents grouped chronologically into the four key epochs. Overall, this report is based on a wide literature review, but it only explicitly considers the pieces of literature or policy that are especially relevant to showcasing trends or milestones in the history of youth political participation. This is why each policy section contains its own set of references; those are the documents directly used in the given section of this report. All collected literature is also referenced at the very end of this report, where an exhaustive bibliography can be found.

The approach taken for the creation of this report had its limitations, mainly that this is not an exhaustive report of all scientific knowledge and/or all policies on youth political participation since 1980 until 2023. The purpose of this report was to capture the main trends, shifts, and developments, and in doing so, small-impact papers and policies were left out. The literature itself was dominated by studies within the Global North, primarily Europe and North America. Whilst efforts have been made to include literature from outside of this group, there is less literature overall from the Global South, and that which does exist has less impact on policies and academic discourse. It is not the case that there are widespread alternative



narratives developed within writing from the Global South, many studies on these regions use discourse and constructs of Global North origins. Additionally, not every academic or policy paper was available in a digital form online, meaning only papers and policies available digitally could be included. Despite using innovative AI translation technology, digital formats of certain documents prevented them from being translated (i.e. those which are not machine-readable), and hence such documents were also excluded from this review. Lastly, in the domain of policymaking, the open method of coordination (OMC), influencing international and national policies via knowledge sharing and development, posed an obstacle of its own. Since it can consist of research reports, good practice sharing, and similar documents, these could not be included in this report as they do not constitute policy documents which would be ratified by any policymaking body. Fortunately, some components of the OMC also go through formal policymaking procedures (e.g. Council Conclusions and similar documents at the level of the European Union), and these were included in this review.

# Review of key academic literature, by theme

## Introduction and key concepts

It cannot be said that the literature on youth participation forms a strong and robust body of evidence on which policymakers can draw. Academic, peer reviewed literature on youth participation is diverse, and scattered across a range of disciplines. Pieces are written from a variety of perspectives often without dialogue between fields. Compared to policy areas such as health, education, or employment, it is relatively under-researched as a large proportion of studies are small scale qualitative case study-style endeavours. It is not the case that research on the same sub-themes is found within every country, or even within every region. Many of the key studies have been conducted within Europe or North America. The research also uses different terminology and underpinning concepts making comparisons challenging. Particularly for policy and

programme makers, a key gap in the literature is work analysing the effectiveness of programmes and policies. Though some work has been undertaken in the area of civic education, the field is almost entirely absent from systematic evaluation of large-scale interventions to promote youth participation.

Despite the small scale, there is a coherent set of narratives and discourses within literature. Much of this has been framed by attempts to define and reconsider what is meant by political participation, in response to changing patterns of engagement of young people and the political sphere. For those developing programmes and policy, it is also essential to consider more deeply what is the goal of any actor's attempts to promote youth participation, and what it implies about young people.

### Key concept 1: Defining youth political participation

A key theme within research on youth in political affairs is debate around what constitutes youth political participation and the involvement of young people within the political sphere. Within academia, there is no single accepted definition of youth participation or youth political participation. Youth participation is not a static concept but has been changing with new developments in social theory and research. The varying practices of outreach and engagement by political bodies have also affected the ways in which participation has been understood and conceptualised (Forbrig 2005).

Most research argues that youth political participation, when viewed exclusively within the lens of so-called "traditional" forms of participation (voting, standing for office, and/or being a member of a political party), is in decline. It is widely established that young people are less likely to participate in this way than previous generations at their age, as well as less likely to take part than older generations currently (Putnam 2001).

However, more recently, researchers have argued that youth participation has not declined but transformed. If we look beyond the traditional

markers of formal political participation, there is evidence of an interested and politically active generation. Doing so requires a need to rethink what we mean by political participation, and consider that activities such as volunteering in communities, membership in interest groups, and engagement with social movements, while not part of traditional formal participation can still be defined as political (Fyfe 2009; Norris 2002; Saunders 2004; Youniss 2002). Expanding the definition of political participation beyond formal markers such as engagement in voting and membership of political parties arguably blurs the distinction between civic participation and political participation (Youniss 2002; Zukin 2006), but also may be closer to the way young people understand what is meant by political involvement. It is argued that young people are turning away from traditional forms of participation in favour of alternative forms. (Turcotte 2015; Pilkington et al 2015; Cammaerts 2014; Edwards 2014, Pinter et al 2014; Giaser et al 2010; Henn 2002). Much youth research has evolved around this distinction between conventional or traditional forms of participation (voting, membership of political parties, and standing for office) and alternative<sup>1</sup> forms of participation, which simply refers to anything else, and sometimes lacks a clear definition (Crowley et al 2016).

Taking into account the potential range of activities that can fall under the banner of youth participation if it is understood more broadly, Checkoway and Guiteeriaz (2012) give the following definition: "Youth participation includes efforts by young people to plan programs of their own choosing; by adults to involve young people in their agencies; and by youth and adults to work together in intergenerational partnerships. However, the issue is not whether the effort is youth-led, adult-led, or intergenerational, but rather whether young people have actual effect." This view recognises that participation is not just a phenomenon or behaviour undertaken by young people, but also requires permanent accessibility and action on the part of institutions. Political participation therefore

describes all parts of the relationship between young people and the democratic institutions (Forbrig 2005). Youth political participation is also understood to be both individual (e.g. voting) and collective (e.g. joining an association) as well as aggregates of individual acts (e.g. boycotting goods) (Evans et al 2007).

It should be noted that evidence for this turn to alternative forms, and the expanding scope of youth participation, has tended to rely on relatively small-scale studies or been confined to a few regions of the globe, most typically the Global North, but is still sufficient to be considered a global trend (Pickard et al 2018). When studies are conducted outside of the Global North, such as Saud et al's (2020) work in the MENA region, Cabo (2018) in the Philippines, Martínez et al (2012) in Mexico, Resnick (2011) in Africa, Sika (2012) in Egypt, or Corvalan et al (2013) in Chile, they often reiterate the Global North driven narrative, as does the World Values Survey covering 59 countries (Solijonov 2016). Nevertheless, it can also be understood that the very concept of distinguishing between traditional and alternative forms is a Global North construct, developed within North America and Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Also referred to as non-conventional, non-institutional, informal, innovative, or new forms.

## Key concept 2: Youth participation as a policy goal and the concept of youth

A theme in the research on youth participation is critique of the purpose of policy on youth participation. Although it is largely accepted that youth participation is a desirable policy goal, not all forms of youth political activity and youth participation are considered inherently “good” or worthy of promotion. This consideration applies to which forms of participation are to be promoted, and the political views young people express within them, for instance extremist acts and radicalised politics could be considered participation, but not something the state wishes to encourage (Youniss et al 2002). As a result, criticism has been made of the use of youth participation initiatives as a form of “governmentality”, where states contain youth engagement to a narrow range of acceptable behaviour so as not to challenge the status quo (Bessant 2003; Kwon 2009). Conversely, encouraging specific forms of participative behaviour is also argued to be a basis for peacebuilding in post war contexts, leading to acquisition of norms, empowerment, and equality for youth (Kurtenbach et al 2015). Youth participation policies and programmes, depending on their design, can therefore encourage a spectrum of behaviours from complaint to dissenting, and promote various levels of agency or empowerment amongst participants (Staeheli et al 2013).

Farthing (2012) has identified a range of competing policy justifications for the promotion of youth participation.

- Right based: participation is promoted to ensure young people have full access to their human rights to participate.
  - Empowerment based: participation is encouraged to promote collective action by young people to challenge oppression or inequity.
  - Efficiency based: participation is used as a tool to gain feedback from young people to improve the quality and effectiveness of public policy.
  - Development based: participation is encouraged in order to improve the health of a democracy and the engagement of young people within democratic life.
- Policy is also underpinned by different understandings about what a young person's citizenship status is, what young people are, and what policymakers wish them to be (Checkoway 2012; Bessant, 2004; 2003; 2020). It is argued “youth” has been conceptualised as:
- Incomplete citizens (deficit model). In this traditional view, young people are understood to be citizens in the making, often viewed as politically apathetic, lacking the skills to engage effectively in democratic society, and requiring education to do so as they transition to adults and “full” citizens (Kurth-Schai, 1988).
  - Agents of social change, where young people are understood to be inherently immersed in a political world from childhood (Kallio et al 2011), able to engage in political acts (in a broad sense) with agency to create change. They are perceived as deserving of (some form of) participation rights and full recognition as citizens regardless of age. Their exclusion from political institutions stems from poor governance, unsuited to youth and/or age-based discrimination and adultism within political systems (Hofmeister 2012).
  - Future generations and victims of intergenerational in-equity. Building on the agents of social change construct, this is a more recent view developed by the sustainability and envi-

ronmental movements. It posits that, as future generations, the needs of young people should be actively considered in policy decisions, particularly those decisions relating to use of resources. Prevention of intergenerational inequity validates the active involvement of young people as well as the consideration of unborn generations, all of whom will bear the burden of climate change over the course of their lifetimes (Narksompong et al 2015). Such conceptualisations may require different consideration of the relationship between time and democracy (Feixa et al 2016).

Overall, the array of discourses on youth participation means it can be challenging to disentangle the competing messages and assumptions about young people and consider consistent operationalisation within programme and policy (Shaw et al 2014). The varying definitions, policy justifications, and understandings of participation all suggest different assumptions about what the policy and/or social problem is, as well as what the end points or success measures for policy might be. Youth participation can therefore be understood as an instrumental tool in achieving a range of different policy goals, as well being a fundamental right and goal in itself.



# Theme 1: Youth in political affairs

**“Youth in political affairs” covers academic research, youth representation within public office, membership of political parties and the traditional forms of political participation, alongside voting. As well as this the chapter addresses alternative forms of political participation.**

# Representation within public office

Research on the involvement of young people within public roles is highly limited, though recent developments have led to a global index on young parliamentarians (see Stockemner et al 2022 and accompanying website<sup>2</sup> for the index). This work has identified that within parliaments, young adults (age of 35 years old or under at the time of a parliament's inauguration) make up about 10% of MPs worldwide. Comparatively, young people under the age of 35 years old make up roughly one-third of the voting-age population and 50% of the global population. For MPs aged 40 years old or under, this group still makes up less than 20% of all MPs, despite making up some 40% of the world's voting-age population (Stockemner et al 2023). It is argued by Stockemner et al (2023) that the number of young legislators is dependent on the willingness of young adults to run and parties'

and political actors' willingness to nominate them, as well as the demand for young candidates in the electorate. There is some evidence that the most significant factor may be the willingness of parties to nominate young candidates to winnable seats (Krook and Nugent 2018; Stockemner et al 2022a, 2022b, 2023).

Potential strategies for reducing the age of political representatives have been suggested as proportional representation systems of quotas, term limits for representatives, and lowering legal age limits to stand for election (Stockemner et al 2023), where citizens must wait, on average, more than five years after becoming a voter before they can run for office themselves (Krook and Nugent 2018).

# Membership of political parties

The mechanism and quality of the membership of young people within political parties and youth wings of political parties has been the subject of very little research. Bruter and Harrison's (2009) research within six European countries has argued that young people join political parties for one of three reasons: moral, social, or professional. The latter of which has been interpreted as a strategy for improving prospects in life rather than the actual interest in politics (Vulkelic et al 2012). Cross et al's (2008) work in Canada found "young people who choose to join political parties are a distinctive group. Many were exposed to partisan activity as children through their parents' activism, and most enjoyed greater exposure to other forms of political information than their counterparts in the mass electorate...in this regard, the young party members stand in sharp contrast to their non-

member counterparts who are more sceptical about the effectiveness of both parties within the political system, and of members within parties". One of the primary functions of youth sections is to attract younger members into a political party (Barrett 2019) although there are few studies in this regard. Hooghe, Stolle and Stouthuysen (2004) report that over 40% of councillors in Belgium began their political careers in the youth section of a political party.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.warpdataset.com/>

# Alternative forms of youth involvement in politics

Building on the distinction of traditional participation vs alternative forms of participation, a number of efforts have been made to define and identify the various forms of alternative participation. Terminology has not been used consistently but traditional participation refers to voting, standing for office, membership of political parties, and membership of trade unions. The extent to which specific types of participation are “new”, “alternative”, and/or “innovative” depends on the context and history (Crowley et al 2016). Dualistic distinctions between the two are also argued to be limited (Kaim 2021) and lines between different forms can be blurred (Discher et al 2012).

Alternative forms of youth participation in political affairs include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Engagement with protests and social movements, particularly single issues causes such as the environment, and often involving individualistic lifestyle choice protests such as boycotting goods (Alteri et al 2016, Fyfe 2009). See the chapter on civil society for more social movements.
- Digital participation or e-participation, a form of participation that takes place online. Digital participation involves the use of ICT, social media, and other digital tools for political participation, it can exist alongside or as part of other forms of participation, and also replicate other forms within digital spaces and platforms (Chrysochoou et al 2016; Pilkington et al 2015). The internet has been identified as a tool used by young people for politicisation and cyber resistance (Khoury-Machool 2007, Wang et al 2018) through peer-to-peer information sharing about political issues and organising online or offline political action (Boulianne et al 2020). The internet can also function as a tool for young people to express their demands to the government (Wang et al 2017). However, unrestricted internet access and perceived internet freedom are required for youth online collective action (Wang et al 2017). Various attempts have also been made by states to engage young people through digital mediums (e.g. Edelman 2008).
- Deliberative participation initiatives, time limited engagement initiatives, based around a specific theme or issue, through which young members of the public come together to influence a key public action of policy based on the outcomes of their discussion and debate. This includes models such as participatory action research (Fox et al 2010), citizens juries, and participatory budgeting. Such initiatives are ideally state supported to ensure results of debates are acted upon. Deliberative participation is similar to public consultation with young people (surveys, focus groups, etc.), but deliberative participation includes a more in-depth level of debate and discussion as well as stronger commitments to act by decision-makers in response to the results (Boldt 2018; Crowley et al 2016).
- Co-production and co-management of public services, where small groups of young people share decision-making responsibilities for a public policy or programme with decision-makers (Crowley et al 2016). This is similar to youth advisory groups, where the young people give advice but do not hold formal decision-making responsibility (Faulkner 2009).
- Membership of independent youth councils, youth civil society organisations, and civil society organisations. Here it is debated if such structured forms are traditional (and therefore arguably in decline) or innovative. However, organisations can foster many other forms of participation, and the nature of the organisation is the defining feature (Grasso 2016). See the chapter on civil society for more on this topic.



Depending on how political participation is defined, two further forms are sometimes considered youth participation, though as they are absent from engagement with political institutions or policymakers, they may be better thought of as civic participation.

- Volunteering, civic activism and mutual aid, where young people take action to create social change but do not attempt to engage directly with policymaking institutions to secure the change, such as organising a beach cleanup activity (Shaw et al 2014).
- Alternative use of public space, such as reappropriating disused buildings or public space into arts venues and housing (Pitti 2018).



## Theme 2: Youth participation in voting and elections

**“Youth participation in voting and elections” covers the engagement of young people in electoral politics. It outlines the general decline in this area across the globe, then looks at voting predictors and research on votes at 16.**

# Decline in youth electoral participation

It is widely agreed across academic literature that young people are turning away from joining political parties and voting, engaging in these activities less than their elders as well as less than elders in their youth (Pickard et al 2018; Pilkington et al 2015; Cammaerts 2014; Flanagan 2009). The cause of this decline in voting and party membership is much more debated and less certain. Apathy amongst young people was originally believed to be a driving factor linked to increasing individualism and rising risk in the lives of young people (Forbrig 2005; Henn et al 2002,). However, this argument is now increasingly rejected on the basis that young people are turning away from traditional forms of participation and turning toward alternative or unconventional forms. It is argued that the decline in engagement of young people with voting (and other traditional forms) is a result of declining or lack of trust and faith in formal political bodies (Foa et al 2020; Farthing 2010; Harris et al 2010; Tumenggung et al 2005) as well as political representatives and parties (Bastedo 2015; Pilkington et al 2015). This is accompanied by a belief from young people that they are unable to have a meaningful effect on political decision-making through conventional means (Foa et al 2020). It is argued that young people are thus politically interested and motivated, and though

they are supportive of democratic values and democracy, they are unconvinced by the current way formal political structures operate (Chrysoschoou et al 2017; Cammaerts 2014; Saunders 2009; Sloam 2007). This issue is not apathy, or lack of belief in democracy from young people, but a perception that current democracies are not well governed and do not represent the interests of young people.

Caution should be taken when considering this trend given within individual countries it is clear the local and regionally specific context, such as the age of a democracy (Kitanova 2018) can be a dominant influence on youth participation. Comparative survey research, (on which most voting research is based) tends to neglect the social context in which political participation is set, and hence cannot fully conceive of or explain the differences in its forms and risks imposing researchers' own perspectives on what participation is and should be (Forbrig 2005). It is therefore important not to transplant findings driven by research in the Global North to other contexts without critique. For example, Resnick et al (2011) find that Africa's youth are less likely to vote than older generations but also less likely to turn to alternative forms of participation such as protest.

# Acquiring voting habits

A sub-theme of this area of research is predictors of voting behaviour. It is argued that a first election leaves a footprint on the ongoing behaviour of a voter, influencing their habits in future elections, with the voting behaviour a person adopts in young adulthood likely to remain in further life (Dinas 2012; Aldrich et al. 2011; Gerber et al. 2003; Plutzer 2002). Political ideologies are forming in adolescence when personal values, world views, and political attributions appear to be highly concordant (Flanagan et al 1999). Predictors of voting habits are understood to be levels of political interest, political knowledge, perceived effectiveness of voting

(Campbell 2019, Levy et al 2019; Chrysoschoou et al 2017, Zani et al 2012), parental/familial political interest, knowledge, and practices, (Deimer et al 2019; Barrett et al 2019; McIntosh et al 2019) and having friends who are politically engaged (Barrett et al 2019). Alongside this, level of education and social economic background are all strongly linked to voting behaviour.

See also: Cross Cutting Theme 1: enablers and barriers to youth participation and Cross Cutting Theme 2: intersectionality and inclusion.

## Votes at 16

Lowering the voting age to 16 is a further area of research, but findings coming from this field are not decisive. Some scholars have identified lowering the voting age may lead to an increase in youth voting, whereas others have identified it does not, and there are numerous debates about the ongoing nature of the impact. On balance, it is clear that every change of electoral law needs to be considered within the

political and national context in which it occurs. Research suggests lowering the voting age can, in some instances, be used as a tool to increase youth voter engagement, alongside a package of other policies and measures but lowering the voting age on its own is not a solution to reinvigorate democracy (see Eighorn et al 2019 for an overview).



## Theme 3: Youth in civil society

**“Youth in civil society” covers the engagement of young people in civil society. The definition and boundaries of what constitutes civil society are subject to debate (Walker et al 2013). This chapter outlines the various modes of youth involvement that relate, accepting that not all modes may fall under strict definitions of civil society. The chapter then addresses the limited literature on the diversity of youth civil society as well as the impact of membership.**

# Modes of involvement in civil society

The definition and boundaries of what constitutes civil society are subject to debate (Walker et al 2013). Assuming this refers only to constituted and structured non-state organisations, there are two methods of involvement for young people in civil society:

- Through membership of youth-led associations, formal civil society organisations which are run exclusively or dominantly by young people and have young people or other youth-led associations as their members.
- Through involvement in “all age” civil society organisations, these organisations integrate youth in different ways. Some by creating youth sections, such as Oxfam International Youth Parliament in Australia and youth wings of political parties; some by positive discrimination in favour of young people, such as YWCA, and others do not make age distinctions but are simply attractive to young people (Rossi 2009).

With a broader perspective on what constitutes civil society, there are two further modes relevant to youth political participation:

- Through involvement in new social movements, such as youth environmental movements and Black Lives Matter. Understood as structurally fluid and decentralised movements, typified by an open membership. Such movements tend to be concerned with lifestyle issues and achieving social change through forms of direct action and community building (Norris 2002). New social movements are not formal organisations however the movements themselves can also involve organisations (Walker et al 2013).
- Through involvement in semi-independent youth structures set up by, or within, state organisations, such as steering groups or youth councils established within a public body. Faulk-

ner (2019) identifies that some structures of this nature may be better thought of as “insider groups” representing youth interests. They have regular access to discussions and developments on policy issues within the host organisations but are highly dependent on the very group they seek to influence for funding and resources. These structures can have a degree of autonomy and may even transition to be independent civil society organisations, though even independent youth organisations can be manipulated by authoritarian regimes through co-optation and coercion (Sika et al 2018).

Youth councils, youth parliaments, youth forums, and youth advisory groups are common terms referring to youth structures, with no singular term being used consistently. These terms can refer to independent youth-led civil associations, and semi-independent structures for young people set up within state organisations, as well as youth sections of all age civil society organisations. They typically, though not always exclusively, have a core function to represent or advocate for young people (Taft and Gordon 2013).

As part of the turn towards alternative forms of participation (see chapter on youth in political affairs) it is argued that young people are turning away from structured, formal, membership based civil society as a mode of activism and towards single issue campaign organisation and social movements (Norris 2002). According to Rossi (2009) activism is no longer viewed as a duty demanding fidelity to an organisation, the subject should instead be faithful to a cause and individual principles. Organisations and collectives are considered channels that, when they cease being efficient or lose certain attractive attributes, young people can stop supporting and/or abandon. Thus, it is argued young people’s individualistic and lifestyle-related concerns rely on

the aggregate of individual actions and therefore fit better within social movements, rather than the collective agreement demanded by traditional representation-based organisations (Livingstone 2008). However, the argument that young people are more attracted to social movements than

organisations is disputed as too simplistic (Crowley et al 2016) and reliant on an artificial distinction between movements and organisations (Walker et al 2013).

## Diversity and common identities

The diversity of youth civil society is a matter of debate, and there are no comprehensive studies of the social demographics of youth civil society organisations. There is evidence that many politically engaged youth civil society organisations could do more to orient themselves towards the needs of young people and in particular towards the needs, interests, and motivations of young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Cammaerts et al 2014). The similarity of activists in some organisations suggest that traditional inequalities of voice and equality are maintained in the younger generations across different organisations (Rainsford 2017). However, activist organisations also serve

as a tool for identity construction both for internal development of members and political external recognition of interest groups and can function effectively as vehicles for collective marginalised groups such as young people from ethnic minority groups. (Albuquerque et al 2000). Groups of young people began to “know themselves” through collective action and political undertakings, adopting common identities and attracting those with similar identities. (Walker et al 2013). It may be the case that individual organisations have fairly homogenous membership, but the youth civil society sector as a whole is diverse.

## Impact of membership of civil society organisations

There is research to suggest membership of civic organisations that allow young people to acquire high-quality participation experience and to practise their participatory skills boosts civic and political engagement, including engagement with voting (Cammaerts et al 2014, Fernandes-Jesus et al 2012, Fox et al 2010, McFarland et al 2006, Quintelier 2008, Fjerza et al 2014). Engagement in extracurricular and community-based organisations in adolescence predicts civic engagement in adulthood (Verba et al 1995) in a potentially long-lasting manner (Youniss et al 2022), bolstering members' political engagement and providing them with valuable civic knowledge and skills (Terriquez et al 2020). The type of organisation is key, involvement in youth voluntary associations concerning community

service, representation, speaking in public forums, and those that generate a communal identity are seen to be most impactful (McFarland et al 2006, Quintelier 2008).

Mechanisms underlying the long-term impact of organisational involvement in one's youth are not well researched. Flanagan (2009) argues impacts may include learning and skills development, creation of a recruitment trajectory where involvement in one group increases the likelihood of recruitment into others, as well as development of identification with public or collective identity based around activism. See also: section on membership of political parties, within Theme 1.

# Cross cutting theme 1:

## Enablers and barriers to youth participation

“Enablers and barriers to youth participation” covers the factors that stimulate or inhibit participation. Current theories about youth political participation and social engagement consider factors at the macro level (e.g. historical, institutional, political, demographic), the social level (e.g. family, school, peer group, access to resources) as well as the personal and interpersonal level (e.g. collective efficacy, self-efficacy, trust) (Zani et al 2012). This chapter explores the current evidence base on the social and personal/interpersonal level and identifies factors that are linked to higher levels of youth engagement in political participation. These factors can be understood as enablers when they are present and barriers when they are not present. Demographic factors are explored in the chapter on inclusion and intersectionality.

## Personal and interpersonal level

At the personal level, increased levels of political interest, political knowledge, perception of political self-efficacy, perceived effectiveness of specific forms of political and civic action political interest, and trust in political institutions are predictors of political participation (Campbell 2019; Levy et al 2019; Chrysochoou et al 2017; Zani et al 2012). Life satisfaction may also play a role (Lorenzini, 2015).

At the interpersonal level, development of ideologies and values, as well as a sense of identity connected to a collective group is important, as collective identity is integral for political participation at the collective level (Haugestad et al, 2021). It is through collective identifications that young people articulate common grievances or common goals that can politicise them and lead them to act

together to change a situation (Chrysochoou et al 2016, Mansouri 2022). Personal commitment to a community is a psychological precursor to political involvement; the community is a context that is close to individual experiences but still connected to the political realm (Zani et al 2012). Young people tend to become politically active when concrete causes are linked to them autobiographically, allowing them to satisfy both personal and social aims simultaneously (Rossi 2009). Rossi (2009) argues there are four motivations for political involvement of young people:

- for personal realisation through helping others
- because of a personal problem
- for professional reasons
- to put ideals and principles into practice.



# Social level factors

At the social level, there are a range of factors positively affecting youth political participation:

- Family, including parental political interest, political knowledge, partisanship, civic, and political practices, as well as family values and climate (Deimer et al 2019, Barrett et al 2019, McIntosh et al 2019).
- Peer group, including positive peer group relationships, having friends who are politically engaged, and having friends who provide social support (Barrett et al 2019).
- Level of education, as higher levels of attainment and/or years of education is widely established to be associated with higher levels of involvement (Barrett et al 2019).

## Access to social and political resources

The resources within the environment a young person lives in may also be a substantial factor in their level of political participation. Characteristics of the place in which young people live mean that specific features associated with that place offer different kinds of opportunities for the development of youth participation (Barrett et al 2019). There are several types of community resources which have an impact on the participation of young people, where a young person has access to them.

Membership of youth, community, and/or religious organisations or associations has a modest but potentially long-lasting effect on political participation (Hooge et al 2005, McFarland 2006). See the chapter on civil society for further details on this.

Participation in political or civic education<sup>3</sup>, despite being frequently proposed as a policy response to promote the participation of young people, has only moderate evidence of impact. The body of research is small overall, and complicated by the terminological issues as well as other methodological challenges, making measurement and comparison of programmes highly challenging (Donbavand and Hoskins 2021; Keating et al. 2012; Enchikova et al 2019). On balance, there is evidence

that citizen education provides a moderate impact with respect to influencing young people's political attitudes and behavioural interventions related to political participation (see Campbell 2019 for an overview). There is some limited evidence that non-formal methods of education such as open classroom debate and deliberation (Lee et al 2015) can be more effective than didactic teaching (Pontes et al 2012, Torney-Purta 2002). Programmes which enable young people to put citizenship ideas into practice through practical means are also thought to be more effective than traditional teaching (Keating et al 2016). Negative experiences of school and extensive discipline within school are also known to discourage participation (Kupchik 2015). Although non-formal educational methods are seen to be more effective, it is argued that programmes in the non-formal sector (i.e. voluntary/extracurricular citizenship programmes) suffer from a self-selection bias. Participants who sign up for voluntary programmes are those more likely to politically participate (Qunintellier and Hooghe, 2013), which may mitigate their impact on aggregate.

Access to social media and internet use has a range of effects on the political participation of young people. As the internet rapidly becomes a key source of political news and connection to political

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<sup>3</sup> A range of terminology is used within the literature such as citizenship education, education for democratic citizenship, human rights education, civic education, and political education. Within this document, citizen education is used as a catch-all term to refer to education focused on democracy and democratic engagement.

movements for young people, (Ramos et al 2021) it has the potential to provide strong online pathways to participation. These pathways centre on news consumption and political expression via digital media technologies (Ida 2020; Lee 2012). A variety of studies in territories where internet access is less widespread have demonstrated intensity of social media use, access to political information via social networks, and social gaming are linked to increased political participation (Abdul Ruaf et al 2016; Mare 2015; Ahmed et al 2013; Skoric et al 2011).

The political identity and attitudes of young citizens are increasingly shaped by their interactions through the social networks which they themselves have had a significant part in constructing (Loader et al 2014). Online spaces facilitate connections between the personal and the political while highlighting the social aspects of youth participation (Literat et al 2018). Online political activity can be interest driven, friendship driven, or politically driven (Kahne et al 2013). Online political activity is identified as a gateway to offline political participation (Mohamad et al 2018; Kim et al 2017), including voting (Butt et al 2021). Furthermore, some forms of non-

political online activity can also serve as a gateway to participation in civic and political life (Kayne et al 2013), though young people are more likely to engage in online collective action when they perceive it as being effective (Velasquez et al 2014). The link between social media use and political participation is not universal amongst young people. The internet is therefore unlikely to provide a magic bullet solution to promoting youth participation. Not all young people use the internet for political purposes (Keating et al 2017). Many young people are more inclined to use news media for entertainment and social networking than for participation (Salman 2015). Many avoid news consumption and also exhibit low levels of participation when online (Edgerley et al 2017). As a result, a growing number of studies conclude the internet may be a less effective means of engaging disaffected young people than traditional routes, though it can be highly effective at mobilising the already interested (Livingstone 2008).

## Cross cutting theme 2:

### Intersectionality and inclusion

**“Intersectionality and inclusion” explores the demographic factors linked to youth political participation. It begins by outlining the limitations in this area of research before summarising what is known about the intersection of gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity with regards to youth participation.**

A range of studies have considered how the experiences of different social groups may vary within the youth cohort when engaged in youth participation activities. These studies explore the intersection of youth and other social identities (Earl et al 2017), but they do not always adopt intersectionality (Crenshaw 2017). Martyn et al (2019) provide a review of research on demographic factors linked to youth participation concluding that “there are widespread differences in young people’s civic and political engagement as a function of their social economic status, gender, and ethnicity. However, the differences that have been found are by no means either universal or consistent. Furthermore, the differences that are linked to demographic categories are complex, with patterns of engagement sometimes being specific to particular subgroups defined in terms of the intersection between two or more demographic categories”. So, whilst identities such as gender and race might be better thought of not as individual attributes but social attributes that enable or delimit youth political involvement (Chrysochoou et al 2017), few, if any, studies have conceptualised youth participation with a fully intersectional lens.

The extent of research into demographic marginalisation within youth participation has also only been sufficient to establish broad tentative patterns. It is generally understood that “if [young people] are to enter the public sphere in its current form, they do so on an extremely unequal footing. The public sphere is not neutral in terms of age, race, socioeconomic background, or gender. Unequally powerful groups develop unequally valued styles of operating with the result that subordinate groups are marginalised or excluded” (Bessant 2003). However, the precise patterns and structures of marginalisation across different social groups as they intersect with youth are not robustly identified. The research is sufficient to identify some trends relating to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, but lacking in areas such as sexuality and disability. Strong inferences can potentially be made from research into adult participation; it might be presumed that patterns of political exclusion within adulthood would be mirrored in youth (Labanesi et al 2012), but some scholars argue against this, as democracies have changed over time and the experience of democracy for young people will be different historically compared to older generations. (Barrett et al 2019).

# Gender

A wide body of research on gender differences in adult political participation has strongly established that women are less likely to consider being involved in political activities than men (Pfanzelt et al 2019). These differences are largely attributed to gender socialisation processes (Zanie et al 2012) and constraints on women by psychological, familial, and societal factors (Martyn et al 2019).

The limited number of studies directly on youth and gender indicate a more complex picture. Gender differences are identified in levels of political knowledge, efficacy, and interest, but not necessarily always in favour of young men (Cicognani et al 2012, Martyn et al 2019). Some studies have failed to find gender differences (Gaby 2016, Martyn et al 2019, Orfan 2020). It is possible that newer generations have experienced different political socialisation patterns with regard to gender (Barrett et al 2019) or that other factors, such as age of a democracy may be more influential than gender on young people (Mirazchiyski et al 2014). Discrimination and constraints faced by young women when entering participation spaces, or engaging in activism are still routinely identified (Earl et al 2017). Overall, it is clear that young women are growing up in a

world which is politically gendered, but the extent to which that will have changed by the time they are adults is not clear.

It is argued, but not concluded, that there are preferences for different forms of participation between genders. Young women have been argued to have a preference towards social movements (Hooghe et al 2004), non-institutional forms (Pfanzelt et al 2019), or participation that can be undertaken more privately in the home such as signing petitions (Marien et al 2010). Young men are argued to be more attracted to traditional politics such as voting (Barrett et al 2019). These patterns may not be consistent across countries and are attached to expectations of women's versus men's rights, duties, and behaviour, as well as policies to promote female participation (Barrett et al 2019), and opportunities for women within the countries (Cicognani et al 2012). Literature in this area is also highly affected by terminological inconsistencies regarding forms of participation, making many studies difficult to directly compare.

See also: chapter on youth in political affairs.

## Socioeconomic status

Compared to research into other demographic factors, the link between socioeconomic status (SES) and youth political participation is much more strongly demonstrated, particularly when education is taken into account. Research in adults has routinely found that those who have a higher SES (measured by income, employment, and education) display higher levels of engagement. With education being the most powerful predictor of many forms of political and civic participation. This finding is mirrored in young people, though SES amongst youth is typically measured by parental employment, parental income, and/or parental

educational achievement (Barrett et al 2019). Research into SES and youth political participation has still demonstrated some of the strongest links, identifying trends relating to political knowledge, efficacy, behavioural intention, and attitudes toward democracy (Grasso et al 2022; Gaby 2012; Diemer 2012). Patterns amongst young people do vary by country, particularly with regard to links between SES and future voting intention or political behaviour, where psychological factors play a more significant role (Barrett et al 2019). SES remains the most clearly identified vector of marginalisation intersecting with youth.

# Ethnicity and migration status

Political participation of people from ethnic minority backgrounds varies according to a wide range of psychological and demographic factors, including their knowledge of civic and political institutions, their political values, their linguistic skills, their social capital, migration history, SES, and gender (Zani et al 2012). Patterns of exclusion therefore vary both between majority and minority groups, but also between minority groups and within minority groups, linked not only to ethnicity and gender, but to the intersection between ethnicity and gender within a particular locale and country (Barrett et al 2019).

Within this complex situation, research into youth political participation has revealed widespread differences between ethnic majority and minority groups in patterns of political engagement across most continents and countries as well as in the psychological and social factors that predict participation (Barrett et al 2019). The extent to which ethnicity relates to migration plays a variable role. Political participation might be a difficult issue for immigrant youth to manage, as it requires deciding whether to participate in the society they have been born into or to remain attached to their society of origins (Grigoropoulou & Chrysoschoou, 2011). This may apply less to minority groups or individuals with less or no connection to immigration, such as those young people educated to the same level as their majority group peers and with proficiency in the national language (Barrett et al 2019).

Some research has argued that, when other factors such as SES (Quintelier 2009) and reduced access to resources or political representatives (Earl et al 2017) are taken into account, ethnicity and immigration status do not play a significant role in youth participation. That is to say that people with similar class and resource levels engage in participation in a similar way even if they are of different immigration status. Ethnic minority individuals frequently have lower SES than members of the ethnic majority groups so at least some of the differences in levels of political engagement are a factor of SES and educational attainment (Barrett et al 2019; Quintelier 2009). Though if the reduced levels of participation of minority youths are due to their overrepresentation within lower SES groups, the end outcome remains the same.

There is some research to indicate motivation and methods of mobilisation may vary with ethnic groups, but this is highly limited (Chrysoschoou et al 2017; Earl et al 2017; Hope et al 2014). The research is emphasised by the limited number of countries it has been carried out within; there is insufficient work overall to establish the extent to which demographic patterns are country/region specific, and which are more global. It is identified that participation among minority youth may be reduced by institutional and social discrimination, but experiences of discrimination may also play a galvanising role (Barrett et al 2019; Earl et al 2017).



# Chronological review of key policies

# Decline in youth electoral participation

The reviewed policies are presented chronologically and divided into four distinct epochs. The epochs showcase how youth political participation changed across the key policy documents and how the overall youth policy and general policymaking changed over the decades.

The first epoch sets the scene, defining some of the key topics and concepts, especially with regard to rights of children and youth, which are necessary to engage in proper deliberations on youth political participation. The second epoch is where the systematic debates on youth political participation commence, kick-started by the threat of a democratic deficit caused by lowering natality and increasing life expectancy. The third epoch represents a fruition of the previous epoch embodied in systematic policies, strategies, and action plans. The fourth epoch is a time of pressing complex societal challenges such as climate change, and therefore mainstreaming of youth political participation (and youth policy in general) and stressing its cross-sectoral nature are the main developments. This epoch is also characterised by creating innovative and long-term youth political participation mechanisms.

It should be noted that these epochs were identified during the review, and they are framed by concrete years to demonstrate general policymaking trends. Nevertheless, there are occasions when certain documents are published within the timeframe of one epoch but included in another. This is due to the fluidity of the policymaking processes and in these cases, content takes precedence over the year of publishing. Therefore, it is possible to find policies from the year 1999 in the second epoch, for example, as they illustrate the upcoming trends of the second epoch, rather than being related to the first epoch in content. It is for the same reason that the epochs themselves overlap in the bordering years (e.g. year 2000 is mentioned both in epoch I. and in epoch II.). The epochs are to demonstrate general trends and are set into approximate timelines to give a good sense of historical context, but policymaking is a fluid process that cannot be precisely captured by exact years and dates.

## Epochs of Policies Related to Youth Political Participation

- I. 1980–2000: Setting the Scene (Pre-Millennium Development Goals, defining key concepts, ad hoc policies).
- II. 2000–2015: Systematic Debates (Millennium Development Goals, EU White Paper on Youth, demographic challenges, systematic policy debates, youth political participation as key domain).
- III. 2015–2020: Systematic Policies (Early Sustainable Development Goals, European Youth Goals, systematic policies, strategies, action plans).
- IV. 2020–present: Mainstreaming Mechanisms (EU Youth Test, G7 youth input, OECD youth policy, complex challenges, youth political participation mainstreaming, innovative youth political participation mechanisms).

# Epoch I.

## 1980–2000: Setting the Scene

This epoch is characterised by exploring children, minors, and youth as a specific group that should be of attention to policymakers. This has to do with the general trends of widening suffrage, exercising inclusion as one of core democratic values, and protecting rights of various minorities and sub-groups of given populations. It is apparent that these trends are inherently linked to democratic countries at a certain level of development, i.e. mostly to the countries of the Global North, but manifested globally as well (e.g. via the UN).

The exploration of youth and children as specific groups is completed ad-hoc and connects to various topics such as youth work, education, and democratic participation. These topics will be considered core youth policymaking domains until the beginning of Epoch IV when mainstreaming and cross-sectoral approaches truly gain momentum. Young people and children are first defined by elaborating on their rights in concrete contexts (e.g. the UN, EU, etc.).

At the UN level, this is typified by the creation of the first ever International Youth Year, devoted to the topic of young people, including youth participation. Early on in this epoch was also the landmark adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including Article 12 and the right to be heard, a foundational rights-based definition of child and youth participation. The convention went on to be the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

The child and youth political participation is therefore frequently explored in this rights-based narrative; children and youth do have the right to engage in a rather narrow set of matters that directly concern them, and the policies should ideally be supporting children and youth in utilising the traditional mechanisms of representative democracy, such as voting and running for office. The ultimate aim is social cohesion and social peace achieved by including young people in political participation processes. In this context, it can also be observed that children, minors, and youth are frequently covered by more general documents which aim at inclusion of various groups into political and democratic processes (e.g. women, minorities, people with disabilities, etc.). The term “children” is more frequently mentioned than youth or young people, showcasing the narrow definitions used in this initial epoch, and also one of the trends of youth policymaking generally – the widening definition of “the youth”.

The adoption of the UN World Programme of Action for Youth marked the first policy framework at the international level, which aimed to support the specific development of young people, including their participation. Alongside the establishment of international policy gatherings, such as the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, this showed an acceleration of focus on youth policies at a national level, supported by an international youth policy agenda.

The main policy developments in the area of youth participation include identification of children, minors, and youth as target groups of rights and policies, and identification of youth political participation as a domain of general policymaking in the context of inclusion efforts. Generally speaking, the main



building blocks of upcoming political debates within future epochs are established, key terms are coined, youth starts to emerge as a wider category than children with specific attributes which need to be further explored (e.g. combination of minors and young adults, two groups which belong under the “youth” umbrella, but carry very different legal and rights-based ramifications in terms of care and protection as well as participation in democratic mechanisms as can be seen by age-based voting rights). The key policy document that is still highly influential today and used as the basic reference across the board is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child from 1989.

Within this epoch there are relatively few significant policy developments that are specific or primarily developed for Global South countries. Those which do exist are limited in content and tend to simply identify the need to promote youth participation within the context of development.

## UN policies

1. General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/32/134 (1977), A/RES/33/7 (1978), A/RES/34/151 (1979), A/RES/35/126 (1980), A/RES/36/28 (1981), A/RES/37/48 (1982), and A/RES/38/22 (1983), A/RES/39/22 (1984), A/RES/40/14 (1985); Secretary-General Report A/40/256 (1985) International Youth Year: United Nations

General Assembly resolutions from 1977 to 1979 mark the first time that the United Nations commemorates youth participation at a global scale, with the proposal of 1985 as the first “International Youth Year” with the resolution in the motto “Participation, Development, Peace”. The aim of the International Youth Year is to “mobilise efforts at the local, national, regional, and international levels in order to promote the best education, professional, and living conditions for young people to ensure their active participation in the overall development of society”. Resolutions from 1980 to 1984 devote a number of plenary meetings at the fortieth session of the UN General Assembly as the “United Nations World Conference for the International Youth Year”, as the first time that this main policymaking organ of the UN is devoted to the topic of youth, including youth participation. On the conclusion of the International Youth Year, all States, UN bodies, specialised agencies, regional commissions, and NGOs (in particular youth organisations) are to implement guidelines for action, including to “enhance the active participation of youth and youth organisations in society, and, in particular, in the promotion and the achievement of development and peace”. Significantly, 1985 also marks the first time in the UN that young people are defined as a broad population made up of different subgroups, rather than a single demographic category.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year (A/RES/33/7)*. New York: United Nations, 1978. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/34/151)*. New York: United Nations, 1979. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/35/126)*. New York: United Nations, 1980. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/36/28)*. New York: United Nations, 1981. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/37/48)*. New York: United Nations, 1982. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/38/22)*. New York: United Nations, 1983. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/39/22)*. New York: United Nations, 1984. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/40/14)*. New York: United Nations, 1985. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations Secretary-General. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace - Report of the Secretary-General (A/40/256)*. New York: United Nations, 1985. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/sg-reports.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *Youth in the contemporary world (A/RES/32/134)*. New York: United Nations, 1977. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

## 2. Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly Resolution 44/25) (1989), United Nations

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a legally-binding, international human rights treaty that outlines the rights of children. It is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. Relevant to child and youth participation is Article 12, where States Parties shall assure all children capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, and those views should be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. While the term “participation” does not appear in the text itself, Article 12 forms the human rights and legal basis for what is now known as “child participation” and is cited frequently in models and justifications for youth participation in national policies and international frameworks.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. New York: United Nations, 1989. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

## 3. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/50/81 (1995) World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) to the Year 2000 and Beyond, United Nations

This resolution and its annex provide the first policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support (by the UN and associated agencies) aimed at improving the situation of young people around the world, including their participation. As a follow-up to the International Youth Year, it focuses on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth, with priority area J: “Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making”. Proposals for action include: informing the access to information for young people, developing opportunities for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, including freedom of association, encouraging youth associations, taking into account the contribution of youth in designing, implementing and evaluating national policies and plans, encouraging cooperation and exchange between youth organisations, and inviting governments to include youth representatives in delegations to international fora, such as to the General Assembly.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81)*. New York: United Nations, 1995. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/208774?ln=en>

## 4. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/52/83 (1997), United Nations, Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes (1998), UNESCO

The resolution endorses the offer made by the Government of Portugal to host the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Braga, Portugal on 8–12 August 1998. Co-hosted by the United Nations, it was the first-ever global gathering of national level government ministers within youth or youth-related ministries. The aim of the conference was to review and appraise the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth on the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Youth, and to strengthen global action on youth. The resulting outcome document was the “Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes”, which was a set of commitments made by the governments participating at the world conference. Included in this is a section on “Participation”, where governments committed to ensuring the active participation of youth in all spheres of society and decision-making (including gender-sensitive measures), promoting citizen education, facilitating access of youth to legislative and policymaking bodies,

upholding freedom of association, giving higher priority to marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged youth to enable their participation, building communication channels with youth and improving their access to communication, and encouraging youth volunteerism as an important form of youth participation. The declaration also calls on relevant UN agencies, specifically UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, ILO, and the World Bank, to provide greater support to national youth policies within their country programmes. Youth representatives from youth and youth-serving organisations also presented a list of recommendations (Braga Youth Action Plan<sup>4</sup>) to the World Conference of Ministers. The recommendations were the outcome of the World Youth Forum, convened by the United Nations in partnership with the Portuguese National Youth Council, held in Braga a few days prior to the global ministerial conference. A/RES/52/83 mandates that the results of the World Youth Forum be “duly taken into account” at the World Conference, thereby establishing formal youth participation at the conference itself and for future conferences.

Full reference:

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes*. Lisbon: United Nations, 1998. [https://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/1998\\_Lisbon\\_Declaration\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/1998_Lisbon_Declaration_Eng.pdf)

United Nations General Assembly. *Policies and programmes involving youth (A/RES/52/83)*. New York: United Nations, 1997. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

## European policies

### 5. Recommendation 902 (1980) Youth co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe

The Council of Europe recognises the importance of involving young people in democratic processes and in policymaking. It calls on to the national bodies as well as international ones (e.g. the assemblies and committees of the Council of Europe) to cooperate with organised and unorganised youth (e.g. the Youth Forum of the European Communities) to take views of young people into account when drafting reports. Similarly, it encourages local and regional authorities to take the views of young people into account in policymaking. The Recommendation also invites young people and youth bodies to play an active part in policymaking and argues for financial support of such activities via international programmes (e.g. European Youth Foundation), practical support via concrete entities (e.g. European Youth Centre), and also for support on national levels (e.g. increased grants to youth work by local authorities, increased funding of national youth committees and similar bodies, etc.). Youth in civic society is therefore the key domain addressed by the Recommendation.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Recommendation 902 (1980) Youth co-operation in Europe*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1980. <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/47f11ed2a12c0d67919244a37d557b05a0ff-254916c2aee698d4cb6de25ccfcd/rec.%20902.pdf>

### 6. Recommendation 1019 (1985) Participation of young people in political and institutional life, Council of Europe

Building on the previous Recommendation, this stresses the importance of prerequisites for active participation of young people, including education, information, and means of participation. Political

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4 An online document, available at [https://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/1998\\_WYF\\_Braga\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/1998_WYF_Braga_Eng.pdf)

parties are explicitly mentioned as one channel suitable for introducing youth to democratic participation, and the need to consult with representatives of young people regularly and at all levels (incl. in Council of Europe's committees) is expressed, stressing the need to provide resources to make these processes happen. Youth in political affairs, as well as in elections and in civic society, are therefore the key domains this Recommendation tackles.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Recommendation 1019 (1985) Participation of young people in political and institutional life*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1985. <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/1d97fe1db42c82fe511dee2e54752d1829e0cfd0b0e5e541848146d420be044d/rec.%201019.pdf>

## 7. European strategy for children, Council of Europe

Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and Committee of Ministers communicated setting up an ongoing initiative focusing on children in the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was stressed that active and responsible participation of children in society should be encouraged, and that views of children should be considered in decision-making whenever such matters are debated that affect them. Launched under the European Strategy for Social Cohesion, the Programme for Children was launched in 1998, focusing on provision/prevention, protection, and participation of children in social life, explicitly mentioning (among others) the need for education, access to rights and citizenship, and equality issues affecting children. The main identified tools to deliver in these domains were good practice sharing, training, technical advice, knowledge sharing, and common policy development.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Doc. 8287 23 December 1998 European strategy for children Recommendation 1286 (1996) Reply from the Committee of Ministers adopted at the 652nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (15 December 1998)*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1998. <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=8442&lang=EN>

Council of Europe. *European Strategy For Children - Recommendation 1286 (1996) of the Parliamentary Assembly*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1996. <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=15320&lang=en>

## 8. Concluding Conference Documents, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

While children and youth are rarely mentioned as separate target groups, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe tackles several key participation related topics. The implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (including the vital section on including views of children in decision-making), equal participation of men and women in political and public life, effective participation of people belonging to national minorities in public affairs, appropriate participation of people with disabilities in decision-making concerning them, and also including NGOs in CSCE deliberations. All of these provisions are relevant to young people who are no longer minors and are especially relevant for intersectionality and inclusion of youth from various backgrounds.

Full reference:

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Concluding Document of the Madrid Meeting 1980 of Representatives of the Participating States of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Held on the Basis of the Provisions of the Final Act Relating to the Follow-Up to the Conference*. Madrid: CSCE, 1983. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/d/40871.pdf>

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Document of The Copenhagen Meeting of The Conference on the Human Dimension of The CSCE*. Copenhagen: CSCE, 1989. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/c/14304.pdf>

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Document of The Moscow Meeting of The Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE*. Moscow: CSCE, 1991. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/3/14310.pdf>

## 9. Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union, Council of the European Union

The Charter is a key document relating to human and social rights in the European Union, and it contains articles which are relevant to youth political participation, although youth is not mentioned as a distinct category. Namely: Article 11 on freedom of expression and information; Article 12 on freedom of assembly and of association; Article 20 on equality before the law; Article 21 on non-discrimination; Article 23 on equality between men and women; Article 24 on the rights of the child; Article 26 on integration of persons with disabilities; Article 39 on right to vote and to stand as a candidate at elections to the European Parliament; Article 40 on right to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections; Article 41 on right to good administration; Article 44 on right to petition. In principle, the Charter sets basic rules for youth in political affairs, for youth in elections, for youth in civil society, and for intersectionality and inclusion in the political participation context.

Full reference:

Council of the European Union. *Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union*. Nice: European Communities, 2000. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7d72ec48-93a1-4848-892f-31c7a1b6d9da/language-en>

# Other international or regional policies

## 10. Human Resource Development Ministerial Meeting, APEC

APEC recognises the participation of women and young people as one of key matters and recommends establishment of a Working Group to facilitate youth and women participating in further APEC's deliberations, recognising that "today's youth are APEC's future". This is a short and generic document, and its importance lies mainly in explicitly mentioning the topic of youth political participation.

Full reference:

APEC. *1997 APEC Human Resource Development Ministerial Meeting*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1997. [https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/sectoral-ministerial-meetings/human-resources-development/1997\\_hrd](https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/sectoral-ministerial-meetings/human-resources-development/1997_hrd)



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APEC. 1997 APEC Human Resource Development Ministerial Meeting. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1997. [https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/sectoral-ministerial-meetings/human-resources-development/1997\\_hrd](https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/sectoral-ministerial-meetings/human-resources-development/1997_hrd)

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Concluding Document Of The Madrid Meeting 1980 Of Representatives Of The Participating States Of The Conference On Security And Cooperation In Europe, Held On The Basis Of The Provisions Of The Final Act Relating To The Follow-Up To The Conference*. Madrid: CSCE, 1983. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/d/40871.pdf>

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Document Of The Copenhagen Meeting Of The Conference On The Human Dimension Of The Csce*. Copenhagen: CSCE, 1989. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/c/14304.pdf>

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *DOCUMENT OF THE MOSCOW MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF THE CSCE*. Moscow: CSCE, 1991. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/3/14310.pdf>

Council of Europe. *Doc. 8287 23 December 1998 European strategy for children Recommendation 1286 (1996) Reply from the Committee of Ministers adopted at the 652nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (15 December 1998)*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1998. <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=8442&lang=EN>

Council of Europe. *EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN - Recommendation 1286 (1996) of the Parliamentary Assembly*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1996. <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=15320&lang=en>

Council of Europe. *Recommendation 1019 (1985) Participation of young people in political and institutional life*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1985. <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/1d97fe1db-42c82fe511dee2e54752d1829e0cfd0b0e5e541848146d420be044d/rec.%201019.pdf>

Council of Europe. *Recommendation 902 (1980) Youth co-operation in Europe*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 1980. <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/47f11ed2a12c0d67919244a37d557b05a0ff-254916c2aee698d4cb6de25ccfcd/rec.%20902.pdf>

Council of the European Union. *Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union*. Nice: European Communities, 2000. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7d72ec48-93a1-4848-892f-31c7a1b-6d9da/language-en>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). *Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes*. Lisbon: United Nations, 1998. [https://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/1998\\_Lisbon\\_Declaration\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/1998_Lisbon_Declaration_Eng.pdf)

United Nations General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. New York: United Nations, 1989. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year (A/RES/33/7)*. New York: United Nations, 1978. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/34/151)*. New York: United Nations, 1979. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/35/126)*. New York: United Nations, 1980. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/36/28)*. New York: United Nations, 1981. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/37/48)*. New York: United Nations, 1982. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/38/22)*. New York: United Nations, 1983. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/39/22)*. New York: United Nations, 1984. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/40/14)*. New York: United Nations, 1985. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *Policies and programmes involving youth (A/RES/52/83)*. New York: United Nations, 1997. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81)*. New York: United Nations, 1995. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/208774?ln=en>

United Nations General Assembly. *Youth in the contemporary world (A/RES/32/134)*. New York: United Nations, 1977. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations Secretary-General. *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace - Report of the Secretary-General (A/40/256)*. New York: United Nations, 1985. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/sg-reports.html>



# Epoch II.

## 2000–2015: Systematic Debates

This epoch is characterised by a commencement of systematic debates on youth political participation. This development follows the emergence of the first key trend framing youth political participation as an important domain: the demographic development in the countries of the Global North.

As Global North countries continue to develop economically and socially, it becomes increasingly apparent that demographic ramifications are starting to show. Most notably, the populations are growing older, a trend driven by a combination of decreasing natality and increasing life expectancy. As the trend of population ageing becomes painstakingly apparent at the turn of the century, policymakers start to realise that democratic deficit could occur, a situation in which young people and their interests are not represented appropriately via representative democracy processes. This threat increases as populations of young people continue to be in a steady decline in the Global North countries, putting in danger the democratic discourse itself as pressures increase across generations, favouring solutions fit for older generations rather than youth. These trends gradually lead to lowering engagement of young people in institutionalised conventional politics, and search for new ways of being politically active, mostly in the domain of non-conventional politics and lifestyle politics.

To counter this incoming peril, systematic deliberations on youth political participation commence. This results in various important contributions to the policy discourse on youth political participation, preparing ground for concrete systematic approaches which are to come in the next epoch. It is important to stress that this demographic development does not occur globally but is concentrated in countries of the Global North. This leads to engagement of young people in democratic processes and youth policy becoming an urgent priority area in the Global North context, while staying away from attention of countries of the Global South who experience vastly different challenges at that time. Responding in part to this demographic challenge is the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which articulated a common global development agenda for the first time, as well as a recognition that the participation of young people and youth organisations would be key to the realisation of these ambitious goals. Alongside this are a number of key UN policy developments to support youth participation, including an update to the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) and the adoption of its implementation plan, the System-Wide Action Plan on Youth. The UN also establishes structures and programmes to further support its work for young people, including the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), a youth volunteer programme within United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and a new Special Advisor on Youth in the office of the Secretary-General.

In the European context, the key document of this Epoch is the White Paper on Youth by the European Commission, outlining youth participation as one of key domains in European policymaking, and paving the road for regular consultations with youth on the European level: the EU Youth Dialogue (called Structured Dialogue in its early years). Another key document is the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life by the Council of Europe. The key definition revolving around the right, the means, the space, and the opportunity of young people to participate

in public and political matters is still relevant and highly quoted today. Lastly, the “Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe” provides a useful insight into the gist of this epoch as it touches upon all key topics. These include youth-tailored participatory structures (e.g. youth councils), widening the suffrage (e.g. lowering the voting age to 16), and overall including young people in decision-making at all levels from local, through regional and national, to the European.

The policy developments in the area of youth participation include youth as a target group appearing systematically in various policies, recurrent acknowledgements of youth political participation as a key emerging topic, and explorations of concrete mechanisms which could be provided to young people to enable them to better engage in political participation.

As with the previous epoch, there are relatively few international policy initiatives specific to Global South countries although some developments do occur, most notably within CARICOM. These policies tend to follow the agenda for participation set at the global level, though place it within broader contexts of youth development and wider youth issues such as work, education, and health.

## UN policies

### 1. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/55/2 (2000): United Nations Millennium Declaration, Report of the Secretary-General A/56/326 (2001): Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/2 (2005), United Nations

The adoption of the Millennium Declaration through resolutions 55/2 (2000) and the UN Millennium Development Goals outlined in the Report of the Secretary-General A/56/326 marks the first time that world leaders set a common global development agenda. While the MDGs did not have specific goals or targets relating to youth, subsequent General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution A/RES/60/2 (2005), begin to recognise that the achievement of the MDGs requires the “full and effective participation of young people and youth organisations and other civil society organisations at the local, national, regional and international levels”.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly. *Policies and programmes involving youth (A/RES/60/2)*. New York: United Nations, 2005.

United Nations General Assembly. *United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2)*. New York: United Nations, 2000. [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_55\\_2.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_55_2.pdf)

United Nations Secretary General. *Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/326): Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration*. New York: United Nations, 2001. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/448375?ln=en>

### 2. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/62/126 (2007) & Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, United Nations; World Programme of Action for Youth (2008), United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs

The resolution and its accompanying annex comprise an update to the World Programme of Action for Youth, presented as a complete document by the United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs. The update adds the following priority areas to the WPAY: Globalisation, Information and Communications Technology, HIV/AIDS, and Armed Conflict and Intergenerational issues. Youth participation appears as a cross-cutting theme in these priority areas, such as the use of ICT to enhance youth participation in decision-making processes, and the active involvement of youth in maintaining peace and security. Under “Intergenerational issues”, it reiterates how the full and effective participation of young people is important for the realisation of the MDGs and the promotion and implementation of the WPAY.

Full reference:

United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs. *World Programme of Action for Youth*. New York: United Nations, 2008. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/united-nations-commission-for-social-development-csod-social-policy-and-development-division/2007-4.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *Policies and programmes involving youth: youth in the global economy – promoting youth participation in social and economic development (A/RES/62/126)*. New York: United Nations, 2007. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/614249?ln=en>

### **3. General Comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child**

General Comment 12 serves as a supplement to the UNCRC, namely, to guide States Parties in the effective implementation of Article 12, otherwise known as the right of the child to be heard. The general comment describes how Article 12 constitutes one of the four fundamental values of the UNCRC, which, along with the right to non-discrimination, right to life and development, and the primary consideration of the child’s best interests, should be considered in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights. While the term “participation” does not appear in the text of Article 12 itself, the general comment explains that the term has evolved and now is widely used to describe “ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes.” A vital component of General Comment 12 is the clarification that the right to be heard applies to individual children as well as groups of children. Here the Committee on the Rights of the Child strongly recommends that States parties “exert all efforts to listen to or seek the views of those children speaking collectively”, and that views expressed by children should be considered in decision-making, policymaking and preparation of laws and/or other measures. It also outlines nine basic requirements for processes in which children are heard and participate, in that the processes need to be transparent, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable.

Full reference:

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. *General Comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child*. New York: United Nations, 2009. <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/advanceversions/crc-c-gc-12.pdf>

### **4. General Assembly Social and Economic Council Resolution A/66/61-E/2011/3 (2010): Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: United Nations system coordination and collaboration tied to youth, United Nations**

The report details the main roles and responsibilities of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, the main mechanism of cooperation for youth within the UN system. It supports and facilitates youth participation within the decision-making processes of the UN, and details examples of UN system collaboration.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly Social and Economic Council. *Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: United Nations system coordination and collaboration tied to youth (A/66/61-E/2011/3)*. New York: United Nations, 2010. [https://www.youthpolicy.org/basics/2010\\_WPAY\\_Implementation\\_Report.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/basics/2010_WPAY_Implementation_Report.pdf)

### **5. General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/64/134 (2009) & Report of the Secretary-General A/66/129 (2011): International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding, United Nations**

Resolution A/RES/64/134 establishes 2010 as the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. Key activities and initiatives are summarised in the report of the Secretary-General, with Member States, UN entities, civil society and youth organisations being encouraged to celebrate this year by showcasing the “contributions of youth to development, promote mutual understanding and underscore the benefits of their participation in all aspects of society.” The Secretary-General’s report recommends that the General Assembly call on Member States to further strengthen partnerships with and among young people, promote a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding with youth as “agents of development”, and to undertake measures to develop a youth-centred global development agenda.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly. *Proclamation of 2010 as the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding (A/RES/64/134)*. New York: United Nations, 2009. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations Secretary General. *International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding (A/RES/66/129)*. New York: United Nations, 2011. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/708158?ln=en>

### **6. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/65/267 (2011) & A/RES/65/312 (2011): Outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding, United Nations**

A/RES/65/267 decides that a High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly will take place on 25 and 26 June 2011, with the theme “Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding” and that it will comprise plenary meetings and two round tables. One of these round tables is entitled “Strengthening international cooperation regarding youth and enhancing dialogue, mutual understanding and active youth participation as indispensable elements of efforts towards achieving social integration, full employment and the eradication of poverty”. The resulting outcome document includes pledges by heads of state and government to participation-related commitments, including strengthening support to youth-led organisations to participate in national and international development activities, and promoting and providing human rights education and learning for youth. The outcome document also reaffirms the call for increased participation of youth and youth-led organisations in the formulation of local, national, regional, and international development strategies and policies.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly. *Organization of the High-level Meeting on Youth (A/RES/65/267)*. New York: United Nations, 2011. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *Outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding (A/RES/65/312)*. New York: United Nations, 2011. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/710074?ln=ar>

## 7. The Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda (2012), Economic and Social Council Resolution E/CN.5/2013/L.4 (2013), Presentation by the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (29 April 2013), Presentation on the System-wide Action Plan on Youth (29 April 2013), United Nations

The Five-Year Action Agenda outlines Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's priorities for his second term in office, announcing the System-Wide Action Plan on Youth, a youth volunteer programme within United Nations Volunteers, and a new Special Advisor on Youth. In the following year, Member States requested an update on these initiatives at the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development. The presentation on the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth announces the scope of his office. This includes encouraging the development of mechanisms for young people to participate in the work of the United Nations, through opening communication channels between youth-led organisations and the UN, enhancing youth access to information on the UN's work with youth, encouraging more governments to participate in the UN Youth Delegate Programme, and advocating for the UNV Youth Initiative. The presentation on the System-wide Action Plan on Youth announces its objectives to enhance coherence in UN system-wide activities in key areas of importance to youth, which include political inclusion, civic engagement, and protection of rights. Moreover, young people are to be involved in the implementation of the Youth-SWAP, such as through the UNV Youth Initiative and in monitoring and evaluation through shadow reports and youth participation score cards developed jointly by inter-agency youth networks and youth organisations.

Full reference:

United Nations. *The Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda*. New York: United Nations, 2012. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/priorities/index.shtml>

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Presentation on the System-wide Action Plan on Youth*. New York: United Nations, 2013. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/YouthSWAP/StelzerActionPlanonYouth.pdf>

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United Nations Secretary General Envoy on Youth. *Presentation by the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth*. New York: United Nations, 2013. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/YouthSWAP/AlhendawiWorkPlan.pdf>

## 8. Youth System-Wide Action Plan (2013), United Nations

The Youth System-Wide Action Plan is a framework to guide youth programming for the UN system. It receives its mandate from the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY). Youth-SWAP has two overarching goals relating to youth participation. These are "Protection of Rights and Civic Engagement (Ensure the inherent rights of youth are recognised and upheld to enable young people's engagement in all aspects of their development)" and "Political Inclusion (Ensure the progressive, substantive inclusion of young people in political and decision-making processes at local, national, regional, and international levels)".

Full reference:

United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination. *Youth System-Wide Action Plan (Youth-SWAP)*. New York: United Nations, 2013. <https://unsceb.org/youth-system-wide-action-plan-swap>

# European policies

## 9. Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Youth meeting within the Council of 8 February 1999 on youth participation, Council of the European Union

Building on the Lisbon Declaration on youth policies, the Resolution states that it is “desirable to grant young people in the European Union a wider scope for active participation in European and national civic society and political affairs, the objective being to enable young people, on a step-by-step basis, to assume their share of both opportunities and responsibilities and to encourage them to become active citizens”. European and national institutions, young people, and youth associations are all encouraged to use existing opportunities to inspire youth participation to the fullest. The European Commission itself is encouraged to take youth views into account in policymaking, to include youth in design, implementation, and evaluation of programmes and policies, to further examine possibilities of youth participation, and to exchange knowledge across the Member States. At the level of Member States, youth participation is to be encouraged and promoted, and innovative ways are to be explored. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion all feature in this document.

Full reference:

Council of the European Union. *Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Youth meeting within the Council of 8 February 1999 on youth participation*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 1999. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A41999X0217>

## 10. European Commission white paper – A new impetus for European youth, European Commission

The White Paper is a key document for many domains, including youth political participation. It clearly states the need to apply five fundamental principles of European governance to the youth participation domain also. These are namely openness (i.e. information and active communication to youth), participation (i.e. consultation with youth), accountability (i.e. development of innovative cooperation mechanisms between national and European levels to increase accountability), effectiveness (i.e. enabling youth to contribute to responding to challenges the society is facing), and coherence (i.e. developing an overview of various policies affecting youth). The White Paper recognises that the youth field is essentially a domain under governance of the Member States, and therefore sets priorities which are to be followed-up via the open method of coordination, i.e. improving on performance across Member States by sharing good practices, preparing guidelines, benchmarks, or indicators in a given area, etc. Among the main proposed measures, Member States are invited to strengthen youth participation at local level, and it states that youth participation in European bodies (e.g. the Economic and Social Committee) will be strengthened, and a regular dialogue with young people will be organised from 2002. At the policy level, “youth” is suggested to become a cross-sectoral topic on both European and national levels, especially in the areas of education, lifelong learning and mobility, employment, social integration, racism and xenophobia, and youth autonomy.

It is necessary to also mention that the White Paper itself is a result of extensive consultations with the youth field, including young people, professionals in the field, policymakers, and the scientific community, among others.

Full reference:

European Commission. *European Commission white paper - A new impetus for European youth*. Brussels: European Commission, 2001. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a3fb3071-785e-4e15-a2cd-51cb40a6c06>



## 11. Recommendation Rec (2004)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of young people in local and regional life, Council of Europe

The Recommendation calls on member states to promote and support the implementation of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. The Revised Charter presents one of the key definitions of youth participation: "Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space, and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society." The Revised Charter also lists sectoral policies which would, among others, benefit from increased participation of young people. These are namely policy for sport, leisure and associative life, policy to promote youth employment and combat unemployment, urban environment and habitat, housing policy, and transport, education and training policy promoting youth participation, policy for mobility and exchanges, health policy, gender equality policy, specific policy for rural regions, policy on access to culture, policy for sustainable development and for the environment, policy to combat violence and crime, anti-discrimination policy, policy on sexuality, and policy of access to rights and law. The Revised Charter also lists instruments for youth participation, including training in youth participation, informing young people, promoting youth participation through information and communication technologies, promoting the participation of young people in the media, encouraging young people to undertake voluntary work and dedicate themselves to community causes, support for young people's projects and initiatives, promoting young people's organisations, and youth participation in NGOs and political parties. The Revised Charter explicitly mentions the importance of institutional participation mechanisms, such as youth councils, youth parliaments, youth forums, and of support for structures of youth participation (e.g. spaces, funds, material support, etc.). Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion are covered in this document.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Recommendation Rec (2004)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of young people in local and regional life*. Place of publishing not available: Committee of Ministers, 2004. [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805dbd33](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805dbd33)  
Council of Europe. *Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*. Place of publishing not available: Council of Europe, 2003. <https://rm.coe.int/168071b4d6>

## 12. Recommendation Rec (2006)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development, Council of Europe

The Recommendation recognises national youth councils as key elements of youth political participation. The Recommendation furthermore states the key principles of national youth council operations, freedom of expression, independence, freedom of information, and acknowledging national youth councils and their opinions in youth policymaking. Member states are encouraged to create such conditions which support creation and operation of national youth councils, and their inclusion into policymaking processes. This document predominantly addresses youth in civil society.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Recommendation Rec (2006)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development*. Place of publishing not available: Committee of Ministers, 2006. [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d8caa](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d8caa)

## 13. Recommendation Rec (2006)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on citizenship and participation of young people in public life, Council of Europe

The Recommendation widens the definition of youth political participation substantially, stating that: "supporting young people's participation is not restricted to asking their opinions but must include empowering them to be actively involved in a creative and productive manner; that youth participation is not limited to areas and issues which only concern youth". Young people who do not belong to youth

organisations are explicitly mentioned as those whose participation is also to be encouraged. Key aspects of encouraging youth political participation as mentioned in the Recommendation include provision of learning opportunities (including informal learning), good practice exchange at all levels, establishment of independent youth councils at all levels of government (including school and student councils), and promotion of partnerships between youth organisations and public bodies. Diversity of youth and the necessity to establish such political participation mechanisms accessible to young people from all backgrounds are also stressed. Civil society and inclusion are the key topics of this Recommendation.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Recommendation Rec (2006)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on citizenship and participation of young people in public life*. Place of publishing not available: Committee of Ministers, 2006. [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805b251a](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805b251a)

#### **14. Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018), Council of the European Union**

The Resolution outlines priorities for the 2010–2018 cooperation in the youth field which became widely known as the “EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018”. One of the main fields of action as defined in this key document, “participation” is listed, aiming to support youth participation in representative democracy and civil society at all levels through initiatives of the Member States and the European Commission. The initiatives are “Develop mechanisms for dialogue with youth and youth participation on national youth policies; encourage use of already existing, or development of, guidelines on youth participation, information and consultation in order to ensure the quality of these activities; support politically and financially youth organisations, as well as local and national youth councils and promote recognition of their important role in democracy; promote the participation of more and a greater diversity of young people in representative democracy, in youth organisations and other civil-society organisations; make effective use of information and communication technologies to broaden and deepen participation of young people; support various forms of ‘learning to participate’ from early age through formal education and non-formal learning; further develop opportunities for debate between public institutions and young people.” One of the key EU initiatives in the field of youth participation is established by this Resolution, the Structured Dialogue (re-labelled as EU Youth Dialogue in late 2010s and still continued as of 2023<sup>5</sup>). The Structured Dialogue is defined specifically in Annex III of this Resolution as a consultative mechanism through which views of youth and youth organisations are collected and deliberated on, with the European Commission and the Member States collecting and sharing good practices which have been discovered in the process. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion are all covered in this document.

Full reference:

Council of the European Union. *Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2009. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1390996863108&uri=CELEX:32009G1219%2801%29>

#### **15. Resolution 1826 (2011) Expansion of democracy by lowering the voting age to 16, Council of Europe**

The Resolution recognises the need to prepare young people for voting and political participation in general (e.g. via formal education), and calls on member states to “investigate the possibility of lowering the voting age to 16 years in all countries and for all kinds of elections” and to “examine the possibility of lowering the minimum age of eligibility to stand for different kinds of elections (local and regional bodies, parliament, senate, presidency) wherever this would seem appropriate”. It recognises potential future

<sup>5</sup> A useful overview of the Structured Dialogue / EU Youth Dialogue cycles can be found at the [European Youth Portal webpage](#).



negative ramifications of demographic development in Europe on democratic political participation and representation of different population groups in democratic processes and quotes positive examples from different European countries (e.g. Austria, Germany, Switzerland). A follow up resolution from October 2015 suggests promotion of lowering the voting age to 16 years old in local and regional elections as well as establishing compulsory political education as an adjacent measure to lowering of the voting age. Youth in elections and in political affairs are addressed in these policies.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Resolution 1826 (2011) Expansion of democracy by lowering the voting age to 16*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2011. <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/18015/html>

Council of Europe. *Resolution 387 (2015) Voting at 16 – Consequences on youth participation at local and regional level*. Strasbourg: Publisher not available, 2015. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680719338>

Council of Europe. *Voting at 16 – Consequences on youth participation at local and regional level*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2015. <https://rm.coe.int/168071a5ed>

## 16. Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18, Council of Europe

After summarising all key international documents focusing on the topic of children and youth participation, the Recommendation lists key principles of children and youth participation such as non-discrimination, inclusion, importance of education and upbringing, provision of information, protection from harm, and transparency. The Recommendation further lists measures which are to be implemented in order to support children and youth participation, such as legal protection of children and young people's right to participate, periodic reviews of the influence of children and youth participation on policymaking, mainstreaming of children and youth participation in decision and policymaking structures, and allocating adequate financial and human resources. It also lists measures regarding the promoting and informing of participation such as implementing public information and education programmes, supporting capacity building in the youth sector and beyond, providing age-appropriate information to children and youth, stimulating research, and promoting peer support and information networks. Lastly, the Recommendation lists measures to be taken in order to create spaces for youth participation such as utilisation of intergenerational dialogue, establishment of participatory approaches in learning environments, investment in non-governmental organisations, establishment of consultative bodies for children and young people at all levels, and inclusion of providers of youth services in policy development delivery and evaluation. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion all feature in this document.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2012. <https://rm.coe.int/168046c478>

## 17. Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe, Council of the European Union

The Council Resolution reiterates the need for increased youth political participation in order to support democracy, pluralism, and active citizenship as core values of the European Union. The Resolution also includes "characteristics of effective and real political youth participation processes". These include "relevance of the issue and real impact on the lives of young people; practice and experience of participation in daily life in different contexts such as family, community, school, workplace, youth work and local life; comprehensive

feedback and follow up by decision-makers; inclusivity and equal access for all young people with regard to gender ethnic cultural educational and social background, sexual orientation, age and specific needs.” Among others, the following concrete measures are suggested: enhancement of participative structures in formal education and nonformal learning, establishment and development of bodies representing interests of students, development of youth councils in close collaboration with local and regional public authorities, lowering the voting age for the elections of local and regional public authorities to 16 years, development of digital tools for political participation of young people, supporting information campaigns and events for young people at the occasion of local, regional, national, and European elections, and the development of a decision-making culture at all levels of government that supports youth-led, bottom up participation processes and is responsive to informal youth initiatives. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion are all covered in this document.

Full reference:

Council of the European Union. *Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2015. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215\(02\)&from=CS](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215(02)&from=CS)

## Other international or regional policies

### 18. Ibero-American Youth Rights Convention, Organización Iberoamericana de Juventud

This is a comprehensive document which builds on various international standards (e.g. Conventions and Declarations) and developments (e.g. conferences of the Ministers responsible for youth). The document summarises rights of young people in the Iberoamerican region. Apart from other Articles which set more generally the necessary precondition for youth participation (e.g. Article 5 on non-discrimination etc.), the Article 21 explicitly elaborates on youth participation, stating that youth participation is to be encouraged, that youth organisations and associations are to be supported, and that views of young people should be taken into account in policymaking as well. Inclusion and civil society are the most emphasised topics.

Full reference:

Organización Iberoamericana de Juventud. *Ibero-American Youth Rights Convention*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2009. <https://archive.crin.org/en/library/legal-database/ibero-american-youth-rights-convention.html>

### 19. Youth Participation in The Democratic Process Resolution adopted by consensus\* by the 122nd IPU Assembly (Bangkok, 1 April 2010), Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Resolution introduces a wide range of measures to be taken by States in order to increase youth participation in democratic processes. These include developing youth policies in consultations with youth organisations, establishing specialised bodies overlooking mainstreaming of youth issues in policymaking, providing appropriate education, including non-formal learning opportunities, and focusing on both youth and various educators such as youth workers, scaling up financial support to youth-led initiatives, supporting representation of youth in decision-making bodies, ensuring inclusion of youth from different walks of life in youth participation initiatives, developing participatory tools, increasing youth awareness of participation opportunities, supporting politically and financially youth councils and parliaments, and encouraging youth to join political parties. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion all feature in this document.

Full reference:

Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Youth Participation in The Democratic Process Resolution adopted by consensus\* by the 122nd IPU Assembly (Bangkok, 1 April 2010)*. Bangkok: Publisher not available, 2010. <http://archive.ipu.org/conf-e/122/res-3.htm>

## 20. The CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan (CYDAP) 2012–2017, CARICOM

Building on a multitude of global and regional youth policy documents, the Youth Development Action Plan identifies six Youth Development Goals. One of the Youth Development Goals focuses on leadership, participation, and governance. This aims to “ensure and enhance youth participation at all levels of decision making, programme implementation, and oversight.” The Youth Development Action Plan specifically focuses on supporting leadership training programs, national representative youth bodies, regional youth governance bodies, participation in electoral processes, statutory boards with youth representation, and implementation of various initiatives such as Annual National Youth Awards. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion are covered in this document.

Full reference:

CARICOM. *The CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan (CYDAP) 2012–2017*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2012. [https://caricom.org/documents/13930-caricom\\_youth\\_development\\_action\\_plan.pdf](https://caricom.org/documents/13930-caricom_youth_development_action_plan.pdf)

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Council of Europe. *Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2012. <https://rm.coe.int/168046c478>

Council of Europe. *Recommendation Rec (2004)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of young people in local and regional life*. Place of publishing not available: Committee of Ministers, 2004. [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805dbd33](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805dbd33)

Council of Europe. *Recommendation Rec (2006)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development*. Place of publishing not available: Committee of Ministers, 2006. [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d8caa](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d8caa)

Council of Europe. *Recommendation Rec (2006)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on citizenship and participation of young people in public life*. Place of publishing not available: Committee of Ministers, 2006. [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805b251a](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805b251a)

Council of Europe. *Resolution 1826 (2011) Expansion of democracy by lowering the voting age to 16*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2011. <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/18015/html>

Council of Europe. *Resolution 387 (2015) Voting at 16 – Consequences on youth participation at local and regional level*. Strasbourg: Publisher not available, 2015. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680719338>

Council of Europe. *Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*. Place of publishing not available: Council of Europe, 2003. <https://rm.coe.int/168071b4d6>

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Council of the European Union. *COUNCIL RESOLUTION of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2009. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1390996863108&uri=CELEX:32009G1219%2801%29>

Council of the European Union. *Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2015. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215\(02\)&from=CS](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215(02)&from=CS)

Council of the European Union. *Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Youth meeting within the Council of 8 February 1999 on youth participation*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 1999. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A41999X0217>

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Inter-Parliamentary Union. *YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS Resolution adopted by consensus\* by the 122nd IPU Assembly (Bangkok, 1 April 2010)*. Bangkok: Publisher not available, 2010. <http://archive.ipu.org/conf-e/122/res-3.htm>

Organización Iberoamericana de Juventud. *IBERO-AMERICAN YOUTH RIGHTS CONVENTION*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2009. <https://archive.crin.org/en/library/legal-database/ibero-american-youth-rights-convention.html>

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United Nations General Assembly Social and Economic Council. *Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: United Nations system coordination and collaboration tied to youth (A/66/61-E/2011/3)*. New York: United Nations, 2010. [https://www.youthpolicy.org/basics/2010\\_WPAY\\_Implementation\\_Report.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/basics/2010_WPAY_Implementation_Report.pdf)

United Nations General Assembly. *Organization of the High-level Meeting on Youth (A/RES/65/267)*. New York: United Nations, 2011. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

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## Epoch III.

### 2015–2020: Systematic Policies

This epoch is characterised by the creation of systematic policies tackling youth political participation, including strategies, action plans, and similar mechanisms. These policies are frequently linked to funding mechanisms and include concrete aims and objectives regarding youth political participation, with many of them also directly linked to concrete evaluation efforts.

Examples of such policies include the EU Youth Policy (both from 2010–2018 and 2019–2027) as they include a strong emphasis on the participation of young people and are directly linked to concrete funding and implementation mechanisms, such as the youth programmes, volunteering programmes, mobility programmes, and specific participation processes, such as the EU Youth Dialogue.

Another noteworthy development is the involvement of youth in designing these policies. This is highly notable in the case of the EU Youth Policy 2019–2027 which includes European Youth Goals created by over 50,000 young people from across Europe during one of the EU Youth Dialogue cycles. The European Youth Goals are not only part of the EU Youth Strategy but are continuously used today to set agendas of the EU Member States Presiding the Council of the EU, continuing to steer direct contributions of youth consultations to the ongoing policy debate (e.g. via EU Council Conclusions and Resolutions prepared by the EU Presidency Countries).

Recognising the need to contribute to the development of active citizens from an early age, strategic policy documents focusing on children are also produced in this period, with examples from both Council of Europe and the European Commission including strategies for the rights of the child. This marks an apparent effort to include incoming generations in public, political, and democratic life as early as possible to systematically support active citizenship in the European context.

At the UN level, this could also be seen through the adoption of the first UN Youth Strategy, and several agency-specific youth strategies, including from UNESCO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNFPA, all with significant focus and mainstreaming of youth participation. These policies coincided with the follow-up to the MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which identified children and young men and women as “critical agents of change” (paragraph 19) for the first time in a global development agenda. Youth participation was also enshrined as a key element to long lasting peace and stability, through the adoption of two Security Council resolutions on the theme.

The policy developments in the area of youth participation include systematisation of policymaking concerning youth political participation and involving youth and children in designing policies in this domain. Building on the deliberations of the previous epoch, youth political participation is approached systematically as a key priority of long-term policies.

Some initiatives were seen with BRICS countries during this epoch. Though, as with the previous epochs, there are generally limited policies that are specific to (or primarily intended for) Global South regions.



# UN policies

## 1. UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth 2014–2021 (2014), UNESCO

While UNESCO has recognised youth as a priority group broadly in its General Conference resolutions since 1993 and since its UNESCO Strategy for Action with and for Youth in 1998, the strategy explains that treating youth as equal partners and actors for development and peace had not been sufficiently reflected in its work. The strategy aims to renew UNESCO's focus on recognising youth as "agents of change, social transformations, peace and sustainable development", in order to create the necessary conditions to empower youth to contribute to the MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. The strategy includes three axes of work to guide its programming, with a clear youth participation focus. These are Axis 1: policy formulation and review with the participation of youth, Axis 2: capacity development for the transition to adulthood, and Axis 3: civic engagement, democratic participation, and social innovation.

Full reference:

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021*. Paris: United Nations, 2014. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227150>

## 2. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 (2015): Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Report of the Secretary-General A/70/156 (2015): Ways to promote effective structured and sustainable youth participation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (or the Sustainable Development Goals) sets the global development agenda for 2015–2030, superseding the previous Millennium Development Goals. While it does not contain specific goals relating to youth participation, it does notably identify children and young men and women as "critical agents of change" for the first time (paragraph 19). It also identifies how the "future of humanity and of our planet" lies in the hands of today's young generation, who will "pass the torch to future generations" (paragraph 53). The Report of the Secretary-General A/70/156 outlines ways in which the UN system has been engaging youth, and details how it has been ensuring the active involvement of young people in the development of the SDGs, including launching the Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda for consultation with youth on goals relating to youth issues.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. New York: United Nations, 2015. <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F70%2F1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

United Nations Secretary General. *Report of the Secretary-General (A/RES/70/156): Ways to promote effective structured and sustainable youth participation*. New York: United Nations, 2015. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/sg-reports.html>

## 3. Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2250 (2015) & S/RES/2419 (2018), United Nations

Resolution S/RES/2250 on youth, peace, and security is the first Security Council resolution focused entirely on the positive role that youth can play in sustaining peace and security. It urges Member States to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels, and to take into account the participation and views of young people when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, recognising that their marginalisation is detrimental to building sustainable peace in all societies. Resolution S/RES/2419 further

emphasises the role of young people in conflict prevention and resolution, the importance of equal and full participation of youth, particularly young women, at decision-making levels, and recognises the role that youth and youth-led civil society can play in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Full reference:

United Nations Security Council. *Youth, Peace and Security (S/RES/2250) (2015)*. New York: United Nations, 2015. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/413/06/PDF/N1541306.pdf?OpenElement>

United Nations Security Council. *Youth, Peace and Security (S/RES/2419) (2018)*. New York: United Nations, 2018. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/173/81/PDF/N1817381.pdf?OpenElement>

#### **4. Report of the Secretary-General A/70/684 (2016): Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient, and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level, United Nations**

The Report of the Secretary-General A/70/684 outlines recommendations for a follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda. It identifies high-level political forums as having a central role in reviewing implementation of the agenda, and youth as one of the stakeholders “engaged in cutting-edge work” that such high-level forums could involve. From this, the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum derives its mandate in the post-2015 era. While it has been the main platform for youth to participate in policy discussions at the United Nations at the global level since 2012, it has a renewed focus on the SDGs, which is to enable the role of youth in the monitoring, review, and implementation of the SDGs. Participation in the forum is by invitation and selected by National Youth Councils, regional youth organisations, youth-led organisations affiliated with the Major Group for Children and Youth, and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations.

Full reference:

United Nations General Secretary. *Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684)*. New York: United Nations, 2016. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/819767?ln=en>

#### **5. General Comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child**

General Comment 20 serves as a supplement to the UNCRC, to guide States on the measures necessary to ensure the realisation of the rights of children during adolescence, including the right to be heard and to participate. The General Comments emphasise the importance of political and civil engagement as a means for adolescents to advocate for their own rights and hold States accountable, and that States should ensure that adolescents are involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of legislation, policies, services, and programmes affecting their lives.

Full reference:

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. *General Comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence*. New York: United Nations, 2016. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/404/44/PDF/G1640444.pdf?OpenElement>



## 6. UNDP Youth Strategy 2014–2017 (2014), Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development & Peace (Youth-GPS) 2016-2020 (2016), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP's Youth Strategy 2014–2017 makes the first strategy that UNDP dedicated exclusively to youth, and marks a paradigm shift for UNDP, where young people are specifically recognised as "development partners, initiators, and catalysts of change". The strategy focuses on empowering youth in governance, livelihoods, and strengthening resilience in their communities. Youth-GPS aims to build upon the implementation of the youth strategy and focuses on four areas of work: civic engagement and political participation, economic empowerment, peacebuilding and resilience-building, and youth as partners in the 2030 Agenda.

Full reference:

United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017*. New York: United Nations, 2014. <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-youth-strategy-2014-2017-empowered-youth-sustainable-future>

United Nations Development Programme. *Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development & Peace (Youth-GPS) 2016-2020*. New York: United Nations, 2016. <https://www.undp.org/publications/youth-gps>

## 7. Core Actions for Refugee Youth (2016), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Core Actions for Refugee Youth is a framework for humanitarian actors focused on how to work with refugee youth as partners and leaders in humanitarian interventions. It includes seven core actions: 1) empower refugee youth through meaningful engagement, 2) recognise, utilise, and develop refugee youth capacities and skills, 3) ensure refugee youth-focused protection, 4) support the physical and emotional well-being of refugee youth, 5) facilitate refugee youth networking and information sharing, 6) reinforce refugee youth in their role as connectors and peace builders, 7) generate data and evidence on refugee youth to promote accountability to youth. This focus on youth and youth participation fits within its overall Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity, where it identifies youth as one of its under-represented groups who should be consulted on protection, assistance, and solutions.

Full reference:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Core Actions for Refugee Youth*. Geneva: United Nations, 2016. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59dc80184.html>

## 8. Youth 2030: Working with and for young people (2018), United Nations Secretary General Envoy's on Youth

Youth 2030 is the first UN Youth Strategy, acting as a common umbrella framework to guide all UN work with and for young people across three pillars: peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. Youth 2030 is placed beneath the policy framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth, and it constitutes the strategic plan on youth for the UN system, and its work through UN Country Teams and UN entities. A core cross-cutting principle of the strategy is "working with and for young people" as both beneficiary and partners of its programming. Among its priority areas, it includes as its first priority "Engagement, Participation and Advocacy – Amplify youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just and sustainable world" and its Fourth Priority "Youth and Human Rights – Protect and promote the rights of young people and support their civic and political engagement".

Full reference:

United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth. *Youth 2030: Working with and for young people*. New York: United Nations, 2018. <https://www.unyouth2030.com/about>

## 9. Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation (2018), UNICEF

The conceptual framework lays out the rights-based approach to adolescent participation for UNICEF, including defining the scope of participation as it relates to the UNCRC, participation in practice, and outcomes of participation. It also introduces the “Essential features of meaningful participation” (Space, Voice, Audience, Influence), otherwise known as the Lundy Model, to UNICEF programming.

Full reference:

United Nations Children’s Fund. *Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation*. New York: United Nations, 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/adolescent-girls-programme-strategy-2022-2025>

## 10. Letter dated 11 July 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/73/949) and Annex: Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, United Nations

The World Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth 2019, organised by the Portuguese Government and in cooperation with the United Nations, was held on 22–23 June 2019. The outcome of the conference resulted in the Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, wherein ministers responsible for youth made several commitments relating to youth participation. These include commitments to promote, protect, and fulfil the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all young people, including ensuring that youth policies are participatory. The Declaration acknowledges meaningful youth participation, engagement, and empowerment as key components of any youth policymaking processes. The Declaration also underlines the importance of promoting meaningful participation and engagement of youth in climate action, as well as in all phases of decision-making and implementation processes across all policies that directly and indirectly affect young people. The Declaration addresses the need to remove barriers that limit the participation and representation of young people, and to support capacity building, as well as establishing youth-friendly environments, promoting effective, structured, and sustainable participation of young people and youth organisations in decision-making processes. It addresses monitoring mechanisms in international organisations, and ensures young people’s access to reliable, understandable, and user-friendly information. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion are covered in this document.

Full reference:

United Nations General Assembly. *Letter dated 11 July 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/73/949) and Annex: Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes*. Lisbon: United Nations, 2019. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. *Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes 2019*. Lisbon: Publisher not available, 2019. <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3D%3DBAAAAB%2BLCAAAAAAABACzMDQ3BQDi5Mb3BAAAAA%3D%3D>

## 11. My Body, My Life, My World: Rights and choices for all adolescents and youth: a UNFPA global strategy (2019), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

UNFPA's global strategy for adolescents and youth aims to support the implementation of the UN youth strategy, Youth 2030. It rests on three pillars: My Body (relating to sexual and reproductive health services access), My Life (relating to determinants of health and wellbeing), and the third, relating to youth participation: My World ("Promote the leadership of adolescents and youth and their fundamental right to participate in sustainable development, humanitarian action and in sustaining peace"). UNFPA's approach focuses on bolstering youth movements and working with youth-led organisations.

Full reference:

United Nations Population Fund. *My Body, My Life, My World: Rights and choices for all adolescents and youth: a UNFPA global strategy*. New York: United Nations, 2019. <https://www.unfpa.org/youthstrategy>

## European policies

### 12. Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016–2021), Council of Europe

The Strategy identifies the participation of children as one of the five priority areas as well as one of the key crosscutting objectives. The right of children to participate should be supported by promotion, outreach, and strengthened participation in and through schools. There are four key foreseen outcomes, namely: "change legislation and policy to implement children's rights to participation; benefit from the child participation assessment tool to evaluate implementation of Article 12 of the UNCRC; take steps to embed child participation in all contexts relevant for children; Further implement the charter on EDC/HRE".

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016 - 2021)*. Place of publishing not available: Council of Europe, 2016. <https://edoc.coe.int/en/children-s-rights/7207-council-of-europe-strategy-for-the-rights-of-the-child-2016-2021.html>

### 13. The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027, Council of the European Union

The Strategy lists the necessity of young people to become active citizens as one of its overall objectives and presents participation as one of its guiding principles. The Strategy furthermore lists three key pillars: engage, connect, empower. It is apparent that youth political participation is at the forefront of the Strategy. It includes a verbatim version of the European Youth Goals which were developed within the sixth cycle of the Structured Dialogue and are based on views and opinions of tens of thousands of young people from around Europe. Apart from being a good practice example of youth political participation which turned into a top-level policy, the European Youth Goals themselves include numerous mentions of youth political participation among its priorities. The European Youth Goal #1 speaks about connecting EU with youth, the European Youth Goal #4 elaborates on information and constructive dialogue, and the European Youth Goal #9 describes the topic of space and participation for all.

Full reference:

Council of the European Union. *The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2018. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL>

## 14. Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, Council of the European Union

The Resolution summarises the outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, which focused on implementation of the European Youth Goal #9: Space and Participation for All. Under the Trio Presidency of Germany, Portugal, and Slovenia, young people from across Europe co-created joint recommendations which were adopted verbatim as an annex 1 of this Resolution. The Annex 1 elaborates on how to achieve concrete targets of the European Youth Goal #9. Among others, it is suggested that concrete feedback is provided to young people whenever they are involved in decision-making processes, legislation is developed to secure sustainable youth co-management systems in decision and policymaking processes, a common youth friendly platform is developed at the European level for young people who are planning to stand for elections, and many others. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion all feature in this document.

It should be noted that the practice of including voices of young people in different council resolutions and council conclusions documents can be observed long term at least since 2018.

Full reference:

Council of the European Union. *Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the intergenerational dimension in the youth field to foster dialogue and social cohesion*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2022. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XG1229\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XG1229(01))

Council of the European Union. *Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2021. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42021Y1214\(01\)&from=CS](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42021Y1214(01)&from=CS)

Council of the European Union. *Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2023. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42023Y0526\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42023Y0526(01))

## 15. EU strategy on the rights of the child, European Commission

The Strategy lists six key areas which are to be covered. The first of these domains is "Participation in political and democratic life". In order to progress this first domain, key actions by the European Commission are listed, including, among others: establishing an EU Children's Participation Platform to connect existing child participation mechanisms at local, national, and EU level; developing and promoting accessible digital inclusive and child friendly versions and formats of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and other key EU instruments; and conducting child specific consultations for relevant future initiatives. The European Commission also invites member states to: establish, improve, and provide adequate resources for new and existing mechanisms of child participation at local, regional, and national level; increase awareness and knowledge of the rights of the child, strengthen education on citizenship, and support schools in their efforts to engage pupils in the school's daily life and decision-making. An important aspect of this Strategy is that it has been developed "for children and together with children", taking into account views and suggestions of over 10,000 children collected through various consultation processes.

Full reference:

European Commission. *EU strategy on the rights of the child*. Brussels: Official Journal of the European Union, 2021. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0142>

## Other international or regional policies

### 16. Call to Action – On young women’s political participation and leadership, Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Call to Action lists three key priorities, with priority #1 elaborating on nurturing young women's political aspirations. Among the recommendations we can find ensuring financial accessibility to quality education, strengthening of gender responsive youth policies, supporting establishment of gender balanced youth parliaments, and implementing strategies to facilitate young women's equal representation in social movements. Priority #2 talks about supporting young female candidates for political office. Among others, the following recommendations are linked to this priority: provision of resources to mobilise training to young women who are political aspirants, promoting parity as one of the key measures guaranteeing women safe, fair, inclusive, and supportive access to political office; and adopting and implementing protective measures to eliminate sexism and gender-based harassment and violence in politics, including online. Priority #3 presents the topic of empowering young women in office and investing in their leadership. Among others, recommendations linked to this priority discuss overseeing the implementation of youth policies from a gender perspective, ensuring that all political institutions are gender sensitive and gender responsive, encouraging structured intergenerational mentorship within political institutions, and creating networks of young parliamentarians. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion are addressed in this document.

Full reference:

Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Call to Action- On young women’s political participation and leadership*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2020. <https://www.ipu.org/news/call-action-young-womens-political-participation-and-leadership>

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Council of Europe. *Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)*. Place of publishing not available: Council of Europe, 2016. <https://edoc.coe.int/en/children-s-rights/7207-council-of-europe-strategy-for-the-rights-of-the-child-2016-2021.html>

Council of the European Union. *Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the intergenerational dimension in the youth field to foster dialogue and social cohesion*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2022. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XG1229\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XG1229(01))

Council of the European Union. *Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2021. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42021Y1214\(01\)&from=CS](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42021Y1214(01)&from=CS)

Council of the European Union. *Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2023. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42023Y0526\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42023Y0526(01))

Council of the European Union. *The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2018. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL>

European Commission. *EU strategy on the rights of the child*. Brussels: Official Journal of the European Union, 2021. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0142>

Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Call to Action- On young women's political participation and leadership*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2020. <https://www.ipu.org/news/call-action-young-womens-political-participation-and-leadership>

United Nations Children's Fund. *Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation*. New York: United Nations, 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/adolescent-girls-programme-strategy-2022-2025>

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. *General Comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence*. New York: United Nations, 2016. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/404/44/PDF/G1640444.pdf?OpenElement>

United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017*. New York: United Nations, 2014. <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-youth-strategy-2014-2017-empowered-youth-sustainable-future>

United Nations Development Programme. *Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development & Peace (Youth-GPS) 2016-2020*. New York: United Nations, 2016. <https://www.undp.org/publications/youth-gps>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). *UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021*. Paris: United Nations, 2014. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227150>

United Nations General Assembly. *Letter dated 11 July 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/73/949) and Annex: Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes*. Lisbon: United Nations, 2019. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-resolutions.html>

United Nations General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. New York: United Nations, 2015. <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%-2FRES%2F70%2F1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>



United Nations General Secretary. *Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684)*. New York: United Nations, 2016. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/819767?ln=en>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Core Actions for Refugee Youth*. Geneva: United Nations, 2016. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59dc80184.html>

United Nations Population Fund. *My Body, My Life, My World: Rights and choices for all adolescents and youth: a UNFPA global strategy*. New York: United Nations, 2019. <https://www.unfpa.org/youthstrategy>

United Nations Secretary General. *Report of the Secretary-General (A/RES/70/156): Ways to promote effective structured and sustainable youth participation*. New York: United Nations, 2015. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/sg-reports.html>

United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth. *Youth 2030: Working with and for young people*. New York: United Nations, 2018. <https://www.unyouth2030.com/about>

United Nations Security Council. *Youth, Peace and Security (S/RES/2250) (2015)*. New York: United Nations, 2015. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/413/06/PDF/N1541306.pdf?OpenElement>

United Nations Security Council. *Youth, Peace and Security (S/RES/2419) (2018)*. New York: United Nations, 2018. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/173/81/PDF/N1817381.pdf?OpenElement>

World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. *Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes 2019*. Lisbon: Publisher not available, 2019. <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3D%3DBAAAAB%2BLCAAAAAAABACzMDQ3BQDi5Mb3BAAAAA%3D%3D>

## Epoch IV.

### 2020–present: Mainstreaming Mechanisms

Apart from the demographic development in the countries of the Global North, as previously mentioned in epoch I., worldwide crises of the early 2020s (e.g. climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, etc.) became another key factor that formed youth policy into not only a standalone, but also an important policymaking domain. It is the emergence of these global crises that pushes upon the policymakers the necessity to acknowledge the cross-sectoral nature of these challenges as well as their intergenerational dimension. In response, youth mainstreaming as well as widening the understanding of youth policy as a cross-sectoral domain have become established practices. Building on the key developments from the previous epoch, namely on the systematic strategies on youth political participation, new policymaking mechanisms, and overall change in understanding of youth participation take place.

This epoch is therefore characterised by efforts to establish concrete innovative, long-term youth political participation mechanisms enabling and empowering young people to contribute to policy development across various policy fields. These mechanisms build on the method of consultations with young people (e.g. EU Youth Dialogue, input to G7 Summit, etc.), but also offer new developments, as is the case with the EU Youth Test, a newly established policy development tool at the EU level which was initiated as a result of public consultations (Conference on the Future of Europe, the European Year of Youth, etc.), and which includes several clear methods of including young peoples' views in policymaking (e.g. apart from consultations also engagement of experts, or deliberations with youth representative structures, etc.). At the UN level, the role of youth became concretised through a dedicated United Nations Youth Office, a more permanent structure than the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth established in the previous epoch.

Overall, the policy developments of this epoch in the area of youth participation include young people becoming active agents in policymaking rather than only policy subjects, in combination with efforts to establish innovative and long-term mechanisms to facilitate youth political participation beyond typical channels of representative democracy (i.e. voting and running for office). It should also be noted that these developments are in line with the more general trends in evolution of Global North democracies, namely their diversification to include various practices beyond representative democracy, including participatory democracy, direct democracy, and deliberative democracy approaches, as well as recognition of the importance of the counter-democracy domain (e.g. civic spaces, movements, and activism). Emergence of the second key trend framing youth political participation as a key priority (i.e. complex cross-sectoral and intergenerational matters such as climate change) enhanced youth mainstreaming developments. UN policy, as articulated in the reports of the Secretary-General, also emphasised an intergenerational perspective, calling for solidarity with current and future generations of young people in global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which mark this era thus far.

Within the Global South during this epoch, policy initiatives have taken place in BRICS, ASEAN, African Union, CARICOM, and Commonwealth regions. These tend to follow the discourse on participation set by the UN, but mostly focus on policies which address international development for youth. There is some emphasis on youth as change makers, mobilising young people towards achieving



various aims, such as the sustainable development goals. Thus the Global South agendas are less concerned with the democratic crisis of the Global North, and more underline the contribution young people can make to a nation's development. There is considerable emphasis on volunteering, and even entrepreneurship connected to youth participation. Policies are generally not detailed enough to establish the concrete long term cross sectorial mechanisms that occur within the Global North for youth involvement in policymaking. Instead, Global South policies provide the building blocks for youth participation policy, setting out youth as rights holders and emphasising the value and need for promotion of youth participation.

## UN policies

### 1. Report of the Secretary-General A/75/982 (2021): Our Common Agenda, United Nations

The report of the Secretary-General, made in the context of COVID-19, states that “now is the time to think for the long term, to deliver more for young people and succeeding generations and to be better prepared for the challenges ahead” and includes a section titled “Solidarity with younger generations”. Here, the Secretary-General urges governments to promote political representation for youth, which could include lowering the voting age or eligibility age for standing as a candidate for elected office or strengthening youth participation bodies. The Secretary-General will also explore a “youth in politics index” tracking the opening of political spaces for young people in countries around the world. Within the UN, the Secretary-General also announces the establishment of a dedicated United Nations Youth Office, and will push for more meaningful, diverse, and effective youth engagement in the UN deliberative and decision-making processes.

Full reference:

United Nations Secretary General. *Report of the Secretary-General A/75/982: Our Common Agenda*. New York: United Nations, 2021. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/217/01/PDF/N2121701.pdf?OpenElement>

### 2. Youth Strategy: Roadmap to 2021 and beyond (2021), International Telecommunications Union (UN)

The ITU, a United Nations specialised agency for ICT, also prepared its Youth Strategy, showcasing how youth policy and youth participation cross many different domains. The Strategy aims to ensure meaningful participation of youth in ITU as key stakeholders in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to align its work with the UN Youth Strategy: Youth 2030. Activities are grouped around three areas of action: Empower (supporting youth empowerment by creating a community of young leaders), Engage (bringing young people together to engage with ITU and its members), and Participate (fostering youth dialogue and participation in ITU activities and decision-making).

Full reference:

International Telecommunications Union. *Youth Strategy: Roadmap to 2021 and beyond*. Geneva: United Nations, 2021. [https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ITU\\_Youth\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ITU_Youth_Strategy.pdf)

### 3. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes (2023), United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth

The policy brief, issued by the Secretary-General, serves as an input into the Summit of the Future, to be held on 22–23 September 2024 in New York. It outlines action-oriented recommendations building upon the theme of meaningful youth engagement highlighted in “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982). The three recommendations to Member States are: a) expand and strengthen youth participation in decision-making at all levels, b) make meaningful youth engagement a requirement in all United Nations decision-making processes, and c) support the establishment of a standing United Nations Youth Townhall and an integrated programme from the United Nations system to facilitate greater diversity, representativeness, and preparedness in youth participation.

Full reference:

United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth. *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policy-making and Decision-making Processes*. New York: United Nations, 2023. <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/#:~:text=Meet%20Jayathma%20Wickramanayake%2C%20the%20Secretary,Ms.>

## European policies

### 4. Towards structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU decision-making process, European Economic and Social Committee

The own-initiative opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee points out that climate and sustainable development policies are intergenerational in nature and therefore meaningful youth engagement needs to be present at all stages of EU decision-making processes. Concretely, the “EESC proposes the establishment of Youth Climate and Sustainability Roundtables to be hosted by the EESC in collaboration with the European Commission and the European Parliament”. Further engagement of youth delegates, youth organisations, or other youth representatives at various events of the EESC is also foreseen.

Full reference:

European Economic and Social Committee. *Stand up for Democracy – Speak up for Europe*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2023. <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/ge-04-23-432-en-n.pdf>

European Economic and Social Committee. *Towards structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU decision-making process*. Place of publishing not available: European Economic and Social Committee, 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020IE1552>

### 5. Decision (EU) 2021/2316 of The European Parliament and of The Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth (2022), European Parliament

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union designated 2022 to become the European Year of Youth. Empowering and supporting young people in political participation and civic engagement, as well as in taking part in consultation processes, and mainstreaming youth policy across all relevant EU policy fields, together with bringing youth perspectives into policymaking at all levels, are all quoted as objectives of the European Year of Youth. The Decision also lists measures which are to be taken to achieve these objectives. Two concrete measures are of interest when it comes to youth political participation: “promoting youth participation and enhancing the use of existing and new innovative tools, channels and programs that enable all young people to reach policymakers by identifying, collecting and sharing

experiences in good practice and raising awareness among policymakers of those tools, channels and programs; gathering ideas using participatory methods in an effort to co-create and co-implement the European Year.”

Full reference:

European Parliament. *Decision (EU) 2021/2316 of The European Parliament and of The Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth (2022)*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2021. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D2316&qid=1666248275753&from=CS>

## 6. The EU Youth Test, European Economic and Social Committee

Building on the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe, and the European Year of Youth, and being fully aligned with key objectives of the EU Youth Strategy, the EU Youth Test is recommended for implementation by the EESC. The EU Youth Test is supposed to function as a method of strategic foresight for policymaking, ensuring that needs and interests of young people are taken into account across all policy fields. While the EU Youth Test contains several steps, one of them is direct qualitative consultation with young people and youth organisations on the matter at hand. The EESC recommends that the EU Youth Test should align with existing successful initiatives such as the EU Youth Dialogue or the European Youth Event.

Full reference:

European Economic and Social Committee. *The EU Youth Test*. Place of publishing not available: European Economic and Social Committee, 2022. <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eu-youth-test>

## 7. Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027), Council of Europe

The Strategy includes six priority areas, one of which is titled “Giving a Voice to Every Child”. Children’s participation is to be boosted by implementing Council of Europe standards in the domains such as policies, youth activities, creating safe and ethical opportunities for participation of children, promoting child participation in and through schools and non-formal learning, development of national strategies or action plans, and assessing and reviewing existing mechanisms. Further innovations are to include, among others: lowering the voting age, co-designing environmental policies, development of child-led activities, empowering children acting as defenders of human rights and of the environment, and mainstreaming child participation. The Strategy also builds on consultations with young people. Suggestions of children who were consulted also included potential measures to be taken such as: giving easy access to children and professionals to platforms that gather children’, points of view; consulting children regarding specific themes of concern to them, and establishing contact through youth councils, European platforms, digital platforms and social media, and other bodies on issues of concern to children.

Full reference:

Council of Europe. *Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2022. <https://rm.coe.int/council-of-europe-strategy-for-the-rights-of-the-child-2022-2027-child/1680a5ef27>

Council of Europe. *Report on child consultations informing the elaboration of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2022. <https://rm.coe.int/council-of-europe-child-consultations-to-inform-the-elaboration-of-the/1680a697d5>

## 8. Youth Action Plan in EU external action 2022–2027, European Commission

The Youth Action Plan is a deliverable of the European Year of Youth, reflecting the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe, and it was designed in line with consultations with over 220 stakeholders from around the world. It is also fully in line with the EU Youth Strategy, utilising its three main pillars of engage, empower, and connect. The Youth Action Plan is subtitled “Promoting meaningful youth participation and empowerment in EU external action for sustainable development, equality and peace”, and as such its major focus is the domain of youth participation. Concrete objectives include, among others: meaningful youth engagement in EU external action, improving youth engagement at regional and multilateral levels, and creating an enabling environment for young people's civic and political participation.

Full reference:

European Commission. *Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action 2022 – 2027*. Strasbourg: European Commission, 2022. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-action-plan\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-action-plan_en)

## 9. Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council – Fostering engagement among young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment, Council of the European Union

The Conclusions, building on numerous international strategies and documents, and on the European youth goal number 10, highlighted the need to include young people in decision-making and action-taking concerning environmental issues and measures. The conclusions invite the member states to “Safeguard and create sustainable long term, secure, accessible, and inclusive civic spaces for cooperation with local, regional, national, European and international political decision-makers, where the voices of young people are heard whatever their age, their concerns or their proposals for actions to prepare to protect the environment and tackle climate change, so that they are not only consulted but are also in a position to actively participate in decisions relating to these issues.” The European Commission is further invited to “Ensure that public consultations on European environmental policies are accessible to young people and to youth and youth work organisations and that, through these consultations, the European Commission gives both citizens and stakeholders the opportunity to express their viewpoints before finalising its legislative proposals. By the same token, encourage the meaningful participation of young people and youth organisations in citizen engagement initiatives falling within the missions of the European Union.” Inclusion and civil society are the underlying themes of this document.

Full reference:

Council of the European Union. *Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council – Fostering engagement among young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2022. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XG0412\(01\)&from=CS](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XG0412(01)&from=CS)

Council of the European Union. *Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the social dimension of a sustainable Europe for youth*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2023. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023XG0526\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023XG0526(01))

# Other international or regional policies

## 10. The Updated OECD Youth Action Plan: Building Blocks for Future Action, OECD

While the original OECD Youth Action Plan did not take youth political participation into account, the update published in 2021 lists intergenerational justice and strengthening the relationship between young people and political institutions as key topics. The document also lists examples of actions undertaken by OECD countries to support young people in these domains. Some of these include removing barriers and promoting meaningful youth engagement in democratic processes, promoting spaces for dialogue among different age cohorts, and promoting representation of young people in the public sector workforce. Most importantly, continuous engagement of young people and youth organisations is foreseen as one of key steps in implementation of the Youth Action Plan. The Youth Action Plan states: “Young people as well as youth organisations will be engaged in the process through different channels to give them a voice and opportunities to propose solutions for the challenges that their generation faces today.” Youth-led civil society organisations, regional umbrella organisations, national youth councils, and other organisations active in the youth field are to be engaged in OECD work and events. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion feature in this document.

Full reference:

OECD. *The Updated OECD Youth Action Plan: Building Blocks for Future Action*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2021. <https://www.oecd.org/employment/youth/The-Updated-OECD-Youth-Action-Plan.pdf>

## 11. Y7 Communiqué 2022, G7

The G7 conference hosted by Germany in 2022 included the G7 Youth Summit. This initiative aiming to foster contribution of young people to the G7 processes, and building on deliberations which took place during the Youth Summit in Berlin, Germany, produced the Y7 2022 Communiqué. This Communiqué was handed over to the Prime Minister of Germany prior to the G7 Summit. It includes four key priorities and one transversal topic. Each of these key priority areas includes recommendations for the G7 members. Key priority #3 refers to the resilience of democracies and includes recommendations on education connected to participation, transparency and accountability, privacy, engagement of civil society in policymaking, interplay between citizens and policymakers in designing policy proposals, and inclusion and accessibility of evaluation processes.

Full reference:

G7. *Y7 Communiqué 2022*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, Year of publishing not available. [https://y7germany.org/fileadmin/redaktion/PDFs/Y7/Youth7\\_Communique\\_2022\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://y7germany.org/fileadmin/redaktion/PDFs/Y7/Youth7_Communique_2022_-_final.pdf)

## 12. Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People, OECD

The Recommendation is a result of long-term OECD work in the youth field. Building on the 2021 updated OECD Youth Action Plan, as well as on its Investing in Youth series, and on its extensive youth reports from 2018 and 2020, consultations with young people from 20 OECD member countries were organised in September 2021 to support development of this recommendation. Section 5 of this Recommendation is especially relevant to the field of youth political participation. This section suggests establishing “legal, institutional, and administrative settings to strengthen the trust of young people of all backgrounds in government, and their relationships with public institutions”. Among concrete suggested measures, the following stand out: adjusting voter registration rules and minimum voting age requirements, increasing age diversity in parliamentary and executive bodies, for example through youth quotas, engaging young

people and youth stakeholders in all stages of the policymaking cycle to ensure age diversity in stakeholder participation, creating or strengthening institutions such as youth advisory bodies and opportunities for stakeholder participation, including through information sharing, consultations and engagement with youth councils at national and subnational level on all policy areas that young people determine are of interest to them; and promoting the representation of young people in the public sector workforce as well as intergenerational learning between older and younger employees. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion feature in this document.

Full reference:

OECD. *Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2022. <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0474>

### 13. The Future We Want: Better Policies for the Next Generation and Sustainable Transition, OECD

Prepared at an initiative of the Italian presidency of the 2022 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, a workshop was organised in Paris, France, bringing together members of Youthwise, the OECD's youth advisory board, as well as representatives from youth organisations and OECD experts. As a result, a youth manifesto was prepared which includes three key domains: youth participation, policy action for future generations, and environment and the planet. Concrete proposals include paid leave for civic participation, application of a long-term intergenerational lens when enacting policy, power sharing across generations, ensuring greater government transparency and accountability, and meaningful involvement of youth representatives in policy debates and decision-making processes on environmental and climate issues, at international, national, and local levels. Political affairs, elections, civil society, and inclusion are all covered in this document.

Full reference:

OECD. *The Future We Want: Better Policies for the Next Generation and Sustainable Transition*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2022. <https://www.oecd.org/about/civil-society/youth/The-Future-Youth-Want-MCM-synthesis.pdf>



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Council of the European Union. *Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the social dimension of a sustainable Europe for youth*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2023. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023XG0526\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023XG0526(01))

European Commission. *Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action 2022 – 2027*. Strasbourg: European Commission, 2022. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-action-plan\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-action-plan_en)

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European Economic and Social Committee. *The EU Youth Test*. Place of publishing not available: European Economic and Social Committee, 2022. <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eu-youth-test>

European Economic and Social Committee. *Towards structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU decision-making process*. Place of publishing not available: European Economic and Social Committee, 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020IE1552>

European Parliament. *Decision (EU) 2021/2316 of The European Parliament And Of The Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth (2022)*. Place of publishing not available: Official Journal of the European Union, 2021. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D2316&qid=1666248275753&from=CS>

G7. *Y7 Communiqué 2022*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, Year of publishing not available. [https://y7germany.org/fileadmin/redaktion/PDFs/Y7/Youth7\\_Communique\\_2022\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://y7germany.org/fileadmin/redaktion/PDFs/Y7/Youth7_Communique_2022_-_final.pdf)

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OECD. *The Updated OECD Youth Action Plan: Building Blocks for Future Action*. Place of publishing not available: Publisher not available, 2021. <https://www.oecd.org/employment/youth/The-Updated-OECD-Youth-Action-Plan.pdf>

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# Summary conclusion

Academic research has focused on young people turning away from traditional forms of youth participation (voting, membership of political parties, standing for office) and toward alternative forms of participation (everything else connecting to the political sphere). Though this research is driven from the Global North, it is widely accepted that young people are less likely to engage in traditional political structures than their elders, and their elders when they were young, but are still active in alternative forms of participation.

Motivations and enablers for participation are many and varied and may also vary by the type of participation the young person is engaged with. It is understood that voting habits and political ideologies are acquired during adolescence but are strongly linked to personal factors such as political knowledge and efficacy, and level of trust in the political system. Youth participation is also generally influenced by family environment, access to social and political resources, and the ability to form identities of affinity by others mobilised by the same cause. Involvement with civil society organisations has a strong impact on the ability of young people to participate, though some evidence indicates that individual organisations are attractive to similar young people, even though the sector as a whole might be diverse.

Youth civil society is arguably much broader than classic youth-led associations, and might also be said to include social movements, and pseudo-independent youth structures set up within public or civic society organisations.

Young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to participate in politics, with educational level and education assignment of both the young person and their parents playing a strong role. There is also variation by gender and ethnicity. Patterns of marginalisation relating to gender and ethnicity are not fully clear, but it is reasonable to assume that those from minority ethnic groups and women are less likely to participate.

Academic research does not contain sufficient evaluative evidence to establish which kinds of programmes and policies are most effective at promoting youth participation, aside from some evidence that informal approaches are to be used, informally applied approaches are most effective.

Indeed, the body of research makes it clear that any programme or policy to promote youth participation needs to set clear goals, considering which forms of participation are to be promoted and why. Given the declining trust of young people and engagement with formal political structures being the dominant narrative, any policy or programme might seek to restore this trust, or alternatively work around it to develop other methods of participation which may be more attractive to young people.

Taking into account that the myth of youth apathy is now largely dispelled, it is clear that reinvigorating youth participation cannot be solved solely by educational programmes for young people. Whilst political knowledge and interest play a role, so too do confidence and belief in the effectiveness of whatever democracy the younger person lives in. A combination of governance reform and educational measures are likely to be needed for any programme to be effective.

Considering the current state of policies on youth participation, as of 2023 it can be said that there are vague and undefined boundaries between children, minors, and youth. This affects policy delivery, since many

concrete action plans and programmes define these groups differently. This has particular implications for the role of education and assumptions about the access of young people to voting enfranchisement. But also more general implications about the competencies and abilities of young people to engage politically.

Only a minority of countries lowered the voting age to 16 despite long-term policy debates and encouragement by various international bodies. Similarly, there is not much progress in increasing numbers of youth representatives in democratic institutions, despite efforts devoted to this area by some international bodies (see IPU, concretely Report from 2018<sup>6</sup> and 2020<sup>7</sup>, and an online data website containing also historical datasets where trends can be explored<sup>8</sup>)

More positively, youth policy in general and youth political participation in particular, became a systematic and cross-sectoral topic and a regular point on most international policy agendas. This stands in stark contrast with previous policy epochs in which these topics were either ad hoc, or even marginal. Two key processes can be identified which greatly contributed to these developments: concerns about democratic deficit within Global North countries, resulting from youth disengagement, and pressing policy matters of current times which present policymakers with the urgent need to acknowledge the cross-sectoral nature of these challenges, as well as their intergenerational dimension (e.g. climate change). The first key process led to systematisation of youth and youth participation policies and to their overall increased development. The second key process led to the widening of the youth policy scope, and therefore also of the scope of youth political participation, to also include areas which were not traditionally deemed relevant for young people (e.g. renewable energy, environmental policies, housing developments, etc.), and more generally to youth mainstreaming.

Across policy field consultations with young people, alternative forms of participation and involvement of young people with policymaking in various formats are becoming increasingly frequent. This is setting up new standards of policymaking not only in the youth political participation domain, but also beyond. See Citizens' Panels initiative of the European Commission where young people are to be represented by 25% of the participants as a rule (e.g. Learning Mobility Panel<sup>9</sup>). The quality of these consultations vary, with some engaging vast numbers of young people and reaching out to youth organisations and youth representatives, while others take place with much lower target audiences and much less rigid methodology. The quality of the consultations might be rising as the attention is devoted to increasing it (e.g. the EU Youth Test which sets clear guidelines for quality of any such process on the EU level across policy fields).

It is clear that the emphasis on youth participation is driven in policy terms by the UN and by the European countries. Thus, there are far fewer international policy developments that are specific to Global South regions. Those which do occur tend to:

- Support the rights agenda led by the UN and hold that promotion of youth participation is desirable.
- Set youth participation within a wider development agenda, placing it alongside other youth issues such as work and education.
- Place some emphasis on volunteering and youth as changemakers who contribute to delivering international development aims such as the SDGs.
- Be less concrete and detailed than developments within Europe, paying less attention to mechanisms and methods of participation and policymaking.

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6 <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2018-12/youth-participation-in-national-parliaments-2018>

7 <https://www.ipu.org/youth2021>

8 <https://data.ipu.org/content/data-age-data-tools>

9 [https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/learning-mobility-panel\\_en](https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/learning-mobility-panel_en)

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