



LET'S VOTE

***AN OVERVIEW OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOTING PARTICIPATION
IN FRANCE, SLOVENIA, PORTUGAL AND SPAIN***

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INTRODUCTION

The project let's vote is about finding ways to involve young people in the democratic process and in particular educate them about the role, impact and importance of voting.

The project involve 4 partners from 4 European countries:

La Villa from France



Društvo CIK from Slovenia



Lupa from Portugal



Promesas from Spain



The goal of this document is to briefly present the electoral system of each partner country, assess the situation of young people and voting in each partner countries, identify the challenges and obstacles to young people's participation in elections and propose potential solution to involve them in the democratic process.





FRANCE

ASSOCIATION LA VILLA

WHAT ARE THE MAIN VOTING SYSTEMS USED IN FRANCE

In France, elections are held either by **direct universal suffrage**: the President of the Republic, deputies to the National Assembly, French representatives to the European Parliament, regional and departmental councillors and mayors are all elected directly by the people.

Senators, on the other hand, are **appointed by indirect universal suffrage** since they are elected by a college of grand electors composed of local elected representatives.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT ELECTIONS IN FRANCE?

Presidential elections

The election of the President of the Republic is carried out by a **two-round uninominal majority vote**. To be elected in the first round, a candidate must obtain an absolute majority of the votes cast. Failing that, the two candidates with the highest number of votes in the first round participate in the second round.

The presidential term is five years. A President of the Republic may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

Legislative elections

The legislative election is a **two-round majority vote** to elect the 577 deputies to the National Assembly.

To be elected in the first round, a candidate must obtain an absolute majority of the votes cast and a number equal to one quarter of the number of registered voters. To be elected in the second round, **a relative majority** is required.

Legislative elections are held by legislative constituency. Each constituency corresponds to one seat. The legislative mandate is for 5 years and is renewable, except in the event of dissolution of the National Assembly.





Senatorial Elections

Senators are elected by **indirect universal suffrage**. They are elected for a renewable six-year term in each department by a college of electors made up of elected representatives from that district.

The college includes senators, deputies, regional councillors elected in the department, departmental councillors and municipal councillors.

The electoral college is composed of approximately 160,000 people, 95% of whom are municipal councillors.

The number of senators in each constituency varies according to the population.

The senatorial election varies according to the number of seats allocated to the department.

- In departments that elect one or two senators, the election is conducted by a **two-round majority vote**.
- In departments that elect three or more senators, the **proportional representation** system applies. The election is held by a single-round list system.

European Elections

The European election is a **proportional list system**. The number of seats to be filled is distributed according to the number of votes obtained by each list.

The candidate for the European election is elected as France's representative in the European Parliament according to the order of presentation on each list. He or she is elected for a renewable term of five years.

Regional Elections

The regional election is a **two-round list election**. Each list is divided into a number of sections equal to the number of departments or special-status communities in the region concerned.

Regional elections are used to elect regional councillors. When a list wins more than half of the votes cast in the first round, the seats are allocated. If not, the lists with at least 10% of the votes cast continue to the second round.

After the second round, the list that comes first is allocated one quarter of the seats. The remaining seats are distributed proportionally among the lists that have received at least 5% of the votes cast.

The election takes place in March every six years.

Departmental Elections

The departmental election is a **two-round majority vote**. Candidates for the departmental elections are nominated in pairs of one woman and one man. Each candidate is accompanied by a substitute.

The departmental elections are used to elect the members of the departmental councils.





Candidates for the departmental elections run in electoral districts called cantons. They can be elected in the first round if they receive an **absolute majority** of the votes cast and a quarter of the registered voters. They are elected in the second round if they obtain a **relative majority**.

Municipal Elections

Municipal councillors are elected by **direct universal suffrage** for a renewable 6-year term.

The voting system is not uniform and differs according to the population of the municipalities in question. A distinction must be made between municipalities with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants and those with 1,000 or more.

Consultations

1. The “referendum d’initiative partage”: The conditions to implement a “referendum d’initiative partage” are very strict and it was implemented only once in 2019.
2. L’initiative citoyenne européenne (ICE) The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) gives Europeans the opportunity to express their concerns in a concrete way and to influence the political and legislative agenda of the European Union. ICE was registered 100 times by the European commission.
3. A referendum is a voting procedure that enables the people to be consulted directly on a draft text. Article 3 of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic recognises the referendum as one of the two means of expressing national sovereignty. Referendums can be used to pass legislation, revise the constitution or decide whether a country should join the European Union. There are 3 types: legislative (to seek the opinion of the people on a draft law that may cover a variety of subjects), constitutional (allows the people to be consulted on a draft text amending the Constitution) and local (to decide whether or not to implement a project concerning a local matter). The last referendum in France was in 2005.

These information and more can be found on the French interior ministry [website](#).

PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ELECTIONS



WHAT IS THE SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND VOTING IN FRANCE?

In March and April 2023, we sent a survey to at least 50 young people in each of the partner country of the project (Slovenia, Portugal, Spain and France) in order to understand the level and type of engagement of young people in the electoral system. The complete breakdown of answers is available in the annex.





For France, the results of the survey and analysis of existing statistics revealed the following facts in accordance with the assumptions of the partners:

Young people between 15 and 25 years old are fairly aware of their political and electoral system but they are not so interested in politics, do not speak about it frequently and do not feel very included in the political system even though most of them report being registered on the voting list and those of age have already voted in at least one election. Most of them get their political information via traditional channel of TV, but social media is the second reported source of political information.

Young French also report that they mostly do not engage in alternative form of political expression. But those who do, say that they do it because they feel that this type of expression has a more immediate impact on the behaviours of their elected representatives and has a greater impact on the politicians and public opinion.

The respondents declared that they have a rather negative opinion of the political system of their country and they are not particularly optimistic for their future.

They reported that the main reason why they go to vote is to express their opinion on an issue.

In order to get a clearer picture of the situation of young people and voting in France, we also used the conclusions of the 2022 study by the “Institut national de la jeunesse et de l’éducation populaire” titled [“Le vote et l’abstention des jeunes au prisme de leurs valeurs et de leur situation sociale”](#)

This report study the youth participation in the latest presidential election in France.

The following conclusions are highlighted:

Young people have lost confidence in the current political system, politicians and politics, and their civic participation is more and more expressed outside of the traditional channels of democracy (demonstration, boycott, petitions...).

During the latest presidential election, 67 % of 18-24 years old and 61 % of 25-29 years old declared having participated in both rounds against 86 % for the category of 35 years old and more.

The study also showed that the young people who did go to vote mostly chose to do so for the candidates at the extreme of the political spectrum (radical left or right). This demonstrates the strong polarisation of young people.

The study also highlight that the social and economic context and the level of education also influence the participation level of young people. Lower socio-economic class and lower education is often associated with lower voting turn out.

WHY IS THERE A LOW VOTER TURNOUT AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN FRANCE?

There are several reasons why young people in France do not always participate in elections:

1. Disillusionment with politics: Many young people feel disconnected from the political process and do not believe that their vote make a difference. They feel that politicians do not represent their interests or that the political system is corrupt.
2. Lack of engagement: Young people do not feel that politics is relevant to their lives, or they are not aware of the issues and policies that are being debated. This lead to apathy and disinterest in voting.





3. Barriers to voting: Young people face practical barriers to voting, such as not being registered to vote or having difficulty getting to the polling station. They also face social or cultural barriers, such as feeling that voting is not something that is expected or valued in their community.
4. Lack of information: Young people do not have access to accurate or unbiased information about political issues or candidates, which can make it difficult for them to make informed decisions about whom to vote for.
5. Low political efficacy: Young people do not feel confident in their ability to make a difference through voting, or they do not believe that politicians will listen to their concerns.

HOW TO FOSTER THE INTEREST OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR VOTING IN FRANCE?

To address these issues, there have been efforts to increase voter engagement among young people in France. This has included initiatives such as social media campaigns, outreach programs to schools and universities, and efforts to make voting more accessible and convenient. Political parties and candidates have also tried to appeal to young people by promoting policies that address issues such as education, employment, and the environment, which are of particular concern to this age group. Overall, increasing youth participation in elections remains a key challenge for the French political system. Young people in France have historically been less likely to vote than older age groups. However, recent years have seen a shift in this trend, with an increasing number of young people becoming politically engaged and participating in elections.

In the frame of our study we reached to some youth workers and asked their opinion about their role and needs related to education to democracy.

The study revealed that in accordance with young people's need, most youth workers believe that young people should be more educated about their political and electoral system. They also report that young people are not interested in this theme. They acknowledge their role in motivating, educating and empowering young people about their political and electoral system but they also acknowledged that they do not tackle this issue in their daily work with young people. Half of them reported having resources to approach this issue but half of them not.

According to the results of our study, we identified several ways to foster the interest of young people for voting in France:

1. Education and awareness: Providing education and information about the electoral process, political parties and candidates, and the issues at stake in elections to help young people make informed decisions and understand the importance of their vote. Disseminate clearer and more objective information about the political system and concrete examples of how politics influence everyday life of young people. More training, more time and more money for youth workers to approach this issue and access to practical pedagogical material.
2. Outreach and engagement: reach out to young people through social media, youth organizations, and community events to engage them in the political process and address their concerns and interests. Use experiential learning activities (voting in schools, games...).
3. Making voting more accessible: Efforts to make voting more convenient and accessible, such as online voter registration and early voting, can help young people overcome practical barriers to voting.





4. Empowering youth voices: Creating opportunities for young people to engage in the political process, such as through youth councils or community forums, help empower their voices and increase their sense of civic engagement.
5. Addressing youth-specific issues: Political parties and candidates should address issues that are of particular concern to young people, such as education, employment, and the environment, to help engage them in the political process and show them that their voices matter.

Overall, it is important to recognize the diversity of young people's experiences and perspectives, and to tailor outreach and engagement efforts to meet their specific needs and interests. By fostering a sense of empowerment and engagement among young people, we want to help increase their interest and participation in the electoral process in France.

GOOD PRACTICES OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN FRANCE

In France, there are a number of projects and programs dedicated to the civic education of young people implemented both by the formal education and official public bodies and the non-formal education sector and NGOs.

Formal education:

One good practice example of education on voting for young people in France is the "Democracy and Citizenship" program implemented by the French Ministry of Education. This program aims to promote civic education and engagement among young people, including educating them about voting and democratic processes. Here are some key features of the program:

1. Curriculum Integration: The "Democracy and Citizenship" program integrates civic education into the national curriculum. It includes dedicated lessons and activities on voting, political participation, and democratic values, which are taught across different subjects and grade levels.
2. Interactive Learning: The program emphasizes interactive and participatory learning methods. It includes debates, simulations, role-playing activities, and group discussions to engage students actively in the learning process and encourage critical thinking about political issues.
3. Voter Simulation: As part of the program, some schools organize mock elections or voting simulations. Students have the opportunity to experience the voting process first-hand, including voter registration, candidate presentations, and casting their votes. This practical exercise helps familiarize young people with the voting process and introduce a sense of civic responsibility.
4. Guest Speakers and Field Trips: The program encourages schools to invite guest speakers, such as local politicians, electoral officials, or representatives from civil society organizations, to talk about voting, democracy, and the importance of political participation. In addition, schools may organize field trips to local government institutions or election centres to provide students with a real-world understanding of democratic processes.
5. Civic Engagement Projects: The program promotes students' active involvement in civic engagement projects. Students may participate in community initiatives, awareness campaigns, or social projects related to democratic values, voter registration, or youth political participation. These projects





provide practical experiences and empower young people to take an active role in shaping their communities.

6. **Teacher Training:** The Ministry of Education provides training and resources for teachers to effectively deliver civic education and facilitate discussions on voting and democracy in the classroom. This support ensures that teachers have the necessary knowledge and tools to engage students in meaningful civic learning experiences.

The "Democracy and Citizenship" program in France serves as a good practice example because it integrates civic education into the formal curriculum, employs interactive and experiential learning methods, and encourages students' active participation in civic engagement projects. By providing a comprehensive approach to educating young people about voting and democracy, this program helps foster an informed and engaged citizenry.

To find more information about the "Democracy and Citizenship" program implemented by the French Ministry of Education, you can visit the official website of the ministry or explore the dedicated resources and publications available. Here are some key sources where you can find more information:

1. [Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports \(Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports\)](#)
2. [Civic Education Portal \(Portail Éducol - Enseignement moral et civique\)](#)
3. [Professional Networks and Associations: Association des Professeurs d'Histoire-Géographie \(APHG\)](#)

Non-formal education

One good practice example of non-formal education on voting for young people in France is the "Citizenship Workshops" organized by youth organizations and civil society groups. These workshops aim to educate and engage young people in the democratic process and voting. Here are some key features of this practice:

1. **Interactive Workshops:** The Citizenship Workshops utilize interactive and participatory learning methods to engage young people. They involve hands-on activities, discussions, debates, and role-playing exercises to help participants understand the importance of voting, democratic principles, and civic engagement.
2. **Focus on Real-Life Contexts:** The workshops often connect voting education to real-life contexts that young people can relate to. For example, they may discuss how voting affects issues relevant to youth, such as education, employment, and climate change. This approach helps participants see the practical relevance of voting and its impact on their lives.
3. **Guest Speakers and Experts:** The workshops often invite guest speakers, experts, or representatives from political parties, NGOs, or local government institutions to share their knowledge and experiences. These individuals provide insights into the voting process, electoral systems, and political decision-making, fostering a deeper understanding among participants.
4. **Simulation and Role-Play:** Many Citizenship Workshops incorporate voting simulations and role-play activities. Participants may have the opportunity to experience a mock election, take on the roles of candidates or voters, and engage in discussions on campaign strategies, party platforms, and voting choices. This hands-on approach enhances their understanding of the voting process and encourages active participation.





5. Peer-to-Peer Learning: Some workshops encourage peer-to-peer learning and dialogue. Young facilitators or mentors who have previous experience in civic engagement or voting may lead sessions, share their insights, and engage participants in meaningful discussions. This creates a relatable and inclusive learning environment.

These Citizenship Workshops implemented by youth organizations and civil society groups serve as good practice examples of non-formal education on voting. By using interactive methods, connecting to real-life contexts, and promoting active participation, these workshops empower young people to become informed and engaged citizens.





SLOVENIA

DRUSTVO CIK

WHAT ARE THE MAIN VOTING SYSTEMS USED IN SLOVENIA ?

Slovenia is a country located in Central Europe and has a parliamentary system of government. The country has a multi-party system, and elections are held regularly to elect representatives at the local, regional, and national levels. The voting system used in Slovenia is a proportional representation system, which means that the number of seats won by a party is directly proportional to the number of votes it receives.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT ELECTIONS IN SLOVENIA ?

Presidential elections

The President represents the Republic of Slovenia and is the Commander-in-Chief of its defence forces. He/she is elected by direct, universal and secret suffrage for a term of five years, but not more than twice in succession.

This means that the President may be elected by all those who are otherwise eligible to vote in elections to the National Assembly. Slovenia does not have a limited passive right to vote. The same age conditions apply to voter and candidates

Legislative elections

Every four years, the 90 members of the National Assembly are elected by proportional representation. There is no minimum threshold required for parties to participate in the election, and all parties that receive at least 4% of the votes are eligible to win seats.

The voting system used is a closed list system, which means that voters cannot change the order of candidates on the list.





Instead, they vote for the party or the candidate within the party list that they prefer. The number of votes received by each party is used to determine the number of seats it will receive in the National Assembly. Seats are allocated using the d'Hondt method, which is a mathematical formula that allocates seats based on the number of votes received by each party.

One unique aspect of the Slovenian legislative election is the use of a special reserve seat system. This system is used to ensure that minority groups are represented in the National Assembly. Each party that wins at least one seat in the National Assembly is entitled to a reserve seat, which is awarded to the party that receives the most votes but does not win any seats.

State council elections

The National Council of the Republic of Slovenia is a representative body defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia as representing social, economic, professional and local interests. It is composed of:

- Representatives of labour and social interests (functional interests),
- Representatives of local interests (territorial interests).
- Forty Councillors of State represent interests covering all the main segments of society:
 - 4 employers' representatives,
 - 4 representatives of employees,
 - 4 representatives of farmers, craftsmen and independent professionals,
 - 6 representatives of non-economic activities,
 - 22 representatives of local interests.

Unlike the National Assembly, the Council of State is elected indirectly. Only those who are members of the above interest groups have the right to vote. Members of the Council of State are elected for five years.

European Elections

MEPs from the Republic of Slovenia are directly elected to the European parliament on the basis of universal and equal suffrage by secret ballot for five-year terms. The electoral system is proportional with preferential voting, where voters have a say in the choice of candidates and not just in the choice of political parties.

Local elections

The basic units of local self-government are municipalities or boroughs. Municipalities are equal partners with the state and are governed by three independent bodies - the mayor, the municipal council and the supervisory board.

Local elections are held every four years to elect the mayor and members of the municipal council. In municipalities where sub-districts are established, members of local, village or neighbourhood communities are also elected. Mayors are elected by a majority system and municipal councils by a majority or proportional system.





Referendums

A referendum is a democratic process in which all citizens with the right to vote can take part and cast their vote on a referendum question. It is one of the cornerstones of direct democracy.

In a referendum on a constitutional amendment, voters decide whether to approve an amendment to the Constitution adopted by the National Assembly before its promulgation.

In a legislative referendum, voters decide on the approval of a law adopted by the National Assembly before its promulgation. A law shall be rejected in a referendum if a majority of the electors who validly voted against it, provided that at least one fifth of the total number of electors vote against the law.

In a referendum on international relations, the electorate shall declare in advance whether it wishes to transfer the exercise of part of its sovereign rights to international organisations or whether it wishes to enter into a defence alliance governed by an international treaty.

The National Assembly may also call a consultative referendum on issues within its competence which are of wider interest to citizens.

The last referendum was in 2022.

YOUNG PEOPLE SITUATION TOWARDS VOTING



WHAT IS THE SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND VOTING IN SLOVENIA ?

In March and April 2023, we sent a survey to at least 50 young people in each of the partner country of the project (Slovenia, Portugal, Spain and France) in order to understand the level and type of engagement of young people in the electoral system. The complete breakdown of answers is available in the annex.

For Slovenia, the results of the survey and analysis of existing statistics revealed the following facts in accordance with the assumptions of the partners:

70% of young Slovenians between 15 and 25 years old declared to have a good knowledge of their political and electoral system, but many also declared they were not interested in politics, that they did not feel included in the political system. They declared that the subject of politics was not a topic that they particularly speak about even though most of them reported being registered on the voting list and those of age had already voted in at least one election.

Most of them said that they get their political information on TV but social media and Internet media came second.





51 % of young Slovenian reported that not engaging in alternative form of political expression, but those who did, mostly signed petitions and/or went to street protests. Many said that they do it because they want to contribute to the political decisions of the country (spread values, express their ideas, contribute to change...) but feel that voting is not enough. Some also expressed that activism has a more immediate impact on the behaviours of their elected representatives and has a greater impact on the politicians and public opinion.

The respondents declared that they have a rather negative opinion of the political system of their country (only 1% are fully satisfied) but slightly more respondents were optimistic for their future than the contrary.

They reported that the main reason why they go to vote is to express their opinion on an issue, then support a candidate and 39 % declared that they always go to vote.

In order to get a clearer picture of the situation of young people and voting in France, we also used the various sources such as press articles from RTV SLO, official statistics from Državna Volilna Komisija (National Electoral Commission) and a thorough study of the situation of young people in Slovenia from Mlad.si ([Mladina 2020](#)) which confirmed and complete the conclusion of our survey:

- Interest in politics among young people is low. Despite the fact that in the parliamentary election of 2022 the turnout was higher than in previous elections, only 13% of young Slovenian between 18 and 30 years old came to vote.
- The results show that young people have very low trust in the various political institutions and in politics in general.
- Participation in elections is low among young people, especially when it comes to elections to the European Parliament. Other forms of participation in institutional politics are extremely low (e.g. running for political office, participating in party activities, etc.).
- Petitioning is one of the most conventional forms of political participation, which is also widespread among today's youth.
- Young people have a high willingness to participate in protest movement activities, either in person or online.
- The willingness and actual participation of young people in various activities within civil society organisations is at a very high level.
- Young people feel more politically competent than they did ten years ago, are more inclined to communicate with politicians, show a greater general interest in politics and are also slightly more likely to sign petitions.
- As many as a quarter of young people believe that the use of violence is legitimate when it comes to higher goals that address injustice.

One interesting fact for our project is that young Slovenians who do go to vote mostly choose to do so for the candidates at the extreme of the political spectrum (radical left or right). This demonstrates the strong polarisation of young people.

Through our survey and research, we identified several reasons for the low turnout of young Slovenians in elections:





Young people report that they do not understand politics, which has a negative impact on political participation despite the increased level of understanding of politics between 2010 and 2020.

Participation in elections was hindered by a lack of knowledge about the candidates or the issue at hand.

Young people in Slovenia said that they believe that politicians are generally not concerned with the opinions of individuals and that the ordinary individual has no influence on what the authorities do. This means that, as a consequence, the political effectiveness of individuals in such a system is limited, which has a negative impact on political participation. In 2022, Miha Zupančič, President of the Slovenian Youth Council, warned that low youth participation in elections was the responsibility of misguided policies that have forgotten about young people. He called on decision-makers to offer clear solutions to the problems of young people and urged young people to turn out in as large numbers as possible. The political parties themselves admit targeting older voters who actually show up to the polls rather than young people who do not, creating a vicious circle of young people disengagement from elections.

HOW TO FOSTER THE INTEREST OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR VOTING IN SLOVENIA?

Here are some of the reasons evoked by the respondents of our survey about what would foster their interest in voting :

- The feeling of being able to influence the issue of the vote and the country's system
- Competent politicians with concrete idea and a concrete plan for the common good
- More honest, clearer and more transparent parties
- Civic duty
- More knowledge of the system and issues
- Less stress on what is right or wrong but more neutral facts and information to guide people's choice
- Better voting system

According to our study, we also identified several areas to improve the interest of young people for voting in Slovenia :

- There is a need to strengthen trust mechanisms in politics, building on positive examples.
- There is a need to stimulate interest in politics through various projects and programmes, which would at the same time influence young people's greater knowledge of politics and political processes.
- It is necessary to promote citizens' participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies at all stages, to be very transparent in this respect and also to provide information on the impact of such participation.
- It is necessary to strengthen the civil society spaces in which young people want to participate and thus strengthen their democratic citizenship.
- Ways should be found to introduce online forms of consultation, participation, monitoring and decision-making that enable young people to participate in the political process on an equal footing.
- The relationship between ensuring security on the one hand and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms on the other needs to be redefined. The so-called 'war on terror' creates a climate for the legitimisation of violence.





- It is necessary to invest in preventive programmes to counter radicalisation and violent extremism, in order to address the conditions that lead to such practices before violence occurs.

GOOD PRACTICES OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SLOVENIA

Inštitut 8 marec: Project “Gremo Volit”



The “Inštitut 8 marec” (institute 8 of march) is a Slovenian non-governmental organisation led by young people that defines its mission as "questioning various forms of subordination, especially in the field of gender, and placing inequality in a broader social context." Their field of action is vast and they are involved in political education campaign.

In the run-up to the 2022 national elections, the Institute ran the “Gremo Volit” (Let's Vote) campaign, which was both designed to collect signatures for the “Undoing Harmful Government Actions Act” and to encourage citizens to participate in the upcoming national elections. Arun Chaudhary, who served as the official videographer for US President Barack Obama and as the creative director

and official photographer for Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign, was also involved in the development of the campaign.

The campaign included a variety of action such as:

- Social media campaign: The Institute published testimony, information related to elections, videos explaining the importance of voting, art creations spreading the message to go vote...
- Website: the website contained clear and accessible information about the candidate's program and views on various themes, dates and practical information about the elections
- Events: the campaign included various events such as concerts including famous Slovenian musician, talks and meeting with politicians, forums, signing petitions...

The campaign was supported by a large network of non-governmental organisation in Slovenia. The Taxi Drivers' Syndicate, in cooperation with the Institute, offered free transport to polling stations on election day to people facing difficulties in accessing polling stations (senior citizens and more vulnerable individuals), and a dedicated app was designed for this purpose. Volunteers were also invited to take part in providing transport to the polling stations.

Following several anonymous reports and several questions from the press concerning alleged breaches of electoral law by the Institute, the Inspectorate of Internal Affairs started to collect explanations and





evidence of the alleged offences against the Institute, and sent a request to the Institute to provide the Inspectorate with evidence of the content and programme of the campaign and to comment on the allegations that the Institute was carrying out an electoral campaign. The Inspectorate's summons to the Institute was signed by Chief Inspector Mark Kandolf, who had been appointed by the Government the previous day and took office on the day the summons was issued to the Institute.

The Institute identified the inspection process as an attempt by the authorities to discredit the Institute, and stated that it was considering the possibility of criminal charges against the inspector for abuse of official position. The inspector was also charged with misconduct in public office.

Constitutional lawyer Saša Zagorc wrote about the Inspectorate's move that, according to the legal rules, the Inspectorate itself should state its own opinion on the existence of a violation and the related evidence, which the alleged violator should then comment on; in the present case, he said, the Inspectorate had shifted the burden of proof to the alleged violator, who had to prove his own innocence.

On 19 May 2022, the Institute received notification from the Inspectorate that no infringement proceedings would be initiated against the Institute.





PORTUGAL

ASSOCIAÇÃO LUPA EM CENA - GRUPO DE TEATRO

WHAT ARE THE MAIN VOTING SYSTEMS USED IN PORTUGAL ?

Portugal has been a semi-presidential representative democratic republic since the ratification of the Constitution of 1976, with Lisbon, the nation's largest city, as its capital. The Constitution grants the division or separation of powers among four "sovereignty bodies": the President of the Republic, the Government, the Assembly of the Republic and the Courts.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT ELECTIONS IN PORTUGAL ?

Presidential Electoral system

Under Portuguese law, a candidate must receive a majority of votes (50% plus one vote) to be elected. If no candidate achieved a majority in the first round, a run-off election (i.e., second round, held between the two candidates who received the most votes in the first round) should be held.

In order to stand for election, each candidate must gather 7,500 signatures of support one month before the election and submit them to the Constitutional Court of Portugal. The Constitutional Court then certifies the candidacies which meet the requirements to appear on the ballot. The highest number of candidacies ever accepted was ten in 2016.

Parliament

The Portuguese parliament is composed of 230 deputies. Deputies are elected from lists submitted by parties, or coalitions of parties, in each constituency. The conversion of votes into terms of office is done according to the system of proportional representation and the highest average d'Hondt method. Deputies represent the whole country and not just the citizens of the constituency from which they were elected. Their term of office is four years, corresponding to one legislature.





Referendum

Article 115 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic determines that the President of the Republic may call a national referendum, on a proposal from the Assembly of the Republic, the Government, or on the initiative of a group of citizens addressed to the Assembly of the Republic. All registered citizens in the national territory can be called to vote; emigrants are thus excluded from this type of suffrage.

As in Portugal a referendum is only legally binding in case the turnout is equal to or greater than 50%, so far none has been. In the suffrage on regionalization and in the two on abortion (or voluntary termination of pregnancy), abstention was always greater than 50%.

However, before carrying out the second ballot on abortion, a deeply divisive issue in Portuguese society, the Portuguese Government stated that, regardless of the number of voters, it would legislate in consonance with the will of the majority of those who went to the polls; that is, if the result were not binding (as it was not), the government would follow the popular recommendation. The Portuguese Parliament approved, by a large majority a law which incorporated into Portuguese legislation what had been recommended by the population in the referendum on abortion held shortly before.

Participative budgets

Participatory budgeting is a type of citizen sourcing in which ordinary people decide how to allocate part of a municipal or public budget through a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making. Participatory budgeting allows citizens or residents of a locality to identify, discuss, and prioritize public spending projects, and gives them the power to make real decisions about how money is spent.

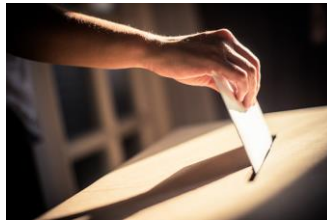
Participatory budgeting processes are typically designed to involve those left out of traditional methods of public engagement, such as low-income residents, non-citizens, and youth and it stands as one of several democratic innovations - such as British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly - encompassing the ideals of a participatory democracy.

Frameworks of participatory budgeting differ throughout the globe in terms of scale, procedure, and objective. Participatory budgeting, in its conception, is often contextualized to suit a region's particular conditions and needs. Thus, the magnitudes of participatory budgeting vary depending on whether it is carried out at a municipal, regional, or provincial level. In many cases, participatory budgeting has been legally enforced and regulated; however, some are internally arranged and promoted. Since the original invention participatory budgeting has manifested itself in all sorts of designs, with variations in methodology, form, and technology.





PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ELECTIONS



WHAT IS THE SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND VOTING IN PORTUGAL ?

In the last 20 years, young people (15-24 years old) from Portugal participated less politically than most of its European counterparts. This comparatively lower propensity to participate in politics was especially visible with regard to voting, but it also occurred in three “non- conventional” ways of participation: boycotting products for political reasons, signing petitions and participation in demonstrations. In its “unconventional” participation, Portuguese youth was more similar to young people from Eastern European countries than those of Western Europe.

Portuguese young people with electoral capacity (18-24 years old) voted much less than their older fellow citizens. This strong negative relationship between age and participation in elections is confirmed, even when taken into account the relationship between other attributes of individuals and voting, such as education, income or ideological position.

Another interesting aspect has to do with the effect of the number of years of schooling: the higher this number, the greater the propensity to vote.

The proportion of those who declare having worked for parties or civic movements is very low, in Portugal and in other European countries. The results show that again, the subject’s years of schooling are related: the likelihood of participating politically in this way goes from less than 1% to about 8%.

The boycott of the purchase of products is not part of the political participation repertoire of the Portuguese, contrary to what happens in other European countries.

The Portuguese, in general, are less likely to sign petitions as a form of participation than most European citizens. However, this is not a specificity of young people. On the contrary, the propensity to resort to this form of participation is similar until about age 60, starting to decline thereafter.

The results indicate that participation in demonstrations were less frequent in Portugal among young people than on average Europeans. However, once again, this is not a particularity of young people. On the contrary: resorting to this type of participation does not negatively distinguish younger people in comparison to most other citizens.

General reasons why youth lacks interest in voting:

1. Voting doesn’t change anything. The idea that the individual vote has no weight.
2. Lack of understanding on what changes if voting A or B.





3. Uniformed, feeling they are not prepared to debate deeply any topic
4. Lack of youth representation, irrelevance.
5. Not competitive, less interesting
6. Detachment to political parties
7. Lack of confidence, trust

YOUTH WORKERS SITUATION TOWARDS VOTING EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL?

According to the Education for Citizenship – Guidelines, from the Portuguese Ministry of Education, the practice of citizenship is a participatory process, both individual and collective, that calls for reflection and action on the problems experienced by each person and by society. The exercise of citizenship implies, on the part of each individual and of those with whom they interact, an awareness whose evolution accompanies the dynamics of intervention and social transformation. Citizenship translates into attitude and behaviour, a way of being in society that has the human rights as a reference, notably the values of equality, democracy and social justice.

As an educational process, Citizenship Education vows to contribute to the development of responsible, autonomous and solidary people that know and exercise their rights and duties through dialogue and respect for others, with a democratic, pluralist, critical thinking and creative spirit.

School provides an important context for the learning and exercise of citizenship and it reflects concerns that also matter to society and that involve different dimensions of Citizenship Education, for example: human rights education; environmental education/sustainable development; road safety education; financial education; consumer education; entrepreneurship education; education for gender equality; intercultural education; education for development; education for defence and security/peace education; volunteering; media literacy; European dimension of education; health and sex education.

Since these subjects are transversal to society, their insertion in the curriculum requires a transversal approach, both in subject areas and subjects and in activities and projects, from preschool to upper secondary education, according to the principles defined by the Decree-Law no. 139/2012, July 5th, with the changes introduced by the Decree-Law no. 91/2013, July 10th. Underlying this educational concept, there is an integrating vision of the different knowledge areas that matter to the educational practice which assumes that, besides the curricular dynamic, there is an experience of school, consistent and systematic, extended to the context where it applies.

The curriculum approach of Citizenship Education can take on different shapes, depending on the dynamics adopted by schools in the context of their autonomy, notably through the development of projects and activities of their initiative, working together with families and entities that intervene in this context, under the framework of the relationship between school and community. Citizenship Education is not a mandatory subject; therefore, schools can decide whether to provide it as an independent subject or not, in the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education (which corresponds to ISCED 1 and 2). It can be developed according to the specific needs and problems of the educational community, alongside and in response to the objectives defined by each school cluster or independent school within their educational projects.





Considering that the Ministry of Education and Science finds this curriculum area very important, some documents have been produced, in cooperation with other public sector bodies and institutions and with several civil society partners, which can be used as systems of reference in the approach of the different dimensions of citizenship. The systems of reference and other guiding documents are not prescriptive guidelines or programmes, they are supporting instruments which, under the autonomy of each educational establishment, can be used and adapted according to the defined options in each context, and help frame the to be developed practice.

The different dimensions of Citizenship Education are already approached in many schools, both transversely and through specific curriculum offers and projects. The dimensions for which guiding documents have been created or are being created are:

- Road Safety Education
- Education for Development
- Education for Gender Equality
- Human Rights Education
- Financial Education
- Education for Security and National Defence
- Promoting Volunteering
- Environmental Education/Sustainable Development
- European Dimension of Education
- Media Literacy
- Health and Sex Education
- Entrepreneurship Education
- Consumer Education

As seen, none of these dimensions of Citizenship Education address specifically Voting Participation Education or engagement by Youth Workers. So this doesn't seem to be a concern by governments so far, despite the descending political participation of young people from Portugal in the last 20 years, as seen in point 2.

There is Voting Education developed in some schools and by Youth Workers in other institutions following guidelines from the Portuguese Youth Institute or even the European Parliament, as described next in point 4 and in the references, but, again, the lack of a governmental directive towards Voting Education specifically leads to believe that every tool is needed.

GOOD PRACTICES OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PORTUGAL

Luckily it is possible to point out a few examples of good practices of democratic education of young people in Portugal. There are not many but anyway shows that there are some concerns and work being developed in this topic.

Cascais Youth Participatory Budget





Cascais, town and municipality, has a well-developed model of Participatory Budgeting running over 5 years. Young people can also be actively involved through the school participatory budget. Each school has a 10,000 EUR budget for implementing its own selected ideas. Beyond that, young people can propose suggestions for inclusion within the city wide budget, and three such projects have been selected in recent years. Some of these projects were digital bus stops (WIFI enabled shelters with solar power charging sockets), creating 'social benches' where young people can come together (and also charge their devices), a skate park and a Festival of Youth Cinema.

The objectives of the Cascais Youth PB are to develop an appetite for participatory democracy from an early age, and to bring young people closer to the political and policy decisions which concern them. The promotion of civic education is an important target of the City Council. At the end of each Youth PB cycle, the participation of the school community is made visible through the implementation of projects proposed by young people within their school. The students also have their proposals for the wider city recognised and these are taken into account by the City Council. The visible realisation of the value of their participation is felt important for fostering their future participation as citizens, for the realisation of their rights, and to build understanding of their duties as citizens. Through running this process the City of Cascais believes young people will become more committed to the building of a more just, equitable and tolerant society.

Within the city guide to school participatory budgeting a number of deeper goals are listed:

- Personal and social development through education for citizenship;
- Encourage entrepreneurial dynamism among young people;
- Greater involvement in the school culture and to improve the school's relationship with the community;
- Develop an understanding of participatory democracy;
- Create an opportunity to identify common values;
- Bring the voice of youngsters closer to policymakers;
- Develop management, decision-making, motivational and relationship skills through practical simulations;
- Financial and personal budgeting education;

The project had a strong pedagogical component where young people are encouraged to be the actors and builders of the process. For each of the stages, actions of preparation, construction, and follow-up were developed to try to place youngsters within leadership roles.

Young people primarily participated within formal sessions within school classes linked to citizenship education. These young people led the process within each school and encouraged their peers to participate in the generation of proposals and within voting sessions. The use of gamification and creative educational approaches was supported by involving external companies specialising in these techniques. Each school also involved its school council made up of elected youth representatives, and more informally there were further means of engaging through local youth clubs and associations.

Jose Branco, from the Portuguese partner Lupa Grupo Teatro, collaborated directly with youth and other youth workers in different stages throughout three years of this youth participatory budget. In his words:





“The idea of creating a participatory budget where youth creates the principles, manages the tasks, defines roles, manages proposals and the voting process is genius. Seeing it happen makes you understand it is possible to empower and educate youth by giving them freedom and responsibility. A significant number of students, all ages, mixed in tables spend hours of their time together, discussing topics for their wellbeing. Listening. Talking if they want. Proposing if they wish.

I was part of the team that for months prepared 20ish students' classes in different schools in Cascais and each one would implement the participatory budget in their school. They were supported by our team of youth workers but they were the ones in charge.

In the beginning of the process one of the reasons why the participatory approach works, is that all those different groups of students are gathered for a weekend out where along some fun time, a lot of work is done. The phases of the procedure are presented and from then on discussion groups, debates, presentations, take place in order to establish the ruling for that year's participatory budget. Each class could participate 3 years consecutively, having, in the last year, to mentor the next group of students for the following year. During the time I was there I could see kids getting older and still connected with the project. Reflecting and correcting one year after some specific ruling that didn't work as expected. This youth worker job was very meaningful because I could go through the process of empowerment of each one of these groups of students and to witness how the whole process had an impact in the school's dynamic, while having the general and specific aims of this project largely achieved”.

Gamification

There are several non-formal education approaches using gamification as a channel for transmitting awareness and reflection. Some, many connected to programs like Erasmus+, give attention to citizenship education and the importance of one person's individual responsibility in a collective environment. These 'games' allow individuals greater space for opening up and experimenting, having in the end a group discussion and reflection.

'Take the lead in the EU elections'



The European project including Portugal aims to empower citizens to engage a greater number of voters, reduce the gap of voter turnout among various EU member states and encourage them to play an active role in the next European parliamentary elections in 2024.

The online Capacity Building Training aims to make the future change-makers more aware and gain capacity-building tools about political activism, the creation of communication campaigns, the importance of news and active democratic citizenship. When selected, you will also get the chance to participate in online campaigns as well as help with the

organisation of local events. The selected participants will have the chance to participate in the capacity-building programme, which will include three online webinars focused on EU values, institutions, EU





Parliament elections and the importance of relying on clear and transparent news. The project is developed by a consortium of partners coordinated by ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy.

Other examples of good practices:

1. Normalization of concepts like: petitions, demonstrations, product and brand boycotts,...
2. More youth representation, in the parliament and on TV, in political debate programs.
3. School literacy. Citizenship classes give light to political citizenship, how institutions work, political parties and the European Union.
4. Simulation of electoral system in schools: 1, socialize, debate, rehearse; 2, impact in the news and how it, by giving voice to the youth, 'forces' political parties to sympathize with youth agenda and policies
5. 'Lottery'. Every citizen could propose an answer to: "If I win I propose that...". Literally like the lottery where the winner would in fact have his/her idea implemented. Like a Participatory Budget.





SPAIN

ASOCIACIÓN PROMESAS

WHAT ARE THE MAIN VOTING SYSTEM USED IN SPAIN

Elections in Spain encompass four different types: general elections, regional elections, local elections, and elections to the European Parliament. General elections and regional elections are typically conducted at the conclusion of the national or regional legislative mandate, which usually spans four years since the previous election. However, early elections can be called in certain circumstances. On the other hand, local council elections (including municipal and insular elections) and elections to the European Parliament follow fixed dates, although some local government bodies, such as provincial councils, are not directly elected. In most elections, a party-list proportional representation (PR) system is employed, while the Senate utilizes the plurality system.

General elections

General elections are elections held for the national legislature, which is called in Spain Cortes Generales (Spanish for "General Courts") and consists of two chambers, the Congress of Deputies and the Senate. The Congress and Senate usually serve concurrent terms that run for a maximum of four years. However, the Prime Minister has the prerogative to dissolve both Houses at any given time either jointly or separately.

1. Congress of Deputies

The Congress is composed of 350 members directly elected by universal adult suffrage for a four-year term of office. Each one of Spain's fifty provinces is a constituency entitled to an initial minimum of two seats; the cities of Ceuta and Melilla elect one member each. The remaining 248 seats are allocated among the fifty provinces in proportion to their populations. Parties, federations, coalitions and agrupaciones de electores (electors' groups) may present candidates or





lists of candidates. The lists are closed, so electors may not choose individual candidates in or alter the order of such lists. Electors cast a ballot for a single list, or for a single candidate in Ceuta and Melilla.

The seats in each constituency are apportioned according to the largest average method of proportional representation (PR), conceived by the Belgian mathematician Victor d'Hondt in 1899 (d'Hondt method). However, in order to participate in the allocation of seats, a list must receive at least three percent of all valid votes cast in the constituency, including blank ballots. The single-member seats in Ceuta and Melilla are filled by the plurality or first-past-the-post method, under which the candidate obtaining the largest number of votes in the constituency is elected.

2. Senate

Senators are elected directly from the provinces and indirectly from the autonomous communities; currently, there are 264 senators, 208 directly elected and 56 indirectly elected.

In the provinces, a majoritarian partial block voting system is used. All peninsular provinces elect four senators each; the insular provinces (Balearic and Canary Islands) elect one or three senators per island, and Ceuta and Melilla elect two senators each. Parties nominate three candidates; each voter has three votes (fewer in those constituencies electing fewer senators) and votes for candidates by name, the only instance of personal voting in Spanish national elections. The usual outcome is three senators for the party with the most votes, and one senator for the runner-up, except in very close races.

The autonomous communities receive one senator, plus one for each million inhabitants. They are entitled to determine how they choose their senators but are generally elected by the legislature of the respective community in proportion to its party composition.

Regional elections

Elections to the unicameral parliaments of the autonomous communities of Spain are held every four years. Most of the seventeen autonomous parliaments elections take place the same day, the fourth Sunday of May of the year before a leap year; the last election was held on 28 May 2023. Despite this, not all the regions celebrate elections at the same time due to the power of the regional presidents to call early elections if necessary.

Local elections

Elections in the municipalities take place in all the country in the same day as the regional elections, the fourth Sunday of May of the year before a leap year. Last time was 28 May 2023.

Elections to the European Parliament

Spain is a European Parliament constituency for elections in the European Union covering the member state of Spain. It is currently represented by 59 Members of the European Parliament and is the second largest European Parliament constituency in terms of geographic area after France, as well as the third most populated after Germany and France.

Voting is on the basis of universal suffrage, which comprises all nationals and non-national European citizens over eighteen and in full enjoyment of their political rights. Amendments to the electoral law in 2011 required for Spaniards abroad to apply for voting before being permitted to vote, a system known as "begged" or expat vote (Spanish: Voto rogado). Seats are elected using the D'Hondt method and a closed list proportional representation, with no electoral threshold being applied in order to be entitled





to enter seat distribution. However, the use of the D'Hondt method may result in an effective threshold depending on the district magnitude.

Referendums

A referendum is a democratic process in which all citizens with the right to vote, can take part and cast their vote on a referendum question. It is one of the cornerstones of direct democracy. In a referendum there's a direct vote by the electorate on a proposal, law, or political issue. This is in contrast to an issue being voted on by a representative. This may result in the adoption of a new policy or specific law, or the referendum may be only advisory.

Electoral procedures

The laws regulating the conduct and administration of elections are laid out in detail in the 1985 electoral law. (Ley Orgánica del Régimen Electoral General.[3]) Under this law, the elections are supervised by the Electoral Commission (Junta Electoral), a permanent body composed of eight Supreme Court judges and five political scientists or sociologists appointed by the Congress of Deputies. The Electoral commission is supported in its work by the Interior Ministry. On election day, polling stations are run by electoral boards which consist of groups of citizens selected by lottery.

The format of the ballot paper is designed by the Spanish state, however, the law allows political parties to produce and distribute their own ballot papers, either by mailing them to voters or by other means such as street distribution, provided that they comply with the official model. The government then covers the cost of all printed ballot papers. These must then be marked by voters, either in the polling station or outside the polling station and placed inside sealed envelopes which are then placed inside ballot boxes in the polling station. Following the close of polls, the ballots are then counted in each individual polling station in the presence of representatives of the political parties and candidates. The ballots are then immediately destroyed, with the exception of those considered invalid or challenged by the candidates' representatives, which are retained for further scrutiny. The result is that full recounts are impossible.

YOUNG PEOPLE SITUATION TOWARDS VOTING



In Spain, adulthood is fixed at 18 years. Any Spaniard of legal age can exercise their right to active and passive suffrage under normal conditions. There is no restriction of being able to vote or to be a candidate for any public office of direct election other than to have reached the age of 18 and not be convicted by a court of law of a temporary suspension of the right to vote. This rule extends to all electoral processes in Spain, including any type of referendum.

The rules are similar for processes of direct democracy. In Spain these processes only produce legal effects when they are carried out in the manner of a binding referendum and can affect the whole of the State to an Autonomous Region, depending on the subject which they deal with.

There are other types of citizen consultations of a more advisory or informative nature that have been carried out at regional level and at local level. In the latter case, some municipalities have extended the right to vote to citizens under 18 years of age, for example in Catalunya, where the minimum age for





participating in processes of public participation (procesos de participación ciudadana) is 16 years old (from 2014).

There is no legislation specifically designed to promote or encourage the participation of young people in electoral processes or direct participation.

For historical reasons, the Spanish legislation on the exercise of the vote is as a guarantor, protecting to the maximum the right of secret ballot. Consequently, it is impossible to know exactly the distribution of electoral participation by age or by any other criterion. Only aggregate participation/abstention results are made public, without any distinction being made among voters.

Participation data according to age is based on analysis of secondary data and therefore merely indicative. Such breakdowns are drawn from post-election polls conducted by the Sociological Research Institute (Centro de Investigación Sociológica, CIS) and estimate participation rates among respondents. Generally, it can be established that voter turnout is greater in general elections, followed by local and regional elections (when they occur at the same time) and European elections, with, frequently, the lowest turnout.

The Youth Report in Spain 2016 (Informe Juventud en España 2016) from the Youth Institute (Instituto de la Juventud, INJUVE) pointed out that the average participation rate of under-30s in different elections is 70%.

In March and April 2023, we sent a survey to at least 50 young people in each of the partner countries of the project (Slovenia, Portugal, Spain and France) in order to understand the level of knowledge on politics and the type of engagement of young people in the electoral system. For Spain, the results of the survey and analysis of existing statistics revealed the following facts:

The largest group of respondents was between 18 and 25 years old (approximately two third), ¼ was between 15 and 18 years old. Most of the respondents were female (approximately two third). All of them were living in urban areas.

In general, young Spanish people don't have a good knowledge about the voting system in Spain. Two third reported an average knowledge. The knowledge about the organization of the government and about the ideas or values of the political parties seems to be even worse.

The big majority is not really interested in politics (90%). 75% do not feel involved or included in the political system, though 80 % of the 18+group had already voted in at least one election. Only 33 % declared that they will always go to vote. The main reasons why they go to vote is to express their opinion on an issue and also to support a specific candidate.

The subject of politics is not at all a topic that they speak a lot about with family and friends but most of the respondents do participate in civil organizations where they also vote; in scouts, student association, ngo,... And they mainly get their political information through TV. Social media and online media came second.

83 % of young Spanish people reported that they are not engaging in an alternative form of political expression. Those who did, signed petitions or were involved in activism, which could be a more suitable mode of expression with a greater and immediate impact.

The respondents declared that they have a rather negative opinion on the Spanish political system and they are also not very optimistic for the future (only a slightly better score). They believe that politics does





not go with them and is the regulation part of their lives. “In general young people do not know about politics and what they know is not very beautiful.”

18% of the respondents think that there is nothing that could foster the interest of young people to go voting.

WHY DO SPANISH PEOPLE DON'T GO TO VOTE?

- The main reason is because they don't know enough about the candidate, issue or political system. They have little information (lack of education about the system) and also misinformation (the image of the media).
- In the second place, distrust: because they believe that voting will not change anything. “Young people have the feeling they are not important to adults.” “They come of age and see it as a freedom they can exercise but quickly they become discouraged with the results, they feel frustration, hopelessness, reluctance and disenchantment and think it's useless to go voting.” “They don't see a direct correlation between voting and decision making, and they're right”.
- Lack of interest also plays an important role. “There's an unconsciousness and ignorance of the implications of not voting”, “There's a neglect on how the world works”, “they have other priorities at that age, certainly when they live comfortably and have no impediment”.
- It was also mentioned that they maybe don't go to vote because there's political chaos and they do not like any of the political parties to represent them because they don't identify with any of the needs of young people/ there's no focus on young people or because their messages do not reach young people.. “In the current political situation, the disastrous situation of the parties, majority abstention (putting blanc vote) might even be the best response.”
- The judgment of people with other ideals in their environment could also play a role.
- Some think it's a bad electoral system; “the voting system is archaic and boring.”
- Some mention detachment and distance from the political class; “It is not easy to access electoral projects”, “they use complicated language”.
- Also immaturity of the young people was mentioned as a possible reason to not go to vote; “lack of judgment and decisiveness”

WHAT COULD MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE TO GO TO VOTE OR FOSTER THEIR INTEREST IN VOTING?

- Qualified and competent politicians (“not only seeing it as a way to make money”): candidates and parties responding to the needs of young people, with good ideas and proposals for the future (for example making it easier to get a job). The biggest stimulans (reported several times by the respondents!) that would attract young Spanish people to go to vote would be “the observation of real changes, not just words and promises that don't come true”. It would help if politics was not just subject of discussions or anger (“that parliament did not seem like a cockfight”).
- The desire for change (the awareness and belief of being able to collectively change the situation or context they live in), “to let the country improve, not get worse and worse”
- The feeling of being involved or taken into account, a sense of belonging, the desire to contribute, the feeling of power when making decisions. “If they would know the history, traditions and culture of Spain, they would love their country and they would want to be a protagonist of their future.” This feeling of responsibility and citizen awareness of participation should be raised from childhood. It's important to make children participate in important decisions by voting from young age to reach





agreements in the family and educational environment (for example elections at school). The participatory awareness should also be a global awareness.

- The family example; “to please their parents and follow their approval” “receiving a mobile phone” or “to go against their parents, in the case of having a free-thinking rebel”.
- Friends/social networks can also play a role; “to boast against his colleagues that they are 18 and can go to vote”, “the feeling of being mature”.
- When it's the first time they can go to vote: the novelty / curiosity.
- And last but not least: education on politics/voter education (as a part of the compulsory educational program) could help. Young people need more knowledge and political awareness. Though this education should be made attractive through methodologies that can get their attention; non-formal education, talks and debates where they can express their opinion, games where they can experience the impact of voting/not voting,... Also it could be useful to adapt the tools to new technologies and make it visual (for example short videos on tiktok with influencers talking about this.” In these methods, young people should feel the importance of expressing and defending their opinions/beliefs and being able to choose who can represent those.

By giving them space for their voices to be heard and giving them exercises in participation they should believe that their vote is useful and impacts the outcome, and they should believe they can change society towards their ideals. They should be stimulated in active participation and making them understand the importance and purpose of voting by showing them the consequences and real repercussions of concrete electoral promises and measures that affect their daily life. It's possible to reflect on current situations and history but also giving simple practical examples from their reality/classroom can be useful. “make them see that their future depends on it and that they decide about their own future”, “make them see that their voice is really useful and their opinion can change things”.

One of the respondents mentioned that this generation of young people actually seems very passionate about the idea of changing the world. So making them see their votes can change the government of a country and that it can make more or less changes in today's world could encourage them a lot to vote.

YOUTH WORKERS SITUATION TOWARDS VOTING EDUCATION

In march and april 2023, we sent a survey to at least 90 youth workers in Spain in order to evaluate youth workers' vision on education in politics, democracy and voting.

67 youth workers filled in the questionnaire. 80 percent of them belong to an organization or study center (some examples: high school, university, scouts, ...). 80 percent of the respondents were +18.

Almost everyone (93%) agrees that young people should be encouraged to go voting.

- Voting is a fundamental right, it's the basis in democracy, that has been fought for for many years and they are less and less interested in the subject.
- Young people should understand the importance of the right to vote. Every vote is important and counts. Laws are affecting them from birth and what they vote for, will determine their future. Instead of criticizing the system continuously, they should realize that they, themselves can change their future, make a change in society, because who they elect is going to make very important decisions. “Maybe instead of encouraging them to vote, we could encourage them to change what they don't like.” They should be aware of the power of the leaders and they should get more involved and take responsibility in designing the country's future, because in the future, they will be the users. “It is important, the participation of all, to say in whom we place the government of the matters that





affect us.” “The youth of now are the ones who later on will be the rulers or will decide on who will govern or represent them to meet their needs.”

- “A lack of participation in voting can lead to political parties that do not represent them, to be elected and also an important part of information about what the population thinks and how it lives is being lost”
- One of the respondents mentioned to keep the age of 18 (adulthood) as starting point for the right to go voting (not before), since before 18 they are still learning how politics work and they are still forming their opinion about their ideals.

95% think that young people should receive training about the democratic and political system of their countries (institutions, voting systems, political parties).

Reasons why they believe this is important:

- Youngsters actually need a minimum/basic knowledge on the democratic and political system of their country. At this moment they don't seem to have a lot of knowledge about it, they even seem to know less and less about it. It's important in order to exercise it themselves when they enter adulthood (to vote for the political party they want or even to decide if they want to be part of politics professionally), in order to be able to be responsible citizens / active participants of their country, of their social reality. “we must encourage them above all to be informed to be able to know what they want.” “It's important to give visibility to the parties and the shit they do”. “Knowledge allows critical thinking (to not be fooled) and it allows better opinion forming / decision making on their own (a big step in adult life)”. It's important to avoid media manipulation (there's a lot of misinformation, populism, emotional publicity and suggestion), and to not get carried away by environment or family traditions.
- Education on this topic is implicit in the very meaning of the term democracy. To be able to govern according to what the majority thinks (and obtain the freedom of the system), the more and better formed that majority is, the more democratic the system will be (it's an egalitarian way of living together). “Institutions are the element that manage the needs of society as a whole, the knowledge about how they function facilitates co-governance, which is very important for the good health of democracy.” “This education is actually an inherent part of human development since we live in society.”
- As citizens of this country, also young people have the same right to know it as the adults around them, so from the moment they have enough mental capacity to understand the different concepts, they should be informed.

The respondents were asked from what age young people should begin to know the democratic and political system of their countries. 20% would prefer to start at the age of 16 (just some time before they get the invitation to go voting). The majority of the respondents (27%) mentioned the age of 14. It could be good to integrate it in the syllabus of the subject Geography and History, since in 3ESO they usually study economics and politics more thoroughly. According to 18% of the respondents, already the beginning of primary school (at the age of 12) could be a good starting point. But 24 % of the respondents would suggest to start much earlier; already before the age of 8, though with age appropriate education on this topic. Maybe it could be good to start in primary with the political systems and from secondary the rest of the contents.

70% of the youth workers think that young people are not interested in voting. 20% mentioned that there are probably two groups (one is interested in voting while another -that is the majority- is not so





interested). So it depends on each case, “but there are too many that do not” and “there is a lot of ignorance”.

85 % of the youth workers think it is the role of educators to educate and encourage young people to vote. Some of them warn that it could be very conflictive. They also mention it is not only the task of educators; it's a joint function of many actors (for example also family). Also it is mentioned that it is the role of educators to encourage citizen participation in all its breadth, not just voting.

37 % of the respondent youth workers already address voter education and democracy education in their work with youth. Some of them do it, but not enough and it also depends on the text books they are using.

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO BE ABLE TO TEACH VOTER EDUCATION TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

- To be able to prioritize there's a need for more resources (which are rather limited at this moment)
- Truthfull information, references, in-depth knowledge and age-appropriate books/ materials (diagrams, drawings) and other tools (for instance practical activities, a game or dynamic) for the classroom to make it attractive and enjoyable and find a way to motivate them in this boring topic “some course/training activities and reserve time to devote to this topic in agendas, about voter education to have the tools to teach and have talks with young people”, “translating into understandable language the laws and regulations that may affect young people and to be able to explain very clearly all the political tendencies”, “to abstract and simplify the democratic system and electoral programs”.

One of the respondents suggest political parties to give age appropriate talks with young people, but what was mentioned a lot is that the information has to be objective and more factual. “consider all political parties equally”. “To be an impartial educator”, “to teach from as neutral perspective as possible, without showing contempt or other personal opinion for any party”. “An educator who demonstrates neutrality to the different ideals of political parties to give free choice to learners according to their interests”. The respondents suggests “teachers with a degree of Geography and History” to teach this topic, “teachers involved in equality and violence prevention”, and “a moderately deep knowledge on the topic would be enough.”

- Since the education has to be age appropriate, there should be tools for different ages
- That institutes allow it to be introduced into the system (to be contemplated within the compulsory educational programming)
- Freedom of expression, less confrontational society (these times there's a lot of polarization and tension, educational tools should take this into account or counter this).
- The content should not be limited to the history of European institutions (this is already in many curricula). They should understand the political system: its important that they understand and value what democracy, freedom and society is, what it means, how it works, who makes the laws,... Also youngsters should be taught how to exercise committed citizen participation. They should know how different forms/channels of participation work in a practical way (both institutional and social). For example: how to present an administrative dispute? What laws affect you when creating an association?, legal vocabulary, vote with discretion,... In addition, they will be part of the democratic system by voting, so they must know what the parties propose, argue why they decide to vote or not vote and for whom... “receiving more information about the situation and candidates would help”. Create spaces for meeting and dialogue between young people and decision makers and have a brainstorming process on how to improve country, region, city,... could also be very educational.





63 % declares to not have enough material and knowledge to address the issue of voting with young people. Some of them are interested in the topic on a personal level and look for information themselves, but in general specific material is missing (certainly about European and global level).

GOOD PRACTICES OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In Spain it doesn't exist "per se" the concept of democratic school, although there are many "escuelas libres" where students participate in the decision making process of the schools, many times with their families also involved.

Most of the cases are part of the considered "alternative schools" although more and more we can see some cases of public funded schools on which the participation model have been re-designed and teachers, students and families take a crucial role in the life of the school.

In the last 40 years, there have been many "transversal" subjects which had embedded the values of participation, citizenship and democracy although not focussed on the reasons and the importance of getting involved in it but focus on the historical events that brought us to this moment in society.

NON FORMAL EDUCATION

Different youth organizations have been playing the role of "democratic educators" including in their educational programmes the structured dialogue and democratic processes since they are 6 years old.

One of these organizations is the Scouts. Where children from 6 and youngsters until 21 meet every weekend and guiding by adults they make their projects possible by following this scheme:

- 1st the children present different proposals to solve a need in their neighborhood.
- 2nd they present the different proposals
- 3rd they vote on which of the proposals they will work during the next months
- 4th they learn to divide in different working groups or commissions and study the situation and possible actions to take and then work for 6-8 months in order to provide a solution (sometimes through fundraising, selling things or organizing events to get some money)
- 5th They provide the solution to the problem (make the action possible)
- 6th They evaluate the whole process
- 7th They Summarize and report how they did it
- 8th They celebrate the success of the project and start a new one.





This is something that more than 180.000 children and young people in Spain have been experiencing for the last 4 decades and later transported into their adult lives and working environments with high success.

By learning to evaluate their neighborhood, the political decisions, the needs and also their actions, they get used to having a critical thinking approach that will help to analyze reality and future events from a constructive perspective.

Some of this approaches can be consulted in publications they have produced about several democratic topics here: https://issuu.com/scout_es

In public school systems there is the Educational LAW that establishes the contents the students need to learn and this has some variations depending on the 17 autonomous communities throughout Spain where they (politicians) include their interests too.

There have been several manifestos and “white books” working as recommendations for schools to apply an education based on democratic values and there are some subjects linked to that, but again, most of it only works around the historical process and how the voting system works but in rare cases they practice it as a daily basis.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECTS

In some primary schools they work on projects to understand what democracy is. In these projects the students have to create a democratic state, the creation of political parties in the classroom and even having elections.

Once the government was elected and formed they started to make decisions that were voted democratically.

By this Project Based Learning method, Autoregulation and cooperative learning the students learn by playing how democratic values can help us to live together.





SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Critical thinking subjects such as philosophy have been removed from the Spanish educational system recently therefore although at this age school councils and other group decision making processes are established, it depends on the center if they want to use it or not.

In Spain there are only 5 centers considered “democratic schools” on which the students take part in all the decisions of the schools like in the Netherlands. Students even discuss, vote and decide which teachers the school is going to hire.

Some of this centers are: Tximeleta (Pamplona), La Rosa de los Vientos (Madrid), Ojo de Agua (Alicante), Los niños del Mango (Almuñecar) y la Escuela Activa Savia (Valladolid).

Unfortunately some of these schools have been considered “out of the system” and as many alternative schools in Spain they have to make partnerships with Panamá or the United States of America in order to have their curriculums approved and validated.





CONCLUSION

The objective of this study in each of the four partners country of the project was to give an overview and a picture of the situation of young people and voting, identify obstacles and challenges to young people's voting participation and reflect upon common solutions.

Regarding the situation of young people and voting, the study uncovered local differences such as, for example a higher sence of voting as a civic duty in Slovenia than in Portugal or a higher level of alternative political expression in France than in Spain but generally speaking, we discovered that there are common trends in all four countries:

- Young people feel disconnected from the political process and do not believe that their vote make a difference. They feel that politicians do not represent their interests or that the political system is corrupt.
- Young people do not feel that politics is relevant to their lives, or they are not aware of the issues and policies that are being debated.
- Young people face practical barriers to voting. They also face social or cultural barriers, such as feeling that voting is not something that is expected or valued in their community.
- Young people do not have access to accurate or unbiased information about political issues or candidates, which can make it difficult for them to make informed decisions about whom to vote for.
- Young people do not feel confident in their ability to make a difference through voting, or they do not believe that politicians will listen to their concerns.

Our project, “Let's vote: a critical aspect of democracy explained to young people”, is looking for solutions to foster young people's participation in voting and according to the results of our study, the consortium has decided to try to answer two critical issue influencing low participation level:

- Education: the level of education and knowledge has a direct impact on young people's participation levels.
- Habit: finding ways to form voting habits is critical to bring young people to the polls.

In order to adress those two issues, the partners are working on the creation of an educational board game.





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