



# Meaningful youth participation

Presentation for youth focal points  
November 29, 2021

# What is youth participation?

**Youth participation** is a fundamental **right and a process** by which young people are able to **have a say** and **influence** on issues that affect them.

This applies to all areas of a young person's life, from the family, school, local communities, public services, and wider government policy.



# Participation in international legal frameworks

## United Nations (UDHR)

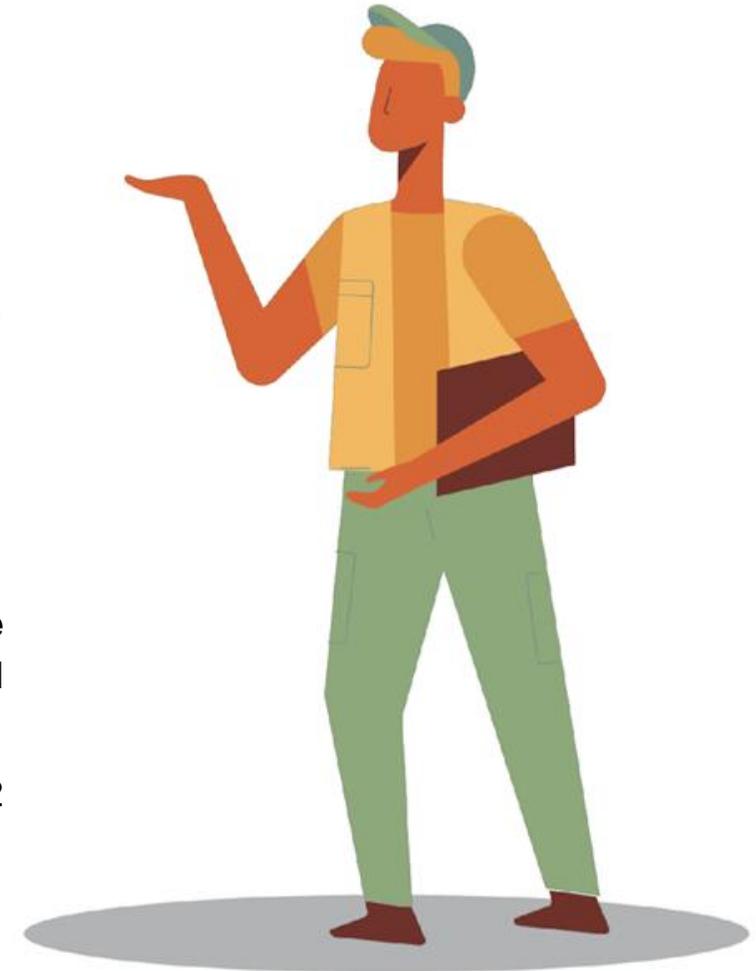
Participation is a **basic human right**

(UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948: Article 20-1 – assembly and association, Article 21-1 - government, Article 23-4 – trade unions)

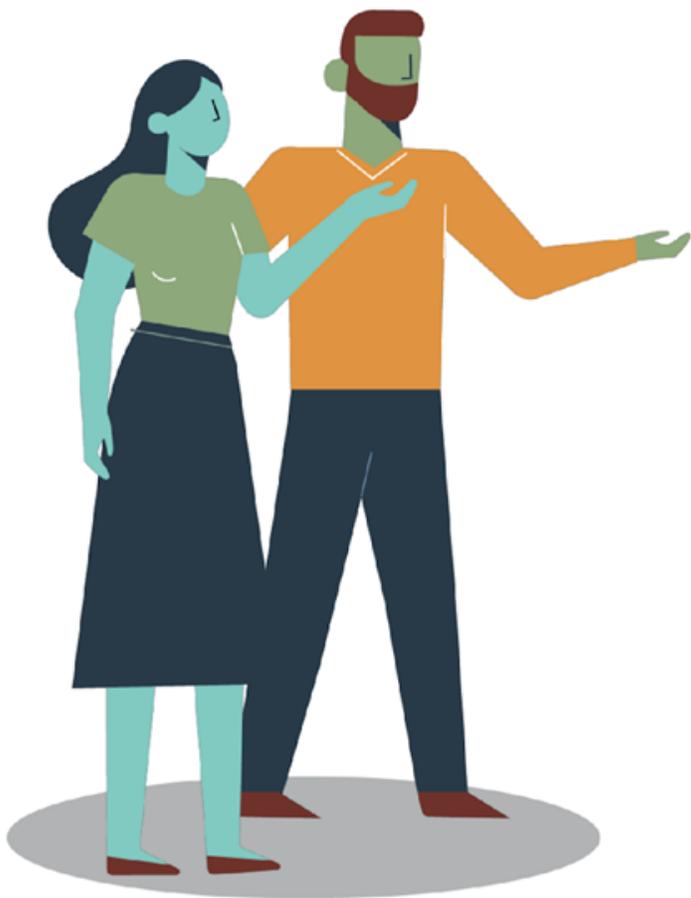
## Council of Europe

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'

(CoE European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life 1992 & 2003).



# EU and youth participation



Youth participation is **central to the EU's values and policies**. According to the Lisbon Treaty, EU action shall be aimed at "*encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe*"(Article 165).

The **EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027)** further states that '*Young people's participation in representative democracy and civil society at all levels and in society at large should be supported.*'

According to the Strategy, youth participation refers to *meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation of young people.*



# Participation in the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027)



## Youth Participation Activities (EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027)

Encouragement and promotion of inclusive democratic participation of all young people in **society and democratic processes**;

Active engagement of young people, youth organisations and other organisers of youth work in **policies affecting the lives of young people on all levels**;

Support for youth representations at local, regional and national level, **recognising young people's right to participate and self-organise**;

Support for youth dialogue with policy-makers, including diverse voices of young people in **decision-making processes on all levels**;

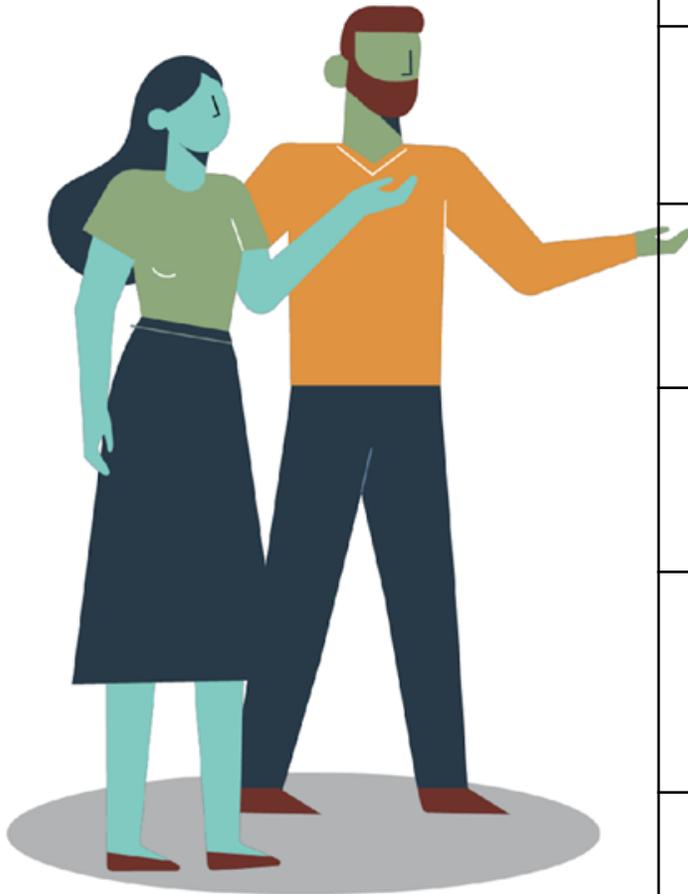
Fostering the **development of citizenship competencies**, through citizenship education and learning strategies;

Support and development of **opportunities for 'learning to participate'**, raising interest in participatory actions and helping young people to prepare for participation;

Exploring and promoting the **use of innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation** e.g. digital democracy tools.



# Meaningful youth participation: RMSOS



Youth Participation = Rights, Means, Space, Opportunity, Support	
<b>Rights</b>	Young people have the <b>right</b> to participate in society as a fundamental right. They should be in a position to actively promote their rights, where they have influence on local decision-making processes through consultations or voting, covering every aspect of life, not only civil or political rights, but also social, economic or cultural ones.
<b>Means</b>	Young people have the <b>means</b> to participate. This requires that basic needs are being met for individuals and communities, so that the feeling of isolation and being left out of society can be dealt with and participation can be enacted. Basic needs include sufficient social security, education, housing, health care, transportation, know-how and access to technology.
<b>Space</b>	Young people need the <b>space</b> to participate. This refers to physical and virtual spaces as well as time for organising of activities, exchanging views or setting up new ideas. It further refers to opportunities to participate within the institutional frameworks; specifically, this can relate to policy making and the needs for young people's views, recommendations and conclusions to be heard, acknowledged and have a real impact on decisions.
<b>Opportunity</b>	The <b>opportunity</b> to participate is an option for young people. This requires that young people have access to information on how to get involved, what opportunities are available and where and these (opportunities) are deliberately provided through structures and institutions. This allows young people to make informed decisions about their involvement and participation, be involved in decision-making processes and systems which are youth-friendly, understandable and empowering.
<b>Support</b>	Young people need <b>support</b> available and accessible in order to participate at a local community level. This should include among others financial support covering expenses and structural costs, on hand moral and personal support through e.g. a youth worker or other professionals, institutional and community support to recognise the importance and contribution of youth participation.



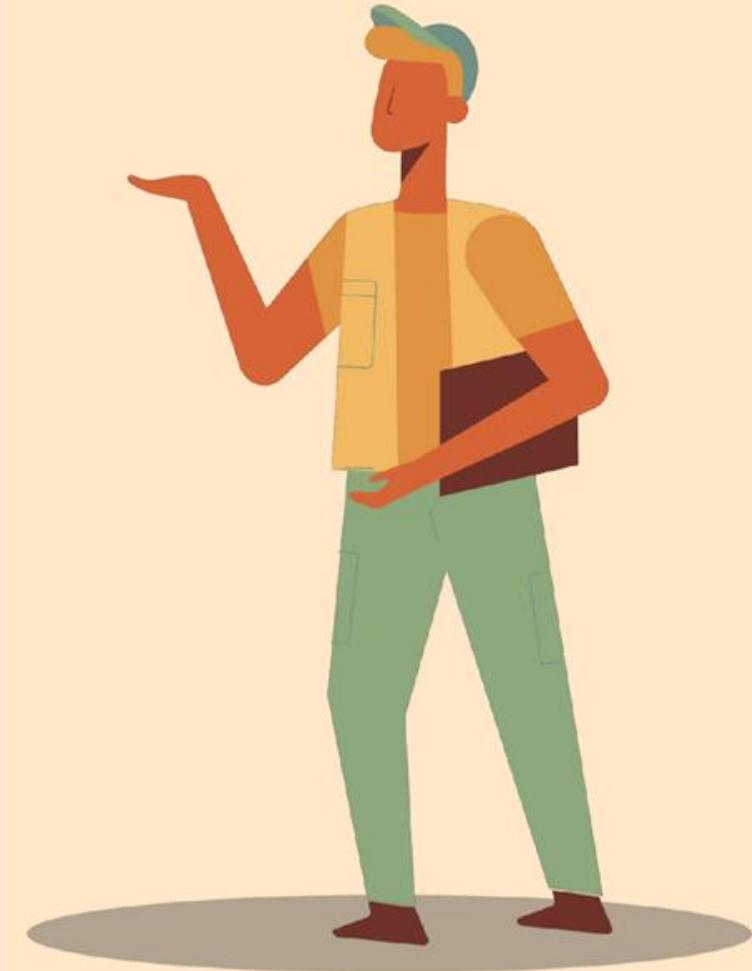
# Levels of youth participation

- The **first level of youth participation (information)** - -- initiatives where young people are informed of activities or results and participate in delivery but are not asked to provide active inputs into planning and do not have active decision-making powers (e.g. young people receive training or participate in an event but have no say in its format or contents)
- The **second level of youth participation (consultation)** - - initiatives where young people are not only informed but also asked for their inputs and opinions but where those inputs are not binding on the executive power behind the initiative (e.g. young people are asked about their ideas for contents of a training event but have no decisive say in the final programme)
- The **third level of youth participation (empowerment)** - initiatives where young people are informed, consulted and where their opinions and inputs have an influence on the final shape of an initiative/intervention (e.g. young people initiate or steer an entire programme).



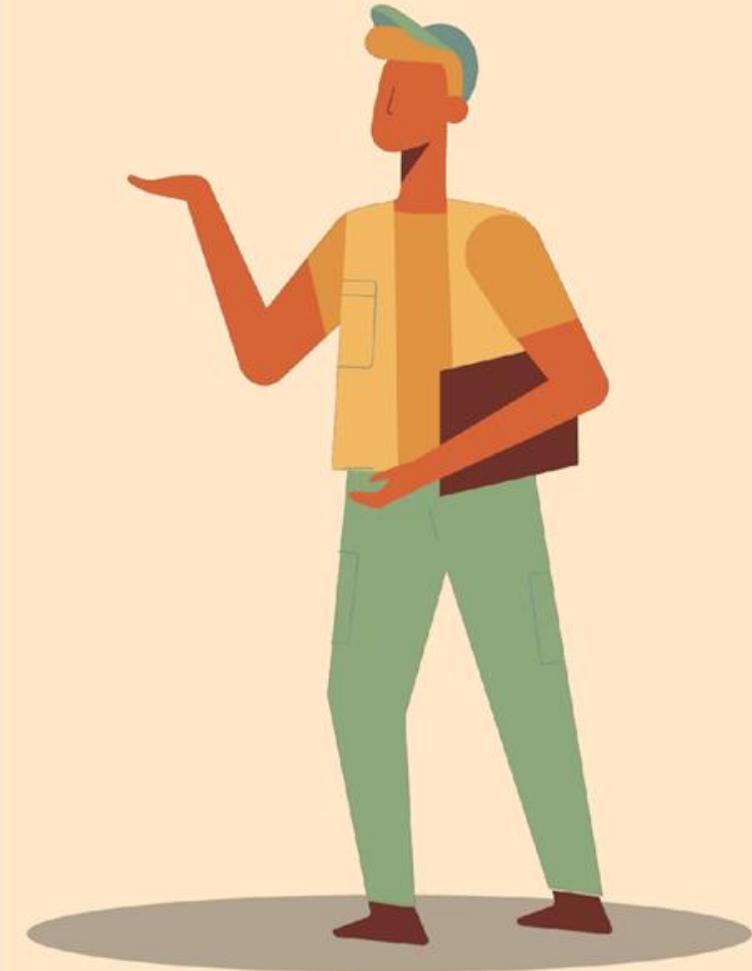
# Measuring youth participation

No	Indicator	Definition	Data source
1.	Participation of young people in <b>different organisations</b> (cultural, charity, sport, etc.)	Percentage of young people (aged 16-29) participating in formal voluntary activities.	Eurostat, EU-SILC, ad-hoc module (ahm) on social and cultural participation 2015, and every 6 years from 2022
2.	Participation of young people in informal <b>voluntary activities</b> (e.g. helping others)	Percentage of young people (16- 29) participating in informal voluntary activities.	Eurostat, EU-SILC, ahm on social and cultural participation 2015, and every 6 years from 2022
3.	Formal <b>recognition</b> for taking part in voluntary activities and share of young people using the credentials to achieve their further goals	Share of young people (age 15- 29) that declare a) having taken part in voluntary activities b) who have received a certificate, a diploma or other kind of formal recognition for their participation and c) who claim they have used the credentials in the labour market or educational setting to achieve their further goals.	Eurobarometer, Youth Monitor



# Measuring youth participation (continued)

4.	Youth <b>active citizenship</b> (participation in political parties, demonstrations, signing petitions, etc.- but without voting)	Percentage of young people (15- 29) declaring active citizenship.	The European Parliament/country specific data
5.	Young people using <b>internet</b> for civic and political participation (petitions, opinions, etc.)	Percentage of young people (15- 29) using internet for civic or political participation.	Eurostat ICT use survey 2015, 2017, 2019,  2021  (every 2 years)
6.	Self-reported <b>access to information</b> (quality, neutral and youth- friendly)	Share of young people reporting that they have easy access to understandable youth-friendly information that follows codes of ethics and quality standards.	Eurobarometer
7.	Participation of young people in <b>representative structures</b> (such as youth councils, youth parliaments), and civic-organisations, political movements, parties or unions	Share of young people (aged 15- 29) participating in representative structures (such as youth councils, youth parliaments), and civic- organisations, political movements, parties or unions in the last 12 months.	Eurobarometer



# Practical tips



- Be **realistic**: what can you achieve through participation?
- Provide **feedback**: what happens to inputs?
- Be **open**: failures and obstacles need to be communicated, results have to be shared
- Be **inclusive**: are all voices considered?
- Be **supportive**: do young people have the means to participate?



